

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament

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266



Edwin K. Broadhead

Jewish Ways of Following Jesus

Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity

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ISBN 978-3-16-150304-7

ISSN 0512-1604 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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The book was typeset by Computersatz Staiger in Rottenburg/N., printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

dedicated to

Rev. Loretta Reynolds, D. theol.

esteemed colleague
dear friend
beloved spouse

Acknowledgements

This venture into the world of Jewish Christianity is the product of an intense year of research and reflection at Oxford University. In a larger sense, the insights reached here represent the most recent stage of an interesting professional journey. My commitment to Christian faith and discipleship led me to critical study of the texts of the New Testament, particularly the traditions of Jesus' teaching. After a period of exploring the gospels from both a literary and a historical critical perspective, my interests turned to the historical Jesus and to the stages of tradition between Jesus and the gospels. Further scholarly attention was given to the role played by traditions such as the Sayings Tradition (Q) and the Gospel of Thomas. All these studies were carried out with an eye to the developmental history and the diversity of early Christianity. These concerns led naturally to an interest in the Jewish profile of Jesus and his earliest followers, but also to the possibility that Jewish ways of following Jesus endured in various times and places.

I am particularly grateful for those who helped me to carry out a sabbatical year at Oxford. Professor Christopher Tuckett paved the way with guidance and with timely introductions. I am particularly grateful to Professor Martin Goodman for his interest and engagement with my project at a very busy time in his own work. His guidance in the field of Jewish studies and his probing questions about my ideas proved invaluable. For the time and support to carry out such a project, I am grateful to my home institution, Berea College of Berea, Kentucky.

A special note of thanks is due for Wolfson College of Oxford, who accepted me as a visiting scholar and provided a base of support and collegiality. I am grateful for the support offered by a variety of Oxford libraries. Chief among these is the Theological Faculty Library and its helpful staff: Kate Alderson-Smith, Richard Budgen, Elizabeth Birchall, John Bardwell. The Wolfson College library and its director, Fiona Wilkes, provided a comfortable place for a portion of my research. The Bodleian Library, the Sackler Library, and the library of the Oriental Institute were boundless sources for a variety of obscure texts, ancient and modern.

I am grateful for the friendship of colleagues who accompanied my journey. Members of the Common Room and the staff at Wolfson provided a place for tea and discussion. My ideas were sifted in conversations in Oxford with extraordinary colleagues such as Christopher Rowland, David Taylor, Sebastian Brock, Geza Vermes, Larry Kreitzer, and Joan Taylor. New Road Baptist Church, Ox-

ford provided a place of worship and a supportive community. I am also grateful for continuing dialogue with fellow members of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, including James Dunn, Cilliers Breytenbach, Sean Freyne, Jörg Frey, David Gowler, Samuel Vollenweider, Peter Lampe, and Alan Culpepper. I appreciate as well the office assistance provided by Niklaus von Wittenbach.

I wish to acknowledge and to honor a line of extraordinary teachers and mentors. Among these are Frank Stagg of Louisville; Ulrich Luz of Bern; Hans Weder, Eduard Schweizer, and Jean Zumstein of Zürich; Peter Stuhlmacher, Martin Hengel, and Jürgen Moltmann of Tübingen.

My work has been carried out with the support of an extraordinary family. My quest for both faith and scholarship was fired by the example and support of my parents, Dempsey and Louise Broadhead. My sister, Janet Broadhead Tidmore, and her husband Pat have followed with interest and care through each stage of my work.

Finally, I am grateful beyond measure for the support and encouragement of Loretta Reynolds, who is both colleague and spouse. I have learned much from the questions she brings from her own interests and her own fields of study, which are homiletics, women's studies, and pastoral care. More importantly, she understood why this venture was so important, she has listened to my ideas, and she has offered her support and encouragement throughout. This text is dedicated to her with many thanks, with great joy, and with much love.

*Edwin K. Broadhead
Berea, Kentucky*

Prologue

Just outside the Victoria Market in Melbourne, Australia stands a small monument to the first British settlers. The British claim to the continent would be based on the legal principle of *terra nullius* (the land of no one). Subsequent rulings in the British court system attempted to extinguish all claims to native title. The glaring contradiction, of course, is that Aboriginal peoples have inhabited the continent for over 40,000 years and numbered, in the late 1700s, some 350,000 inhabitants. Although their origin, identity, and history cannot be precisely described, Aboriginal presence cannot be ignored. Even where no descendants remain, such as in Tasmania, the oral tales and the campfires and middens bear witness to their place on the map of history.

Such is the case with the religious map of antiquity. A Christian orthodoxy (though not hegemony) was achieved with the patronage of Constantine (313 ce) and in the pronouncements of the Council of Nicea called by the emperor (325 ce). A similar orthodoxy was enforced upon Judaism by the codification of rabbinic tradition in the Mishnah and by its subsequent imposition as the standard for Judaism (2nd to 5th century ce). Both traditions, Christian and rabbinic, imposed their dominance upon the religious map of their own time, but also, retrospectively, upon the previous periods. An ideological form of *terra nullius* was declared, asserting the primal status of these later norms. The trajectory sketched out in Luke-Acts seems to move with inevitable inertia from Pentecost westward toward Rome and the Christianization of the Roman Empire. In Judaism, the prophet of the journey was Josephus, who privileged the Pharisaic approach and cooperation with the Romans in the aftermath of the 1st Jewish War. The developments after the fall of the Temple (70 ce) appear to lead inevitably to the consolidation of rabbinic authority in later centuries. In the process of achieving dominance, the Church Fathers labeled other groups as heretics; the rabbis, for the most part, ignored their competition. Like the British colonial accounts, these two grand narratives were written with a clear awareness that the landscape was, in reality, filled with a wide variety of characters and groups and traditions, with many Judaisms and many Christianities.

Our task here is to add a critical note to the monuments that define both Christianity and Judaism – to acknowledge that the ancient landscape included the story of Jewish followers of Jesus. As far as it is possible, this study seeks to clarify historical markers for the presence of Jewish Christianity in various

places, in different times, and in diverse modes. The presence of such markers would challenge a variety of scholarly presumptions: 1) that there was an early and decisive parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity; 2) that Jewish Christianity quickly subsided in the face of an emerging orthodoxy of Gentile Christianity; and 3) that surviving groups of Jewish Christians are to be understood, with various Church Fathers, as heretics. If historical markers for the continuing vitality of Jewish Christianity can be isolated, then a different religious and social map of the first four centuries is required, and a different understanding of the development of primitive Christianity and rabbinic Judaism must emerge.

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Introduction

This investigation begins with the hypothesis that groups in antiquity who were characterized by Jewish ways of following Jesus may be vastly underrepresented, misrepresented, and undervalued in the ancient sources and in modern scholarship. If this is true, then the history of development of both Judaism and Christianity and of their interrelationship are subject to revision.

The purpose of this study is to gather the evidence for Jewish Christianity and to reconsider its impact. The first challenge in this quest is the problem of nomenclature and definition. While other descriptions have been suggested in recent scholarship, I have retained the label *Jewish Christianity* in an effort to sustain clarity and to retain continuity with some three centuries of critical scholarship. Nonetheless, numerous difficulties are involved in both the nomenclature and the content of this term. While these problems will be addressed in detail in chapter two, a preliminary label and definition may be offered here.

The larger goal of this research is to recover, reconstruct, and analyze the evidence from antiquity of a phenomenon that may be described as *Jewish ways of following Jesus*. The term *Jewish Christianity* will be used throughout as a synthesizing construct of modern scholarship that points to various groups in antiquity that may be labeled, for the purpose of analysis, as examples of this phenomenon – as *Jewish Christianities*. This choice of labels is not intended to privilege either Jewish or Christian components of this identity. While scholarly labels can name, they cannot accurately define or describe such groups, nor can they account for their diversity: only a critical collection, reconstruction, and analysis of the ancient evidence can do that. This reconstruction will take priority over the continuing debate about what to call such groups.

Central to this definition of Jewish Christianity is the understanding that both their Jewishness and their connection to Jesus are expressions of a continuing covenant between Israel and God. Jewish Christianity could then be understood as a scholarly label for

persons and groups in antiquity whose historical profile suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain their Jewishness and that they do so as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel.

tianity existed, the attempt to describe fully *how* it existed is an ongoing challenge.

The impact of such findings, however, should not be underestimated. The final chapters of this work will suggest that these historical markers are not only important for a critical reconstruction of Jewish Christianity; they must also be accounted for in any critical effort to describe the formation of Christian identity and to trace the developmental history of primitive Christianity. The same is true of rabbinic Judaism. Plausible evidence for the enduring presence of a vital, variegated Jewish Christianity would require significant revisions to the religious map of antiquity.

The research that follows will show the value of a description that remains open to a wider range of definitions of what it means to *follow Jesus* or to *maintain Jewishness*. This flexibility reflects the nature of the evidence as well as the growing scholarly awareness of the rich diversity of groups, ideas, and practices behind the emergence of Judaism and Christianity as distinct, definable religious traditions.

The gathering of the evidence for such groups is no easy task. First, the material is found in various formats and encompasses a wide temporal and geographical range. This requires an interdisciplinary approach and a wide-angle perspective. Secondly, this material is found mostly in the works and worldview of its opponents. Thirdly, the modern treatment of this evidence has been dominated, for the most part, by two theological paradigms – that of canonical, orthodox Christianity and that of rabbinic Judaism. These problems are challenging, but not insurmountable. Because there was never a dominant chronicler for Jewish Christianity and because there survives little direct evidence for its identity, the search necessarily involves a critical hermeneutic of recovery and reconstruction. Such an approach provides the only reasonable hope for accurately locating Jewish Christianity on the map of antiquity.

Even so, the task remains difficult. The self-concept of Jewish Christianity is not available in any unmediated way to modern scholarship, and there is little prospect for a comprehensive synthesis of the evidence that survives. What is available to careful scholarship, however, is a set of historical markers for the presence of Jewish Christianity. These markers typically take the form of representations, echoes, after-effects, implications, and unexplained gaps.¹ Such markers are elusive, but they provide valuable testimony to various manifestations of an entity that may be described as Jewish Christianity.

This study seeks to isolate and to collect these historical markers. At a minimum, such historical data can lay to rest any assertion that Jewish Christianity did not exist or that it did not matter. Such evidence may also challenge presumptions of an early and decisive parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. This study may also add further evidence that official Judaism and official Christianity are late, sometimes awkward constructs. A more difficult challenge is the attempt to synthesize the data – to show possible connections and lines of influence that might lead to a fuller description of Jewish Christianity. This study will point in a preliminary way to a few clusters and tangents that appear to emerge from the various manifestations of Jewish Christianity. Even so, this limited effort at synthesis must be offered along a continuum of possibility, plausibility, and probability. While it should become clear that Jewish Chris-

¹ This is also the way science must speak of certain cosmic phenomena. The Big Bang theory of the origins of the universe depends upon observations of the after-effects of this event. In a similar way, Black Holes are known by the empty space they create on the cosmic map and by their gravitational effect on surrounding objects.

tianity existed, the attempt to describe fully *how* it existed is an ongoing challenge.

The impact of such findings, however, should not be underestimated. The final chapters of this work will suggest that these historical markers are not only important for a critical reconstruction of Jewish Christianity; they must also be accounted for in any critical effort to describe the formation of Christian identity and to trace the developmental history of primitive Christianity. The same is true of rabbinic Judaism. Plausible evidence for the enduring presence of a vital, variegated Jewish Christianity would require significant revisions to the religious map of antiquity.

PART ONE

Parameters for a Quest for Jewish Christianity

Despite the extensive literature over the history of primitive Christianity, there still is no investigation of the question of how one should evaluate the role of Jewish Christianity. It is true that in the last years the significance of the study of Judaism for the evaluation of the Christian religion has been noted many times. It has been emphasized that interest in historical knowledge about the beginnings of the Christian religion makes it necessary to carry out scholarly research on Judaism in the first centuries before and after Christ. The question about the essence of Christianity has led especially to discussion of the relationship between the Gospel and Judaism. However, a comprehensive investigation of Jewish Christianity has not been produced.

This description, which notes several issues confronting contemporary New Testament studies, was penned in 1908.¹ A century later, this concern for Jewish Christianity is still relevant. Part One of this study considers the parameters for a quest for historical markers that suggest the presence, and perhaps the profile, of Jewish Christianity. The first chapter traces the history of critical research on Jewish Christianity from the early Deists through Ferdinand Christian Baur to the present. The second chapter confronts the problems involved in naming and defining Jewish Christianity. The third chapter considers various issues of hermeneutics and methodology, then projects a strategy for a historical quest for Jewish Christianity.

¹ Gustav Höinnecke, in the Forward of *Das Judenchristentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Trowitsch und Sohn, 1908). The translation is mine.

CHAPTER 1

A History of Research

Research on Jewish Christianity has most often emerged as a corollary of other investigations. Concerns for the theological unity of church doctrine, New Testament studies, patristic studies, reconstructions of church history, the study of Judaism, and even archeology have raised and engaged, sometimes inadvertently, the question of Jewish Christianity.

1. Beginnings

Clear use of the terms *Jewish Christian* and *Jewish Christianity* is found nowhere in antiquity, but emerges only in the wake of the Enlightenment and English Deism.¹ The use of these descriptions was a part of the Deists' search for a natural, reasonable religion. The Deists' focus on the origins and essence of Christianity carried explicit theological judgements that they used to criticize the church of their own age. In 1718, John Toland argued that Jewish Christians such as the Nazarenes and the Ebionites were the earliest form of Christianity, and he contrasted these with a Pauline Gentile Christianity². By 1740 Thomas Morgan contrasted Jewish Christians or Christian Jews as a negative parallel to the natural religion sponsored by Paul.

St. Paul then, it seems, preach'd another and quite different Gospel from what was preach'd by Peter and the other Apostles . . . And this was the vast difference between the Jewish and Gentile Christians at first, and in the Apostolic Age itself. That one believ'd in and receiv'd Christ, as the Hope and Salvation of Israel only, or as the Restorer of their Kingdom; and the other as the Hope and Salvation of all men alike . . . This was a very wide Difference indeed; and at this Rate the Jewish and Gentile Christianity, or Peter's religion and Paul's, were as opposite and inconsistent as Light and Darkness, Truth and Falsehood . . .³

¹ See the discussion in Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmore and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972 [German original, 1970], pp. 51–61.; Jörg Frey, "Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien," in *Antike Christliche Apokryphen I: Evangelien*, ed. Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

² John Toland, *Nazarenus: or Jewish, Gentile and Mahometan Christianity* (London, 1718).

³ Cited in Kümmel, *History of the Investigation*, p. 56.

The deistic concerns made their way into Germany, where the interest in Jewish Christianity flourished. Johann Semmler, writing from 1771–75, initiated a type of critical analysis when he sought to divide the books of the New Testament according to their origin in Jewish Christian or Gentile Christian communities.

It can be demonstrated from the oldest of the extant writings that there was for long a party of Christians that belonged to the Diocese of Palestine and that consequently accepted the writings of those apostles who actually carried on their ministry among the circumcized; that Paul did not direct his letters to these Christians, who belonged to the diocese of James and Peter; and that they, therefore, also did not have the Pauline letters among their authoritative writings. On the other hand, the party of Christians that belonged to Paul's diocese was quite aware that James, Peter, and Jude had not sent it any letters; and it, consequently, was also not able to exhibit and introduce those writings among its congregations. Both parties are Christians and have separated themselves from the Jews; but the way of thinking of the Palestinian Jewish-Christians is still too simply and too much accustomed to all sorts of local ideas and insignificant concepts, for other Christians who do not dwell among these natives to be able to accept this kind of teaching for themselves as though it were for their advantage. On the basis of the most ancient residue of a history, the aversion of the supporters of Peter for the followers of Paul is undeniable.

If one were to deny the very real distinctiveness of Jewish teaching or of teaching oriented to Jewish-Christians, he would deliberately have to speak, as it were, against the very clear light of the sun. ...⁴

In a similar way, Johann Michaelis in 1771 distinguished between Christians of Jewish and Gentile origin.⁵ By 1776 Gerhard Lessing would connect the idea of a primitive Nazarene gospel to the comments of Papias and Jerome in an attempt to reconstruct the foundational stages of the Christian religion.⁶ While most retained the negative contrast found in much of English Deism, a few began to see in Jewish Christianity a primal, positive image. Ferdinand Christian Baur would posit the contrast between such early groups as a key component in the synthesis from which Christianity emerged.

2. Ferdinand Christian Baur

The history of critical research on Jewish Christianity takes on a distinct coherence and impetus with Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860). Baur was the son of an Evangelical pastor in Württemberg and studied at the University of Tübingen.⁷ His tenure as professor of New Testament exegesis at Tübingen, which be-

⁴ Cited in Kümmel, *History of the Investigation*, pp. 67–68.

⁵ See Johann Michaelis, *Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des alten und neuen Bundes I-II*, 4th edition (Göttingen, 1788).

⁶ Cited in Frey, "Judenchristlicher Evangelien."

⁷ For a short biographical description of Baur and his impact, see Joseph Tyson, *Luke*,

gan in 1826 and lasted until his death in 1860, was marked by controversy. A part of this conflict was occasioned by the work of his students, especially David Friedrich Strauss and his *Life of Jesus* (1835). Also numbered among Baur's students were Eduard Zeller and Matthias Schneckenburger, whose work on Acts influenced Baur's position. Baur's ideas and those of his followers constituted the Tübingen School and played a key role in the development of critical scholarship in theological studies.⁸

Baur's foundational work is significant for its impact. For the next 150 years almost all research in Jewish Christianity operated under the shadow of Baur. Some scholars confirmed his paradigm and many sought to counter it, but Baur's work provided the backdrop for almost all debate.⁹

Baur's foundational work is also significant for its extent. His focus on conflict and compromise in the development of the early church influenced numerous fields of study. In addition to initiating the critical study of Jewish Christianity, Baur shaped the agenda for New Testament studies; this was most true for Lukan literature, especially Acts. Baur's work pushed others to the critical study of Judaism, studies of Paul and his opposition, studies in patristic materials, and studies in the history of development of primitive Christianity. Modern sociological studies of the New Testament bear an indirect influence from Baur.

Baur's position is grounded in exegesis of New Testament texts.¹⁰ His quest began in an 1831 essay that explored Paul's delineation of competing parties in the struggle at Corinth.¹¹ Paul names four groups, reported to him by Chloe's people, who offer competing claims: "I am from Paul, I am from Apollos, I am

Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 12–15.

⁸ Helpful summaries may be found, among other places, in Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 12–29; Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, trans. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989 [1st German edition 1983]), pp. 1–7; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1974), 419–20; Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958), pp. 1–4; Gustav Hönecke, *Das Judenchristentum*, pp. 1–3.

⁹ See, for example, the evaluation of Gustav Hönecke, *Das Judenchristentum*, p. 1: "The person who for the first time within the Protestant theology of Germany made the attempt to present the primitive history of Christianity in a coherent framework, to provide a correct historical evaluation of the dynamic power and principle, the conflict and developmental stages, to understand the history of Christianity as the result of the organic collaboration of manifold factors was Ferdinand Christian Baur." The translation is mine.

¹⁰ While the Hegelian pattern of conflict ending in synthesis is obvious, the criticism that Baur's construction is only a philosophical schema is false. While Baur modeled the framework in dialectical terms, the basic components are drawn from textual and historical analysis. Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 6–7, offers helpful summary and analysis on this critique.

¹¹ "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums im der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Paulus in Rom," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1831), 61–206.

from Cephas, I am from Christ" (1 Cor. 1.12). For Baur this conflict provides the paradigm for the development of primitive Christianity. Baur identifies the Paul and Apollos group as one movement and the Peter and Christ group as an opposing party. Gathered around the apostleship of Paul and Peter, Baur frames these two movements in history of religions terminology, with important sociological implications. Peter is among the original apostles and represents the Jewish roots of Christianity. Paul, who claims to be an apostle through revelation, is a converted Jew who wishes to take the gospel to the Gentiles, but without the imposition of circumcision and most other requirements of Jewish Law. For Baur, this conflict is the ground from which early Christianity emerged.

Baur first believed that Paul, Peter, and even James shared similar grounding in Judaism and in their openness to some form of Gentile mission. The opponents were not these founders, but false apostles similar to the people described in Acts 15.5 as Pharisaic believers in Jesus who insisted on circumcision and obedience to the Law. Since Paul had not known Jesus, the authenticity of his apostleship was questioned, and Baur finds anti-Paulinism behind various New Testament materials: Corinthians, Galatians, and Philippians. The Pastoral letters were understood by Baur as Paul's attempt at mediation.¹² As early as 1831¹³ Baur found a similar line of Jewish Christian opposition in the Ebionites described in the second century works of Irenaeus and Epiphanius and in hints of anti-Paulinism in the homilies attributed to Clement.¹⁴ At this point Baur believed the Ebionites emerged post 70 ce and were related to the Essenes.

This interesting connection carried difficulties, however, since the opposition cited by Baur was separated by a minimum of 120 years. Baur bridged this gap with his assertion, in his 1831 essay, that the church at Rome and its stories of Peter provided evidence of a strong Jewish Christian presence. For Baur, this established the line of continuity running from the false apostles who opposed Paul in the time of his writing to the founding of the Roman church to the conflicts of the second century.¹⁵

¹² Gerd Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 1–7, notes that Baur at this point accepted Acts as a historical account and did not question the authorship of the Pastoral epistles. Baur would develop a more critical assessment in the following years.

¹³ F. C. Baur, *De Ebionitarum origine et doctrina, ab Essenis repetenda. Schulprogramm* (Tübingen, 1831). Cited in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 2–3, notes that it was August Neander who alerted Baur to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and to the parallelism in the opposition of Simon Magus in this material. Baur's description of the Ebionites draws heavily upon the work of Karl Credner.

¹⁵ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 3, notes further evidence cited by Baur: Seutonius' report of the expulsion of Christians (Jewish?) from Rome, which may document the presence of Roman Christians already in the 40s, as well as figures such as Priscilla and Aquila, who may have become Christians at Rome.

Baur would challenge his own construction. By 1835 he had concluded that the Pastorals were not from Paul.¹⁶ Baur soon challenged the consensus, popular and scholarly, that a companion of Paul wrote the book of Acts. By 1845 Baur had taken a clear position that the Pastorals and Acts presented conflicting portraits that could not be reconciled.¹⁷ The apostolic agreement is congenial in Acts, with James confirming the work of both Peter and Paul among the Gentiles (Acts 15.6–29). In Galatians the Jerusalem pillars (James, Cephas, John) agree on a divided mission (2.1–10). This is followed by Paul's bitter confrontation with Peter and a diatribe against the works of the Law (Gal. 2.11–21). Baur concluded that the book of Acts is an apologetic work, then he set about the task of locating its time and purpose and place of construction.

Building on his earlier decision that the goal of Acts was to portray Paul in a Petrine way and Peter in a Pauline way, Baur now argued that a supporter of Paul at Rome had written Acts to counter the opposition of Jewish Christians by emphasizing Paul's Jewishness:

The Acts is thus the attempt at conciliation, the overture of peace, of a member of the Pauline party, who desired to purchase the recognition of Gentile Christianity on the part of the Jewish Christians by concessions made to Judaism by his side, and sought to influence both parties in this direction.¹⁸

The point of this exercise, in Baur's estimation, was reconciliation between Jewish Christian and Pauline factions in the city of Rome.

Baur also made significant changes in his overall paradigm. He no longer saw the original opponents of Paul as false apostles. Instead, Paul connected this opposition to the Jewish Christianity represented by Peter, James, and others. Beyond this, Baur now believed that the Ebionite movement could be traced back into the pre-70 period. The result of Baur's reformulation of his own work did not destroy his comprehensive paradigm, but strengthened it. Baur now believed there was continuity between the apostolic opposition to Paul and the second century conflicts. The Pastorals and the book of Acts represented mediating attempts on the side of the Paulinists. Baur saw the dropping of the demand for circumcision of Gentiles as a similar gesture from the Jewish Christian side.

For Baur, these movements ended in a reconciliation in the latter second century. An enduring Jewish Christian Ebionism and its Pauline opponents were reconciled, and this synthesis of conflicting movements formed the catholic church.

¹⁶ F. C. Baur, *Die sogenannten Pastoralbriefe des Apostels Paulus aufs neue kritisch untersucht* (Tübingen: Cotta'sche Verlagshandlung, 1835).

¹⁷ F. C. Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine*, trans. A. Menzies and Eduard Zeller, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873, 1875).

¹⁸ F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Allan Menzies (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878 [German edition 1853]), vol. 1, p. 135.

Seen in retrospect, Baur's analysis had placed the origins of the church in a wider historical and sociological framework. He had demonstrated the importance of critical reading of New Testament texts. He emphasized the role of patristic writings and demonstrated a model for using such materials. Baur framed the origins of the church not only in terms of theology, but also in terms of historical conflict and development. Most significantly for our purposes, Baur had placed Jewish Christianity on the map of the ancient world and had made it a primary factor in the history of primitive Christianity.

In Baur's model Jewish Christians were the oldest party and could trace their origins to apostles who knew Jesus. Jewish Christians dominate the Jerusalem church, they are foundational to the church at Rome, and their voice can be heard in the opposition to Paul in Galatia, Philippi, and Corinth. They emerge in church history as the Ebionite sect, and they are present in the conflict narrated in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. For Baur, the reconciliation between Paulinists and Jewish Christians was the generative factor behind the emergence of the catholic church.

3. Support for Baur's Position

Baur's work posed an extensive list of new problems, and both followers and detractors turned to the task. The most pressing of these issues was the need for a more careful textual analysis, particularly of the patristic materials invoked by Baur. Baur's work would also be questioned in terms of its historicity. Baur had realigned the paradigm of early Christianity, but he was still dealing primarily with literary artifacts. For example, Baur's claim that Paul is made to look like Peter, who is a typical first generation believer, is a literary observation. Joseph Tyson has accurately noted that Baur does not know what the historical Peter should look or sound like. It is more accurate to say that Luke has presented Paul in a way that Baur associated with first generation Jewish Christianity.¹⁹ Baur did not draw upon a firm historical portrait of Judaism or Jewish Christianity in his evaluation of primitive Christianity.

Baur was also criticized for the Hegelian nature of his model – the synthesis of two conflicting points of view to create a movement with great historical force. While this characterization is too simplistic and is often overstated, critics would challenge Baur at this point.²⁰ Some scholars attempted to refute Baur by realign-

¹⁹ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 11–17, esp. n. 18.

²⁰ Peter Hodgson has led the defense of Baur against the charge of Hegelian dominance in two works: *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). See the discussion and defense in Tyson,

ing the parties in conflict and arguing for a different form of reconciliation, creating, perhaps unintentionally, their own Hegelian model.²¹

In the wake of Baur's work, more critical analytical tools and more nuanced positions would emerge. Among these would be the concept of Markan priority, the two-source hypothesis, form criticism, and the recognition of editorial interests in New Testament materials. These concepts, along with a growing awareness of ancient Judaism, would transform the field of study. Numerous scholars took up the challenges articulated by F. C. Baur. A number of these sought to extend and to refine his work.²²

3.1 Albert Schwegler

One line of scholarship sought to ground Baur's model in more careful analysis of texts and in more nuanced historical detail. The first to take up this task was Albert Schwegler, who attempted to frame a more comprehensive portrait of Christian origins. Writing in 1847, Schwegler accepted the basic paradigm that the history of early Christianity was shaped by a fundamental conflict between Paul and the first apostles.²³ Schwegler agreed with Baur that Ebionites were present in the pre-70 era, but he described three forms and stages of the Ebionite movement.

1. Nazarenes were pre-Pauline Christian Jews who practiced an ascetic, legalistic Judaism similar to that of the Essenes. The earliest Christians were one of the many sects of Judaism, and these Ebionites would grow to become a part of the catholic church some one hundred years later.
2. Ebionites appear as the Jewish Christians who oppose Paul in various Pauline letters and churches.
3. Ebionites of Irenaeus' time have already been drawn toward the catholic church.

Nonetheless, Schwegler finds general coherence and continuity among these groups:

Whenever in the apostolic and postapostolic age we meet Jewish Christianity, from the earliest time on, in all parts of the Christian world – in Jerusalem, in Corinth, in Rome – we always find it mixed in varying degrees with those elements which in the current discussion are usually called by the summarizing label “gnosticizing Ebionism.”²⁴

Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars, pp. 14–15, 26–27. Lüdemann offers evaluation and rebuttal of this criticism in *Opposition*, pp. 6–7.

²¹ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 6, n. 54, names Wellhausen among these.

²² In addition to the scholars treated here, see the extensive list by Hönecke, *Judentum und Christentum*, pp. 7–19.

²³ Albert Schwegler, *Das Nachapostolische Zeitalter in den Hauptmomenten seiner Entwicklung*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Ludwig Friedrich Fues, 1846). See also the discussion of Schwegler in Gustav Hönecke, *Das Judentum und Christentum*, p. 3, and in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 7–9.

²⁴ Schwegler, *Nachapostolische Zeitalter*, vol. 1, p. 187, trans. and cited in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 8.

For Schwegler, the Ebionites emerge from the first followers of Jesus in the Galilee.²⁵

Schwegler attempted to extend the textual analysis of Baur, and he argued that the Gospel of the Hebrews not only represents the core of Jewish Christian tradition, but was foundational for the canonical gospels. Schwegler also formulated a new schema for the developments that led to the catholic church. In distinction from Baur, Schwegler argued that all of the two centuries prior to catholicism are under the dominance of Ebionite Christianity. The Roman church can trace its history in the Ebionite texts of Hermas and in parts of Justin and Hegesippus. The church of Asia Minor has an Ebionite foundation in various texts: the opponents of Paul at Galatia; the apocalyptic imagery of the Revelation; the Papias fragments; the opposition behind the letters to the Hebrews, the Colossians, and the Ephesians; and the Montanist materials.²⁶ The outcome of this analysis distinguishes Schwegler's position: the catholic church of the latter second century emerges from Ebionitism, and Pauline Christianity has little impact on these developments.

3.2 Karl Köstlin, Adolf Hilgenfeld

Schwegler was answered by other proponents of Baur who were seeking to extend his conflict model. Karl Köstlin argued that primitive Christianity was not simply a brusque Jewish Christianity. The development of Christianity is not an expansion of Ebionism, but the integration of Jewish Christianity with a strong Pauline movement.²⁷

Adolf Hilgenfeld defended the model of Baur and the Tübingen school for some sixty years, particularly against the ideas of Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf Harnack. Hilgenfeld used as his base the journal *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, which he founded in 1858 and edited until his death in 1907.²⁸ Hilgenfeld reaffirmed the conflict between Paul and the Jewish Christianity of the first apostles, but he sought a more nuanced description of Jewish Christianity and its impact on the developing church.²⁹ For Hilgenfeld the original Jewish Christians were the Nazareans, the members of the earliest Jerusalem church. This group was hostile to Paul, and they used for their gospel a Hebrew version of Matthew. They fled from the Jewish War (66–70 ce) to the Transjordan, where they met others who were hostile to the Mosaic cult. The Elkesaites

²⁵ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 8.

²⁶ See Hönecke, *Das Judenchristentum*, p. 3, and Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 8.

²⁷ Köstlin is discussed in Hönecke, *Das Judenchristentum*, pp. 3–4, and in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 9.

²⁸ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 18.

²⁹ Hilgenfeld is discussed in Hönecke, *Das Judenchristentum*, pp. 4, 11–12, and in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 18–21.

were a different group of Jewish Christians who impacted the Nazareans. Ebion was considered by Hilgenfeld to be a late historical figure who advocated a Mosaic version of Christianity. Hilgenfeld argued that these various Jewish Christians, in order to fight gnosticism, blended with a moderate Pauline group to constitute the catholic church.

3.3 Oscar Cullmann

Oscar Cullmann, writing in 1930, believed the conflict was played out in a different manner.³⁰ Cullmann offered extensive reconstruction of the Pseudo-Clementine materials and drew from this his larger model. Cullmann believed that the very beginnings of Christianity bore the influence of a gnostic, Baptist type of Judaism, and this influence can be seen at work in the New Testament. This explains the presence of New Testament parallels in the *Kerygmata Petrou*, which shows the influence of a Jewish Christian, Baptist gnosticism. Cullmann argued that the Johannine literature reflects a religious Jewish Christian gnosticism, while the *Kerygmata Petrou* shows the intellectual form of Jewish Christian gnosticism. The key point in Cullman's construction is the disintegration of Jewish Christianity. Since Jewish Christians who fled to Transjordan had been absorbed into gnostic syncretism, they were rejected along with it. For Cullmann, it was the conflict between the church and gnosticism that spelled the end for Jewish Christianity.³¹

3.4 Hans-Joachim Schoeps

The question of Jewish Christianity was revived in 1949 in the works of Hans-Joachim Schoeps.³² Schoeps called his work "the late rehabilitation of a refined Tübingen point of view."³³ The point of entry for Schoeps was the ongoing reconstruction of the Pseudo-Clementine literature. Schoeps believed the Pseudo-Clementines as a whole belonged to a period in the 4th century after the Council of Nicea. Nonetheless, earlier sources could be reconstructed.³⁴ Schoeps' contribution to this process was the argument for two Ebionite sources behind Pseudo-

³⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *Le problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin*. EH-PhR 23 (Paris, 1930). See the discussion by Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, pp. 20–22. Strecker, pp. 22–23, notes that a similar path, based on a different reconstruction, is taken by Jean Baptiste Thomas.

³¹ Oscar Cullmann, "Ebioniten," RGG (3rd ed.), 297–98.

³² *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949). Schoep's work is discussed by Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," 423–25; in Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, pp. 23–26; and in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 21–25.

³³ Schoeps, *Judenchristentums*, p. 5.

³⁴ See Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, p. 23.

Clementine literature: the *Kerygmata Petrou*³⁵ and the *Anabathmoi Jakobou*.³⁶ In a wide-ranging and imaginative literary reconstruction, Schoeps drew upon various components within the Pseudo-Clementines: a *Grundschrift*, *Homilies*, *Recognitions*, *Kerygmata Petrou*, *Anabathmoi Jakobou*, *Acts of Peter*, a Jewish apology, a Greek novella, a Bardesanes segment. In addition to reconstruction of the Pseudo-Clementines, Schoeps drew upon a conjectured commentary by Symmachus on the Gospel of the Ebionites, upon Symmachus' translation of the Hebrew Bible, upon Jewish Christian Gospels, upon the *Didaskalia*, and upon patristic materials from Justin, Irenaeus, Ephiphanius.

For Schoeps, the golden age of the Ebionites was in the second and third centuries. Sharply anti-Pauline in their focus, the second century Ebionites have a long history. They may be identified with the Pharisaic Christians of Acts 15.5, and they fled from Jerusalem to Pella before the 1st Jewish War (66–70 ce). Their theology is marked by an adoptionistic christology that understands Jesus as the True Prophet of Deut. 18. Focused on the prophets and on Jesus, they embraced a modified form of Mosaic law and carried on a brisk fight with the Marcionites and other gnostic movements. Their activity is most evident in the second century, but their lineage extends back through the Essenes, through Jesus himself, to the Rechabites of the Hebrew Bible.³⁷

With Schoeps, the ideas of Baur and the Tübingen school received their most comprehensive formulation. His removal of gnostic influence from the Clementines was not generally accepted, however, and a different conception of Jewish Christianity dominated the 1950s. In this era it was generally believed that Jewish Christianity did not exist in the diaspora after 70 ce, that the Jerusalem church disintegrated into Jewish sectarianism, that there was an underground stream of Jewish Christianity represented in the named sects, and that some influence can be found in more syncretistic sects from the second century.³⁸

³⁵ Here Schoeps was largely dependent on the work of Hans Waitz, who argued that the Pseudo-Clementines were catholic in character, but that a significant part of their construction came from Ebionite sources. This is discussed by Georg Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, pp. 14–16, 23–26.

³⁶ This reconstructed work is seen to be the *Ebionite Acts of the Apostles* and is seen to be preserved, along with the *Kerygmata Petrou*, in the first book of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*. On this reconstruction, see Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, pp. 14–16, 23–26; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 21–25; and Schoeps, *Judenchristentums*, pp. 381–456.

³⁷ Schoeps, *Theologie*, pp. 247–55, 315–20. See the discussion in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 21–22; Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” 423–24; and Strecker, *Pseudoklementinen*, pp. 23–26.

³⁸ Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” 424–25.

4. Reactions to Baur's Position

Another line of scholarship presents alternatives to the position of Baur and the Tübingen school.³⁹ Most scholars articulated their position in direct relationship to that of Baur.

4.1 Gotthard Victor Lechler

One of the most interesting stories is that of Gotthard Lechler. Lechler's 1851 book, *Das apostolische und nachapostolische Zeitalter mit Rücksicht auf Unterschied und Einheit in Leben und Lehre*, which was based on an earlier essay, won the Teyler prize for work that could offer an alternative to the tendency criticism of Baur and the Tübingen school.⁴⁰ Especially noteworthy were the grounds upon which Lechler opposed Baur's paradigm.⁴¹ While he acknowledged that the Christianity of the earliest community was not free from the influence of Judaism, Lechler refused to accept any divide between the first apostles and Paul. To do so, said Lechler, would tear apart the apostolic teaching. Furthermore, to accept that the first apostles were different than Paul and remained within Judaism would lead to the conclusion that Jesus was only a Jewish rabbi. For Lechler, the apostolic council of Acts 15 is not a conflict between Paul and the first apostles, but a conference about the rules of conduct between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Jewish Christianity went through a long series of developments, says Lechler, but had no influence on the primitive catholic church.

Lechler's response was clearly motivated by the work of Baur, and his guiding principles are theological rather than exegetical.⁴² More sophisticated responses to Baur were soon to come.

4.2 Albrecht Ritschl

In the mid 1850s Albrecht Ritschl offered a radically different understanding of the conflict described by Baur.⁴³ Ritschl pointed to the difficulty in defining Jewish Christianity and noted the confusion in terms used by scholars. He attempted to distinguish between Judaizing Christianity and Jewish (Christian). For

³⁹ In addition to the scholars treated here, see the extensive list of Baur's opponents in Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 4–7.

⁴⁰ See the biography of Lechler at www.bautz.de/bbkl/l/Lechler_g.shtml.

⁴¹ See the discussion by Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 4–5.

⁴² Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, p. 5, notes a similar response in theological terms by Heinrich Thiersch.

⁴³ Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche, 2nd edition. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1857). See the discussion of Ritschl in Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 28–29, in Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 5–6, and in Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 12–18.

Ritschl, the movements that equate Christianity and Judaism should be called Judaizing Christian (*judenchristlich*). The opponents of Paul would fit into this category. Jewish influence that does not equate Judaism and Christianity is Jewish (*judaistisch*).⁴⁴ From this standpoint Ritschl will define Jewish Christianity as “nothing other than a form of Christianity which retains a specific influence from Jesus.”⁴⁵

Working with the assumption of Markan priority, Ritschl drew a distinct portrait of the historical Jesus. He accepted the Markan portrait of Jesus as one who liberalized such commandments as Sabbath rest and ritual purity and emphasized the priority of love for God and love for other humans. Thus, Jesus reinterpreted Torah through his prioritizing of the love command. Ritschl believed the first followers of Jesus embodied these principles.⁴⁶

For Ritschl, there existed no strong conflict between Paul and the first apostles. These Jewish Christians acknowledged the apostleship of Paul and validated his mission to the Gentiles. They are later represented in the tolerant Nazareans portrayed by Jerome, and they remain faithful to the teaching of the first apostles at least into the fourth century. On the other hand, Judaizing Christianity survives among Pharisaic Judaizing Christians who oppose Paul, but also among Essenes in the post-70 era. In the struggle with gnosticism, both Judaizing Christians and Jewish Christians were declared heretical. Consequently, says Ritschl, they played no significant role in the formation of the catholic church, which developed from Gentile Christianity. The formative theology of the catholic church is Pauline, unmixed with Jewish Christian thought.

Ritschl's construction made two major shifts in Baur's paradigm. First, he re-located the tension between competing parties of Christians and redefined it as a conflict between Jews and Christians. The new understanding of Torah implemented by Jesus distanced him from the Judaism of his day, and this distance was embodied as well in his first followers. Hostility and conflict with Judaism is thus traced back to Jesus himself.⁴⁷ Secondly, Ritschl denied all influence of Jewish Christianity upon the formation of the catholic church. The results of Ritschl's model are a portrait of Jesus and his followers over against Judaism and a church free from the influence of Judaism, Judaizing, or Jewish Christianity.

⁴⁴ Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Cited in Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ See Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 28–29.

⁴⁷ See the analysis by Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 122–26.

4.3 Adolf von Harnack

Adolf Harnack redefined the Jewish Christianity of Baur and denied it any role in the development of the catholic church. For Harnack, the conflict described by Baur did not exist.⁴⁸

Harnack studied and taught at Leipzig from 1872–78, then taught at Berlin beginning in 1888. Harnack was aware that he could no longer claim that Jesus' teaching had no parallels in the Hebrew Bible and in Judaism; thus, he claimed a qualitative distinction for Jesus, particular in his valuing of ethics over ritual. Jesus himself was the line of division: "By their rejection of Jesus," said Harnack, "the Jewish people disowned their calling and dealt the death-blow to their own existence ..."⁴⁹ Harnack also argued that Judaism was inferior to Greek culture, so Christianity naturally was attracted to Hellenism. Harnack sympathized with Marcion in his rejection of the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁰

Consistent with this view, Harnack argued that Jewish Christianity, as a whole and in particular details, was not a factor in the development of Christianity into catholicism. Harnack argued that only the Pharisees – with their strictness – and the Jewish Hellenists – with their lack of nationalistic fervor – influenced the primitive history of the church. The Essenes played no role. Harnack eventually accepted the presence of Jewish Christians in the diaspora, but he insisted they quickly blended into the Gentile Christian, Pauline movement. Thus, Harnack can declare that the early catholic church grew upon Gentile ground. The Jewish Christian community was taken up completely and entirely into the Gentile Christian community.

For Harnack, there was no conflict in the background of the developing church, and there was no significant impact from Jewish Christianity. The separation from Judaism began with Jesus and reached its natural goal in Gentile Christianity.

⁴⁸ Harnack's *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* appeared in three volumes between 1885 and 1889 and was translated as *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. (Boston: Little and Brown, 1905–1910). See the discussion by Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 30–42; Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," 421–22; Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 16; Hönecke, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 17–18.

⁴⁹ Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904 [German edition 1902]), vol. 1, pp. 81–82.

⁵⁰ In his work entitled *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1921), which was translated by John Steely and Lyle Bierma as *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990), Harnack declares: "The rejection of the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the great church rightly avoided; to maintain it in the sixteenth century was a fate from which the Reformation was not yet able to escape; but still to preserve it in Protestantism as a canonical document since the nineteenth century is the consequence of a religious and ecclesiastical crippling." (p. 134).

4.4 Adolf Schlatter

The name of Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938) belongs beside that of Adolf Harnack. Because of the controversy surrounding Harnack's ideas at Berlin, a counter position was created, to be filled in 1893 by Adolf Schlatter.

Schlatter did not accept Baur's concept that the dispute in Acts was representative of an enduring conflict between two Christian parties.⁵¹ For Schlatter, Acts provided a straightforward historical account of the division between Judaism and Christianity. Schlatter redefined Judaism as a negative ethical-metaphysical phenomenon: "By 'Judaism' I refer to that form of Jewish piety that frames the relationship between God and the nation in such a way that the nation's preservation and glorification were God's purposes."⁵² For Schlatter, Judaism is a metaphor for materialism.⁵³ He argued that this negative spiritual state of Judaism could be found among both Jews and Christians.

For Schlatter, the split with Judaism begins with Jesus: "From the very beginning, his work had led him on a course that separated him thoroughly from Judaism, since the latter had a strong interest in the public nature and greatness of God's rule."⁵⁴ This parting of the ways is a historical reality recorded in the book of Acts, and the speech of Stephen provides the first occasion to recognize this fundamental difference. Throughout his work, Luke is not opposing the Jews as such, but the Mammon or materialism that characterizes Judaism.

Schlatter thus historicized and radicalized the conflict model of Baur. The tension was not between types of Christianity, nor even between Jews and Christians; it was between Christ and Mammon. There was no enduring conflict, for the parting began with Jesus and was accomplished in the first generation.

4.5 Jean Daniélou

In 1957 Jean Daniélou abandoned Baur's synthesis by seeking a broader framework for understanding Jewish Christianity.⁵⁵ Daniélou criticized others for pointing only to syncretistic forms of Jewish Christianity. Daniélou himself recognized three types of Jewish Christianity: the opponents of Paul and others

⁵¹ Adolf Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1923), translated by Andreas Köstenberger as *The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997). See the discussion in Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 43–65.

⁵² Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, p. 206.

⁵³ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, p. 54.

⁵⁴ Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, p. 206.

⁵⁵ Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Desclée: Éditions du Cerf, 1958), which appeared in English as *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea*. vol. 1, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John A. Baker (London: Dartmon, Longman, and Todd, 1964). See the discussion by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 25–27 and by Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," pp. 425–26.

who denied that Christ is God; the Jerusalem church, which disappeared shortly; and that form of Christianity that does not have a connection to Judaism, but does borrow from its ideas.⁵⁶ This third type most interested Daniélou in his search for nonsyncretistic Jewish Christianity. His approach was to find ideas that Christianity took over uniquely from Judaism, and for this he turned to Jewish apocalypticism. For Daniélou, any Christianity that had borrowed such ideas was to be labeled as Jewish Christianity. Daniélou's reconstruction left him with a narrow stereotype of Jewish thought, with no clear impact from Christian thought, and with a Jewish Christianity that was, in essence, all of second century Christianity.⁵⁷

As a consequence, Baur's enduring conflict between two Christian parties was reduced by Daniélou to the intermingling of ideas.⁵⁸ Where Christianity had borrowed ideas from Judaism, in all times and places, Daniélou applied the label of Jewish Christianity.

5. A Sample of Recent Scholarship on Jewish Christianity

The question of how to define Jewish Christianity, raised by Hort, Harnack, Seeberg, Daniélou and others, has emerged anew in recent scholarship. James Carlton Paget notes three major trends in the quest for a definition.⁵⁹ The first of these is an ethnic definition: "a Jewish Christian was a Jew who became a Christian."⁶⁰ A second approach offers a praxis-based definition: "a Jewish Christian is someone who accepts the messianic status of Jesus ... but feels it is necessary to keep, or perhaps adopt practices associated with Judaism such as circumcision, in the case of males, the Sabbath, the food laws and other related practices."⁶¹ A third pattern seeks to define Jewish Christianity around a common set of ideological and doctrinal issues.⁶² In addition to the three models defined by Carlton Paget, a fourth way, implied by Baur and pursued by Gerd Lüdemann, sees anti-Paulinism as an intrinsic trait of Jewish Christianity.⁶³

⁵⁶ Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," p. 425.

⁵⁷ See especially the critique by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Marcel Simon would criticize the focus on ideas and concepts, arguing that praxis is what defines Judaism and would most properly define Jewish Christianity. Simon's various works are discussed by Lüdemann, *Opposition*, pp. 27–28.

⁵⁹ James Carlton Paget, "Jewish Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) vol. 3, pp. 731–75 and 1168–72. For extensive bibliography on the question of definition, see especially p. 733, n. 7.

⁶⁰ Paget, "Jewish Christianity," p. 733.

⁶¹ Paget, "Jewish Christianity," p. 734.

⁶² Paget, "Jewish Christianity," p. 736–39.

⁶³ Baur, "Die Christuspartei"; Lüdemann, *Opposition*.

For his own work, Paget favors a praxis-based definition that could possibly include more than ethnic Jews.⁶⁴ In his opinion, the quest for theological unity among Jewish Christians cannot succeed. He also warns against any hope of finding a uniform system. “We must,” says Paget, “be prepared to speak of Jewish Christianities, and not of a monolithic Jewish Christianity in which individual Jewish Christian sects were related.”⁶⁵ Even with such a modest approach, it is difficult to find a definition that is precise, yet accounts for the diverse manifestations of Jewish Christianity.

Scholars continue to work on various other components for a history of Jewish Christianity. A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink provided a survey of patristic evidence.⁶⁶ Klijn has also assembled evidence on the Jewish-Christian gospels.⁶⁷ A recent collection edited by Peter Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry looks at Jewish Christianity in scattered pieces of Jewish and Christian literature.⁶⁸ Other authors have treated such questions as rabbinic evidence for Jewish Christianity, the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity, the role of the synagogue benedictions in the conflict between Jews and Christians, the development of the tradition of James and the Jerusalem community, among others.⁶⁹

A few scholars have attempted a connected account of Jewish Christianity in the first four centuries. Ray Pritz, for example, believes that the Nazarenes provide a thread of continuity from the early Jerusalem community to the third or even fourth century.⁷⁰ Pritz defines almost all other groups in relation to the Nazarenes, who differ from the rest of the church only in their observance of the Law. Pritz also conjectures that all Jewish Christian gospels are variations upon an original Jewish Christian gospel.

Michael Goulder attempts to describe a unified line of development around the concept of two primitive missions.⁷¹ Goulder believes that the Ebionites criticized by Irenaeus and Epiphanius reflect the earliest manner of following Jesus. This connection may be seen in their name (The Poor People), in their christology (Jesus was possessed by divine power from his baptism until just prior to his

⁶⁴ For Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” p. 740, the burden of proof is on those who would place Gentiles within Jewish Christianity.

⁶⁵ Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” p. 741.

⁶⁶ A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

⁶⁷ A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

⁶⁸ *The Image of Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁶⁹ The variety of issues involved may be seen in a bibliography such as that of Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” pp. 1168–72.

⁷⁰ Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988).

⁷¹ Michael Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM Press, 1994). See also his description of Ebionite thought in “A Poor Man’s Christology,” *NTS* 45 (1999), 332–48.

death), and in their practice (food restrictions, Sabbath observance, sexual abstinence, giving up of goods). Goulder fully embraces Baur's model of a Pauline mission in conflict with the Petrine mission, and he seeks to trace this hostility in various times and places: in the Pauline letters, in the Pastorals, in the Johannine literature, in the Revelation, and in Ignatius.

Goulder also believes the war was contested primarily along an east-west divide.⁷² Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, tells of a conflict among the churches (around 190 ce) over the date for celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the side of celebrating on Easter Day, Eusebius cites an impressive collection of churches: Caesarea, Jerusalem, Rome, North Turkey, Gaul, Southeast Turkey, Corinth, and many others. The celebration of the feast on Nisan 14, the day of Passover, is supported, says Eusebius, by "the whole of Asia." Goulder notes that churches from Syria and Egypt are not mentioned:

The likely conclusion is that they were not part of Christendom, as Victor and Polycrates understood it: they were heretical, Ebionites, as Irenaeus would have described them. To us, attempting a more neutral stance, the churches involved were the churches of the old Pauline mission, now the majority church recognizing only Pauline orthodoxy. The churches of Palestine, Syria and Egypt were the descendants of the Jerusalem mission, now with an outmoded Petrine theology.⁷³

Goulder believes that even the areas of Petrine influence were largely won over by the third century, "reducing the rump to the status of moribund deviants."⁷⁴

Unlike Baur, Goulder insists the conflict does not end in reconciliation, but in suppression and absorption. Having won the war, the Paulinists absorb the writings and the legacy of the Petrine mission: "The Roman church wisely adopted Matthew's Gospel as its title deed, and elected Peter posthumously as its first Pope..."⁷⁵

Perhaps the most promising survey of the field is found in three recent works. James Carleton Paget's treatment of Jewish Christianity in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* notes the difficulties of naming this phenomenon, the paucity and complexity of source materials, and the almost complete lack of archeological evidence.⁷⁶ With these limitations in mind, Paget addresses the issues of definition and limits himself to a survey of Palestinian Jewish Christianity. He considers the role of Jewish Christians in relation to Christian origins, in the period from the death of James (62 ce) to the Bar Kochba revolt (132–135 ce), and in the post-70 era. He then looks at various literary sources that might inform a quest for Jewish Christianity: the New Testament, patristic materials, the Pseudo-Clementines, Jewish Christian gospels, and gnostic ma-

⁷² Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions*, pp. 181–82.

⁷³ Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions*, p. 182.

⁷⁴ Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions*, p. 182.

⁷⁵ Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions*, pp. 188–89.

⁷⁶ Paget, "Jewish Christianity," pp. 731–75.

terials. Paget turns next to Jewish sources, looking first at Josephus, then at the rabbinic evidence. His conclusions are modest, noting that some Jews apparently accepted Jewish Christians, that it is reasonable to see Jewish Christianity as a messianic sect within Judaism, and that some aspects of theology found among the various Jewish Christianities may be developments of trends already present in Judaism in the years before 70 ce. "Here," says Paget, "certain forms of Jewish Christianity, especially those that engaged with other Jews, might have perceived themselves as forming a reform movement within Judaism."⁷⁷

A recent collection edited by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik is named *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*.⁷⁸ This work is a piece of a much larger project that presumes Jewish Christianity can be traced through twenty-one centuries of development. The first volume is composed of twenty-two contributions by sixteen different scholars, and it is divided into seven major units. The introduction treats problems of definition, method, and sources (Oskar Skarsaune) and offers a more extensive discussion of the problem of terminology (James Carleton Paget). The second unit treats the New Testament and related material. Topics here include James and the Jerusalem community (Richard Bauckham), Paul as a Jewish believer according to his letters (Donald Hagner) and according to Acts (Reidar Hvalvik), named Jewish believers connected with Paul's mission (Reidar Hvalvik), influences in the Roman church (Reidar Hvalvik), and Johannine accounts of believers in Asia Minor (Peter Hirschberg). A third unit treats the literary heritage of Jewish Christians: the Jewish Gospels (Craig Evans), the Old Testament pseudepigrapha (Torleif Elgvin), the Pseudo-Clementines (Graham Stanton), the Greek and Latin Fathers (Oskar Skarsaune), Justin (Oskar Skarsaune). A fourth unit investigates evidence of Jewish believers found in Christian literature from the second to the fifth centuries: the Ebionites (Oskar Skarsaune); the Nazoreans (Wolfram Kinzig); Cerinthus, Elxai, and others (Gunnar af Hällström and Oskar Skarsaune). Part five examines other literary and archeological materials: Greek and Latin patristic literature (Oskar Skarsaune), the Syriac fathers (Sten Hidal), Christian-Jewish dialogues through the sixth century (Lawrence Lahey), church orders and liturgical texts (Anders Ekenberg), rabbinic literature (Philip Alexander), archeological evidence (James Strange). In the final section Oskar Skarsaune attempts a synthesis of Jewish believers in Jesus in antiquity.

Several traits characterize this collection. First, *Jewish Believers in Jesus* is the initial installment in an ambitious project sponsored by the Caspary Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies: to trace the impact of Jewish Christianity "through

⁷⁷ Paget, "Jewish Christianity," p. 775.

⁷⁸ *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

the centuries until our own time.”⁷⁹ The presence and continuing impact of Jewish Christianity are not a scholarly question behind this project; they are its presumption. As a consequence, the volume at times tends toward special pleading and apologetic language. Secondly, the study is shaped by its eclectic design. Some of the individual studies focus on particular groups, others focus on particular types of literature, and others focus on individual patristic writers. This approach tends to create overlap and repetition, but also to blur the lines of methodology and to prevent any type of synthesis of historical groups. Moreover, the volume slips into language and categorization that is wholly inappropriate. After describing a group that may be labeled as “Jewish believers in Jesus,” chapter headings elide this term to “Jewish believers.”

Another collection on Jewish Christianity appeared in 2007.⁸⁰ Edited by Matt Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered* is a part of the *Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* series. The purpose of the collection is “to provide a much-needed orientation to what has traditionally been and is still sometimes called ‘Jewish Christianity’ as it appears in contemporary study.”⁸¹ Rather than attempting an exhaustive or systematic treatment, however, the book has “the much more modest aim of providing the reader with a point of entry into this complex and controversial subject.”⁸² The collection is aimed at the general reader and seeks to offer “a representative sample of the ancient texts and groups that have figured prominently in the discussion, and a variety of approaches to the problem of classification found in the contemporary scholarship on them.”⁸³ The introduction considers the problem of name and definition (Matt Jackson-McCabe). Part one deals with various groups: the Jerusalem church (Craig C. Hill), Paul and his opponents (Jerry Sumney), and Ebionites and Nazarenes (Petri Luomanen). Part two deals with various texts: the Q document (William Arnal), the Gospel of Matthew (Warren Carter), the Johannine community (Raimo Hakola), the letter of James (Patrick Hartin), the Johannine apocalypse (John Marshall), the *Didache* (Jonathan Draper), and the Pseudo-Clementines (F. Stanley Jones). There is no attempt to synthesize the various parts. Moreover, the study operates within a strategic set of limitations: “contributors have done their best to avoid overly technical analysis, to focus on English-language scholarship where possible, and to keep endnotes to a minimum”⁸⁴ The study of McCabe-Jackson has, however, stirred new interest in this field of study.

⁷⁹ *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, p. xiii.

⁸⁰ *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

⁸¹ *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, p. 5.

⁸² *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, p. 5.

⁸³ *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, p. 5.

⁸⁴ *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, p. 5.

As these studies suggest, the attempt to describe the history of research on Jewish Christianity faces problems not unlike those faced in writing the history itself; it continually emerges from and impinges upon other lines of research. Among these are the history of Judaism, the history of Christianity, patristic studies, reconstruction of the Pseudo-Clementine corpus, studies in Luke-Acts, Pauline Studies, archeology, sociology, and others.

6. Critical Bias and Critical Balance

An issue not often addressed in Jewish Christian studies is the incessant problem of anti-Jewish bias. Early descriptions of the development of primitive Christianity employed an uncritical description of Judaism and constantly suggested its replacement by the higher truth of the emerging church. This is most evident in the way scholars refer to first century Judaism as *late Judaism*, implying a dying faith in its last stages.⁸⁵ Joseph Tyson observes that there is a frequent interrelationship between a scholar's view of first century Judaism, the scholar's view of modern Judaism, and the scholar's view of Luke's treatment of first century Judaism.⁸⁶

F. C. Baur, for example, believed the uniqueness of the Hebrew faith was its "pure and refined monotheistic idea of God,"⁸⁷ yet he argued this essence had been obscured:

But on the other hand the Old Testament conceived God as the God, not of the human race, but of a particular nation. And the particularism, the limitation of the blessings and hopes of religion to the Jewish race, which was partly the cause and partly the effect of this conception of God, stood in the strongest contrast to the spirit of Christianity. If the Old Testament notion of God was ever to be a sufficient form for the consciousness of God which belonged to the universal and absolute nature of Christianity, it was necessary that it should first be freed from this national one-sidedness and defectiveness.⁸⁸

In his larger synthesis, Baur believed that Luke's reconciliation of conflicting Christian parties is based on their mutual hostility toward non-Christian Jews.

Albrecht Ritschl dismissed the influence of Jewish Christianity and argued that the tension between Jesus and Judaism continued in the history of the developing church.⁸⁹ Adolf Harnack followed this line, asserting that it was necessary for Jesus and Christianity to overcome the defective Jewish religion and even to jettison its scriptures. Adolf Schlatter redefined Judaism as a negative metaphor for materialism, then called for its rejection. Some recent scholarship puts re-

⁸⁵ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, p. ix.

⁸⁶ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, p. 103.

⁸⁷ Baur, *Church History*, vol. 1, p. 17.

⁸⁸ Baur, *Church History*, vol. 1, p. 18.

⁸⁹ See the discussion by Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 28–30.

sponsibility for this type of redefinition on Luke himself: Jews who do not believe in Jesus are separated out from a restored, believing Israel.⁹⁰ Some understand this as a positive treatment of Judaism by Luke.

In the years following the Holocaust, Hans Conzelmann put forth a paradigm in which Luke sees salvation history transferred from the nation of Israel to the Christian church. Of Jesus' preaching, Conzelmann said, "It is immediately obvious that this preaching had to lead to a fundamental conflict with *all* the trends within Judaism."⁹¹ The transition to Gentile Christianity, for Luke, was occasioned by Jewish rejection of the Gospel. Conzelmann, however, believed this was more than a Lukan construct. For Conzelmann, the conflict was an inevitable historical reality: "The conflict is inherent in the existence of the church itself. It will last as long as church and synagogue exist side by side."⁹² For Conzelmann, the continuing history of the Jewish people is of no theological significance for Christians.⁹³

Just as problematic would be any attempt to reconstruct Jewish Christianity as a type of penance or as an act of political correctness.⁹⁴ The tension within ancient Judaism and the tension within primitive Christianity was intense, vicious, and, at times, destructive. We should not be surprised if a similar tension existed between Judaism and Christianity at various times and places in the first centuries, and we should expect such tension within any history of Jewish Christianity. The problem arises, of course, when such conflict is imposed by interpreters, either by misdefinition or misrepresentation, or when the conflict is suppressed by interpreters in the cause of modern apologetics. A better approach is an accurate historical description of anti-Judaism, wherever it exists, accompanied by an articulate theological condemnation of anti-Judaism, wherever it exists.

7. Overview and Analysis

The introductory chapter offered a preliminary definition for Jewish Christianity. The constructed scholarly label of *Jewish Christianity* points to *Jewish ways of following Jesus*, that is, to *persons and groups in antiquity whose historical profile*

⁹⁰ See Jacob Jervell and Jack T. Sanders. Their work is discussed in Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, pp. 91–109; 113–22.

⁹¹ Hans Conzelmann, "Jesus Christ," in RGG, 3rd ed. (1959), translated by Raymond Lord as *Jesus: The Classic Article from RGG Expanded and Updated*, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 54.

⁹² Hans Conzelmann, *Gentiles–Jews–Christians: Polemics and Apologetics in the Greco-Roman world*, trans. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992 [German edition, 1981]), p. 257.

⁹³ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, p. 80.

⁹⁴ Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars*, deals with this balance in his final chapter, pp. 134–46.

suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness and that they do so as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel. A survey of the history of research shows that a definitive and comprehensive account of Jewish Christianity has not been produced. This is due in part to the lack of source materials, to the complex and contradictory nature of available data, and to the heretical labels, both Christian and Jewish, that cast this movement onto the trash heap of history. But another reason for the lack of an adequate account of Jewish Christianity is the failure of much of critical scholarship to consider the possibility that such movements played a foundational and enduring role in Christian history. The tension that separated Jewish ways of following Jesus from what would become the mainstream of church history was located by earlier scholars in the time of Jesus or in the first generation of his followers. Later scholars prefer to speak of a parting of the ways that is mostly accomplished by the Jewish Wars of 70 ce or 135 ce. Both trains of thought arrive at the same destination: a Gentile Christian church largely free from, and mostly unaware of, Jewish practices and conceptions of faith.⁹⁵ This outcome has often been seen as an inevitable development, and this model has provided the hermeneutical framework for most descriptions of early Christianity.

The evidence, both in terms of its content and in terms of its hermeneutical relevance, may suggest otherwise. The chapters that follow will offer a sketch of what critical scholarship can know – and cannot know – about Jewish Christianity. No comprehensive portrait of a unified Jewish Christianity is forthcoming, but there is much to be known about Jewish ways of following Jesus in the ancient world. In the light of this knowledge it should become clear that such groups cannot be excluded from the map of antiquity. Consequently, all reconstructions of primitive Christian and rabbinic history must take into account the possibility of a vital and enduring presence of Jewish Christianity.

⁹⁵ The same sense of inevitability often accompanies descriptions of the development of rabbinic Judaism.

CHAPTER 2

Toward a Definition of Jewish Christianity

One of the most difficult issues in the critical study of Jewish Christianity is the articulation of an accurate and useful definition. While recent discussions have multiplied both the names and descriptions, they have been less successful in adding clarity. Syllogistic explorations based on modern philosophy of language and culture may be too abstract to engage fully the evidence on the ground in antiquity. Theological interests and counter interests have often shaped the naming of this phenomenon. In addition, the debate over definition can lead to a type of scholarly paralysis and can take priority over the task of recovering and reconstructing evidence from antiquity.

This investigation pursues the hypothesis that groups in antiquity who were characterized by Jewish ways of following Jesus may be vastly underrepresented, misrepresented, and undervalued in the ancient sources and in modern scholarship. The goal of this research is to recover, reconstruct, and analyze the evidence from antiquity for such groups. The term *Jewish Christianity* will be used throughout as a synthesizing construct of modern scholarship that points to various groups in antiquity that may be labeled as examples of this phenomenon – as *Jewish Christianities*. Such scholarly labels can name, but they cannot accurately define or describe these groups, nor can they account for their diversity: only a critical collection, reconstruction, and analysis of the ancient evidence can do that. Consequently, the label *Jewish Christianity* will be retained here, despite its limitations, in an effort to engage both the ancient evidence and the modern history of research on Jewish ways of following Jesus.¹ This chapter seeks to articulate a provisional, working definition of the label Jewish Christianity.

1. Challenges

While numerous sources from antiquity identify followers of Jesus who appear to remain within the larger framework of Jewishness, there is less certainty or consistency in how they name such groups. One of the first insights of the recent

¹ This choice of this English-language label is not intended to favor either the Jewish or the Christian components of identity, and the label itself cannot provide a full account of the characteristics of such groups.

focus on these groups was the observation that terms such as Jewish Christianity, Jewish Christians, *Judenchrist*, and *Judenchristentum* belong to the category of metalanguage used in the technical, scientific descriptions of modern investigations.²

One common term that was applied widely in antiquity to such groups was *Ebionite*. While this name almost certainly had a specific reference in its origins, it quickly became a general category used by patristic writers for classification of one type of heresy. The term has continued in modern theological studies in a type of triangulation process that imagines orthodox Christianity – the Church – emerging victorious from its controversies with gnostics, Ebionites, Marcionites, and others. However, few scholars of antiquity find the term useful in describing the broader set of movements that exhibit Jewish ways of following Jesus.

While most would agree that ancient sources do not use the term *Jewish Christianity* or *Jewish Christian*, Oskar Skarsaune believes there are close analogies. He cites the following passages:

1. John 8.31 “Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him ...”
2. Origen, (*Cels.* 2.1) “... those of the Jewish people who have believed in Jesus”
3. Origen, (*Cels.* 2.1) “Why ... did he not represent the Jew as addressing Gentile instead of Jewish believers?”
4. Origen, (*Cels.* 2.1) “Notice, then what Celsus says to Jewish believers”
5. Origen, (*Cels.* 2.1) “... He failed to notice that Jewish believers in Jesus have not left the law of their fathers ...”
6. Origen, (*Comm. Matt. in Eusebius, HE* 6.25.4) “[Matthew published his gospel first] for those who from Judaism came to believe”
7. Eusebius, (*HE* 4.5.2) “It is said that their whole church at that time consisted of believing Jews”
8. Eusebius, (*HE* 4.22.8) “[Hegesippus] was a believer from among the Jews”³

Skarsaune also suggests that the term “Jewish Christian” may be found in the prologue to the Latin translation of a work from Aristo of Pella and in the *Martyrdom of Peter and Paul*.⁴

Three key problems attach themselves to the term Jewish Christianity. First, we have no examples of the term used as a self-reference in antiquity. Even in Skarsaune’s proposed analogies, the labels are applied by outsiders.

Secondly, modern scholars have used the label variably, vaguely, and inconsistently. On one end of the spectrum the term can be limited to the early Jerusalem community under the leadership of James; on the other end, it can be used

² Carsten Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten: Historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam*. Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3 (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1989).

³ Oskar Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity – Problems of Definition, Method, Sources,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), pp. 3–6.

⁴ Skarsaune, “Problems of Definition,” p. 6.

to describe any type of Jewish influence upon Christianity. Moreover, the nature of the evidence has made it difficult for scholars to offer a consistent answer about which people, texts, ideas, and practices belong to the phenomenon. Karen King, for example, notes that the term Jewish Christianity can refer to any of the following:

- Christianity as a variant type of Judaism, exemplified in the fact that Jesus and his earliest followers were Jews.
- Ethnic Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah.
- Christians who maintained Jewish practices, such as faithful adherence to the Law, Sabbath observance, dietary practices, male circumcision, festivals, or synagogue attendance.
- First century members of the Jerusalem church who may have fled to Pella during the war with Rome.... Ebionites or Nazoreans, an alternative nomenclature for certain Jewish Christians found in second-century and later polemical literature, are sometimes understood to have derived from the Jerusalem church or from Peter's teaching, or to be a later group altogether.
- The influence of Jewish concepts and texts, including acceptance of the authority of Hebrew scriptures, reliance on Jewish theology (especially apocalypticism), or the use of Jewish modes of biblical interpretation.
- An adoptionist Christology (maintaining that Jesus was only a human being 'adopted' by God to be his Son; rejection of the virginal conception of Jesus).
- A denigration of Paul in favour of Peter and/or James.
- The exclusive use of the Gospel of Matthew.⁵

These changing contexts and the wide range of scholarly usage mean that the analytical value of the term is debatable.

The third problem is rooted in the linguistic structure of the term, but the issue is primarily theological. The early stages of modern scholarship understood this phenomenon from the perspective of emerging Christian orthodoxy. In this view the path toward orthodoxy was marked by different ways of being Christian, and one of these was Jewish Christianity. Christian scholars, some of whom were anti-Jewish, saw this phenomenon as a variant form, or even an aberration, of Christianity. In English, this position may be reflected in the linguistic structure of the name: Christianity is the substantive that is modified by the adjective Jewish. Similar problems adhere to the term Jewish Christians. Moreover, the term Christian may invoke the Christendom that followed Constantine and Nicea and the numerous theological and political issues associated with western Christianity. Consequently, some insist that scholarship that is carried out in the aftermath of the Holocaust, with a renewed attention on the Jewishness of Jesus and his message, and in dialogue

⁵ Karen King, "Which Early Christianity?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 74.

with modern scholars of Judaism requires a different set of descriptors for this phenomenon. Others retain the term as a connection to the history of research.

Scholarly use of the term Jewish Christianity is often linked to the name of Ferdinand Christian Baur, but his work is rooted in earlier stages of research. James Carleton Paget traces the first use of the term *Judenchrist* to Johann Semler in the 1760s.⁶ The English terminology is likely earlier. It is used of a contemporary figure as early as 1618 and of some Christians in the book of Acts as early as 1660. Probably the first scholarly use of the term is by John Toland in 1718 and by Thomas Morgan between 1737 and 1740.⁷ This use of the terminology in English Deism likely underlies the work of Ferdinand Baur.

2. A Sample of Recent Attempts at Definition

Many studies from the 1960s on attempt to refine the approach of Jean Daniélou, who focused upon Jewish Christianity as a type of thought system that borrowed ideas from Judaism and used them in distinctive ways. This definition was abstract – it was not clear that it applied to any distinct historical group – and it was broad – it could, theoretically, apply to almost all groups of Christians.⁸

2.1 Joan Taylor

Joan Taylor challenges this approach through a focus on praxis and through a *via negativa* that dismisses the whole by negating the parts. While accepting that early followers of Jesus in Palestine continued to follow Jewish practices, she dismisses much of the evidence and assigns most of the rest to either Judaism or to Christianity as clearly defined entities. Taylor also presents the history of development along a narrow geographical framework. As a result, the Jewish Church mostly disappears by the end of the first century, though there are subsequent attempts to Judaise and re-Judaise certain communities. Ultimately, Taylor defines Jewish Christianity as a hybrid: “It is bi-religious rather than ethnico-religious in application. Judaism and Christianity as two distinct *religions* are, in Jewish-Christianity, combined.”⁹ She concludes that

⁶ James Carleton Paget, “The Terms Jewish Christian and Jewish Christianity in the History of Research,” in Skarsaune, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, p. 25.

⁷ Paget, “Terms,” 23–30.

⁸ Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judoéo-Christianisme* (Desclée: Éditions du Cerf, 1958), which appeared in English as *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea. vol. 1, The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John A. Baker (London: Dartmon, Longman, and Todd, 1964). See the discussion of Daniélou above in the history of research chapter.

⁹ Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?,” VC 44 (1990), 314–15.

There is no doubt that Jewish-Christians, defined as Christian Jews and their Gentile converts who maintained Jewish praxis, existed throughout the first four centuries of the Christian Church, and indeed, for all we know, for many centuries afterward. Jewish-Christianity was not, however, a multifibrous strand of heterodox sectarianism unravelling from the Jerusalem community via Pella.¹⁰

Taylor is correct in her insistence that Jewish Christianity cannot be measured by a consistent belief system and in her resistance to seeing all expressions of Jewish Christianity as part of a genetic whole. She is less clear on what specific practices qualify a group as Jewish Christians, but her language presumes there is a coherent core of acts that signifies Jewishness. Her analysis suffers most from a presupposition that will reappear in various definitions: that Jewish Christianity is a third way formed through a blending of two distinct religions, then disappearing back into those groups.¹¹ This presupposition blurs the image of all lines of development.

2.2 Bruce Malina

Bruce Malina attempts a hypothetical definition based on a syllogistic approach.¹² He seeks to logically analyze and then to rearrange the usage of the term Jewish Christianity. Malina begins with the observation that

Presumably the use of such a label implies the presence of a configuration of features outlining the physiognomy of the purported new phenomenon that serves as criterion for judging the similarities and differences in the crowd of perceptions in which the phenomenon stands to have it stand out from the crowd.¹³

Malina thinks the wide divergence of definitions has two causes:

the two variables that cause confusion in the use of the term "Jewish Christianity" are the relational perspective of the observer of the phenomenon and the time frame chosen by the observer in which to view the phenomenon.¹⁴

Malina then categorizes the motivation (the relational perspective) of scholars who study the issue:

¹⁰ Taylor, "Phenomenon," 327.

¹¹ This presupposition is evident in Taylor's reference to two distinct religions and in claims such as this: "By the middle of the second century, few Jews within the Church continued to maintain the praxis of Judaism ..." This schema collapses when one recognizes that there was no one way of Judaism, either belief or practice, in the second century. Rabbinic Judaism was only beginning, in Palestine, to record its texts and to assert its authority. Christianity of the second century was a chaotic complex, and "the Church" did not yet exist.

¹² Bruce Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward a Hypothetical Definition," *JSJ* 7 (1976), 46–57.

¹³ Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism," 46.

¹⁴ Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism," 47.

1. New Testament literature
2. Christian theology
3. history of the Christian movement
4. specific Christian documents that seem to support Mosaic observances or to oppose Paul
5. archeology related to Jewish Christian groups, texts, or ideas
6. Christian holy sites that were preserved by Jewish Christians
7. contemporary ecumenical dialogue
8. the heresiology of the patristic writers.¹⁵

Malina divides the field into three distinguishable categories. 1) *Jewish Christianity* is “the historically perceived orthodox Christianity that undergirds the ideology of the emergent Great Church.”¹⁶ 2) *Judaism* refers to rabbinic, Pharisaic Judaism. 3) *Christian Judaism* is, in a first century context, “a phase of the Christian movement comprised of Jews (by birth or conversion) who accept Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah to come.”¹⁷

Malina is clear that this definition is created through a rational exercise.

In other words, the outcome of this procedure should reveal a hidden *tertium quid* between the Judaism of the post 70 A.D. world and the Christianity of the Great Church. Presumably the reason why the label “Jewish Christian” is so inadequate is that it often serves to point to a phenomenon better called “Christian Judaism”. The method involved in drawing up this hypothetical ideology is a kind of triangulation. Of each normative perceptual cue and value the question is asked: “What implicit assumption might this percept category or value derive from, so that it can be considered neither Jewish nor Christian?” When enough material has been covered with this question, the answers will be found to point in a common direction. The new ideology emerges from the point where lines of answers intersect.¹⁸

This syllogistic definition is then applied to historical developments. Malina believes the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 dealt with the social engagement between Christian Jews and Jewish Christians. The council set forth behavioral directives, says Malina, but it failed to articulate an ideology to warrant the new behavioral patterns. Malina then seeks to root the new movement in an ideological base:

What then would be some of the features of a Christian Judaism that would form the ideology – the views and values – of a Christian Judaism that could readily stand side by side with Pharisaic Judaism and even readily win converts from that movement as Acts attests?¹⁹

¹⁵ Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism,” 47–48.

¹⁶ Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism,” 49.

¹⁷ Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism,” 50.

¹⁸ Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism,” 50.

¹⁹ Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism,” 51.

The result is a flow chart that divides the landscape into three ideological types, primarily on their views of apocalypticism, messiology, and daily rules for living. Malina describes *Judaism* as a movement with the Mosaic covenant still in effect and lived out through the commandment system. Apocalyptic speculation is not normative for daily living, nor is historical speculation based on apocalypticism. Eschatology is simply future, and the Age to Come will arrive when the messiah comes. The Temple fell because of belief in too many messiahs, and it is no longer basic to Judaism. Cosmic speculation is allowed for mystics, but plays no normative role in daily life. The synagogue is the normative place of worship, with daily life lived under rabbinic prescriptions.

For the *Jewish Christianity* that undergirds the Great Church, Malina describes a different ideology. Jesus is now the messiah with power. He replaced the Mosaic covenant and calls for life guided by the Spirit. Apocalyptic speculation and its historical emphases provide norms for daily life. The Age to Come began with Jesus – a type of realized eschatology. The Temple was a hindrance and was destroyed because of rejection of Jesus. Cosmic speculation is normative for both daily life and for worship, which derives now from Jesus and from the Spirit.

Between these two poles lies, for Malina, *Christian Judaism*. Here Jesus is the messiah, but not yet in power. The Mosaic covenant is to be lived out, since Jesus did this. Daily living is not guided by apocalyptic speculation, since Jesus did not live this way. Eschatology is futuristic, since the Age to Come will arrive when Jesus comes in power. The Temple is no longer basic; it was lost because of too many messiahs and because of rejection of Jesus. Cosmic speculation is not normative for daily life. Synagogue worship is normative, as is the command of Jesus.

It is clear that Malina's definition of Christian Judaism is the end product of a syllogism, but he claims the procedure is based on a series of historical inquiries. His paradigm intends to enclose a particular ideology and to separate it out from the other two, thus creating an overarching category. It is not clear, however, that this ideological paradigm applies to any particular historical group. Some descriptions of the Nazoreans, for example, seem to distinguish them from other Christians only in their observance of the Law; nothing is said of their apocalyptic vision or of a different view of Jesus.

Malina's definition depends on a high degree of abstraction, but it also depends on stable, clearly defined alternatives. The type of Christian Judaism Malina describes can only emerge from the intersection and interactions of two fixed traditions, which he posits in Judaism and in Christianity:

The following features would seem to be basic to such a Christian Judaism, and taken together would form the typical Gestalt of such movement within or without 'official' Judaism and 'official' Christianity.²⁰

²⁰ Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism," 51.

By official Judaism Malina means rabbinic Judaism, and by official Christianity he means "the ideology of the emerging Great Church which allowed for the N.T. canon and the theologies and practices dependent upon it."²¹ Consequently, the Christian Judaism of Malina is an ideology abstracted as a third way between rabbinic Judaism and the Christianity of the Great Church. While intellectually satisfying in the tradition of Hegel and Baur, its historical basis and application are suspect.

2.3 Neil McEleney

While Malina deals with the result of such triangulation, Neil McEleney sought to establish its cause.²² He believes "there existed a firmly accepted Jewish orthodoxy in the first century and this was even then a *definable* belief (actually expressed in part in the *shema*) which was accepted by all who called themselves Israelites."²³ This orthodoxy, which is said to exist prior to 70 ce, is based on "consensus on a doctrinal minimum beyond which one could not go without danger of exclusion from Israel."²⁴ This minimal content centers on three doctrines: the God of Israel, the people of Israel, and the practice of the Mosaic law. Most significant is his conclusion that the generic orthodoxy that defined Judaism through most of the first century was replaced after 70 ce by two specific, detailed forms of orthodoxy: Pharisaic Judaism and early Christianity.²⁵

2.4 Stanley Riegel

Stanley Riegel attempts an anatomy similar to that of Malina.²⁶ Noting a twofold problem of terminology and definition, Riegel divides the scholarly descriptions into three categories: doctrine, imagery, and chronology. Doctrinal definitions are based on perceptions of the Mosaic Law or on christological perceptions. Definitions based on imagery conceive Jewish Christianity as "Christianity expressing itself in the terms and ideas derived from a Jewish-Semitic background."²⁷ Chronological definitions are framed in reference to the Jewish War (66–70 ce).

²¹ Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism," 51.

²² Neil McEleney, "Orthodoxy in Judaism of the First Christian Century," *JSJ* 4 (1973), 19–42.

²³ McEleney, "Orthodoxy in Judaism," 20.

²⁴ McEleney, "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in the New Testament," The Catholic Theological Society of America, Proceedings from the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention (Detroit, 1970).

²⁵ McEleney, "Orthodoxy in Judaism," 42.

²⁶ Stanley Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology," *NTS* 24 (1978), 410–15.

²⁷ Riegel, "Jewish Christianity," 414.

Riegel contends that any definition must take all three categories into account. On this basis, he suggests a new lexicography. *Judaeo-Christianity* is an ideological marker: it refers collectively to the many Jewish-Christian ideas of the first few centuries. *Jewish Christianity* should refer to Christianity expressed in Semitic-Jewish thought forms, but limited to the tradition of the Jerusalem Church of the first century. *Judaistic Christianity* would refer to heterodox forms such as Ebionites, found mainly after 70 ce.²⁸

Riegel's categories deal more with the history of research rather than with any historical groups. He has not defined in any way the Jewish framework against which his three definitions emerge. Where he does refer to Judaism, the terminology is vague and ideological: "the many Jewish-Christian ideas existing in the first few centuries"; "Semitic-Jewish thought forms"; "the Judaistic character of Christianity." In this model both Judaism and the responses to it are based on ideas more than on specific practices.

While Riegel is correct in emphasizing the chronological variance, this reference is also vague, placing the apostolic era over against movements "largely 'heterodox', and occurring mainly after A.D. 70."²⁹ Little attention is given to geographical diversity. What emerges from the anatomy is one overly broad category (*Judaeo-Christianity*) for "all aspects of the study,"³⁰ and two chronological divisions (apostolic Jewish Christianity and post 70 Judaistic Christianity), with the later seemingly less Christian than the earlier. Riegel's lexicon has its ancestry in the conceptual framework of Jean Daniélou and R. N. Longenecker.³¹

2.5 Oskar Skarsaune

Oskar Skarsaune chooses the criterion of ethnicity over the more problematic issue of ideology. Skarsaune employs the term *Jewish believers in Jesus* to designate "Jews by birth or conversion who in one way or another believed Jesus was their savior."³² Skarsaune interprets belief in Jesus to include

any type of Christology that accords a unique role to Jesus as Messiah or the end-time, final Prophet, or any other role that makes him decisive as a saving figure.³³

²⁸ Riegel, "Jewish Christianity," 415.

²⁹ Riegel, "Jewish Christianity," 415.

³⁰ Riegel, "Jewish Christianity," 415.

³¹ Daniélou himself recognized three types of Jewish Christianity: the opponents of Paul and others who denied that Christ is God; the Jerusalem church, which disappeared shortly; and that form of Christianity that does not have a connection to Judaism, but does borrow from its ideas. This third form, which is general and doctrinal, most interested Daniélou. R. N. Longenecker was influenced by Daniélou.

³² Skarsaune, "Problems of Definition," pp. 3-16.

³³ Skarsaune, "Problems of Definition," pp. 13.

In Skarsaune's work, however, the term is frequently abbreviated for the sake of convenience to *Jewish believers*.³⁴ For Skarsaune, this definition includes Jews who believed in Jesus but have abandoned a Jewish way of life, including those assimilated among Gentile Christians. Skarsaune then complicates the issue by using the term *Jewish Christian* in a different sense:

A "Jewish Christian" is a Jewish believer in Jesus who, as a believer, still maintains a Jewish way of life.³⁵

Skarsaune then argues that both terms have near parallels in antiquity. In addition, he argues that such terms in antiquity always refer to ethnicity.³⁶

2.6 Simon Claude Mimouni

Simon Claude Mimouni includes both an ethnic and a praxis oriented dimension to his definition. He also notes, however, the doctrinal diversity among such groups. Mimouni says that

ancient Jewish Christianity is a modern term designating those Jews who recognize Jesus as messiah, who recognized or did not recognize the divinity of Christ, but who, all of them, continued to observe the Torah.³⁷

2.7 Raymond Brown

Raymond Brown argued that the Jerusalem community knew two types of Christians – Hebrew Christians and Hellenists – both of which were of Jewish origin.³⁸ Hellenists differed from Hebrew Christians in three factors: they speak Greek, they reflect the Greco-Roman world in the names they give their sons, and they are less attached to the Temple. Brown then argued that the distinction and even the tension in places like Rome can be traced to the different mission strategies of these two groups. The result is four types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity for the New Testament period:

1. Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts who fully observe Mosaic Law.
2. Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts who do not insist on circumcision, but do require some Jewish purity laws.

³⁴ It seems to me both problematic and unclear to designate a limited group of Jews as *Jewish believers*.

³⁵ Skarsaune, "Problems of Definition," p. 5.

³⁶ Skarsaune, "Problems of Definition," pp. 5–6.

³⁷ Simon Claude Mimouni, "Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien," *NTS* 38 (1991), 161–86. Mimouni's definition is discussed by Skarsaune, "Problems of Definition," 4–5.

³⁸ Raymond Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity, but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983), 74–79.

3. Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts who required neither circumcision nor purity laws, but did not break with the Temple.
4. Jewish Christians and their converts who required neither circumcision nor purity laws and saw no abiding significance for the Temple.

For Brown, the distinction between Christians of different ethnic origins does not apply to the New Testament period, but only to the second century when

"the catholic church" was increasingly composed of ethnic Gentiles with little history of direct contact with a Jewish heritage and when Jewish Christians were a minority distinguished by a stubborn adherence to Jewish practices (an adherence now with some frequency being dubbed heretical). But I would argue that during most of the first century a theological distinction signaled by "Jewish Christianity" and "Gentile Christianity" is imprecise and poorly designated.³⁹

2.8 Matt Jackson-McCabe

Matt Jackson-McCabe argues that the term Jewish Christianity carries within it two questionable presuppositions:

1. that immediately after Jesus' death there arose a religion (Christianity) that could be clearly distinguished from Judaism
2. Those who inhabit the borderline between Judaism and Christianity are best described as examples of Christianity.

He then notes recent developments that challenge these presuppositions:

1. Scholarship in the aftermath of the Holocaust
2. New appreciation of the diversity of 2nd Temple Judaism based on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Jewish works such as the pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, the apocrypha
3. The rejection of an early Christian orthodoxy that was broken by the intrusion of heresies.
4. The recognition of a common ground of ideas and materials shared between Judaism and Christianity
5. Recognition that the aftermath of the process can be misleading in defining the foundational events
6. Challenges to the idea that there was an early and definitive parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity.⁴⁰

Jackson-McCabe delineates various problems with a morphological description of such groups, but he also finds practice-based definitions to be problematic. Jackson-McCabe notes the variety of alternative names suggested in recent scholarship, but also the persistence of the term Jewish Christianity.⁴¹ Jackson-Mc-

³⁹ Brown, "Jewish/Gentile," 75.

⁴⁰ Matt Jackson-McCabe, "What's in a Name? The Problem of 'Jewish Christianity,'" in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 27–30.

⁴¹ Jackson-McCabe, "What's in a Name?", pp. 30–32.

Cabe does not offer his own definition or delineation, but points rather to the need for reconsideration of both the terms and ancient data for Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism. Because such groups

exhibit in combination traits associated with either Judaism or Christianity as these categories are typically conceived, they challenge us to rethink received wisdom about the boundaries that define and separate these classes and the extent to which appeal to them is helpful for the historical redescription of religions in antiquity. For that reason, if no other, the texts and groups that challenge our normally dichotomous use of the categories Judaism and Christianity represent a fertile field of investigation for historians of religion.⁴²

2.9 Jonathan Z. Smith

Some scholars draw from theories of linguistic and social analysis to suggest a polythetic mode of classification. Jonathan Z. Smith notes the difficulty of naming defining traits for a group that will not change over successive generations. He prefers rather to point to a set of traits. While many members of a class will possess many (but not necessarily all) of these traits, there is no one trait that is required of all for inclusion.⁴³

2.10 Daniel Boyarin

Daniel Boyarin seeks to locate such groups on a continuum of ideas and practices.⁴⁴ Noting that Judaism, for its self-definition, depends in large part upon Christianity as a contrasting other, Boyarin suggests that a continuum with definitive end points can help.

In other words, one can model a situation in which there will be persons or groups who will clearly be “Christian” or “non-Christian Jewish,” that is, who will form definable clusters of religious features, while the boundaries between the two categories will remain undefinable.⁴⁵

⁴² Jackson-McCabe, “What’s in a Name?”, p. 37.

⁴³ Smith’s ideas are found in a range of works: “Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 1–18; *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); “Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion,” *HTR*, 89, pp. 387–403; “The ‘End’ of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification,” in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, ed. Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 237–41. McCabe-Jackson’s discussion is found in “What’s in a Name?”, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Daniel Boyarin, “Semantic Differences; or ‘Judaism’ / ‘Christianity,’” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, ed. Adam Becker and Annette Reed, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 76–77.

⁴⁵ Daniel Boyarin, “Semantic Differences,” pp. 65–85. Boyarin’s ideas are developed in two other works: *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*

Boyarin sometimes refers to such middle groups as a part of Judaism, but he also refers to Judaeo-Christianity. Theoretically, there need be no one set of features shared by all members of such a group, but Boyarin suggests that

There is, perhaps, one feature that constitutes all as members of the Judeao-Christian semantic family: appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures as revelation. In all other aspects, the category of Jews/Christians constitutes a family in which any one sub-group might share features with any other (on either side of that supposed divide) but not all features with any, and there is no one set of features that uniquely determines a Christian group (except, of course, for some appeal to Jesus, which is simply an analytic statement and therefore tautologous) over and against a non-Christian group.⁴⁶

Boyarin notes an important historical factor that blurs this complexity. He points to writers and speakers who

wish to transform the fuzzy category into one with absolutely clear borders and the family resemblance into a checklist of features that will determine an intensional definition for who is in and who is out of the group as it defines itself and, therefore, others.... These are the writers whom we know of now as heresiologists. The discursive practice known as heresiology was crucial in the formation of Judaism and Christianity as religions for all that it appeared in very different textual guise in each of these cultures.⁴⁷

2.11 James Carleton Paget

James Carleton Paget offers two important discussions of the terminology for Jewish Christianity. In the *Cambridge History of Judaism* Paget describes three patterns in modern scholarship for defining Jewish Christianity:

1. An ethnic definition: ethnic Jews who became Christians
2. A praxis-oriented definition: those who accept Jesus as the messiah but continue practices associated with Judaism
3. Ideological and doctrinal definitions: Christianity that retains Jewish thought forms.⁴⁸

Paget believes that a praxis-oriented definition can best describe the connection to Judaism while retaining the necessary degree of specificity and flexibility to account for the evidence.⁴⁹

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁴⁶ Boyarin, "Semantic Differences," p. 79

⁴⁷ Boyarin, "Semantic Differences," pp. 84–85.

⁴⁸ James Carleton Paget, "Jewish Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) vol. 3, pp. 733–42.

⁴⁹ Paget, "Jewish Christianity," pp. 739–42

Paget returned to this subject in his contribution to *Jewish Believers in Jesus*.⁵⁰ He notes the complexity this line of scholarship:

The history of scholarly attempts to define the terms “Jewish Christian” and “Jewish Christianity” demonstrates the ongoing difficulty with the terms. In part, the difficulty may be said to lie in fulfilling the two conditions, first set out by Richard Longenecker over thirty years ago, for any successful definition. According to Longenecker, a successful definition must have a sufficient degree of particularity and specificity to enable precision of treatment, as well as a breadth of designation that will allow for variations in the entity studied. But there may be a sense in which we have become overly concerned with the creation of a hold-all definition precisely because our instinct is to think of the terms in a sectarian way. In this respect the shadow of Baur still looms over us. Perhaps we should simply accept the breadth of the term and the multiple uses to which it has been put.... This may, of course, mean that each author who uses the term is forced to define what s/he means by it before commencing substantive discussion.⁵¹

After noting the debate over whether to retain or to abandon the term Jewish Christianity, Paget makes his own suggestion for a way forward. “Why not simply settle on a term like ‘Torah observant’ and then introduce subcategories like Ebionite, Elchasaite etc.”⁵² In this way Paget seeks a praxis-oriented definition with both specificity and flexibility of usage.

2.12 Jörg Frey

An extraordinary distillation of the issues is found in the analysis of the Jewish Christian gospel tradition by Jörg Frey.⁵³ Frey notes how dogmatic interests may shape the decisions about which groups and texts are designated as Jewish Christian. The designation of groups in ancient texts is sometimes based on their ethnic origin, sometimes on their practices, and sometimes on their theological differences with the Great Church tradition. Frey notes how these ancient elements reappear in various combinations in modern attempts at definition. Frey recognizes the difficulties and limitations of ethnic and doctrinal definitions, but he also notes that many Jewish practices are found among God-fearers, making this approach problematic as well. Frey’s own position, provided as a precursor to his treatment of the Jewish Christian gospel tradition, is succinct.

⁵⁰ Paget, “Terms,” pp. 22–52.

⁵¹ Paget, “Terms,” pp. 50–51.

⁵² Paget, “Terms,” pp. 51–52.

⁵³ Frey’s work will appear in the forthcoming edition of *New Testament Apocrypha* in the volume entitled *Antike Christliche Apokryphen I: Evangelien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming) and in “Zur Vielgestaltigkeit judenchristlicher Evangelienüberlieferungen” in *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen*, ed. Jörg Frey and Jens Schröter, WUNT (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, forthcoming 2010).

The most practical approach is certainly a cumulative determination of Jewish Christian identity which is based on a conscious foundation of Jewish Torah observance and reckons with a continuing connection to synagogue Judaism, but does not presume the necessity of fixed theological positions. Anything more than this relatively open definition appears, in light of the fragmentary nature of the source materials, hardly possible. Because of the difficult nature of the source materials, further concretization beyond this relatively open definition is hardly possible.⁵⁴

3. Continuing Issues

This sample of recent attempts to define the phenomenon in antiquity of Jewish ways of following Jesus demonstrates the complexity of the task. At the same time, a number of methodological concerns are evident.

3.1 Triangulation, Synthesis, and Hybridization

In many attempts at definition Jewish Christianity is defined through a process of triangulation, synthesis, or hybridization. Baur set Petrine and Pauline Christianity in a dialectic conflict that led to the synthesis of orthodox Christianity. Taylor insists that Jewish Christianity requires a hyphen: it is a bi-religious entity born of two distinct religions. Malina finds Jewish Christianity in the intersection of ideas that stand out from the perceptions of Judaism and Christianity.

All such procedures and perceptions presume an evolutionary type of historical dynamism, but they also depend upon official, normative versions of Judaism and Christianity. Judaism is presumed to be a coherent entity found in the rabbinic tradition. Christianity is presumed to be orthodox Christianity (or the Church), even if in its formative stages. In almost all instances, Jewish Christianity is seen as the byproduct of forces operating between these two poles of tradition.

This myth of primal coherence is prevalent throughout the history of research. Ferdinand Christian Baur evoked a stream of energetic responses when he challenged the Christian version with its unbroken unity between the apostolic age and the Great Church. He rewrote the myth to include two competing lines that led to the unity of orthodoxy. The change in the process was of limited consequence, however, since the result was the same. Much recent scholarship prefers a different model of bifurcation: the tension within Judaism led to a parting of the ways between synagogue and church.⁵⁵ What emerges are two distinct religions.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Frey, "Vielgestaltigkeit."

⁵⁵ Neil McEleney, "Orthodoxy in Judaism," 42, poses the question "Are not Pharisaic Judaism and Christianity ... both fully worthy of the name Judaism today as parallel developments of a wider Jewish orthodoxy of the first century?"

⁵⁶ This school of thought places the split with Judaism at various times: with Jesus him-

Jewish Christianity may then be defined positively (as a hybrid of the two) or negatively (as the area of mutual rejection).

All of these roads lead to the same conclusion: real Jewish Christianity belongs mostly to the apostolic age (pre 70 ce). What is found after that is usually described as sectarian and heterodox, as Christian use of Jewish ideas, as Christians converted from Judaism, or as Christian Judaizers. In the end, the movement is said to have subsided, and Christianity was defined by the emerging orthodoxy of the Great Church tradition.

3.2 Anachronism

In a great deal of scholarship this presumed internal coherence of orthodox Christianity and of rabbinic Judaism is read anachronistically onto the formative years. Prior to Nicea (325 ce) one probably should speak not of Christianity in any unified sense, but of Christianities.⁵⁷ This diversity can be exemplified in the story of Christianity at Rome. Paul, a Hellenistic Jew with Roman citizenship, arrives in shackles at the port of Rome (Ostia) around the year 65 ce. Behind him lies the strained relationship with the Jewish followers of Jesus in the Jerusalem community and the factional divisions of the Gentile community in Corinth. It was also in Corinth that Paul met Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew who followed the tradition of John the Baptist and taught about Jesus in the synagogues. Upon Paul's arrival in Rome, he must introduce himself and his mission to a Christian community he had neither founded nor influenced. His letter to Rome suggests there is some tension within this community. While in Rome, Paul met with a mixed reception from the synagogues. Tradition says that Peter was also influential in the church at Rome and that he and Paul both died there. In later years, one could walk down the streets of Rome to observe followers of various other Christian traditions – among them the apologist Justin Martyr, the dualist Marcion, and the gnostic Valentinus. Such diversity typifies Christianity before Constantine and defies simplistic definitions.

James Charlesworth finds further evidence of this diversity in the Christian additions to Jewish texts of the Apocrypha.⁵⁸ Although the proponents of the apocryphal writings were “eventually moved to the fringes of triumphant Christianity,”⁵⁹ they provide an important witness to the diversity of formative Christianity. Charlesworth emphasizes this point:

self, with the Hellenists, with Antioch, with the Pauline mission, with the 1st Jewish War (70 ce), or with the Bar Kochba rebellion (132 ce).

⁵⁷ And, it can be argued, for some time after Nicea, particularly in some locales.

⁵⁸ James Charlesworth, “The Christian Additions to the Apocryphal Writings,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2: *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 27–55.

⁵⁹ Charlesworth, “Christian Additions,” p. 55.

The Christian expansions to the Jewish apocryphal works warn us that the early roads to normative self-definition were confused and buffeted by many forces. The most forceful of these was probably not a search for dogma. To assume a developmentalist approach, according to which all the “superior” insights and ideas eventually triumphed, is to recast earliest Christianity not only confessionally but retrospectively from Nicaea.... The complexity of traditions, both within the Christian additions to Jewish apocryphal writings and within the “canonical” New Testament, indicates that for hundreds of years (at least) there were numerous normative self-definitions within Christianity.⁶⁰

A similar diversity characterizes Judaism before the codification of rabbinic materials. The tannaitic stage (70 ce–200 ce) culminated in the consolidation of the oral traditions into the Mishnah (around 200 ce). This was followed by the resumption of the Mishnah in the Gemaras of Palestine and Babylonia in the amoraic period (200–500 ce). Scholarship typically uses the term *sects* to refer to the varieties of Judaism before the formation of the Mishnah (c. 200 ce).⁶¹ However, Lawrence Schiffman insists that

Only after Judaism converged around the ‘mainstream’ of tannaitic Judaism, a process which took centuries, can the term ‘sect’ be used to describe those who diverged from its dominant or authoritative form.⁶²

Even then, there was no central belief system, since rabbinic material is oriented toward proper praxis. Emmanuel Rackman noted that

Even with regard to doctrine, such a divergence of opinion has prevailed among the giants of the Tradition that only one dogma enjoys universal acceptance: the Pentateuch’s text was given to the Jewish people by God.⁶³

As scholarship in Jewish studies has intensified over the last decades, it becomes more and more difficult to define Judaism as a coherent entity. Many now speak, with Jacob Neusner, not of *Judaism*, but of *Judaisms*. Neusner refers to the entire period from the return from Babylon (ca. 500 ce) to the fall of the Temple (70 ce), as the “first age of diversity.”⁶⁴ This period was marked by the establishment of the Torah and its interpretation as the central focus of Jewish life. Neusner insists that all of the various forms of Judaism are held together by a religious thread:

It is a single ecology, made up of two components: first the permanent and ubiquitous appeal to the Torah, that is, the Five Books of Moses ... and, second the inquiry into the Torah to make sense of the diverse circumstances of various groups ...”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Charlesworth, “Christian Additions,” p. 55.

⁶¹ This is also the term used by Josephus to describe the various groups within Judaism.

⁶² Lawrence Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing, 1991), p. 5.

⁶³ Emmanuel Rackman, “A Challenge to Orthodoxy,” *Judaism* 18 (1969), 143.

⁶⁴ Jacob Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan Avery-Peck (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 2003), pp. 3–19. The “second age of diversity” is from 1800 to the present.

⁶⁵ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” p. 8.

The priests who survived the destruction of the Temple in 586 bce produced the Hebrew Bible in the form of the Tanakh, composed not only of the Law, but also prophetic materials and other writings. But these priests did not provide a solitary form of Judaism:

During this same period a number of diverse groups of Jews, living in the Land of Israel as well as in Babylonia, to the east, and in Alexandria, in Egypt, to the west, took over these writings and interpreted them in diverse ways. Hence during the period from the formation of the Torah-book to the destruction of the second Temple, there were many Judaisms.⁶⁶

Neusner labels the period from 70 ce to 640 ce (from the fall of the second Temple to the Islamic conquest) as the *age of definition*. Neusner contends this period was dominated by three groups: priests, scribes, and zealots. The zealots dominated until their demise at the end of the second revolt (135 ce). The priests and scribes were fused in the aftermath of these events. It was only then that rabbinic Judaism emerged around the two lines of Torah – the Hebrew Bible and the oral tradition enshrined finally in the Talmud.⁶⁷

Describing the first century ce, Neusner insists that “for this period no such thing as ‘normative Judaism’ existed from which one or another ‘heretical’ group might diverge.”⁶⁸ Further, some scholars now question the direct identification of rabbinic Judaism with the Pharisees described by Josephus and by the New Testament.

Consequently, any attempts to define Jewish Christianity must place it within the larger field of religious phenomenology that characterized the Graeco-Roman world of the first centuries ce. A subset of this larger field is to be found in traditions that root their identity in the stories of Israel and Israel’s God. Among these are numerous forms of Jewishness existing across a wide range of practices and beliefs. This is true before 70 ce, but also afterwards. Among these diverse expressions of Jewishness are to be found Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and the Qumran community, but also John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth and his first followers. From a historical perspective, it becomes clear that the early Jesus movement is one form of Jewishness among many others, but it is equally clear that the followers of Jesus subsequently took on a wide array of forms.

There is a growing awareness among scholars that the development of Christianity and Judaism into distinct, coherent, definable religious traditions was a lengthy process which, in some sense, was never fully attained. It is an anachronistic form of literary imperialism to impose upon the formative period of the

⁶⁶ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” p. 15.

⁶⁷ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” pp. 16–17.

⁶⁸ Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai. Ca. 1–80 C.E.*, Studia Post-Biblica (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. 25.

first centuries descriptors such as normative, orthodox, heretical, heterodox, sectarian.

3.3 Reification

Many scholars seek a stable definition that will account for the traits of Jewish Christianity in all times and places. Such definitions cannot account for a movement that begins in the 2nd Temple era but extends through the establishment of rabbinic authority over wide stretches of Judaism, nor can it account for a movement that, in terms of geography, is scattered widely across the ancient world. Even the more accessible entities of rabbinic Judaism or orthodox Christianity cannot be contained within such rigid categories of definition.

3.4 Abstraction

Subjecting the definition of Jewish Christianity to syllogistic analysis has provided a sometimes interesting exercise, but it is not always clear that historical events and groups comply to such schematics. Moreover, the desire for logic and certainty overlooks the transitional nature of religious and social development. For example, at one point all Christians were Jews, but later almost no Christians were Jews. It is very difficult for a logical paradigm or self-contained definition to encompass this transition; what is required instead is careful historical description based on reconstruction and analysis of how ancient events, groups, and texts developed.

3.5 The Perception of Distinction

A further problem for defining Jewish Christianity is the view that this phenomenon is uniquely difficult to define. This is true in effect, but not in essence. The evidence for Jewish Christianity was suppressed and reshaped by two emerging traditions – rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity. In essence, however, the definition of Judaism and of Christianity are also elusive.⁶⁹ The difficulties of defining Jewish Christianity are common to much of the religious landscape of antiquity. The more difficult side of this equation, however, is presented by the complexity of what it means to be Jewish.

⁶⁹ It is quite possible that Essences and Sadducees survived into the rabbinic era, the people of the land were not easily incorporated into rabbinic strictures, and the Kairites arose to challenge the rabbis. Orthodox Christianity was challenged by gnostics, Marcionites, Montanists and a variety of other groups.

4. Defining Jewishness

If Jewish ways of following Jesus arose from the wide diversity of emerging Judaism, then any definition of Jewish Christianity depends intrinsically upon the definition of what it means to be Jewish. This self-evident fact does not reduce the difficulty, now recognized across a wide range of scholarship, of defining Jewishness in antiquity. The emergence of Judaism as a distinct, definable religious system was a lengthy and complex development; underlying this process is the question of Jewishness – what does it mean to maintain Jewishness, and who is and is not to be identified as a Jew? This question is central to any conceptualization of Judaism and to any definition of Jewish Christianity.

From an ethnological perspective, the concept of identity proves illusive. Shaye Cohen notes that

Sociologists agree that ethnic or national identity is imagined; it exists because certain persons want it to exist and believe that it exists. It can be willed into and out of existence.⁷⁰

This transitory status belongs as well to the search for Jewishness. Cohen says

My thesis is that Jewish identity in antiquity was elusive and uncertain for two simple reasons. First, there was no single or simple definition of Jew in antiquity... . Second, there were few mechanisms in antiquity that would have provided empirical or 'objective' criteria by which to determine who was 'really' a Jew and who was not. Jewishness was a subjective identity, constructed by the individual ... , other Jews, other gentiles, and the state.⁷¹

Missing from these observations is the counter phenomenon: the extinction of identity. Triumphant groups tend to read their victims out of existence or to incorporate them into the identity and history of the victor.⁷² This process of extinction exists within and alongside the work of identity formation.

Shaye Cohen investigates a wide range of factors that are sometimes thought to establish Jewishness. Among these are social mechanisms such as looks, clothing, speech, names, and occupations. None of these establish Jewishness, and no one in antiquity seems to think they did. Circumcision, which was also practiced in Egypt and in various cultures influenced by Egypt, was probably first taken as a marker of Jewishness in the Maccabean period, where it is a sign that one is not Hellenistic. Philo, Josephus, and Jerome treat circumcision as rather non-dis-

⁷⁰ Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 5.

⁷¹ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 3. Cohen notes, p. 8, that "The uncertainty of Jewishness in antiquity curiously prefigures the uncertainty of Jewishness in modern times."

⁷² This two-edged process of construction and extinction will prove important in the definition of Jewish Christianity.

tinctive.⁷³ The closest things to markers for Jewishness were proximity and praxis: people who lived in daily association with Jews were likely Jews, and Jewish practices were a likely sign of Jewishness (or at least a wish to be perceived as such). But even these markers were not certain.⁷⁴

The linguistic terms by which Jews were distinguished (*Ioudaios* in Greek, *Iudaeus* in Latin, *Yehudi* in Hebrew) were based in geography: they refer to Judeans, the inhabitants of Judea. This, says Cohen, was the only meaning of the term prior to the 2nd century bce, and it applied in both the homeland and in the diaspora:

'Judean' is an ethnic-geographic term: a Judean is a member of the Judean people (ethnos) and hails from Judaea, the ethnic homeland. In the diaspora a 'Judean' is a member of the association of those who hailed originally from the ethnic homeland.⁷⁵

For Judeans, the clash with Hellenistic culture in the 2nd century bce required a reconstruction of identity, bringing two new elements. Faced by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, some Judeans became apostates. The military victories of the Hasmoneans brought new alliances, with some conquered peoples incorporated into Judea – Idumaeans and Ituraeans, for example. Thus, the definition of a Judean took on a political element; it could now refer to those who had been incorporated into and pledged allegiance to the Judean political entity. The term Judean also took on a religious element. While previously the religion of a Judean came with the territory, the new political situation required a mechanism by which non-natives could be incorporated in the religion of Judea. Like Greekness, says Cohen, Jewishness "once had been a function of birth and geography but now in the Hasmonean period it became a function of religion and culture."⁷⁶ This change is reflected in the terminology. In the book of 2 Maccabees the term *Ioudaios* is used for the first time in the sense of *Jew*, and the term for Jewishness (*Ioudaïsmos*) appears for the first time. Two choices now occupy the landscape of Judea: Greekness and Jewishness, Hellenism and Judaism. Cohen says of this choice:

With the opening of the boundary in the second century B.C.E., gentiles crossed it and became Jews in a variety of ways, whether by political enfranchisement, religious conversion, veneration of the Jewish God, observance of Jewish rituals, association with Jews, or other means. The same period also provides the first secure attestation of the notion of conversion to Judaism ...⁷⁷

⁷³ See the discussion by Cohen, *Jewishness*, pp. 39–49.

⁷⁴ See the discussion of these possibilities by Cohen, *Jewishness*, pp. 53–62. He notes that by contributing two drachmas to the Temple you could declare yourself a Jew and publicize your desire to be seen as a Jew, which, in some situations, carried benefits.

⁷⁵ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 104.

⁷⁶ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 137.

⁷⁷ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 342.

This new option – becoming a Jew – required a clear and standardized process. The rabbis provided this in the 2nd century ce. They demanded of all converts that they accept the Torah, that men be circumcised, and that all be baptized. These steps were to be taken publically and officially.⁷⁸

The engagement with Gentile cultures and religions also requires a clear understanding of who is born as a Jew and who is not. The Hebrew Bible and the 2nd Temple era are not only patriarchal, but also patrilineal: a child born of a Jewish father is Jewish, regardless of the mother.⁷⁹ In the Mishnah, codified by the rabbis around 200 ce, a matrilineal principle prevails in the determination of Jewishness: a child born of a Jewish mother is Jewish, regardless of the father. There is no clear reason or explanation for this change.⁸⁰

While rabbis often speak of Jewishness as a clearly distinguishable trait, neither their standards nor the means of determining Jewishness are clear to others. In the end, rabbinic canons involved an exotic mixture of religion and ethnicity, and the rabbis were alone in their certainty:

The identity system that would attain canonical form in rabbinic Judaism was a union of disparate elements, Jewishness as a function of religion and Jewishness as a function of descent. ...many rabbinic texts imagine that Jews are distinctive, identifiable, unassimilable; indeed, rabbinic texts are the only texts of antiquity to make such statements.⁸¹

While Cohen provides a developmental understanding of Jewishness, Jacob Neusner attempts to describe Jewishness not by its many expressions (Judaisms), but as a single religious system (a Judaism). Seen as a religious system, a Judaism is composed of three elements: a worldview, a way of life, and a social group that embodies the system.⁸² From this perspective Neusner notes the different periods and the variegated forms that mark the history of Judaism:

In the long history of the Jews, groups of people who regarded themselves as “Israel,” that is, groups of Jews, have framed many Judaisms. What permits us to make sense of the history of these Judaisms is the fact that, over time, we are able to identify periods in which a number of Judaisms competed, and other times in which a single Judaism predominated.⁸³

⁷⁸ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 342.

⁷⁹ Ruth the Moabitess is in the genealogy of David, as is Rehab, the harlot from Jericho. Both are in the genealogy of Jesus.

⁸⁰ Cohen, *Jewishness*, pp. 305–307, suggests the influence of Roman law and the rabbinic code on the mixing of kinds, but he finds neither to be a satisfactory explanation.

⁸¹ Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, p. 343. He also notes that while this constructed stability endured from late antiquity to early modern times, the modern era has witnessed a similar uncertainty about Jewishness.

⁸² Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” p. 11. Neusner notes, however, the difficulty of maintaining this definition in the modern era (p. 19).

⁸³ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” p. 12.

Neusner thus insists this reality “requires that we learn how to respect the plurality of Judaic religious systems and speak of Judaisms, not Judaism, or ‘a Judaism’ when we mean a specific Judaic religious system.”⁸⁴ The diversity that characterizes Judaisms, particularly in the period between 500 bce and 200 ce, has a clear analogy:

Just as from the very beginning, when Peter and Paul contended about absolutely fundamental issues of faith, the world has known Christianities, but no single Christianity, so the world has known, and today recognizes, diverse Judaisms, but no single Judaism.⁸⁵

However Jewish Christianity is to be defined, it is neither the synthesis nor the parting of the ways of two primal, normative religious streams called Judaism and Christianity. Since no such monadic entities existed in this period, Jewish Christianity must be located and defined from among the various Judaisms and Christianities of the first centuries of the common era. Furthermore, “maintaining Jewishness” will prove to be as least as complex within Jewish Christianity as it is within Judaism.

5. Jewishness and the Jewish Followers of Jesus

No source from antiquity succeeds in placing Jesus of Nazareth or his first followers outside the bounds of Jewishness. Rabbinic references to Jesus and his followers typically place them in the category of *minim* – Jews who have gone astray. Jesus and his earliest followers fit the formula of Jewishness, whether measured by Cohen’s ethno-religious standard, by Neusner’s trilogy of worldview, way of life, and social group, or by other recognizable standards. Jewish ways of following Jesus will be also be observed in other times and places. How, then, do Jewish ways of following Jesus fit into the larger question of what it means to be Jewish? While the boundaries of Christianity have no ethnic component and are more definable, the boundaries of Jewishness and the process of maintaining Jewishness are more complex. In order to search for evidence of Jewish ways of following Jesus in the first four centuries, how then should one define Jewish Christianity?

6. Parameters for Defining Jewish Christianity

As noted in the history of research, four types of definitions have been attempted: ethnic, doctrinal, practical, oppositional. Each of these four patterns presents difficulties. In addition, chronological and geographical factors must be considered.

⁸⁴ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” pp. 6–7.

⁸⁵ Neusner, “Defining Judaism,” p. 7.

The ethnic definition – that Jewish Christians are Jews who became Christians – appears to be the simplest and most useful. This is deceptive, however. It is not clear that all Jewish Christians were born as Jews, since not all Jews were born as Jews, and not all who are born as Jews believe and practice Judaism. Neusner notes the difficulty of ethnic definitions of religious movements:

Judaism is identified as the religion of the Jews, that is, a religion of an ethnic group. But that identification brings confusion, for not all Jews practice Judaism or any other religion. Hence the beliefs and practices, if any, of Jews do not by themselves form data for the description of Judaism.

... The ethnic group does not define the religious system. We cannot study Judaism if we identify the history of the Jews with the history of Judaism, just as we cannot study Judaism if we regard the faith as a set of ideas quite divorced from the life of the people who hold those ideas. All Judaists – those who practice the religion, Judaism – are Jews, but not all Jews are Judaists. That is to say, all those who practice the religion, Judaism, by definition fall into the ethnic group, the Jews, but not all members of the ethnic group practice Judaism.⁸⁶

While all would not agree with the lines along which Neusner distinguishes ethnic identity and religious identity, the central point remains: an ethnic definition is difficult for Judaism and impossible for Christianity. Such an approach proves equally troublesome in the effort to define Jewish Christianity.

The doctrinal definition – Jewish Christians are Christians who believe certain Jewish doctrines – is equally problematic. This definition assumes there was a common core of ideas that established Jewish identity and that we have access to such a core.⁸⁷ While there may be a core for certain periods, any core may change from one period to another. Although Temple and Torah may have provided the center for Judaism from 500 bce to 70 ce, this must change after 70 ce, and especially after 135 ce. The rabbinic cohesion develops rather slowly and extends its influence only gradually. This lack of a clear doctrinal center for Judaism in this period makes difficult any attempt to define Jewish Christianity along doctrinal lines, either by similarity or contrast.

Such doctrinal definitions must also designate how much doctrinal conformity is required and how much diversity is tolerated. A narrow definition would exclude other Jews, while a broad definition would allow all Christians and Muslims to claim to share Jewish beliefs. As the work of Daniélou demonstrates, doctrinal definitions tend to be too narrow to be relevant or too broad to be useful.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Neusner, "Defining Judaism," pp. 4–5.

⁸⁷ See, for example, the variety of Judaisms named by Josephus, by the rabbis, and in patristic writings.

⁸⁸ Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, which appeared in English as *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea. vol. I, The Theology of Jewish Christianity*.

The idea of defining Jewish Christianity by its opposition to Paul is equally untenable. First, it defines an entity by what it opposes, rather than by any positive attributes. Secondly, opposition to Paul, even within the New Testament, was diversely motivated and took a variety of forms.

Can Jewish Christianity be defined by its practice? Joan Taylor and James Carleton Paget, among others, think so,⁸⁹ but this approach is not without problems. What set of practices is determinative for Jewish identity, but only for Jewish identity? Cohen concluded that circumcision and association with other Jews provided the only reasonable markers, but even these were not certain.⁹⁰ Martin Goodman notes the difficulty of establishing rabbinic rule among the farmers of the Galilee.⁹¹ Moreover, he is not totally convinced that rabbis and Pharisees are the same people, nor that Essenes and Sadducees disappeared in the rabbinic period.⁹² M. Avi-Yonah points to the continuing tension, most notable in the late 3rd century, between the rabbinic scholars and the Jewish Patriarch who served under the Romans. He also notes the shift in power from Palestine to Palmyra shortly afterwards.⁹³

Furthermore, while Jews might agree in principle on practices such as Temple piety or Sabbath observance, they disagreed about the particularities. This was even more true after the destruction of the Temple, and this debate is maintained and even encouraged in rabbinic literature. Furthermore, Christians, along with Hellenistic Jews and rabbinic Jews, developed extensive systems in which Jewish practices were replaced, superseded, spiritualized, or transformed in a variety of other ways. Finally, the issue of specificity remains. What list of practices is small enough to be useful, but large enough to be meaningful?

Each of the four approaches (ethnic, doctrinal, oppositional, praxis) founders on the same shore: they presume there is a set of norms that is definitive, that these norms are shared by a majority of Jews, and that modern scholarship has access to these standards of identification.

Furthermore, all four patterns tend to impose a definition from outside of the movement itself. Any meaningful definition must take into account the self-conceptualization of the groups studied and should combine a number of relevant factors.

⁸⁹ Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Paget, "Jewish Christianity," pp. 733–42.

⁹⁰ See the discussion by Shaye Cohen, *Jewishness*, pp. 25–68. Observance of circumcision, Sabbath, and Jewish food laws can be found among some modern groups of Christians.

⁹¹ Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132–212*, 2nd edition (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2000 [1983]), pp. 177–81.

⁹² Goodman, *Roman Galilee*, in the preface to the 2nd edition.

⁹³ M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kochba War to the Arab Conquest* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976 [1st Hebrew edition, 1946]), pp. 116–27.

A bit of circularity is necessarily involved. The search for a phenomenon requires some idea of what it looked like, including a name and definition, but an accurate name and definition can only be given on the basis of observation. Even so, such observation must begin with a working definition.

What components and functions are required for a workable definition of Jewish Christianity? The most obvious trait is that any definition must contain within it enough characteristics to accurately label it as Jewish, yet it must also find in Jesus the definitive connection to God: *Jewish Christianity must represent Jewish ways of following Jesus*. This requires some connection to an ethnic and religious conceptualization of Jewishness. The religious dimension must contain some formulations of Jewish practice and belief. Self-conceptualization, which can be known only indirectly through historical profiles and presentations, must be considered along with the opinion of outside observers. Any definition of Jewish Christianity must also contain some degree of portability: it must be potentially applicable to a variety of groups existing in differing locales and eras. A broad sketch of the Jewish landscape might look like this:

Table 2.1 A Sketch of the Jewish Landscape

	pre-exilic	500 bce–70ce	70–135ce	135–614 ce
<i>ethnic dimensions</i>	Israelites	Judeans, Jews	Judaisms	rabbinic Judaism, sects
<i>religious beliefs</i>	covenant Temple Torah	covenant Temple Torah, Tanak Qumran eschatology messianism Jewish Xy other texts	covenant oral traditions Torah, Tanak eschatology messianism Jewish Xy Jewish Xn texts other texts	covenant mishnah, Talmud Torah, Tanak Jewish Xn texts
<i>religious praxis</i>	Temple, purity	Temple, purity	synagogue, purity	synagogue, purity
<i>geographical center</i>	Israel	Judea	Palestine, diaspora	Palestine, Babylonia, diaspora

The chart above attempts to sketch in part the diversity and the chaotic developments that underlie the formative period of rabbinic Judaism. Any forms of Jewish Christianity would fall into the widest period of this diversity. When separated out as a distinct entity, a sketch of Jewish Christianity might be charted in a preliminary way:

Table 2.2 A Sketch of Jewish Christianity

	30–70 ce	70–135 ce	135–500 ce
<i>ethnic dimensions</i>	Jewish	Jewish	Jewish
<i>religious beliefs</i>	covenant Temple, messiah	covenant messiah	covenant messiah
<i>religious practice</i>	Temple messianic Torah	synagogues? messianic Torah	synagogues? messianic Torah
<i>geographical center</i>	Jerusalem	Jerusalem? Transjordan?	Jerusalem? Transjordan?

This does not, however, imply a static or even stable existence for Jewish Christianity. In addition to its loss of the Temple and departure from Jerusalem (70 ce), Jewish Christianity experienced other transitions. The geographical center likely shifted among Jerusalem, the Transjordan, and the Diaspora. At some point the ethnic dimensions were probably widened to include, like other forms of Judaism, a process for the conversion of Gentiles. Beyond this, the diminishing status and authority of Jewish Christianity was likely accompanied by diminishing numbers. A final dynamic should be noted. The processes of identity formation within Jewish Christianity are not carried on in isolation: they are accompanied by movements that seek its extinction.

7. Constructing A Working Definition for Jewish Christianity

A suitable definition must reflect the tasks involved, the complexity and breadth of the evidence, and the continuing dialogue within critical scholarship.

7.1 *The Tasks Involved*

This attempt to gather the evidence for Jewish Christianity in antiquity is carried on at three distinct levels. The first is the gathering and sorting of evidence from antiquity. This task is primarily based in literature, though social analysis and some architectural evidence are involved. Furthermore, the task is largely one of recovery and reconstruction, since the evidence appears mainly in the selective telling of those who opposed such groups.

The second task is that of description and synthesis of the evidence. The definition of Jewish Christianity – the delineation of what critical scholarship can and cannot say about these ancient groups – occurs primarily at this level. Set along a continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable,

this level of inquiry employs the gathered evidence in an effort to locate Jewish ways of following Jesus on the social, religious, temporal, and geographic maps of antiquity.

The final task is to name that which has been recovered and described. The process is, of course, a circular one: scholars must know what it is they are looking for, but only the evidence itself can define the phenomenon. While the philosophical underpinnings of logic, linguistics, and social analysis may demand a precisely defined point of entry, such clarity may not be accessible. Furthermore, it may not provide the best approach to the issue. The tradition of scientific inquiry is rooted in a level of curiosity and discomfort that leads to questions. These leading questions become the basis for an educated hypothesis that can be subjected to controlled investigation. Such investigation leads sometimes to closed doors, but also to further questions and a revised hypothesis.

A defining description of Jewish Christianity should be the product of such explorations, but such descriptions are also subject to further revision. The naming of the phenomenon can be seen as the final, though perhaps not the most important, consequence of such inquiry. It is important, then, not to seek to accomplish all of the task in the naming of the phenomenon. Moreover, any attempt at definition must reflect the complexity of this issue, the wide continuum upon which the evidence is played out, and the provisional nature of any conclusions.

7.2 Complexity and Continuum

The history of research and the review of definitions illustrate the complexity involved in defining Jewish Christianity. A key element in this complexity is the quantity and the quality of source materials. Ancient sources provide more hints than substance for a wide range of groups and texts no longer accessible to modern scholarship. Moreover, the testimony to such groups is most often testimony against them or testimony about them in service of another interest. A great deal of what could be known has been suppressed or subsumed within a different agenda.

Also crucial to any definition is a recognition of the broad continuum involved. This continuum may be defined in terms of defining characteristics and in terms of location on the map. Most definitions, both ancient and modern, of Jewish Christianity are rooted in characteristic ideas, practices, and ethnicity. But the evidence for Jewish Christianity contains a wide range of theological positions, some of which are contradictory. There is no agreement on which specific practices make one a Christian or a Jew or a Jewish Christian; a wide continuum is evident for all of these traditions. Even the ethnicity of Jewish Christianity is treated in varying ways. The broad continuum of characteristics associated with Jewish Christianity makes any definition problematic.

The continuum of Jewish Christianity is also evident in terms of location on the map of antiquity. This is true of temporal, geographical, social, and political location. Jewish Christianity is found in a time frame that extends at least from the mid 1st century ce well into the 4th century ce. Its geographical nexus extends from Alexandria to Antioch and from Edessa to Rome. Jewish Christianity ranges across various cultures and languages and across numerous political systems.

Consequently, no single depiction can account for the complexity and the broad continuum represented by the ancient evidence. While there is some benefit in a *via negativa* that describes what Jewish Christianity is not, any useful definition must be also be polythetic; it must be capable of including a varied range of traits and locations without seeing any one site or set of traits as definitive.⁹⁴

7.3 A Working Definition

This investigation explores the hypothesis that groups in antiquity who were characterized by Jewish ways of following Jesus may be vastly underrepresented, misrepresented, and undervalued in the ancient sources and in much of modern scholarship. If this is true, then the history of development of both Judaism and Christianity are subject to revision, as is the history of their interrelationship.

Any nomenclature and definition employed in this quest must be relevant for both the ancient evidence and for the modern history of research. As noted in the Introduction, the label *Jewish Christianity* will be used here as metalanguage – as a synthesizing construct of modern scholarship. Therefore, the various groups in antiquity who exhibit Jewish ways of following Jesus will be labeled as *Jewish Christianities*. Central to such a definition is the understanding that both their Jewishness and their connection to Jesus are expressions of a continuing covenant between Israel and God. Jewish Christianity could then be understood as a scholarly label for

persons and groups in antiquity whose historical profile suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness and that they do so as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel.

This characterization includes an ethnic component: most appear to present themselves as physical heirs, though a few may present themselves as Jewish by adoption. This identity includes an ideological component: they show signs of clinging to Jewish beliefs and to Jewish self-identification. This characterization includes a practical component: through a messianic interpretation of the Torah

⁹⁴ One can rather easily distinguish apples from oranges, but it becomes much more difficult to describe apples in terms of color or species.

and its demands, they do things that might be expected of faithful Jews. In sum, *Jewish Christian* should refer to

followers of Jesus who maintain a significant degree of Jewishness – they present themselves as faithful Jews standing in continuity, in both thought and deed, with God's covenant with Israel.⁹⁵

As much recent scholarship has shown, the question of who is a Jew and how one maintains Jewishness in antiquity is not a simple issue. There were some in antiquity who spoke as if Jewishness was a clearly definable entity. Such statements, however, were ideological pronouncements designed to enforce particular ideas about identity; they were not reflections of the reality on the ground, which remained complex, vague, and strongly debated. A wide range of practices, associations, beliefs, and social and ethnic groupings could factor into the claim that one did or did not maintain Jewish identity. This renewed awareness of the complexity of maintaining Jewish identity must be taken up into any quest for Jewish Christianity. We can expect that how some followers of Jesus maintain Jewishness involved a wide-ranging set of practices, ideas, and social connections. We can expect, as in Judaism in general, that the issue of how one maintains Jewishness while following Jesus continued to be complex, vague, and strongly debated.

The wide range of what it means to follow Jesus, particularly before the imposition of Nicene orthodoxy, is now recognized in critical scholarship, as is the complexity of what defines Jewishness before the widespread assertion of rabbinical authority. This complexity of Christianities and Judaisms will also be evident within any description of Jewish Christianities. While the parameters of these movements will change across time and place, the definition offered above may encompass the evidence for Jewish ways of following Jesus in antiquity while sustaining the critical debate about the shape and role of such groups.

Excluded from this definition of Jewish Christianity would be all conceptions of an Israel replaced by or superseded by Christianity, all systems that abrogate or replace the Law, all allegorizing or spiritualizing interpretations of the Law, and all christological paradigms that call into question the basic integrity of monotheism. These represent a disruption rather than a continuation of Israel's heritage. Also excluded would be individuals and movements who embrace aspects of Jewish belief and practice, but whose basic identity is Gentile and Christian.

⁹⁵ The difficulty, of course, is that self-perception and self-understanding are not directly available. Even more elusive is the attempt to recover self-perception from the representation of a group by their critics. Even direct testimony from within a group tends to be controlled and idealized. From a critical perspective, self-identity is a construct based on representations, characterizations, context, and practices. The most valid of these constructions draw upon various types of evidence and are confirmed by multiple voices. This limitation applies to all groups from this era, including other Jews and other Christians. The tools for dealing with such limitations were developed primarily in the quest for the historical Jesus.

It is also invalid to define Jewish Christianity by what it is not – neither Jewish nor Christian. Similarly, a definition should not be shaped by perceptions of orthodoxy or heresy, either from the Christian or Jewish side. Finally, Jewish Christianity cannot be defined by its failure to survive. In particular, rabbinic and patristic definitions, since they represent the retrospective view of the dominant, surviving movements, cannot be taken as the last word on Jewish Christianity.

In the light of these critical issues, it should come as no surprise that Jewish Christianity proves difficult to define and to describe. It was a variegated movement scattered across a broad geographical and temporal range. Moreover, its contours were effaced by two powerful streams of tradition: orthodox Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. Like a *palimpsest*,⁹⁶ its story has been erased and written over by other stories. It is the task of critical scholarship to read the text beneath the texts, to tease out – from the polemics of their opponents, from the fragments of their own texts, and even from the silence and the gaps – clues to the identity of ancient Jewish followers of Jesus. In the final analysis Jewish Christianity can only be known in part, and it can only be described through a critical process of rediscovery, reconstruction, and redefinition.

⁹⁶ A *palimpsest* refers to a manuscript, usually of leather, whose text has been deemed expendable. The original text has been scraped away and replaced with a more valued text. While the ghost of the prior text is rarely available to the naked eye, scientific tools can often expose the underlying story.

CHAPTER 3

Strategies in a Quest for Jewish Christianity

New Testament scholarship has been occupied through some two centuries with the quest for the historical Jesus, that is, with the effort to distinguish the historical profile of Jesus from the faith-oriented literary portraits found in the New Testament. Although this scholarly quest has been marked by numerous difficulties and failures, it has also led to significant accomplishments. Not least among these accomplishments is the extended reflection across several generations of scholars on the methods and tools required to distill from ancient literature and artifacts an accurate profile of a historical figure. Among the fields of inquiry advanced by this historical quest are linguistics, literary analysis, sociology, the history of religions, and archeology. In addition, significant content has been added to scholarly knowledge about ancient Judaism and about the impact of Graeco-Roman culture upon the Mediterranean world. Some of the tools and insights developed within historical Jesus research may contribute to a historical quest for Jewish Christianity.

One key to recovering the profile of Jewish Christianity is the recognition that the stories of ancient Judaism and primitive Christianity have been framed in a utilitarian way by the triumphant elements of those traditions. This rhetorical stance distorts both their particular history and the story of their relationship to one another. This intrinsic rhetoric of triumph and distortion calls for a hermeneutic of critical suspicion.

A second key is recognition of the accidental and fragmentary nature of the evidence that remains. While all history is fragmented, the triumphant forms of Judaism and Christianity were consciously selective in their representation of Jewish Christianity. Such selectivity and fragmentation call for a critical hermeneutic of recovery and reconstruction.

A third key for recovering the historical profile of Jewish Christianity is recognition of the patterns of generalization at work in the representation of such groups. The patristic writers, for example, tend to describe all of their opponents through a few categories of heresy such as gnostic or Ebionite. Awareness of this tendency requires close attention to particular, local expressions of Jewish Christianity.

A fourth key is found in the necessity of a multi-disciplinary approach. Most studies of Jewish Christianity have been confined to a rather narrow field of literary sources and theological concerns.

A fifth key is the need to incorporate the ambiguity and complexity of this quest. The history of scholarship is often characterized by competition between those who find Jewish Christians nowhere and those who find them everywhere. Critical analysis will find the situation fraught with ambiguity and infinitely more complex than such stereotypes suggest. A more useful approach is to locate potential data along a continuum of historical value that ranges from possibility to plausibility to probability. Such provisional results more accurately reflect the available data, and such an approach provides the only reasonable access to the historical profile of Jewish Christianity.

These keys will shape the quest for Jewish Christianity. Because the representation of Jewish Christianity is distorted, fragmentary, stereotyped, scattered, and imprecise, a critical hermeneutic of recovery and reconstruction is required. This hermeneutical approach does not mean that Jewish Christianity should be found behind every gap and every contradiction within ancient literature or behind every illegible inscription unearthed by archeologists. It does require, however, recognition that some form of Jewishness provided the foundational framework of Jesus' earliest followers. It also requires careful reconsideration of the possibility that Jewish Christianity was a vital and enduring factor in the development of primitive Christianity.

Consequently, the strategy for this quest is guided by the diversity and complexity of the landscape. The origins of Jewish Christianity must be sought in the historical profile of Jesus, among the communities of his earliest followers, and in the writings that they produced. The most extensive articulation of Jewish Christianity is to be found in subsequent patristic representations, which must be sorted carefully. Other evidence may be found in the remnants of the literary tradition ascribed to Jewish Christians, in rabbinic references to followers of Jesus, and in a few archeological findings.

The sorting of such evidence is not simple, and no one method can accurately survey these diverse landscapes. On the other hand, any suggestions of multiple attestation from a diversity of landscapes and any threads of continuity and coherence are noteworthy. Such collaborative testimony may provide important historical markers for the existence and the endurance of a religious phenomenon that may be properly described as Jewish Christianity. If so, the possibility that this phenomenon impacted the development of both ancient Judaism and primitive Christianity cannot be ignored.

PART TWO

Points of Origin

In order to advance the scholarly debate about Jewish Christianity, this study looks for evidence of persons and groups in antiquity who sought to fulfill God's covenant with Israel by a simultaneous effort to follow Jesus and to maintain Jewishness. One key to the identity of such groups is to be found in the persons, places, and processes from which they originate. A primary key to the origin and identity of such groups may be sought in the historical profile of Jesus as a first century Jew. Subsequent chapters will consider the shape of the earliest communities of Jesus' followers and the profile of the earliest texts that emerge from these communities. These points of origin may shed light on the foundational character and the earliest developments of a religious phenomenon that may be properly described as Jewish Christianity.

CHAPTER 4

Jesus the Jew

While the last thirty years of research on the historical figure of Jesus have been dominated by an affirmation of his Jewishness, this was not always so. Albert Schweitzer showed in 1901 and 1906 how the Historical Quest of the 1800s tended to reconstruct Jesus in the modern, non-Jewish images of European liberalism.¹ Schweitzer's work largely ruptured the scholarly quest for Jesus as a historical figure. When the New Quest reinstated the search in the middle of the 20th century, among its chief tools was a criterion of dissimilarity. This criterion attributed to Jesus those sayings and traits that could not be explained by reference to Judaism or Christianity. More significantly, New Quest scholars often used these exotic markers to reconstruct a comprehensive portrait of the life of Jesus. This delimitation largely separated Jesus from Jewish ideas and resulted in shallow stereotypes of both Jesus and Judaism.² The recent efforts of the Jesus Seminar tend to continue this distancing of Jesus from his Jewish context.

1. A Quest for the Jewish Jesus

The emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus was already present in the work of earlier scholars such as Albert Schweitzer, Joachim Jeremias, Paul Winter, Samuel Sandmel, Joseph Klausner, and others.³ It was largely the work of Geza Vermes,

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950 [1901]). His treatment of the Quest appeared as *Von Reimarus zu Wrede, eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906). The English translation may be found as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. Dennis Nineham; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

² In recent studies a reverse canon is sometimes applied: since the Jewishness of Jesus is a primary presumption, Jewish ideas and practices attributed to Jesus are given high historical plausibility.

³ Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p.170, for example, understood Jesus in terms of Jewish apocalyptic literature: "the only significance of the whole of Jesus' activity is to gather the eschatological people of God". Paul Winter produced *On the Trial of Jesus*, ed. and rev. by T. A. Burkhill and Geza Vermes (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974 [1st edition., 1961]). Samuel Sandmel wrote *We Jews and Jesus* (London: Gollancz, 1965). Joseph Klausner's work appeared in Hebrew in 1930, then in English as *Jesus of Nazareth; His life, times, and teaching*, trans. Herbert Danby (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1947).

however, that provoked a systematic attempt to understand Jesus within Judaism.⁴

Using a variety of rabbinic texts, Vermes, in 1973, sought to place Jesus wholly within the Judaism of his day. He did so by placing him not among the rabbis, but among the charismatic figures of Judaism: "the logical inference must be that the person of Jesus is to be seen as part of the first-century charismatic Judaism and as the paramount example of the early Hasidim or Devout."⁵ Vermes argues that ongoing tension between this movement and the rabbinic code accounts for the official perception of such figures:

Since halakhah became the corner-stone of rabbinic Judaism, is it not surprising that, despite their popular religious appeal, Jesus, Hanina, and the others, were slowly but surely squeezed out beyond the pale of true respectability.⁶

Later Christian traditions also abandoned this characterization; they elevated Jesus to divine status and formulated language and titles to express that theology.

Having located Jesus among the Galilean Hasidim, Vermes then looks at primary titles for Jesus: prophet, lord, messiah, son of God. Vermes reads these titles against their historical background and their use in Judaism of the first century. He concludes that Jesus did not refer to himself as messiah. The use of the other terms by Jesus – or by his earliest followers in reference to Jesus – is viewed as fully compatible with the Jewish model of the charismatic holy man. Only in later confessional use do these and other titles separate Jesus from his Jewish context. Vermes concludes that

The positive and constant testimony of the earliest Gospel tradition, considered against its natural background of first-century Galilean charismatic religion, leads not to a Jesus as unrecognizable within the framework of Judaism as by the standard of his own verifiable words and intentions, but to another figure: Jesus the just man, the zaddik, Jesus the helper and healer, Jesus the teacher and leader, venerated by his intimates and less committed admirers alike as prophet, lord, and son of God.⁷

This description also helps to quantify what Jesus is not: "Jesus did not belong among the Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots or Gnostics, but was one of the holy miracle-workers of Galilee."⁸ While Vermes locates Jesus fully within a distinct form of first century Judaism, he points to two traits in which Jesus differs from others.

⁴ Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1973). A number of works followed. Among these are *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew* (Newcastle: University of Newcastle, 1981); *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1983); *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

⁵ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 79. Vermes, pp. 60–78, compares the stories of Honi and of Hanina ben Dosa.

⁶ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 82.

⁷ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 225.

⁸ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 223.

Second to none in profundity of insight and grandeur of character, he is in particular an unsurpassed master of the art of laying bare the inmost core of spiritual truth and of bringing every issue back to the essence of religion, the existential relationship of man and man, and man and God.⁹

Vermes also contends that Jesus was distinguished by the audience he addressed.

The prophets spoke on behalf of the honest poor, and defended the widows and the fatherless, those oppressed and exploited by the wicked, rich and powerful. Jesus went further. In addition to proclaiming these blessed, he actually took his stand among the pariahs of his world, those despised by the respectable. Sinners were his table-companions and the ostracized tax-collectors and prostitutes his friends.¹⁰

While not all would agree with where Vermes locates Jesus within Judaism, Vermes established the presumption that Jesus was a Galilean fully at home within the variegated Judaism of the first century ce. Subsequent studies would seek to describe the locale, social setting, and mode of operation of the Jewish Jesus.

E. P. Sanders took up this renewed focus on the Jewishness of Jesus. He argued that any good explanation "should situate Jesus believably in Judaism and yet explain why the movement initiated by him eventually broke with Judaism."¹¹ For Sanders, this explanation is found in a worldview that can be described as Jewish restoration eschatology: Jesus believed that God was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. The key to this restoration was a new Temple, and this required the dissolution of the current Temple. While prior quests had focused on the authenticity of Jesus' sayings, Sanders turned to his deeds and to a description of his life.

Sanders contends the secure data about Jesus is limited, and even this should be placed on a continuum of plausibility. In *Jesus and Judaism* (1985), Sanders divided evidence about Jesus into six categories: certain or virtually certain; highly probable; probable; possible; conceivable; incredible (that is, not believable).¹² After a series of critical discussions among colleagues, Sanders offered a more concise sketch in *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993).¹³

- Jesus was born c. 4 BCE, near the time of the death of Herod the Great;
- he spent his childhood and early adult years in Nazareth, a Galilean village;
- he was baptized by John the Baptist;
- he called disciples;
- he taught in the towns, villages and countryside of Galilee (apparently not the cities);
- he preached "the kingdom of God";
- about the year 30 he went to Jerusalem for Passover;
- he created a disturbance in the Temple area;
- he had a final meal with the disciples;

⁹ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 224.

¹⁰ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 224.

¹¹ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 18.

¹² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 326–27.

¹³ E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

- he was arrested and interrogated by Jewish authorities, specifically the high priest;
- he was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate.¹⁴

To this list Sanders adds a few secure facts about the aftermath of Jesus' life.

- his disciples at first fled;
- they saw him (in what sense is not certain) after his death;
- as a consequence, they believed that he would return to found the kingdom;
- they formed a community to await his return and sought to win others to faith in him as God's Messiah.¹⁵

Thus, Sanders has done away with both sides of the criteria of dissimilarity. He attempts to understand Jesus by those traits that not only place him within the Judaism of his day, but also explain the emergent Christianity.

Marinus de Jonge takes his own route into the Jewish profile of Jesus and his earliest followers.¹⁶ Although he embraces the New Quest concern for the christology implicit in Jesus' words and deeds, de Jonge focuses on the issues of *continuity* and *divergence*, both in Jesus and among his earliest followers. He contends that questions of identity formation are not essential, but contextual: they emerge out of the ongoing interactions and negotiations with a particular time and place and people. For de Jonge, Jesus is best understood in two contexts: the responses he evoked from his earliest followers, and the connection and divergence of Jesus' ideas and actions to the larger framework of Jewish life.

Jesus was a Jew and his followers were Jews; for a long time Jewish modes of thought prevailed in the church. But Judaism around the beginning of the Christian era was a conglomerate of many different trends and groups, all interpreting and obeying the law of Moses and adhering to traditions of past generations, but arriving at very different results in theory and practice.¹⁷

For de Jonge, Jesus is thoroughly theocentric, and his creative appropriation of Jewish concepts explains his identity.

He believed himself to have been sent as God's final envoy, as the inaugurator of God's rule on earth, which would later be realized completely in the entire creation. Everything centered around the sovereignty and fatherhood of God. Jesus' christology was "theocentric" from beginning to end.... As God's final envoy Jesus saw himself as standing in a unique relationship to God, whom he addressed as Father.... This is true not only of how Jesus viewed his relationship to God and his mission, but also of how his immediate disciples and the next generation of followers viewed him.¹⁸

¹⁴ Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁵ Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 11.

¹⁶ The framework can be seen in Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context: the Earliest Christian Responses to Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), and in *God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' Own View of His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

¹⁷ de Jonge, *Christology in Context*, p. 27.

¹⁸ de Jonge, *God's Final Envoy*, p. 145.

Both contexts – a variegated Judaism and a variety of responses from his earliest followers – are engaged in the central question of eschatology.

Jewish eschatological expectation took many forms, but it always centered around the awaited decisive intervention by God – who might or might not employ human or angelic intermediaries. Jesus' expectation was thoroughly Jewish in this respect, notwithstanding his conviction that he himself was called upon to play a crucial role in the process. The same is also true of the expectations of his followers after his death, when, in the light of God's vindication of Jesus in the resurrection, they emphasized Jesus' very special and intimate relationship to God and the central part he was expected to play in the forthcoming events.¹⁹

Vermes, Sanders, and de Jonge represent different aspects of a concerted scholarly embrace of the Jewishness of Jesus. Also evident here is a renewed concern for how his earliest followers negotiated their experience with Jesus within changing contexts. A new wave of scholarship on Jesus had begun.

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz contend that three elements are common to recent reconstructions of the life of Jesus: 1) the theological interest of earlier quests has been replaced with sociological interests – a move designed to support historical objectivity and accuracy; 2) Jesus is understood from within Judaism rather than over against it; 3) there is renewed attention to materials outside the Christian canon.²⁰ It is clear that these traits do not apply to all recent scholarship.²¹ However, following Vermes, Sanders, and de Jonge, scholars would not often argue over whether Jesus was Jewish, but mostly over how he was Jewish.

John P. Meier has produced four volumes, with a fifth one projected, on the historical figure of Jesus.²² Meier understands Jesus as a marginal Jew in the model of Elijah: he intended to gather and reconstitute Israel in expectation that the end of the age was at hand. The image is thoroughly Jewish:

Whoever or whatever Jesus was, he was a complex figure, not easily subsumed under one theological rubric or sociological model. In this sense as well, he was a marginal Jew. In short, up to this point in our investigation the data suggest some sort of fusion of eschatological prophet, baptizer, exorcist, miracle-worker and healer, and rabbinic teacher of the law.²³

¹⁹ de Jonge, *God's Final Envoy*, p. 145.

²⁰ A wider discussion can be found in Gowler, *What Are They Saying About Jesus?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007).

²¹ N. T. Wright and Luke Johnson, for example, give primacy to the role of theology and avoid non-canonical materials.

²² John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol 1: *The Roots of the Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol 3: *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4: *Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). A fifth volume is projected to deal with the enigmas Jesus posed and was.

²³ Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, p. 454.

N. T. Wright has proposed a five-volume treatment of the historical figure of Jesus. Asserting an approach of “critical realism” as a counter to the hermeneutics that operate under the influence of the Enlightenment, Wright contends that all human knowledge, thought, and ways of life are framed in stories and are perceived as components of a worldview. Wright begins his analysis of Jesus by proposing to reconstruct, through its stories, the worldview of first century Judaism. The remaining step is to construct the individual mindset of Jesus within this worldview. Wright gives some sketch of the figure of Jesus that will emerge from his volumes. The worldview of first century Jews, says Wright, is dominated by the experience of exile: Gentiles control Israel, and the Temple has not been restored to its former glory. The mindset of Jesus is seen in passages such as the apocalypse of Mark 13: he has come to announce the return from exile, the imminence of God’s restored kingdom, and the foundation of a new Temple.

In contrast to the approach of Wright, Gerd Theissen seeks to extend the hermeneutics of the Enlightenment; he explains Jesus in terms of the social movements from which he emerges. In his *Sociology of Early Palestine* (1978), Theissen posited a social network composed of itinerant charismatic prophets and their network of supporters. Jesus, says Theissen, created such a group around himself and saw them as the first installment in the healing of the social and political crisis of Israel. While Jesus’ vision for healing the nation failed, the movement was continued after Jesus’ death by his followers, who focused their message on the coming Son of Man.²⁴

Theissen and Annette Merz developed this line of thought in *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (1998). Theissen and Merz replace the criterion of dissimilarity with a criterion of plausibility: positive evaluation is given to those traditions that are plausible within Jesus’ Jewish context but also provide a plausible explanation for subsequent developments in Christianity.²⁵ Their quest for plausibility leads them to understand Jesus as a wandering Jewish charismatic. His preaching is rooted in three distinctly Jewish sources: a prophetic reading of the Torah, Jewish Wisdom traditions, and Jewish eschatology.²⁶ Jesus is said to have combined the political metaphor of God’s rule with the familial metaphor of God as father; this combination stands at the forefront of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus, says Theissen and Merz, historicized these images in his insistence that the Kingdom of God was arriving in his own words and deeds. His calling of the

²⁴ Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

²⁵ Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London, SCM Press, 1998). Gowler, *What are They Saying About Jesus?*, notes that plausibility, for Theissen and Merz, involves multiple attestation and coherence. Gowler also notes a bit of circularity: Jesus can only have said and done things that a first century Jewish charismatic prophet would have said and done.

²⁶ Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 381.

Twelve, his entry into Jerusalem, and his actions in the Temple all seek to embody the vision of Jesus for God's coming reign.²⁷

2. A Different Way

In the same year that Sanders published *Jesus and Judaism* (1985), a distinctly different approach was initiated. The *Jesus Seminar*, founded by Robert Funk and chaired by Funk and John Dominic Crossan, sought to update and to popularize the quest for the historical Jesus. After much internal division and public notoriety, the results of the seminar began to appear in 1989, and a full report was given in *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (1993).²⁸

A distinct set of presuppositions and conclusions emerged from the Jesus Seminar.²⁹ Although their report insisted the words of Jesus cannot be recovered, plenty was said on the character and purpose of his speech.³⁰ Priority was given to sayings judged to be from earlier strata such as Q or Thomas, while doubt was expressed about self-reference on Jesus' part or about language akin to that of the gospel writers. While Jesus' vision may have been coherent, priority was given to expressions that were occasional and not systematic. About 18% of his sayings were taken to be authentic. Some 97% of the seminar insisted that Jesus was non-apocalyptic, leading to the conclusion that the apocalyptic Jesus "had died a scholarly death."³¹ The seminar concluded that no saying of Jesus from the passion narrative was authentic, that Jesus did not predict his own death, and that Jews were not involved in his trial or death. Jesus did not consider himself the messiah, but he did announce "God's Empire." This empire was countercultural, giving priority to the poor and marginalized, and it was characterized by outrageous deeds such as turning the other cheek. In his personal behavior, Jesus turned his back on the asceticism of John the Baptist and engaged in a rich social life of eating and drinking. Jesus' life was marked by what the seminar called "conflict with Judaism"; this tension was especially present in his contact with Pharisees and Sadducees.

Following this treatment of what Jesus said (and did not say), the seminar's evaluation of the deeds of Jesus appeared in *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the*

²⁷ Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 37.

²⁸ Robert Funk, et. al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: MacMillan, 1993).

²⁹ See the summary by Gowler, *What are They Saying About Jesus?*

³⁰ Aphorisms, parables, sharp exchanges given in language that was pithy, vivid, and humorous.

³¹ Funk, et. al., *The Five Gospels*, p. 11.

Authentic Deeds of Jesus (1998).³² Using similar presuppositions and guidelines, the seminar affirmed about 16% of Jesus' deeds as authentic.

The resulting portrait is that of a teacher of wisdom in the tradition of the Greek Stoics or Cynics. Though no scholar has described another Jewish figure of this type, particularly in first century Galilee, Jesus is understood as an itinerant sage teaching a countercultural wisdom.

Several members of the Jesus Seminar drew upon these findings to produce their own reconstructions.³³ While the portraits of Jesus produced by Funk, Mack, Borg, Crossan, and Robinson all stand at a distance from the images of Jesus as a Jewish eschatological figure, the non-eschatological Jesus is also said to be a Jewish figure – albeit an exotic and distinctly individualistic one. His countercultural teaching is said to draw upon the Hellenistic wisdom tradition, which is not unknown within Judaism.³⁴

Nonetheless, two different accounting schemes seem to be at work here. In one, Jesus is Jewish because his thoughts and actions are recognizable within one or more Jewish paradigms such as apocalypticism, propheticism, social reform, wisdom, charisma. A second method of accounting – that of the Jesus Seminar – seems to begin with the premise that Jesus is Jewish and, on this basis, to conclude that whatever he thought and did, whether wisdom, social reconstruction, stoicism, cynicism, or feminism, must therefore be seen in Jewish terms. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Jesus evoked by the seminar has not only abandoned Jewish apocalypticism; he stands as a figure largely isolated from all of Jewish culture, and he appears to stand in stark tension with Judaism itself. By over exaggerating the criterion of dissimilarity, the Jesus seminar has evoked a figure who is ultimately disconnected from both Judaism and from the historical developments of early Christianity.

³² Robert Funk, et. al., *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1998); Burton Mack, *The Christian Myth: Origins, Logic, and Legacy* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Marcus Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1987); Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991); James M. Robinson, *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of the Original Good News* (SanFrancisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

³³ Robert Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

³⁴ The clearest analogies might be Paul and Philo, who are Jews deeply influenced by the world of Hellenism, though, to my knowledge, the seminar did not depend on these analogies.

3. A Sample of Recent Contributions

Despite the notoriety of the Jesus Seminar, the Jewish Jesus who proclaims the imminence of God's Reign is based on solid evidence and continues to dominate New Testament studies. More importantly, the Jesus driven by Jewish eschatology continues to provide the best explanation of the literature, the social context, and the aftermath of his movement.³⁵ Despite the efforts of the Jesus Seminar, the quest for a thoroughly Jewish (and thoroughly eschatological) Jesus continues.

Daniel J. Harrington describes seven issues central to the continuing attempt to describe the Jewishness of Jesus:

1. New discoveries demonstrate the diversity of Judaism and make it more difficult to know what kind of Jew Jesus was
2. The complexity of the available sources, particularly in terms of date and context
3. Different theological assessments offered by Jews and Christians on the same materials
4. The Dead Sea Scrolls: what is the religious movement behind these texts and does it provide background for studying the Jewishness of Jesus?
5. The possibility that Jesus was a teacher of Jewish Wisdom
6. The question of who put Jesus to death and why.³⁶

In the focus on the Jewishness of Jesus, which was spurred by the work of Geza Vermes, the voice of Jewish scholars continues to play an important role. Michael Cook describes five perspectives through which contemporary Jews assess the presentation of Jesus in the Gospels.

1. Changes in early Christian perspectives on Judaism – from affirmation to disappointment to hostility – are written onto the figure of Jesus and the status of his Jewishness
2. Those interpreting Paul – either positively or negatively – shaped the way Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels. Included here are views about the Law of Moses, the mission to the Gentiles, and the supersession of Judaism
3. The Church, in its own struggle with Jewish opponents, adjusted and added to the teachings of Jesus
4. Side-by-side comparison of Matthew, Mark, and Luke suggests that later writers intensified the anti-Judaism of their sources
5. Jesus appears to fulfill expectations in the Jewish Bible because Christian writers modeled their portrait of Jesus on scriptural images.³⁷

³⁵ See, for example, my recent assessment that the Gospel of Thomas attributes to Jesus eschatological sayings and that at least one of these (Saying 82) is authentic Jesus material. This argument can be found in Broadhead, "An Authentic Saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas?" *NTS* 46/1 (Jan. 2000), 132–49.

³⁶ Daniel Harrington, "Retrieving the Jewishness of Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus Through Catholic and Jewish Eyes*, ed. L. Greenspoon, D. Ham, B. LeBeau (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000), pp. 67–84.

³⁷ Michael J. Cook, "Jewish Reflections on Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus Through Catholic and Jewish Eyes*, pp. 95–111.

Cook notes the impact of these various approaches.

Thus, the seeming anomaly of a Pharisaic-like teacher of parables espousing a new “Christian” theology, at least implicitly anti-Jewish, is most acceptably resolved for some by reclaiming Jesus as a Jew and ascribing the Gospels’ anti-Judaism instead to writers who had redirected the image of the historical Jesus along anti-Jewish lines.³⁸

Alan Segal contributes another voice to this conversation. In “Jesus in the Eyes of One Jewish Scholar,” Segal seeks to show how the apocalyptic vision of Jesus was both similar to and different from that found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁹ A recent study by Hyam Maccoby seeks to bolster an idea put forward by Paul Winter: Jesus was a Pharisee.⁴⁰

4. What is Implied by What We Think We Know?

My own reflections on the historical character of Jesus are found in a study on the role of implicit christology in the quest for Jesus.⁴¹ Inherent in this study is a conscious resistance to all methods that bracket out the Jewishness of Jesus.

4.1 Implicit Christology as a Defensive Response

The concern to find in the words and deeds of Jesus implicit markers for his self-concept arose within the history of scholarship as a defensive response to one stage of critical enquiry. The separation of history and dogma was a principal inherent in the ideas of the Enlightenment, but this separation was imposed upon the search for Jesus only gradually. The decisive blow came at the beginning of the 20th century, and it was delivered along three fronts. Adolf Harnack argued in 1900 for a clear distinction between the true image of Jesus and the Christ of dogma, with its metaphysical overlay of Greek philosophy.⁴² The second front rooted the demarcation in the Gospels themselves. The Gospel

³⁸ Cook, “Jewish Reflections on Jesus,” p. 108.

³⁹ Alan F. Segal, “Jesus in the Eyes of One Jewish Scholar,” in *The Historical Jesus Through Catholic and Jewish Eyes*, pp. 147–54.

⁴⁰ Hyam Maccoby, *Jesus the Pharisee* (London: SCM Press, 2003). In *On the Trial of Jesus* (1961), pp. 133–34, Paul Winter proclaims that “In historical fact, Jesus was a Pharisee,” and insists that “If the evangelists portray Jesus as being in violent opposition to the Pharisees, they depict a state of affairs which had come about several decades after the crucifixion.”

⁴¹ Edwin Broadhead, “Implicit Christology and the Historical Jesus,” in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2010). See also Edwin Broadhead, “Jesus and the Priests of Israel” in *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

⁴² Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), translated in English as *What is Christianity* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901).

of John was characterized as product of theological mythmaking and the Gospel of Mark was taken as a rather straightforward account of the history of Jesus. The third front came with Wrede and Schweitzer and took the division into the heart of the Gospel of Mark. William Wrede insisted that the Gospel of Mark, with its motif of a secret messiahship, is a theological construction and not a direct historical account of Jesus' ministry.⁴³ In the same year Albert Schweitzer shattered the confidence placed in the Markan portrait so favored by the liberal quest, and he called for a realistic assessment of the historical Jesus.⁴⁴ The demarcation of the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith was completed in the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Kähler. Both believed that a historical portrait of Jesus was impossible, but it was also unnecessary. The existential encounter with the Jesus of the kerygma mattered most for Bultmann, and Kähler gave priority to the historical, biblical portrait of Christ.⁴⁵

With the advent of the New Quest among the students of Bultmann, various topics were seen as fertile ground for extracting the messianic consciousness of Jesus. Most of these involved a search for some aspect of Jesus' words and deeds that might *imply* something about his identity and self-awareness. Scholars have sought an implicit christology in a variety of places:

- the existential quality of Jesus' message;
- the voice with which Jesus spoke (whether the *ipsissima verba* – the very words of Jesus; the *ipsissima vox Jesu* – the very voice of Jesus; or the *ipsissima structura* – the pattern of Jesus' speech);
- the charismatic authority of Jesus;
- the general impact or the coherence of Jesus' words and deeds;
- the continuity of the kerygma (message proclaimed) from Jesus to the early Church to the Gospels;
- the memory of Jesus in the traditions of the Church;
- concepts implied in the narrative structures of the story of Jesus.

The function of such approaches is noteworthy. Faced with the critical assertion that no explicit christological claims could be credited to Jesus himself, implicit claims kept open the hope of knowing something about Jesus and the hope of connecting the confessional preaching of the early church to Jesus himself.

This approach carries a number of liabilities. First, implicit christology is not an obvious or necessary hermeneutical step; it is a response to the failed attempt to locate a clear, explicit christology with Jesus himself. Secondly, implicit christology often thrives on a supposed contrast between Jesus and Judaism. In the third

⁴³ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J.C.G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971 [1901]).

⁴⁴ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950 [1901]).

⁴⁵ Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, trans. C. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964 [1892]).

place, implicit christology is in danger of becoming uncritical. Redactional and theological interests are not limited to explicit portraits of Jesus; they may be present as well in implicit descriptions. Fourthly, implicit christology is equally subject to Schweitzer's critique of liberal portraits of Jesus – that they tell more about the author than the subject. Fifthly, the quest for an implicit christology may combine two problems: the absence of explicit material and the insertion of redactional interests. In the sixth place, when a christology is implied in some aspect of Jesus' life, it is not always clear what is implied. Finally, as with the earlier quest for an explicit christology, a collection of implied data or images about Jesus might not articulate a coherent portrait of who he was as a real person (the real Jesus).

4.2 A Different Understanding of Implicit Christology

I have suggested a different use of implicit christology that seeks firmer foundations and does not bracket out the Jewishness of Jesus. Rather than beginning with isolated fragments of authentic material and seeking some implicit thread that unites them, it might be more profitable to begin with a broad outline of major features of Jesus identified through historical critical analysis, then to ask what is implied by such features. This approach would not focus so sharply upon what is dissimilar or exotic in Jesus' ministry but would measure data along a more positive continuum of possibility, plausibility, probability. Rather than using implicit christology as an indirect attempt to establish the profile of Jesus, it would be fruitful to explore what is implied by what we think we already know about Jesus. In this approach, implied christology could play a positive role in filling out a widely accepted profile.

What would such a profile look like? I would contend the following are plausible, probable descriptions of the profile of Jesus, firmly grounded in historical analysis and widely affirmed in critical scholarship.

1. Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Galilean Jew.
2. He lived all of his life under the control of Rome.
3. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
4. Jesus spoke primarily about Yahweh, the God of Israel.
5. The content of Jesus' message about God centered in the concept of God's Reign
6. The manner of Jesus' message presented a distinctly Jewish rhetoric grounded in parables, proverbs, sayings, and similes.
7. Jesus employed a prophetic rhetoric of urgency and demand.
8. Jesus had a reputation as a wonder worker – as a healer and exorcist.
9. Jesus stood at a distance from the cultic centers of Jewish faith.
10. Jesus engaged in ongoing controversy with the leaders of Israel.
11. Jesus died in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans.
12. Some of Jesus' followers claimed to have a renewed experience with Jesus after his death

If the broad lines of this profile are true, what does it imply about Jesus as a historical figure?

1. Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Galilean Jew. This implies:

- Jesus believed that Yahweh alone is sovereign over all creation and over all nations
- Jesus affirmed God's special work for and with and through Israel
- Jesus believed that God's will should dominate all of life
- Jesus believed the current age stood in irresolvable tension with the purposes of God; thus, catastrophe was imminent and unavoidable
- Jesus spoke Aramaic, but likely understood some Greek
- As a Galilean, Jesus likely had little exposure to Roman soldiers or Jewish priests
- Jesus, like most Jewish males, was likely married.

2. Jesus lived all of his life under the control of Rome. This implies:

- Like most faithful Jews, Jesus saw the Roman Empire as the antithesis of God's Reign, as an oppressive challenge to the sovereignty of God
- Jesus believed that Rome, like all nations, was subject to the judgment of God
- Jesus' silence about Roman power and his refusal to engage it implies his opinion that Rome is irrelevant in the larger scheme of history.

3. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. This implies:

- Jesus knew well the person and the preaching of John
- Jesus accepted John's call to repentance
- Jesus was a follower of John
- Jesus affirmed, at least initially, the judgment pronounced by John.

4. Jesus spoke primarily about Yahweh, the God of Israel. This implies:

- Jesus was driven by a theology rather than by any christology
- Jesus believed the destiny of the world depended on God's actions, not his own
- Jesus believed that the current age belonged to God's enduring work with Israel.

5. The content of Jesus' message about God centered in the concept of God's Reign. This implies:

- the created order stands already under the sovereign control of Yahweh
- the Roman Empire, because it stands in opposition to God's Reign, will cease
- the tension between the present order and God's purpose is irresolvable and unbearable; catastrophic change is imminent
- Jesus' identity is consistent with the content of his message: Jesus is the herald of the Kingdom of God.

6. The manner of Jesus' message employed a distinctly Jewish rhetoric grounded in parables, proverbs, sayings, and similes. This implies:

- Jesus embraced the prophetic traditions of Israel and placed himself within that tradition
- Jesus understood the social implications of his eschatological message

- Jesus understood himself as the distinct voice announcing the arrival of God's Reign; one's response to Jesus validated one's standing before God
- Jesus' role is consistent with the manner of his message: he is the Jewish prophet who speaks the word of the Lord.

7. Jesus employed a prophetic rhetoric of urgency and demand: repent, believe in the Gospel, follow me. This implies:

- Jesus' identity is consistent with the rhetoric of his message
- he is the one in whose words and deeds the message is realized
- his message demands a response, and this response is final.

8. Jesus had a reputation as a miracle worker – as a healer and exorcist. This implies:

- various individuals understood Jesus' wonders as manifestations of God's saving power, that is, as salvation
- the miracle stories may provide the foundational understanding for the confession of Jesus as the Savior.

9. Jesus stood at a distance from the cultic centers of Jewish faith. This implies:

- Jesus believed holiness was a spiritual value grounded in common places and common people
- Jesus believed his call and his teaching on the Kingdom of God now set the standard for holiness
- Jesus believed the leadership of Israel, particularly the Jerusalem Temple, had failed God and God's people.

10. Jesus engaged in ongoing controversy with the leaders of Israel. This implies:

- Jesus was a part of the lively Jewish dialogue about what it means to be faithful to God
- Jesus initiated some of this controversy
- Jesus saw this controversy, especially with the Temple leaders, as a part of his prophetic calling.

11. Jesus died in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. This implies:

- the Romans interpreted Jesus' words and deeds as politically dangerous
- Jesus' dispute over the role of the Temple played a part in his arrest.

12. Some of Jesus' followers claimed to have a renewed experience with Jesus after his death. This implies:

- this renewed experience was interpreted as evidence of Jesus' resurrection from the dead
- this interpretation provides the framework for various christological understandings and expressions.

In this approach, what is known to be probably true about Jesus carries important implications for analyzing what is not yet fully known.⁴⁶ This analysis embraces the hermeneutical presumption that the identity of the messenger is congruent with the context, manner, and content of his message. If this is true, the teaching and deeds of Jesus imply that he is a faithful Jew who stands in the prophetic tradition, calling Israel to repent and to practice a type of public, persistent holiness in light of the imminent catastrophe that will sweep away the current era and establish the sovereignty of God. Following in the steps of John the Baptist, Jesus issues a final call to God's Kingdom. Jesus thus framed his own work and his own being in the blinding light of the coming Reign of God.

4.3 A Galilean Jew

Can such a Jesus be said to stand fully within Judaism, yet remain distinctive? Is it possible to place Jesus in a continuum that links him both to 1st century Judaism and to the formative stages of the Christian movement? I have suggested one key to this continuity may lie in the Galilean context of Jesus' Jewishness.⁴⁷

Previous portraits of Galilee as an isolated hotbed of radicalism have given way to a more balanced, more documented account. It has proven difficult to sustain the view that Jewish piety is largely missing from the Galilee or that Jewish practice in the Galilee is radically different from Judea. Nonetheless, significant areas of potential tension may be identified. First, the Galilee of Jesus was under Roman administration, and this brought the intrusion of Greco-Roman culture.⁴⁸ While not all opposed the policies of the empire, Roman intrusion would likely bring some measure of economic, social, and religious discomfort to the Galilee of Jesus.

⁴⁶ Different assumptions about the profile of Jesus would hold different implications, and any critical consensus on Jesus will change over time. But any different assumptions must first stand the test of critical analysis and sway the discourse of wider audiences.

⁴⁷ Edwin Broadhead, "Implicit Christology and the Historical Jesus."

⁴⁸ Sean Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), notes that this intrusion is most evident in the imposition of Roman coins and in the building of Roman cities. Freyne also posits the influence of Galilean ecology, economy, and historical memory upon Jesus. Freyne further considers the impact of Judea and Jerusalem upon a Galilean Jew. Moreover, recent discoveries at Sepphoris suggest that Jesus lived next door to a thriving center of Graeco-Roman power and administration and to the wealthy cultural trappings of the *pax Romana*. Martin Goodman, however, sees little evidence for a distinct view of Galilean Judaism in his "Galilean Judaism and Judean Judaism," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, pp. 596–617. In my opinion, one need not argue for a sharp distinction between the Galilee and Judea in order to suggest that the fundamental ethos of the Galilee – political, economic, religious, and ecological – played a formative role in the identity of Jesus. While the Galilee may not host a radically different Judaism, it is a different place than Jerusalem and Judea.

A second area of discontent might be found in the relationship of Galileans to the Jerusalem Temple and its leadership. Cultic obligations would be difficult for those who worked in agriculture or commerce, and the trip to the Temple was no easy matter. If there were Galilean priests, they likely made their living from other jobs and commuted to Jerusalem for festivals or for their period of annual service. Some tension may also exist between the urban and rural ethos and around cultural issues such as dialect. Beyond this, the relative wealth of the aristocracy who ruled Jerusalem may be a source of conflict.

These two lines of conflict would combine in the office of the chief priests. Identified with Jerusalem, with the priestly oligarchy, and with the Temple cult, chief priests would also be identified with the Roman administration. Since the high priest was appointed by Roman leaders, at times on an annual rotation, collaboration with Rome was the norm. Beyond this, chief priests were probably associated with the collection of the Temple tax.

In the canonical gospels, Jesus' relationship with the ruling priests is marked by disdain and disengagement. Priests, and the ruling priests in particular, are treated as largely irrelevant for the message and ministry of Jesus in the Galilee. While this literary portrait reflects a post 70 ce ethos, it may be accurate in some degree for the time of Jesus. It is probably no accident that traditions focused on Jesus' sayings, such as the Sayings Tradition Q and the Gospel of Thomas, have nothing to say of priests.

This portrait of Jesus as a disgruntled Galilean appears to place him wholly within the ethos of his culture, place, and people. As a Galilean Jew, Jesus experienced the burdens of Roman administration and the distance from the Jerusalem cult; both obstacles were likely embodied in the office of the ruling priests.

Was Jesus more than a disgruntled Galilean? Are there elements that distinguish Jesus within this ethos and account for his enduring legacy? A plausible case can be made for four distinctions.

First, Jesus, from a historical perspective, was almost certainly a disciple of John the Baptist. If Jesus is related to John through Mary, then he, like John, is a son of Aaron who abandons his priestly heritage. Embracing a prophetic model, Jesus stands at a distance from cultic obligations, from dietary laws, from Sabbath limitations. Jesus preaches a coming kingdom and an impending disaster. Like John, he dies at the hands of the Roman occupation. This association with John and its impact on Jesus' ministry distinguishes him from the general discomfort that pervades the Galilee.

Secondly, Jesus embraced the role of an eschatological prophet. In view of the coming kingdom, Jesus appears to be genuinely unconcerned with the Romans. In a similar way, the Temple cult and holiness codes are relativised; in view of the imminent catastrophe all foods are clean, the Sabbath is for human activity, and God's forgiveness is available to all. This eschatological projection would generate conflict with both the Temple and with the Roman administration.

Thirdly, Jesus practiced a prophetic rhetoric: specific aspects of his speech envisioned the end of the Temple and its cult.⁴⁹ While numerous Galileans may have been disgruntled with the Temple and its leadership, Jesus probably stands out in the prophetic rhetoric that he directed against the Temple – a rhetoric similar to that emerging from the Judean desert at Qumran.

Fourthly, Jesus engaged in acts of prophetic symbolism that had extraordinary impact and extreme consequences. The most significant of these is his action in the Temple in the week of Passover. Numerous Galileans may have seen the Temple as a place of corruption and collaboration, and numerous visitors may have been repulsed, particularly in the season of Passover, by the presence of animal noise and waste, pagan coins, and commercial exchange in the courts of the Temple, but the prophetic act of Jesus against the Temple is distinctive.

These factors may shed light on the profile of Jesus. As a member of the Jewish people, Jesus may have shared with other Galileans a general experience of distance and discontent. It is likely, however, that his conflict with the ruling priests is distinctive. Any such tension is most plausibly rooted in his association with John the Baptist, in his eschatological message of the approaching Reign of God, and in his prophetic words and deeds. Jesus' vision of a kingdom where God's sovereignty is expressed in unmerited, unmediated forgiveness may be seen in his relativising of the holiness code, but it was probably expressed most dramatically in his symbolic actions against the practices of the Temple at Jerusalem.

It is possible that Jesus had only one significant engagement with the leadership of Israel⁵⁰ and that this encounter cost him his life. On the eve of Passover, Jesus was arrested by collaborators as a Jewish blasphemer and executed by Romans as a Jewish revolutionary – events that placed him at the center of the developing Christian story.

5. Conclusion

It is entirely possible that Jesus should not be numbered among those pious Jews whose religious practice centered in the Temple.⁵¹ His residence in the Galilee distanced him from the Jerusalem Temple geographically and, perhaps, ideologically. Jesus probably cannot be numbered among those Jews who closely followed codes of ritual purity and holiness; purity proved elusive among the Galilean working class, and the gospels suggest Jesus intentionally relativised such

⁴⁹ In doing so, he reflects prophets such as Jeremiah, who stood in the door of the temple to predict its demise (Jer. 26.1–24; Amos 9.1). A similar critique may be found at Qumran.

⁵⁰ This would depend to some degree upon whether one accepts the single visit to Jerusalem in Mark or the multiple visits in the Fourth Gospel.

⁵¹ Luke 1.5–80 characterizes Temple piety in the figures of Elizabeth and Zechariah, the prophetess Anna, and the elderly Simeon. Acts 3.1 offers a similar portrait of Peter and John.

codes. Jesus' life was probably not ordered by rabbinic law, since, among other reasons, such codes were likely not yet consolidated. He almost certainly cannot be numbered among those who raised arms against Rome. While Jesus seems to have stood at some distance from the perceived centers of Judaism, it may be that such eccentricity places Jesus alongside many Jews of the first century, especially in the Galilee.

Numerous scholars have interpreted the perceived distance of Jesus from Temple, scribe, Sadducee, Pharisee, and Zealot to be a distance from Judaism. More careful investigations, however, have shown that Jewishness in the first century ce was a widely variegated religious phenomenon, both in doctrine and in practice.⁵² Closer analysis suggests that the eccentricity of Jesus fits in a general way within the complexity of first century expressions of Jewishness.

Jesus was, however, almost certainly distinguished by his association with John the Baptist and by his obsession with the coming Reign of God. In this light Jesus re-evaluated the power of Rome, the authority of the Temple, the role of holiness and purity, and the practice of the Law. More significantly, Jesus saw his own identity and mission – and that of his followers – in the light of the coming Kingdom of God. This vision for the dramatic fall and rise of Israel was deeply rooted in the stories and visions of her prophets, and his life likely represents an attempt to recover the prophetic traditions of Israel. As a consequence, all descriptions of the historical figure of Jesus must begin and end with his profile as a Jewish prophetic figure.

The religious map of antiquity looks quite different when Jesus is separated out from Christianity and resituated as a historical figure wholly within the variegated framework of 1st century Judaism. If Jesus is a Jewish prophetic figure, it is also reasonable to expect that a prophetic, revisionist form of Jewishness will dominate among the earliest communities of his followers and within the earliest texts produced by those communities.

⁵² Jewish prophetic movements and the Qumran community exhibit, in different ways, a strong degree of eccentricity.

CHAPTER 5

The Earliest Communities of Jesus' Followers

Chapter 2 defined Jewish Christianity as persons and groups in antiquity whose historical profile suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness and that they do so as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel. Chapter 3 showed that the origins of this religious phenomenon are almost certainly connected to the historical profile of Jesus. As a Galilean Jew, Jesus likely shared generally in the discontent of his region and its relative distance from the centers of power of Judaism. Jesus stood out from this context, however, in his allegiance to John the Baptist and in his vision of the approaching crisis. His proclamation of the Kingdom of God almost certainly provides the interpretive matrix for his words, his deeds, and his death. This historical profile locates Jesus fully within the diverse matrix of first century Judaism.

Followers of Jesus arose in various places and contexts. To what degree did these communities continue in the Jewish ethos of Jesus? To what degree did they transform this Jewish matrix? To what degree did they stand outside of it? Such questions cannot be answered globally, but only locally, by particular times and places. Consequently, the quest for historical markers for Jewish Christianity requires an analysis of what can be known and reconstructed from the earliest communities of Jesus' followers.

Any attempt to reconstruct the profile of an ancient community must be provisional: access to data is limited and sometimes accidental, and sources are often tendentious. While certainty may be the ideal, the results can only be measured in terms of plausibility and probability. In most cases Jewish Christianity does not provide the only explanation for the formation and development of a particular Christian community; in some cases, however, it does provide the best explanation.

1. Jerusalem

Most modern scholarship agrees with Luke, Paul, Eusebius, and other ancient writers that Christianity originated among the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. Reconstructions differ, however, about the significance and characteristics of this movement, about its impact, and about its endurance. The literary testimony to a Jewish Christian community that serves as the source and center for early Christianity can be traced along several trajectories.

1.1 Luke and the Restoration of Judaism

Luke-Acts provides the most extensive portrait of the Jerusalem community. The ending of the Gospel of Luke shows clear redactional activity that prepares for the Lukian focus on Jerusalem. In Mark 16.7, women at the tomb are sent to tell Jesus' disciples to meet him in the Galilee, just as he had told them. In Mark 16.8, the final verse of the gospel, the women flee and tell no one. Matthew 28.8–20 picks up this thread and completes it: the women tell the disciples, they meet Jesus on the designated mountain in the Galilee, and they are commissioned to go to the nations. Luke 24.6–53 redirects this story: the women are told to *remember* what Jesus told them while they were in the Galilee. They return to tell the rest what had happened. Luke then tells new, distinct stories about appearances in and around Jerusalem (24.13–53). After the ascension, the followers of Jesus return to Jerusalem, where they are continually in the Temple, blessing God (24.53). The opening verses of the book of Acts pick up this new direction: disciples are told not to leave Jerusalem, and they are promised a mission to the ends of the earth. After the ascension, they return to Jerusalem (1.12–14) and worship in the Temple (3.1–10). Thus, Luke has reshaped the end of the gospel and the beginning of Acts to accommodate his focus on the beginnings of Christianity in Jerusalem.

Most scholars now see the book of Acts not as straightforward history, but as an apology – a carefully crafted case for the validity of the Christian movement. Some consensus has been reached on the apologetic design of Luke. First, most interpreters agree upon Luke's intention to show that Gentile Christianity has authentic beginnings in the Jesus movement and in the earliest apostolic activity in and around Jerusalem. The second major pole of Luke's apologetic is seen in his theodicy – in his insistence that God has not abandoned Israel. The third pole of apologetic is Luke's suggestion that the Jewish people abandoned God. The Old Testament stories of Israel's rejection of God's salvation are, for Luke, repeated in the rejection of Jesus by the Jerusalem establishment and in the rejection of Paul's preaching by the synagogues of the diaspora.

Closer inspection reveals another, often overlooked motif: in Acts 1–9 Luke presents the messianic movement in Jerusalem not simply as the beginning of Christianity, but, more importantly, as the restoration of authentic Judaism. This process signals the fulfilment of the Old Testament. In particular, this restoration is a prophetic movement that stands in continuity with the prophetic traditions of Israel (3.24–25). This renewal is marked by the outpouring of the Spirit (2.17–21). It is eschatological in that it represents God's final and complete call to salvation (2.14–41). Finally, this movement is messianic: it centers on the offer of forgiveness that has come with Jesus, the crucified and risen messiah. Luke traces the impact of this messianic renewal upon various aspects of Judaism.

First, sectarian divisions within Judaism are challenged by the messianic movement. Saul, a dynamic Pharisee, is drawn into the movement and turns to the propagation of its message (9.1–30). Still he identifies himself as a Jew (21.39) and as a Pharisee (23.6). A great many of the priests join the movement (6.7). Gamaliel, a respected teacher and Sanhedrin member, calls for tolerance (5.33–39). A Zealot is numbered among the followers of Jesus (1.13). Proselytes are drawn into the messianic movement (2.10; 6.5; 8.26–40). Luke thus demonstrates that the messianism centered around Jesus has begun to overcome the sectarian divisions within Judaism.

In a similar manner Luke shows instances of reconciliation between Hebraic and Hellenistic Judaism. Practical matters are addressed through the appointment of the Seven (6.1–6). Hellenistic Jews are addressed with the message about Jesus (2.5–13), and Saul of Tarsus seeks to convince fellow Hellenists of the messianic movement (9.29).

Thirdly, Luke addresses the structural divisions that mark Israel's worship. The messianic movement is equally active in Temple (3.1–26; 5.19–21, 42), before the councils of rulers (3.5–12), and in house worship (5.42). Stephen's debate with the synagogue foreshadows the activity of the messianic movement in the synagogues of the diaspora. The messianic movement thus crosses the various institutional lines of Judaism.

Fourthly, the traditional Jewish distinctions between male and female are addressed by the messianic movement. Both men and women undergo the initiatory rite of baptism (8.12). Women serve as exemplary disciples within the messianic movement (1.14; 9.36).¹

Fifthly, Luke demonstrates how this messianism overcomes the racial divisions that mar Judaism. Devout Jews from "every nation" hear the proclamation that Jesus is God's messiah (2.5–42). The messianic movement attracts adherents from Asia, North Africa, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia, among others. In this way Luke portrays the messianic movement as a form of Judaism not limited by racial bounds.

Finally, Luke demonstrates the expanding geographical reach of this messianic movement. This Jewish messianism pervades the three traditional realms of Israel: Judea, Galilee, Samaria (9.31). Luke then lists various nations² and cities³ where this messianic movement succeeds.

The designation of the members of the messianic movement as *Christians* is not employed until Acts 11.26, and here it applies to Antioch. In Acts 1–9 Luke makes no attempt to distinguish the messianic movement as anything other

¹ Acts will tell later of Lydia, who comes from Jewish piety into the messianic movement centered on Jesus (16.11–40). Her house apparently becomes a center for such messianism in Philippi (16.40).

² Phoenicia, Cyprus, Cyrene, for example.

³ Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, Antioch, for example.

than Jewish. Luke insists that this restoration of Israel, long predicted in the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2.17–21), comes to realization in the messianic community in and around Jerusalem.

Luke's larger design is to trace the expansion of Christianity into the heart of the Roman Empire. He sets forth this agenda and its process in Acts 1:8: under the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers will take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth. Luke traces these developments primarily along the path of Paul in his mission to the Gentiles. A key component in the success of this mission is a distinctly Lukan paradigm of the rejection of the Gospel by Jews. Using a threefold repetition of the motif (13.46; 18.6; 28.25), Luke insists that the failure of the Jewish synagogues to respond to Paul's preaching is both explanation and justification for the Gentile nature of Christianity.

In view of Luke's larger design, his account of a revitalized messianic Judaism operating in and around Jerusalem fits uncomfortably into his larger plot. Despite the threefold motif of rejection, Luke leaves plenty of anecdotal evidence that Jewish messianism centered on Jesus was an active and growing movement that endured in Jerusalem and re-emerged in almost every phase and locale of the wider missionary activity.

Why would Luke weave such conflicting evidence into his plot line? Perhaps he is bound by the constraints of reality. While Luke plots his story as if Jewish messianism centered on Jesus and Gentile Christianity are successive components in a solitary line of development, he knows the historical reality that this form of Jewish messianism and Gentile Christianity are ongoing, parallel developments whose story is forever entwined. To embrace this reality causes much trouble for Luke's story; to not embrace this reality would be a fiction. The same struggles were faced, from a Jewish perspective, by Paul.

1.2 Paul and the Jerusalem Community

Paul refers to the Jerusalem community at various points in his letters. In a scathing defense of his own calling and apostleship, Paul insists that his work does not originate from human authorities like those at Jerusalem. Recalling his conversion, Paul notes that he went to Jerusalem only after three years and that he saw no apostle except Peter and James, brother of Jesus (Gal. 1.11–24). After 14 years he returned to Jerusalem because of a revelation; there he had a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders (2.1–4). He insists that "from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders – what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality – those leaders contributed nothing to me" (Gal. 2.6). Paul also says that a confrontation with Cephas in Antioch was caused by representatives sent from James (Gal. 2.11–14).

Paul may refer to the Jerusalem community when he tells of missionaries who accept food and drink from the churches and who are accompanied by "believing wives." Paul claims the rights to the same privileges, but he does not take advantage of these (1 Cor. 9.1–18). Paul plans to send a collection from Corinth to Jerusalem (Gal. 2.10; 1 Cor. 16.1–4; 2 Cor. 8.1–9.15; Rom. 15.25–29). The "letters of acknowledgement," disparaged by Paul, may come from the Jerusalem community (2 Cor. 3.1–3).

Consequently, Paul both confirms and resists the authoritative position of the Jerusalem community in the period between 52–65 ce. While Paul asserts the legitimacy of his own calling and his own work among the Gentiles, he struggles over the fate of Israel and the mission to the Jews. His answer seems to come along two lines. First, there is a two stage mission: the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1.16). Secondly, Paul believes that in the mystery of God's workings "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 9–11, esp. 11.26).

Thus, the New Testament witness to the Jerusalem community is largely utilitarian. Luke insists that Judaism has undergone an eschatological renewal among the first followers of Jesus. For Luke, this renewal serves as the platform and as the first stage in the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 1.8). From Acts 13 on, the mission to the synagogues is largely unsuccessful, and Jerusalem serves primarily as the destination for reports.

Paul insists that his ministry did not originate in the Jerusalem community and does not need their affirmation. He claims apostolic status equal to that of the Jerusalem leaders and claims to have learned nothing from them. Despite his avowal, Paul is sensitive throughout his ministry about the blessings of the Jerusalem community.

While Luke and Paul testify to the importance of the Jerusalem community in an indirect way, the most significant witnesses to the vitality of the Jerusalem community and to its Jewish Christian identity are found outside the New Testament. The clearest picture is obtained by reading the New Testament accounts in light of these other trajectories.

1.3 James, Brother of Jesus

James, the brother of Jesus, is mentioned at a few places in the New Testament. Explicit reference is found in Mk 6.3 and its parallel in Mt.13.55, where four brothers of Jesus are named: James, Joses (Joseph), Judas, Simon. Paul makes explicit reference to James in Gal. 1.19; 2.19; he is among the few Paul visited after his conversion, and delegates from James cause the conflict at Antioch over eating with Gentiles. Paul's most significant reference to James is found in the resurrection traditions that Paul has received:

I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, and that he was buried, and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures, and that he was seen by Peter, then by the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 believers at once, among whom the most remain until the present, but some have died. The he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. But last of all, as to one born out of time, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor. 15.3–8).

Paul clearly wants to place himself within the circle of the apostles. It is noteworthy that the appearance to James, like that to Paul, is distinct from the experience of the other apostles. Implicit reference to James may also be found in the mention of “the Lord’s brothers” in 1 Cor. 9.5; 2 Cor. 2.1–3; Gal. 1.19.

Luke does not mention James, the brother of Jesus, in his gospel, and he plays a limited role in Acts. Luke gives one verse to the only apostolic martyrdom in the New Testament, telling that another James, the son of Zebedee, was killed by Herod (12.1).⁴ James, brother of Jesus, first appears in Acts 12.17: Peter sends word of his release from prison to “James and to the believers.” James is next mentioned in Acts 15.13, where he pronounces the outcome of the apostolic council. Here he is portrayed as having the authority to decide the case and to impose this decree upon other churches (15.13–21). James next appears in Acts 21.17–26, where he receives Paul and news of his mission to the Gentiles. Paul is urged by the larger group to perform a Nazirite vow. James does not appear again in Luke’s account.

The final piece of evidence from the New Testament is the letter accredited to James. The opening lines identify the author as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” and address the letter to “the twelve tribes in the diaspora” (James 1.1). The only distinctly Christian elements are found in the opening lines and in the reference to faith in “our glorious Lord Jesus Christ” (2.1). While the content of the letter reveals a distinct line of Jewish Christian theology, it tells nothing about the figure of James – not even which James – and nothing about the status of the Jerusalem community.

The testimony outside the New Testament, however, provides a rich characterization and history of the brother of Jesus and his place in the Jerusalem community. Reference to James can be found in a wide range of literature: Josephus (*Ant.* 20.200); Hegesippus (in Eusebius, *HE* 2.23.4); Clement (*Hypotyposes* 6, 7 in *HE* 2.1.2–4); Eusebius (*HE* 2.1.2–7; 3.23); the Gospel of Thomas (12); the Gospel of the Hebrews; the Pseudo-Clementines (*Rec.* 1.70–71; *Hom.*); the Manichean Psalm-Book (Psalms of Heracleidea); the Apocryphon of James (1–2, 16); the 1st Apocalypse of James (25.42); the 2nd Apocalypse of James (61–62); the Letter of Peter to James; the Letter of Clement to James; the Ascent of James.⁵

⁴ The execution of the apostle James should be dated 42 ce, while the execution of James, brother of Jesus, should be dated 62 ce.

⁵ The list is given by Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in*

A dramatic portrait of James and the Jerusalem community emerges from this material. The widespread use of this tradition in different contexts also confirms the continuing importance of James and the Jerusalem community. Near the end of this line of tradition, Jerome, writing in 392 ce, offers a summary that reports and analyzes material drawn from the book of Acts, from Hegesippus, from Josephus, from Clement, from Paul, from the Gospel of the Hebrews, and from other traditions.

James, who is called the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but as appears to me, the son of Mary sister of the mother of our Lord of whom John makes mention in his book, after our Lord's passion at once ordained by the apostles bishop of Jerusalem, wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles, and even this is claimed by some to have been published by someone else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority. Hegesippus who lived near the apostolic age, in the fifth book of his Commentaries, writing of James, says:

After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the church at Jerusalem. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. He alone had the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, since indeed he did not use woollen vestments but linen and went alone into the Temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees.

He says also many other things too numerous to mention. Josephus also in the 20th book of his Antiquities and Clement in the 7th of his Outlines mention that on the death of Festus who reigned over Judea, Albinus was sent by Nero as his successor. Before he had reached his province, Ananias the high priest, the youthful son of Ananus of the priestly class, taking advantage of the state of anarchy, assembled a council and publicly tried to force James to deny that Christ is the Son of God. When he refused Ananias ordered him to be stoned. Cast down from a pinnacle of the Temple, his legs broken, but still half alive, raising his hands to heaven he said, "Lord forgive them for they know not what they do." Then struck on the head with a club of a fuller, such a club as fullers are accustomed to wring out garments with, he died. This same Josephus records the tradition that this James was of so great sanctity and reputation among the people that the downfall of Jerusalem was believed to be on account of his death. He it is of whom the apostle writes to the Galatians that "No one else of the apostles did I see except James the brother of the Lord," and shortly after the events the Acts of the Apostles bear witness to the matter. The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says, "but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep)" and again, a little later, it says, "'Bring a table and bread,' said the Lord." And immediately it is added, "He brought

the Letter of James (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 2. See also the discussion of the impact of the epistle, pp. 61–100.

bread and blessed and broke and gave to James the Just and said to him, my brother, eat thy bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep." And so he ruled the church in Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero, and was buried near the Temple from which he had been cast down. His tombstone with its inscription was well known until the siege of Titus and the end of Hadrian's reign. Some of our writers think he was buried in Mount Olivet, but they are mistaken.⁶

While legendary developments and contradictory images are evident, this literary tradition certainly reflects a historical core concerning James: he was the brother of Jesus, the leader of the Jerusalem church, a martyr at the hands of Ananias.

1.4 The Bishops List

Eusebius and Epiphanius stand at the head of a literary tradition that lists the first bishops of the Jerusalem community prior to the bar Kochba war of 135 ce.⁷

James	Benjamin	Justus
Symeon	John	Levi
Justus (Juda)	Mathias	Aphre (Ouaphre)
Zacheus (Zacharias)	Philip	Joseph (Joses)
Tobias	Senikus	Juda

A number of scholars have noted the difficulty of fifteen bishops for the period from Jesus' death (c. 30) to the 2nd Jewish War (135 ce); the suggestion of 13 bishops in 35 years is even more questionable.⁸ While this is not impossible, Richard Bauckham suggests the last twelve names represent a council.⁹ In addition to the primacy of James in the Jerusalem tradition, the succession by Symeon is also noteworthy. Eusebius, citing traditions that seem to be dependent on the work of Hegesippus, says that 1) Symeon is the son of Clopas, 2) Clopas was the brother of Joseph; 3) Symeon is thus the cousin of Jesus; 4) Symeon was elected as the second bishop of Jerusalem in the aftermath of the martyrdom of James.¹⁰

Hegesippus contends that the choice of Symeon over Theobouthis was a decisive moment in the history of the community.

⁶ Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men (de vir. ill.)*, 2.

⁷ The primary list is that of Eusebius (*HE* 4.5.3–4). The variant spellings are from Epiphanius (*Pan.* 66.21–22). Eusebius also has a list of some 15 Gentile names who led the community from 135 to 200 ce.

⁸ The death of James, brother of Jesus, is 62 ce, while Symeon was killed under Trajan, likely in the opening years of the 2nd century. This would suggest 13 bishops in some 35 years following Symeon.

⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp 70–79.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *HE* 3.11; 4.22.4a.

For this reason they used to call the church a virgin; for she had not yet been corrupted by vain teachings. But Theobouthis, because he was not made bishop, began secretly to corrupt her from the seven sects among the people, to which he himself belonged ... From these sprang false Christs, false prophets, false apostles, those who have divided the unity of the church by injurious words against God and against his Christ (cf. Ps 2.2).¹¹

Hegesippus and Eusebius report that these sects instigated the crucifixion of Symeon in the reign of Trajan. Hegesippus notes that Symeon is a member of the house of David and a follower of the Christ.¹²

Despite the hagiographical elements of this portrait and despite Hegesippus' apologetic for the purity of the primitive church, the characterization of James and Symeon assign central value to the Jerusalem community. Despite the report that the Jerusalem community fled to Pella in the period before the fall of the Temple (70 ce), Hegesippus and Eusebius believe this Jewish Christian community had stable leadership from the apostolic era to the time of the 2nd Jewish War (135 ce). Two figures provided stability from the time of the apostles to the time of Trajan (c. 100 ce). One was the brother of Jesus, the other was his cousin.

The attention to James and to Symeon confirms the perception of Jerusalem as the origin and center for primitive Christianity. Writers like Hegesippus and Eusebius are not overly concerned with the doctrine and practice of the Jerusalem community. While Luke saw Jerusalem as the first stage in the Gentile church, Hegesippus and Eusebius see the Jerusalem community as the basis of orthodox Christianity. Historical analysis, however, suggests that the Jerusalem community actually stood at some distance in its faith and practice from the developments that led to orthodox Gentile Christianity. Both the canonical letter of James and the remembrance of James outside the New Testament point to a thoroughly Jewish tradition of following Jesus.

1.5 The Flight to Pella

Eusebius (c. 260 to 340 ce) says that the Jerusalem community survived the 1st Jewish War because they were warned by a prophecy to flee to Pella in the Transjordan.

On the other hand the people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed in Christ migrated (*HE* 3.5.3).

Epiphanius (c. 315 to 403 ce) knows a similar tradition, likely borrowed from Eusebius.

¹¹ Eusebius, *HE* 4.22.5–6.

¹² Eusebius, *HE* 3.32.3b; 3.32.6.

When the city was about to be taken by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should move from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella. (*De mens. et pond.* 15)¹³

Epiphanius uses this tradition to explain the origin of two heretical groups: Nazarenes and Ebionites. Epiphanius insists that these groups do not represent the Jerusalem Christians, but emerged as heretical alternatives only after the flight to Pella. (*Pan.* 29.7.7; 30.2.7). Both Eusebius and Epiphanius suggest the community returned to Jerusalem in the aftermath of the war (*HE* 4.5.1–2; *De mens. et pond.* 15).

A number of scholars dispute the historicity of the flight.¹⁴ Those who question the reliability of this event point to several difficulties:

- the supposed allusions to the flight prior to Eusebius are questionable¹⁵
- the core tradition in Eusebius (*HE* 3.5.3) speaks of a flight, but no return
- this core tradition may be constructed by Eusebius
- later writers seem to depend on Eusebius alone
- a flight from Jerusalem seems impossible during the siege
- Pella is hardly a refuge, since it was sacked by Jewish rebels.¹⁶

However, dismissal of the Pella tradition creates significant problems. First, it is clear that the tradition has been developed and used in different ways. The tradition is more plausible if it represents the flight and return of some Jewish Christians rather than a relocation of a community. It would be difficult to argue that no Jewish Christians survived the siege or that none returned to Jerusalem. Secondly, the tradition does not serve Eusebius well. He is more concerned to show that a universal mission emerged from Jerusalem. His story of the return to Jerusalem and the list of successors to James run counter to his focus. Thirdly, the choice of Pella would be strange if the tradition is created. Finally, the Pella tradition seems to provide the base for a number of Jewish Christian sects attacked by later writers. The cause of the heresiologists would be better served by the idea that authentic Jewish Christianity perished in the flames of the 1st Jewish War. Consequently, the form and function of the Pella tradition suggest that it is based on some historical reality.

¹³ Josephus relates a similar prophecy concerning the doom of Jerusalem.

¹⁴ Primary among these are Gerd Lüdemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella Tradition," in E. P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 161–73; Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, trans. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989 [1st German edition 1983]), pp. 200–13; Joseph Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella," *ETL* 66 (1990), 368–84.

¹⁵ Mk.13; Lk. 21; Mt. 24; Rev. 12.6, 14; *Asc. Isa.* 4.13; *Ps. Clem. Rec.*, 1.37.2.

¹⁶ These difficulties are summarized by Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 146.

1.6 Summation

Luke has underplayed the role of Jerusalem. While he describes there a vital movement that represents the renewal of Judaism, Luke moves quickly to the Gentile mission and its path westward in the steps of Paul. Jerusalem, for Luke, is the first stage of the journey to Rome.

Jerusalem is for Paul a pole of both attraction and repulsion. Paul frames his own apostleship and ministry in distinction from the Jerusalem leaders, but he also insists that he is their equal and has their blessings. Jerusalem plays a key role in Paul's efforts to articulate his own status and vocation.

The status of the Jerusalem community is overplayed by Hegesippus. He sees the leadership of James to be a primal age marked by unity and purity of doctrine. Like all heresiologists, he is seeking in his own time an orthodoxy that will actualize the myth of primal purity and unity. The reports of Eusebius and Epiphanius serve, for the most part, to support their view of orthodoxy.

A critical reading of these literary reports is revealing. Hidden within these utilitarian portraits is a Jewish community of Jesus' followers that endured at least until 70 ce, but perhaps until 135 ce. For at least a part of this time, the community appears to be led by relatives of Jesus. Just as noteworthy is the status of this community. Up until the 1st Jewish War, it apparently stood in some relationship to the Temple. At least until 70 ce, but perhaps until 135 ce, the Jerusalem community also provided the center of gravity for almost every form of Christianity.¹⁷ As a consequence, it may be reasonably argued that the religious phenomenon labeled as Jewish Christianity has significant connections to the earliest and most influential community of Jesus' followers.

2. The Galilee?

Various lines of evidence suggest that the Galilee was one site of early Jewish Christian activity. Several developments contribute to this expectation.

2.1 The Ministry of the Historical Jesus

Jesus was a Galilean Jew, and, apart from the final week, he likely spent the whole of his ministry in the Galilee. The Gospel of Mark frames the social location of Jesus in a paradigmatic scene in Mk 1.21–39. Jesus has left Nazareth to be baptized by John and to be tested in the wilderness (1.9–13). After the arrest of John, Jesus comes into the Galilee, proclaiming the nearness of God's reign; then he

¹⁷ A further testimony to this may be found in the Gospel of Thomas. This text, which is likely written in Syria in the 2nd century but is influential in Egypt in the 4th century, tells its readers to look to James, for whose sake heaven and earth were made (Saying 12).

calls disciples to follow him (1.14–20). Thus the Sabbath scene at Capernaum (1.21–39) is the first day of Jesus' public ministry, and it serves to epitomise the entirety of his work. On the Sabbath Jesus teaches in the synagogue of Capernaum, and the people are amazed at the authority of his teaching. The Gospel of Mark then offers three demonstrations of this power: an exorcism, a healing, and a general healing scene. The end of the unit conveys the significance of the scene: though the people wish him to stay, Jesus moves out to the neighbouring towns. The Markan conclusion provides the framework for Jesus' identity and mission: "And they came preaching in the synagogues in the whole of the Galilee and casting out demons" (1.39). In the Gospel of Mark, the story of Jesus is a Galilean story.

Both Matthew and Luke endorse this staging. Matthew is more explicit about the kingdom, he speaks of *their* synagogues, and he describes healings rather than exorcisms. The message and function, however, are unchanged:

And he went around in the whole of the Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people (Mt. 4.23).

The Lukan staging is a bit more complex. The rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Lk. 4.16–30) has been taken over from Mark 6.1–6, but it has been relocated to serve Luke's agenda. Typical Lukan themes are developed: the role of the Spirit; the fulfilment of scripture, specifically of prophecy; the mission of liberation; the rejection of the prophet by his own people. The relocated Nazareth story provides, for Luke, the paradigm of Jesus' ministry. But this is also a Galilean scene, and it is followed immediately by the Sabbath in Capernaum (Lk. 4.31–44).¹⁸ The following scenes trace the ministry of Jesus in the Galilee. Although the Fourth Gospel narrates extensive activity in Judea, Jesus' first public activity and his first Johannine *sign* occur in Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2.1).

Historical reconstruction of Jesus' life and activity reveals a Galilean Jew who is convinced of the nearness of God's reign. His ministry is that of a holy man and a prophet. The nearness of the kingdom is demonstrated in his deeds of power and in his proclamation in parables and sayings. His eschatological vision is congruent with one strand of the religious ethos of the Galilee. His message of liberation for the poor and outcast fits well into the social and economic world of Galilean Jews. The synagogue at Capernaum and the house of Peter seem to serve as a type of headquarters for Jesus, and he appears to use the synagogues of the Galilee as the staging ground for his ministry. This historical profile suggests that an early group of Jesus' followers will be found in the Galilee and in its synagogues.

¹⁸ There are three textual traditions for Lk 4.44: Jesus was preaching in the synagogues of a) Judea; b) the Galilee; 3) the Jews. The critical editions usually choose the harder reading of Judea.

2.2 Galilee and the Gospel of Mark

Critical analysis of the gospels suggests their discourse operates at two levels: that of the events and that of the audience. While this is not true in every detail, it is true in the larger hermeneutical codes of the gospels.¹⁹ Thus, the Gospel of Mark is not only *about* the Galilee; it is also directed *to* the Galilee. As Jesus faces his death, he offers a prophetic interpretation from the Hebrew Bible:

It stands written, “I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” But after I have been raised, I will go before you into the Galilee (Mk. 14.27).

At the end of the narrative, the directions to the community are placed on the lips of an external character – the young man at the empty tomb.

Do not be afraid. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene, the crucified one. He has been raised. He is not here. See the place where they placed him. But go up, say to his disciples and to Peter that he is going before you into the Galilee. There you will see him, even as he said to you. (Mk. 16.6–7)

There is no resurrection appearance in the Gospel of Mark. Thus, the promise of Mk 16.6–7 provides the last point of connection for the audience of the story. The end of the story is abrupt: “But going out they fled from the tomb, for they were having terror and astonishment. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (16.8).²⁰ If there is any narrative logic to this ending, it is to be found in its address to the audience: the story awaits its completion by disciples in the Galilee. This has led many Markan scholars to believe that this gospel speaks to and for a community of Jesus’ earliest followers in the Galilee.²¹

2.3 Galilee and the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew takes up this Markan framework, then fills it out (Mt. 28.1–20). The woman at the tomb receive the same message – “He is going before you into the Galilee” – but they do not flee. As they go to tell the disciples, they meet Jesus himself, who gives a different form of the message:

Do not be afraid. Go up and announce to my brothers that they should go into the Galilee. And there they shall see me. (Mt. 28.10)

¹⁹ A clear example of this is found in the narrator’s comment in Mk. 13.14: “Let the reader beware.” Jesus had no readers; therefore, the comment is addressed to the audience of the gospel.

²⁰ The various additions to 16.8 are, on textual, linguistic, and stylistic grounds, all secondary.

²¹ First enunciated by Ernst Lohmeyer, this position is widely embraced in Markan scholarship. While the focus is Galilean, a mission to the nations will precede the endtime (Mk. 13.10).

The appearance in the Galilee is narrated in Mt. 28.16–20. The disciples meet Jesus at the appointed mountain. There they receive his commission to go into all the world to teach, to make disciples, and to baptize. Thus, the Gospel of Matthew envisions the Galilee as the platform for the mission to the nations.²²

2.4 Galilee and the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke has a different paradigm for the first followers of Jesus: they will operate in and around Jerusalem, then move, in the book of Acts, westward toward Rome. The Gospel of Luke does not – perhaps cannot – omit the post-resurrection focus on the Galilee. In order to focus on Judea, this gospel reduces the role of the Galilee to a memory:

Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in the Galilee, saying “The Son of Man must be handed over into the hands of sinful persons and crucified and raised on the third day.” And they remembered his words. (Lk. 24.5–8)

For the Gospel of Luke, the Galilee is not a destination, but a memory. It is significant, however, that this gospel can only create the new focus on Jerusalem and its mission by reorienting the focus on the Galilee. This suggests that the future in the Galilee was a central expectation of the earliest gospel traditions. The Gospel of Luke does not embrace that expectation, but it cannot omit it.

2.5 Galilee and the Prophets of the Sayings Tradition (Q)

An early collection of Jesus' sayings²³ developed into a written Greek text that was used as a source by the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Since this text can only be known through reconstruction, the double tradition of sayings – those found in both Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark – provide the basis for analysis.²⁴ Reconstruction of the tradition has also led to attempts to understand the tradents and the context of transmission. The most plausible social setting and religious ethos is found among a community of Galilean prophets who, in expectation of the endtime, announce the kingdom of God in the days before the coming of the Son of Man. These wandering charismatics announce the coming

²² Most scholars do not think Matthew is a Galilean gospel. It is more properly located in Syria, probably in Antioch, and its field of vision is turned toward the Gentile mission.

²³ A few sayings are from John the Baptist. The Sayings Tradition is usually known as Q.

²⁴ But the double sayings should not be equated with the Sayings Tradition (Q). This is simply the tool available to access some portion of the tradition. On the question of the nature and extent of the Sayings Tradition, see my analysis in "The Extent of the Sayings Tradition (Q)" in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann (Leuven: Peeters, 2001). See also my treatment of the identity of the Sayings Tradition in "On the (Mis)Definition of Q," *JSNT* 68 (1997), 3–12.

kingdom in the words of Jesus, remembered from his ministry and transmitted (and developed) through the community of prophets.²⁵

Whether or not this is the precise context of the Sayings Tradition, its base is clearly Galilean. The villages of the Galilee are the immediate target of their mission, and judgement is pronounced upon Galilean villages that reject this message (Mt. 11.20–24; Lk. 10.13–15).

2.6 Galilee and the Family of Jesus

The family of Jesus stands at the head of the list of bishops of Jerusalem: James is the brother of Jesus, and he is followed by Symeon, cousin of Jesus. The presence of Jesus' relatives is even more conspicuous in the Galilee.

Paul knows "brothers of the Lord" who are traveling missionaries; they are accompanied by their wives and are supported by their hosts (1 Cor. 9.5). A similar report is emerges somewhere between 200 and 250 ce in the writings of Julius Africanus. He uses the term *desposynoi* (literally "those who belong to the master") to refer to the relatives of Jesus. The words of Julius are reported in Eusebius:

From the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Kokhaba they travelled around the rest of the land and interpreted the genealogy they had and from the Book of Days as far as they could trace it. (Eusebius, *HE* 1.7.14).²⁶

Julius suggests these are relatives of Jesus who preserve and transmit the Davidic genealogy of their house. Earlier reports from Julius say they seek to reconcile two different lines of genealogy. Richard Bauckham has suggested that this represents no simple pronouncement of the Davidic genealogy, but a theological interpretation of salvation history framed around God's work with the generations. In this schema, suggests Bauckham, the birth of Jesus signals the coming of the final generations.²⁷

Hegesippus also provides an interesting account of two of Jesus' relatives. This information is given in Eusebius, with part cited and part reported.

Now when this Domitian gave orders that those who were of the family of David should be put to death, it is recorded in an ancient authority that some heretics brought an accusation against the descendants of Jude, who was the Saviour's brother after the flesh, on

²⁵ The most significant study of the social and religious motivation for the Sayings Tradition is found in the work of Gerd Theissen. See, for example, *Social Reality and the Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

²⁶ The Book of Days refers to the biblical book of Chronicles. There are numerous villages with some form of the name Kokhaba. For this issue, the two most important ones are in the Galilee and in the Transjordan area. If this Kokhaba is in the Transjordan, it would establish a plausible connection to Jewish Christians groups described by patristic writers. This connection, however, cannot be substantiated.

²⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*.

the ground that they were of the family of David, and that they bore kinship to Christ himself. This is shown by Hegesippus, who speaks as follows in these very words:

But there still survived of the family of the Lord the grandsons of Jude, his brother after the flesh, as he was called. These were informed against, as being of the family of David, and the evocatus brought them before Domitian Caesar. For he feared the coming of the Christ, as did also Herod. And he asked them if they were of David's line, and they acknowledged it. Then he asked them what possessions they had or what fortune they owned. And they said that between the two of them they had only nine thousand denarii, half belonging to each of them; and this they asserted they had not in money, but only in thirty-nine plethra of land, so valued, from which by their own labors they both paid the taxes and supported themselves.

And that they showed also their hands, and put forward the hardness of their bodies and the callosities formed on their hands from continual working, as a proof of personal labour. And that when asked about Christ and his kingdom, its nature, and the place and time of its appearing, they tendered the reply that it was not of the world nor earthly, but heavenly and angelic; and that it would appear at the end of the world, when he should come in glory and judge the quick and the dead, and render unto every man according to his conduct. And that after this Domitian in no way condemned them, but despised them as men of no account, let them go free, and by an injunction caused the persecution against the Church to cease. And that when released they ruled the churches, inasmuch as they were both martyrs and of the Lord's family; and when peace was established, remained alive until Trajan. Such is the account of Hegesippus. (Eusebius, *HE* 3.19.1–3.20.7).

Various aspects of this account are doubtful: an appearance before Domitian himself; the end of persecution on their account; the role of the *evocatus* (which apparently means a soldier recalled into military service); a period of persecution that is then stopped; the stylized confession of faith before a Roman emperor.²⁸

Despite these flourishes, the account probably provides some insight into the family of Jesus and plausibly speaks of their role in the Galilee. Though not the only possibility, the most plausible location for the family farm would be in the Galilee, and the grandsons, named elsewhere as Zoker and James, come from a landed working class. If the memory that they “ruled the churches” is authentic, then it can only be a local tradition, since they are said to live in the time when Symeon is bishop of Jerusalem. The notation that they were betrayed by sectarians coincides with the reported fate of Symeon, and it may point to various types of Jews in Palestine.²⁹ Thus, the report of Paul, the account of Julius Africanus, and the story of the grandsons of Jude, taken together, provide a plausible portrait. They imply that the family of Jesus played an active role among Jewish Christians in 1st century Galilee as leaders and missionaries.

²⁸ See the issues noted by Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 99–100.

²⁹ The heretics and sectarians are almost certainly to be understood as some Jewish group. Hegesippus would probably not think of Christians as heretics, and it is precisely the Christians that are feared by Herod and Domitian. More plausible is one group of Jews exposing another one as followers of the Christ.

2.7 Galilee and the Rabbis

Rabbinic literature has little to say directly about followers of Jesus. The analysis of rabbinic evidence in Chapter 12 will argue that three types of rabbinic material may refer to the followers of Jesus: 1) some rabbinic references to heretics; 2) a synagogue prayer against heretics; 3) other stories and traditions, including the *Toledot Yeshu*. Some of these materials apply explicitly to the Galilee.³⁰

The rabbinic term for heretics (*min, minim*) refers to Jews who have made bad choices, particularly in terms of practice.³¹ This primary frame of reference suggests that Jewish Christians are one of the major groups of *minim*. Beyond this linguistic framework, however, there are several explicit references to a Jewish Christian. The most dramatic of these is an early and oft-repeated story about rabbi Eliezer.³² He is brought to trial, apparently before a Roman official, on a charge of heresy.³³ He is acquitted, but he remains concerned: he cannot remember any instance in which he may have committed *minuth*. Rabbi Aquiba stirs in him the memory that, while in Sepphoris, he was pleased by the teaching of Jacob, a follower of Jesus. This teacher becomes known in rabbinic tradition as Jacob the Min,³⁴ and he is typically associated with Sakhnin or Sakhnaya, which is some six kilometers from Kokhaba in the Galilee.

A similar story is told of rabbi Eleazar ben Damah in several texts from the Talmud.³⁵ When Damah is bitten by a serpent, he hopes to be healed by Jacob the Min, a follower of Jesus from Cephar Sama or Cepha Sechanja. Damah intends to prove from Torah that this is permitted, but he dies before he is able to do so. R. Ishmael proclaims Damah blessed because he died before he allowed Jacob to heal him. These accounts make it clear that rabbis sometimes used the terms *min* and *minim* to refer to Jewish Christians, in some instances by name.

In a similar manner, the synagogue prayer against heretics (*birkhat ha-minim*), which likely arose in the last part of the 1st century, applies in the earliest stages to Jewish heretics. Thus, the prayer may include among its targets some Jewish Christians in the synagogues. If so, the Galilee was likely the major area of conflict.

³⁰ For a general consideration of Judaism in the Galilee, see Martin Goodman, "Galilean Judaism and Judean Judaism," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, pp. 596–617.

³¹ The term will develop a wider use, including against Gentiles and Gentile Christians.

³² The story is found in various forms: b. A. Zar 27b; T. Hull 2.24; b. A. Zar 16b; Qoh. Rabb. on 1.8; Jalq. Shim'oni on Micah 1 and Prov. 5.8

³³ Almost certainly on the charge of being a Christian. This is one of the few charges of *minuth* that might attract the attention of the Romans.

³⁴ See b. A. Zar 27b; T. Hull 2.24; b. A. Zar 16b; Qoh. Rabb. on 1.8; Jalq. Shim'oni on Micah 1 and Prov. 5.8.

³⁵ T. Hull. 2.22,23; j. Sabb. 14d; j. A. Zar. 40d, 41a; b. A. Zar. 27b; see also Qoh. Rabb. 1.9).

Other stories reflect engagement between rabbis and Jewish Christians. At least one of these is associated with the Galilee. A late Jewish source says that Hananiah, the nephew of rabbi Josua (c. 130 ce), was forced to abandon the land of Israel and to live in Babylon.³⁶ This was his punishment because he was placed under a spell by the *minim* of Kephar Nahum (Capernaum).

2.8 Joseph of Tiberias

Joseph of Tiberias was a Jew who was associated, at one point, with the Jewish leader (Patriarch). He converted and was forced to flee from the Galilee in the early 4th century. He took refuge in the Gentile city of Scythopolis (Beth Shean). From there his life took two interesting turns. Under the patronage of Constantine he was sent to build Christian churches in the Galilee, and he became a source for Epiphanius and his *Panarion*.³⁷ Joseph suggested there were no (Gentile?) churches in the Galilee at the time of Constantine, and he was allowed to build at Sepphoris, Nazareth, Capernaum, and other places. He also said that some of “the believing Jews” at Tiberias have in their *genizah*³⁸ a copy of the Gospel of John translated into Hebrew, but also Hebrew Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles.

2.9 Conclusion

Jesus was a Galilean Jew. His ministry was likely centered in the Galilean village of Capernaum, from where he travelled to the synagogues of the Galilee. The Gospel of Mark appears to be written not only *about* Galilee, but also *to* Galilee. This orientation is echoed by the Gospel of Matthew, but here Galilee becomes the platform for the sending to the nations. Luke-Acts follows an axis from Jerusalem to Rome; in order to do so, it must first reorient the Galilee traditions. The Sayings Tradition suggests a setting in the Galilee, among other places.

However, these strong expectations that early Jewish followers of Jesus are to be found primarily in the Galilee are not given clear affirmation in the literary and archeological evidence. Despite this silence, plausible traces of a Jewish Christian movement may be found in the subsequent history of the relatives of Jesus: the missionary activity of his brothers, the legacy of James, the leadership of Symeon and the grandsons of Jude. Moreover, some elements of the rabbinic engagement with Jewish Christians can be located in the Galilee, and the stories of Joseph of Tiberias offer hints of a Jewish Christian presence. This multiple attestation from diverse interests suggests there was some historical reality to this

³⁶ The text, which is late, is found only in Qoh. Rabb. 1.8.

³⁷ See especially *Pan.* 30.

³⁸ A *genizah* is a storage niche in the synagogue that is designed to hold texts containing sacred names.

tradition. It is possible, then, that Jewish Christianity may indeed have been present at various times in the Galilee, but there is no evidence of a coherent movement or of a dominant presence.

3. Antioch

Most descriptions of primitive Christianity see Antioch in Syria as the place where Christianity escaped its bondage to Jerusalem and its Jewish heritage. This characterization is grounded in the role of Antioch in the book of Acts: here Gentiles accept the gospel, here the Pauline mission begins, and here the followers of Jesus are first called *Christians*. The portrait of Antioch is confirmed and developed in the writings of Ignatius (c. 100 ce): here the orthodoxy of the Gentile church is guarded by a tripartite institutional structure of bishop, elders, deacons. In the scholarly caricature of the Lukan paradigm, Antioch is halfway between Jerusalem and Rome.

Even the Lukan portrait proves to be more complicated than any simple Jerusalem-Antioch-Rome paradigm. Luke mentions that Nicolaus, one of the seven chosen as deacons, is a proselyte to Judaism who comes from Antioch (Acts 6.5). Only in Acts 11.19–30, however, is attention given to Antioch. Luke says that some who left Jerusalem after the death of Stephen went to Antioch. There they carried on a mission to Jews only. Luke then says that some who came from Cyprus and Cyrene began speaking to Hellenists. By Hellenists, Luke likely mean Greek-speaking Jews. Barnabas, who is also from Cyprus (4.36), is sent from Jerusalem to continue this ministry. He recruits Paul to help him, and they work together for a year. It is in this context that Luke says “it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians” (11.26).

This passage has often been interpreted as the transition to a Gentile church and the launching of the Gentile mission to Asia Minor and Greece. This new situation is said to require a new name – Christians. This image has been read back onto the story, however. If the account ended at Acts 13.4, the story would be dominated by a Jewish Christian movement that has attracted and welcomed a variety of Jews. The Jerusalem community is dominated by Hebrew speakers, with some Hellenists. Pentecost witnesses Jews from a variety of locales and languages responding to the gospel. In Antioch, a number of Greek speakers respond, and they are brought under the care of the Greek-speaking Barnabas. The use of a Greek term – *christianos* – to describe these believers is to be expected.³⁹ Even in Luke’s accounting, the movement is now composed of a wide variety of Jewish followers of Jesus. The inclusion of Gentiles is first seen in Joppa when Peter meets

³⁹ It should be noted that *christianos* does not become a prevalent term among patristic writers. It is used only by Ignatius of Antioch and in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

Cornelius; this event is welcomed by the Jerusalem community (11.18). The conversion of Cornelius is followed by the first movement to Syrian Antioch (11.19). A sizable response by Gentiles (at Psidian Antioch) begins only in 13.44–52, and this is reported back to the community at Syrian Antioch in 14.26–27.⁴⁰ The immediate result is controversy over the terms of admission for Gentiles, leading to the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15.1–35).

At no point does Luke show the community at Antioch becoming primarily Gentile. Nor does it become a center for the Pauline mission. In the account in Acts, Paul has a falling out with Barnabas and goes his own way (15.36–41), returning to Antioch only once more for a short time (18.22). Paul also tells of his confrontation with Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2.11–14). Paul's account speaks of no reconciliation; indeed, he seems to have lost the confrontation with Peter. Paul does not mention Syrian Antioch again in the remainder of his writings.

Thus, the references by Paul and even the presentation by Luke present Antioch as a community of followers of Jesus drawn from a wide variety of Jews. Situated in a Greek-speaking cosmopolitan city, these followers of Jesus are known to some by a Greek name – *christianos*. Among this group are Jewish prophets and teachers (Acts 13.1), and the first missionaries from Antioch are sent to the synagogues (13.2–5).

Careful attention to the New Testament references to Antioch reveals a community that is an extension of the Jerusalem community. The founders come from Jerusalem, significant events are reported back to Jerusalem, critical decisions are made in conjunction with the leaders of Jerusalem, and the mission to the Gentiles is carried out with the blessing and support of the Jerusalem community. From the time of its founding to the end of the 1st Jewish War (70 ce), the community at Antioch has its primary orientation and identity in Jewish Christianity.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The first of three paradigmatic accounts of turning to the Gentiles because of Jewish rejection is narrated in 13.46. This programmatic turning will be pronounced again in 18.6; 28.25.

⁴¹ Raymond Brown and John Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983) distinguish four types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity. Group One consists of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts. This group insists on full observance of Mosaic Law, including circumcision. Group Two consists of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts. This group does not insist on circumcision, but it does require Gentiles to keep some Jewish observances. Group Three is composed of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts, but they do not insist on circumcision or on observance of Jewish food laws. Group Four consists of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts who not only do not insist on circumcision or food laws; they see no abiding significance in Jewish laws about food and cult. This seems to be an extraordinary attempt to make all groups both Jewish and Gentile and to avoid any sharp distinction and conflict within Jewish and Gentile ways of following Jesus. In avoiding the primary synthesis posed by Baur, Brown and Meier seem to argue for synthesis at every stage of the process, with the middle way always triumphant.

This appears to change in the aftermath of the 1st Jewish War and the fall of the Temple (70 ce). By the time of Ignatius (c. 100 ce), the church at Antioch is said to operate under a tripartite organization of bishop, elders, deacons. Under this structure Ignatius combines various elements of Pauline and Johannine thought. There is some reference to the Matthean tradition, but few allusions to the Hebrew Bible. Ignatius attempts a theological synthesis that will articulate the orthodoxy of “the catholic church” (*Smyrneans* 8.2). In doing so, he battles not only docetic and gnostic thought, but those considered Judaizers.⁴²

Between these two stages, the Gospel of Matthew is likely formulated in Antioch. This Gospel is at once Jewish, with its concern for the Law (Mt. 5.17), and anti-Jewish, with its hatred for Pharisees (chapter 23). Disciples are told to go nowhere among the Gentiles (10.5–6), then commanded to go and make disciples of “all the Gentiles” (28.19). The key to these contradictions lies in a source critical analysis of the Gospel of Matthew.⁴³ The canonical version of the Gospel of Matthew has incorporated various lines of early tradition. While these are usually treated as sources, they are more appropriately understood as living traditions that are born by tradents. Incorporated into canonical Matthew is some ninety percent of the Gospel of Mark and an extensive use of the Sayings Tradition (Q). For some materials, such as the Sermon on the Mount, a Matthean version of the Sayings Tradition may be used. Other traditions that are unique to Matthew have been described under the rubric of *M*, for special Matthean materials. There is an astonishing connection between the Matthean material and the canonical epistle of James.⁴⁴ Over the whole construction lingers the shadow and influence of Peter. Much of this material has a strongly Jewish orientation. The Matthean use of Jewish Christian materials such as 5.17–18; 10.5–6; 15.24 suggests that Jewish Christianity is known and respected in the Matthean community. Nonetheless, the larger work is designed to support the Gentile mission (28.18–20).

These developments shed some light on the development of the Antiochene community. The Lukan and Pauline references point to a community that stands in continuity with and under the authority of the Jerusalem community. The Gospel of Matthew suggests this community also knows traditions from the Galilee (Q) and from Jewish Christians with a strong orientation to the Law. These living traditions are incorporated into the larger story of the Gospel of Matthew and its focus on the Gentile world. The central event behind this re-orientation is likely the 1st Jewish War (70 ce), though the introduction of a synagogue prayer (*birkhat ha-minim*) against Jewish heretics and the strengthening

⁴² Found explicitly in *Philadelphians* and *Magnesians*.

⁴³ The next chapter will provide a full treatment of early Christian texts, including the Gospel of Matthew and the *Didache*.

⁴⁴ This relationship and its implications will be addressed in the following chapter.

of Christian gnosticism may have played some role. The program against Jews at Antioch in 69 ce may also have made the position of Jewish Christians more difficult. Some thirty years later, the community seems to represent the emerging face of Christian orthodoxy and institutional stability. Even so, Ignatius (2nd century) and Chrysostom (4th century) will continue to scold the church at Antioch for its "Judaizing." This issue will disappear only with the removal of Jews from Antioch in the 7th century.

Despite its description as a model for Gentile orthodoxy, the Antioch community of Jesus' followers almost certainly has its origins in some form of Jewish Christianity. It appears to maintain this identity at least until the end of the 1st Jewish War.

4. Rome

There is a distinctly Judaic character to the emergence and development of Christianity in the city of Rome.⁴⁵ This intrinsic trait is often lost in the final profile of the Roman church.

4.1 Judaism in Rome

Jewish contact with Rome began as early as 140 bce, when the Hasmonean leaders of an independent Israel sent delegates to Rome.⁴⁶ With the Roman conquest of Palestine, Pompey brought Jewish captives to Rome around 61 bce. Philo says that most of these Jews lived in the Trans-Tiber section of the city as emancipated slaves.⁴⁷ Peter Lampe locates the Jewish quarters not only in the Trans-Tiber area of Trastevere, but also along the Appian Way.⁴⁸ Estimates of the Jewish population in first century Rome usually range from 40,000 to 50,000.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ The definitive treatment of Christianity in Rome is found in Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. M. Steinhauser, ed. M. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 [1st German edition, 1987]). See also the work of Raymond Brown in *Antioch and Rome*.

⁴⁶ 1 Macc. 14.24.

⁴⁷ Philo, *De Lagatio ad Gaium*, 155, 157.

⁴⁸ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 38–40, bases his conclusions on, among other factors, the concentration of Jewish cemeteries. Juvenal, *Sat.* 3.12–16, also located Jewish settlements near the Capena gate in this area.

⁴⁹ See the discussion by Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, p. 94.

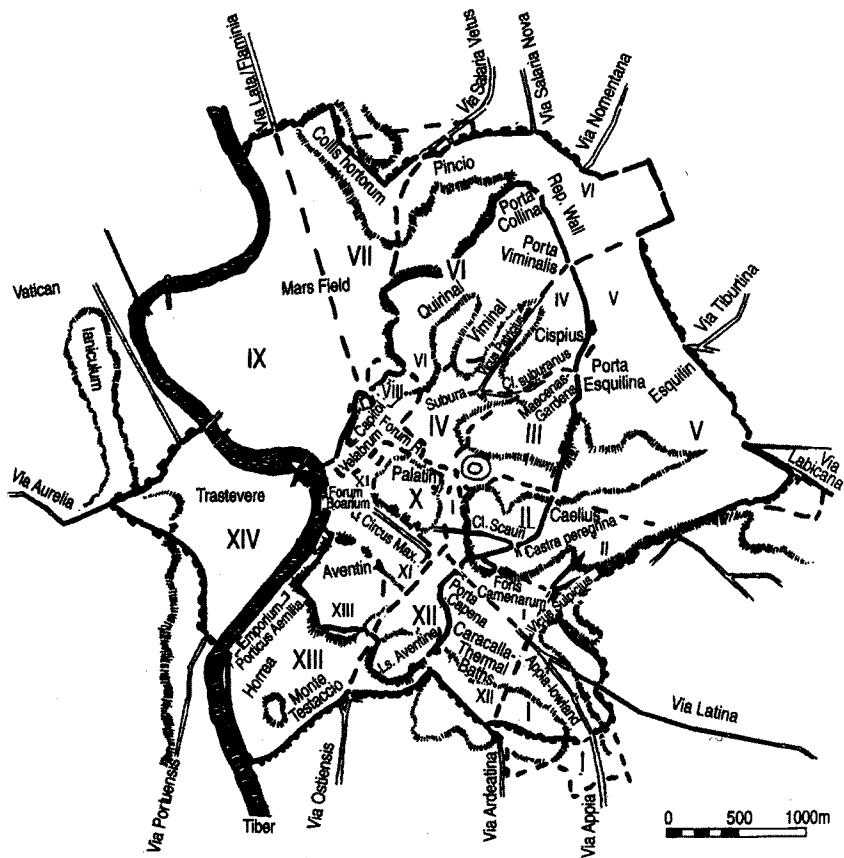


Figure 5.1: Augustan Division of the City of Rome⁵⁰

The Jewish communities at Rome were affiliated, both intellectually and politically, with Jerusalem and Palestine.⁵¹ Political connections include Hasmonean support for Julius Caesar, Herodian alliance with Augustus, the Roman appointment of kings and tetrarchs after the death of Herod the Great, and the rearing of Herodian princes in the imperial court. The presence of Josephus and Berenice in Rome may provide further evidence of this political affiliation. The intellectual affiliation is found in a sequence of Palestinian rabbis active in Rome, at least from Domitian on (81 ce.). A pre-70 confirmation of this connection to Palestine is likely found in Acts 28.21. Three days after landing, Paul explains his situation

⁵⁰ Sketch from Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, p. 478.

⁵¹ See the discussion by Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 95–97.

to Jewish leaders in Rome (28.16–20). The Jewish leaders reply: “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you” (28.21).

Neither Paul nor Peter brought Christianity to Rome. There is no evidence that Peter founded the church at Rome, and the claim that he was a bishop first arises in the third century. Although likely, it is not historically certain that Peter was ever in Rome. Paul, probably writing from Corinth near the end of the 50s, uses his letter to the Romans to introduce himself and to ask for the help of an already existing community of followers of Jesus. The content of Paul’s letter suggests this community is shaped by Jewish conceptions.

Judaism finds its way to Rome from Palestine. Its traces are left at the village of Puteoli, where Jews had lived since the time of Augustus.⁵² Rome and Puteoli have the only known pre-Christian Jewish settlements in Italy.⁵³ Lampe also notes that the line from Puteoli to Rome is an economic axis: in the first half of the first century it was the main trade route from the East to the city of Rome. The harbor at Puteoli, not Ostia, was the main gateway to Rome in this period.⁵⁴ Judaism found its way from Palestine to Puteoli to Rome along this route.

The Judaism that emerged in Rome was marked by its scattered nature. The 12 to 15 different synagogues of this era seem to have no centralized leadership.⁵⁵ This is also confirmed by the sociological work of Lampe. He finds Jews living predominantly in Trastevere and the Porta Capena on the Appian Way, but synagogues are also found in other locales: on the Mars Field; close to the Republican wall between the Porta Collina and the Porta Esquilina; in the northeast near the Porta Collina; and in the business quarter of Subura.⁵⁶ This dispersion will prove significant for the destiny of the synagogues, but also for the Christian movement.

The profile of Jewish communities in Rome is mirrored in that of Christian communities. Luke locates Christian communities in Italy only in Puteoli and at Rome (Acts 28.13–15). Primary Christian sites are to be found in Trastevere and the Porta Capena on the Appian Way, which lies along the trade route from the east. Christians are also found in smaller numbers in other sections of the city.

⁵² Josephus, *Bell.* 2.104; *Ant.* 17.328.

⁵³ So Lampe, *Rome*, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 9–10. The primary advantage of Puteoli was the possibility that ships could load goods and produce from the Campania region for the return trip. Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 92–93, thinks this also explains why the Jewish presence in Rome is later and smaller in number than in Alexandria and in Babylon. Jewish migration seems to be correlated to the level of commerce. Brown suggests that early Rome was self-sufficient in terms of agriculture, but in later years became more dependent on external commerce. Jewish migration seems to be correlated to the level of commerce.

⁵⁵ Both positions have been argued. See the discussion and the evaluation by Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 101–102, esp. note 210.

⁵⁶ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 38–40.

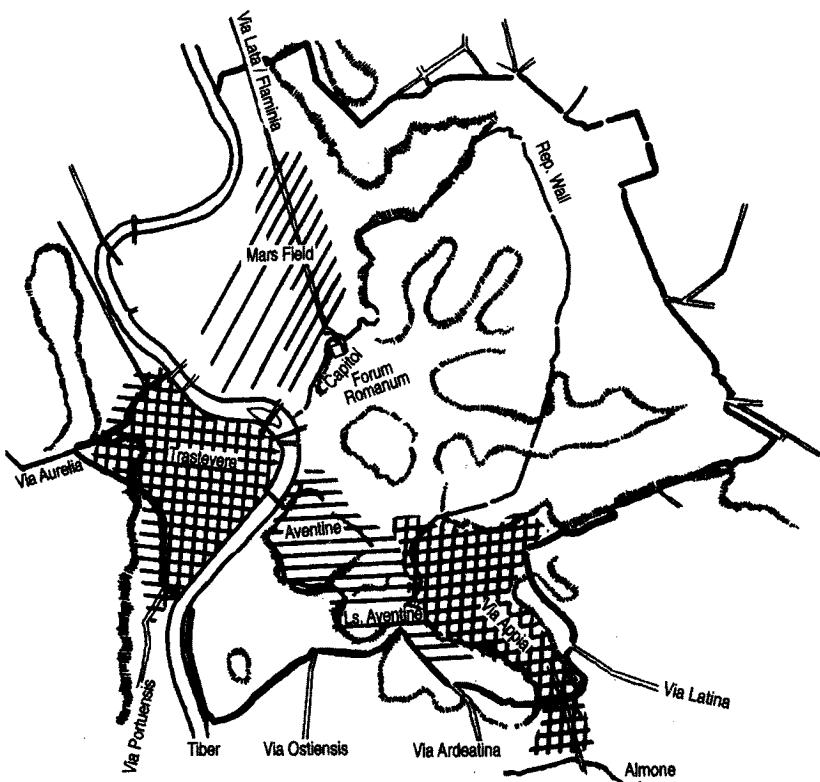


Figure 5.2: Christian population centers in the city of Rome⁵⁷

Lampe describes Roman Christianity as “fractionated”; in the early period it is scattered among numerous house churches with no centralized controlling authority. Christianity at Rome, through all of its stages, deeply reflects the shape and influence of the synagogues.⁵⁸

4.2 The Emergence of Christianity in Rome

The first historical record of followers of Jesus in Rome seems to come not from a Christian witness, but from the Roman historian Suetonius. Writing in the first third of the 2nd century, Suetonius says that Claudius “expelled Jews from Rome because of their constant disturbances impelled by Chrestus” (*Claudius* 25.4).

⁵⁷ Sketch from Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, p. 479.

⁵⁸ Lampe, *Rome*, especially pp. 69–79.

This edict is also mentioned by Orosius (*Hist.* 7.6.15f.), and by Luke (*Acts* 18.2). Suetonius' description is made difficult by the reference to Chrestus. While Chrestus may be found as a Roman name,⁵⁹ there is no instance of its use as a Jewish name. That a Gentile by the name of Chrestus was dividing the synagogues, resulting in the expulsion not of Chrestus, but of the Jews, is implausible. The simplest solution, confirmed by a wide range of scholars, is that Suetonius is pointing to the followers of the Christ.⁶⁰ Equally implausible, however, is Luke's suggestion that Claudius ordered *all* Jews to leave Rome.⁶¹ The edict of Claudius is best explained as an expulsion of some Jewish activists who were dividing the synagogues over their message about Jesus. This means that the expulsion was limited, that it focused on Jewish Christians, and that it likely occurred around 49 ce. Here the profile of Acts is congruent: Priscilla and Aquila, Jews from Pontus, have been expelled from Rome (*Acts* 18.1–3). They meet up with Paul in Corinth (18.1–2). Priscilla and Aquila share Paul's trade of tent making, and they seem to be a part of his activity in Corinth: "Every Sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks" (18.4).⁶² Priscilla and Aquila should be understood as Jewish Christians who have been expelled from Rome and continue their work in Corinth.⁶³

Thus, the first appearance of Christianity in Rome is that of Jewish Christians who are active in the synagogues. Paul finds collegiality with exiles like Priscilla and Aquila, and he practices a similar ministry in the synagogues of Corinth.

The next evidence of Christianity in Rome is Paul's letter, likely addressed from Corinth in the late 50s. Although Paul has never been to the capital, he assumes there has been a Christian presence in Rome for some period: "I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain" (*Rom.* 15.23–24; see also 1.13). Paul's hopes for this visit to Rome are threefold: 1) to "reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles" (1.13); 2) that "I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company" (15.32); 3) on his way to

⁵⁹ See the tabulation by Lampe, *Rome*, p. 13, note 6.

⁶⁰ There is sufficient documentation of the use of *Christians* to refer to the followers of Christ. For examples of this, see, Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 12–13. For a contrary opinion on Chrestus, see Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶¹ The expulsion of 20,000 to 50,000 people, even if plausible, would hardly escape the notice of historians like Josephus.

⁶² Any attempt to support the opposite position confirms this: non-Christian Jews just expelled from Rome would hardly provide housing for a Jewish Christian (Paul) who was preaching Christ in the synagogues – likely the very activity that caused the expulsion. The most plausible conclusion is that Priscilla and Aquila are among the Jewish Christian activists expelled from Rome under Claudius.

⁶³ The reference to Priscilla and Aquila as Jews in 18.2 does not preclude them from being Jewish followers of Jesus. The term *Jews* refers to Jewish Christians in *Acts* 16.1 (Timothy's mother); 16.20 (Paul and Silas); 21.39; 22.3 (Paul); 22.12 (Ananias, see 9.10); perhaps in Gal. 2.13.

Spain, “to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while” (15.24). Both the address and the content of Paul’s letter suggest the nature of Christianity at Rome.

Peter Lampe believes Paul is writing to a Gentile church already separated from the synagogue. His analysis is based primarily on the future configuration of Roman Christianity, but also on the list of names greeted by Paul at the end of the letter.⁶⁴ Lampe believes that Christians and Jews are clearly distinguishable groups by the time of the persecution under Nero (64 ce).⁶⁵ Lampe finds earlier evidence of a separated form of Christianity in the greetings of Romans 16.⁶⁶ His analysis of the 28 individuals mentioned, 26 by name, produces a significant profile.

- Of the 26 names, 8 are women and 18 are men
- Two names are not Christians, but the head of households that contain Christians⁶⁷
- Traits of active participation are assigned to 7 women and 5 men
- Twelve of the names are characterized, either by location or by previous engagement with Paul, as coming from the east. Statistically, this may be as high as 14. It is also possible that some of the remainder are known to Paul because they fled under Claudius, but have returned
- Of the 26 names, 4 give indication they are freeborn, and at least 9 are of slave origin
- Sixteen of the names are Greek, and 8 are Latin.⁶⁸

Lampe notes that Paul designates three of the list (Andronicus, Junia, Herodian) as “my relatives,” a term he uses in Rom. 9.3 to speak of fellow members of Israel. Since Paul seems to specify that these three are Jews, Lampe concludes that the rest of the names on the list are not: they are Gentile Christians.⁶⁹ His extrapolation from this data is bold: “in the group of persons of Romans 16 apparently a similar ratio of Jewish to Gentile Christians existed as in urban Roman Christianity as a whole.”⁷⁰

There are at least three problems with Lampe’s conclusion. First, it is not clear that the names list can bear this much weight. Andronicus, Junia, and Herodian may, in fact, be genetically related to Paul. The Latin names Maria and Rufus, also used by Jews, could also be added to the list of Jewish Christians. Neither is

⁶⁴ Despite various challenges, the integrity of chapter 16 has strong support. For an overview of this issue, see Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 105–111. The decisive argument is provided by Harry Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, in *Studies and Documents*, 42 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977). See also the discussion by Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 153–64.

⁶⁵ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 15–16.

⁶⁶ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 153–83.

⁶⁷ A different explanation might be that they are dead.

⁶⁸ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 153–83.

⁶⁹ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 74–75, also notes that only three names (Rufus, Julia, Maria) are found among urban Roman Jews, but these names are Latin.

⁷⁰ Lampe, *Rome*, p. 75.

it clear that a Greek or Roman name always means a non-Jewish heritage, especially in a limited list.⁷¹

Secondly, and more significantly, there are no grounds for presuming that Paul is in a position to address all of “urban Roman Christianity.” Paul is addressing people he knows – perhaps all of the people he knows. There are no critical standards that suggest this select group can be interpreted as a representative profile of all followers of Jesus in the city of Rome.⁷² The list in Romans 16 provides a representative profile – and perhaps a comprehensive profile – of Christians at Rome *known by Paul and supportive of Paul*. If that is the case, one should expect a high ratio of Gentile Christians. More importantly, one should expect, on critical grounds, that the name list is disproportionate to the larger Christian population. It is not certain that Paul’s letter is sent to all of the various groups of Christians in Rome; it may in reality only address one or two of the various communities, particularly if some – or all – of these Christian communities are still attached to synagogues.⁷³

Thirdly, Lampe’s presumption that the quantitative ratio of the names list is indicative of urban Roman Christianity makes it difficult for him to explain the prevalence of Jewish synagogue traditions in the theology, practice, and structure of the Roman church. His emphasis on the qualitative impact of the Jewish Christian minority and his insistence that Gentile God-fearers play a major role in the transfer of synagogue traditions to the churches are reasonable, but unnecessarily overburdened. Lampe’s insistence that “Neither a quantitative nor a qualitative preponderance of Jewish Christians can be inferred from the strong synagogal tradition in Roman life”⁷⁴ seems incongruent with his conclusion that Christians from the sphere of influence of the synagogues, Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians, exercised an astonishing influence on the formation of theology in urban Roman Christianity in the first century. These Christians from the sphere of influence of the synagogues presumably formed the majority.⁷⁵

⁷¹ For example, Paul is a Roman name, and Mark is likely the most common name in the Roman empire.

⁷² If this were so, one could equally hypothesize that some 12 % of “urban Roman Christianity” is genetically related to Paul.

⁷³ Paul’s “To all God’s beloved in Rome” (Rom. 1.7) may be no more inclusive than Luke’s “Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome” (Acts 18.2). In a similar way it would be difficult to imagine that the list of names *from* whom Paul brings greetings in Rom. 16.21–24 represents the whole of Christianity in Corinth, where Paul experienced considerable opposition. It is likely the names *to* whom Paul brings greetings is similarly selective.

⁷⁴ Lampe, *Rome*, p. 76.

⁷⁵ Lampe, *Rome*, p. 76. Lampe has not demonstrated there is a preponderance of “God-fearers” (a contested category) at Rome. Gentile names could equally be proselytes (full converts to Judaism) and thus Jews in every sense. Lampe has also not demonstrated that the Jewish heritage was transmitted in large part by those with Greek or Roman names. Lampe’s projection of the primary role of God-fearers has not been substantiated. Moreover, Lampe’s

Lampe's attempt to limit the impact of Jewish Christianity requires a number of difficult maneuvers. The Greek names on Paul's list are presumed to be non-Jewish, but they are also presumed to be God-fearers who converted to Christianity, but not to Judaism. This division would break down, of course, if they represent Jews with Greek names or if they are proselytes. Proselytes may have Gentile parentage and Gentile names, but they are Jews.

A more reasonable and critically sound answer lies close at hand: Paul knows and addresses one segment (24 names!) that likely represents some followers of Jesus scattered among the numerous synagogues and house churches of Rome.⁷⁶ Twenty-four of Paul's list are Christians, some with Jewish names, some with Greek names. Priscilla and Aquila are Jewish Christians who have returned to Rome, where they host a house church. Andronicus and Junia are apostles or they are prominent among the apostles, and they were already followers of Jesus at the time of Paul's conversion. Of the others we know nothing of the path they followed to Christian faith – only that they did and that a strongly Jewish Christian ethos dominated the Roman church.

While the list of addressees is noteworthy, the content of Paul's letter probably provides a clearer indication of the nature of Christianity in Rome. At the time of writing, Paul is about to make an appearance in Jerusalem, bringing a collection from the Gentile churches. He is anxious about "unbelievers in Judea" and is concerned "that his ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Rom. 15. 31). In light of these concerns, Paul addresses his recipients in Rome as siblings and asks them "to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf" (15.30). Paul has clear expectations for his visit to Rome: "to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while" (15.24). Paul expects to share some spiritual gift with the Romans and to be encouraged by each other's faith (1.11–12). Raymond Brown also suggests that Paul, who is preparing his defence in Jerusalem, tries out his argument on an audience at Rome with similar context and concerns.⁷⁷

It is clear that Paul designs his letter to evoke a certain reception, affirmation, and support from the Roman Christians. While this is Paul's intent, it may not reveal much about the nature of his recipients: Paul's hopes may be misguided. But the rhetorical strategy employed by Paul in the bulk of the letter does suggest connections to his audience. As many scholars have noted, the letter to the Romans is an extended introduction and explanation of who Paul is and what he does. At the heart of this presentation is a careful explanation of the role of Jewish faith and the mission to the Gentiles.

model suggests that Jewish heritage was transmitted to Roman Christianity by those at the margin of the synagogues who had never formally joined it.

⁷⁶ Lampe identifies at least five different meeting sites within the list.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, p. 110.

Paul's rhetoric to Roman Christians stands in contrast to his earlier address to the Galatians. There he suggests:

- Those who impose the Law on others do not obey it themselves (Gal. 1.14)
- The Law was given because of sin, and it was given through angels (3.19)
- Now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to the discipline of the Law (3.25)
- The Law is a covenant of slavery (4.24–25; 5.1)
- Circumcision negates the benefits of Christ (5.2)
- Those who are so concerned with circumcision should castrate themselves (5.12)
- Those who are led by the Spirit are not subject to the Law (5.18).

While it is clear that Paul is angered about those in Galatia who want to circumcise Gentiles, nonetheless the shift in rhetoric is dramatic. Raymond Brown credits much of this change to a maturing process,⁷⁸ but critical analysis does not easily deal with personality shifts. A more profitable explanation is found in the rhetorical design of Paul's writings.

Romans is crafted to elicit a particular response on the part of the first readers; thus the rhetorical strategy may be expected to exhibit coherence with the intended audience. The answer given in a rhetorical context may be presumed to be congruent with the question asked.⁷⁹ It is reasonable, then, to suggest that Paul addresses the connections between Jewish faith and the gospel because he is addressing an audience that has questions and concerns for such issues. Various scholars place the letter to the Romans within a recognizable genre of ancient literature in which the writer affirms values recognized by the audience and thus establishes his own connections to the audience.⁸⁰ At the heart of Paul's letter lies a collegial approach and a coherent reflection on the hopes of Israel:

- Despite his earlier disrespect (Gal. 2.6), Paul now refers to the Jerusalem saints (Rom. 15.26, 31)
- The faith of the Roman Christians is known throughout the world (1.8)
- Paul is confident about the quality of their faith, though he has never met them (15.14)
- Paul makes strategic use of the editorial "we":
Jesus was put to death for us and raised for our transgressions (3.24–25)
All of us were baptized into Christ and we walk in newness of life (6.3–4)
- Paul lists the advantages of being Jewish and the value of circumcision (3.1–8)
- He emphasizes the positive role of the Law (7.7–25)
- Paul talks about the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (8.2)
- He asks those who have the Law and circumcision not to boast in it (3.9)
- To Israel belong adoption, glory, covenants, the Law, worship, the promises, the patriarchs, the messiah (9.1–5)

⁷⁸ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 111–14, 120.

⁷⁹ It appears that some report – perhaps an inaccurate one – of Paul's diatribe in Galatia has reached Jerusalem (Acts 21.17–24). They need to be assured that Paul observes and guards the Law. Paul undergoes a rite of purification to demonstrate this. His letter to the Romans is probably designed, at least in part, to answer these same questions.

⁸⁰ Among these are Wilhelm Wuellner and Robert Jewett. See the discussion in Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 118–19.

- God has not rejected Israel, of whom Paul is a proud member (11.1–2)
- Those who observe food laws and special days should be treated with respect (14.1–23)
- All Israel will be saved (11.26)
- Christ has become a servant of the circumcised to confirm the promises to the patriarchs and to show mercy to the Gentiles (15.8–9)
- The weak and the strong should live in harmony, glorifying God with one voice (15.5–6).

This change in language and rhetoric need not be seen as disingenuous. It is thoroughly consistent with Paul's stated pattern:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the Law, I became as one under the Law To those outside the Law, I became as one outside the Law To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9.20–23).

Thus Paul presents to the Roman Christians his full credentials as a Jewish follower of Jesus, and he expects a sympathetic and supportive hearing.

Romans 16 suggests that from his earlier ministry in the east, Paul knows or knows about or is related to a small group of Christians at Rome. The remainder of the letter suggests that Paul expects to meet in Rome a Christianity characterized by deep respect for its Jewish roots. As in no other writing, Paul expresses his affirmation of the heritage of Israel and his hopes for the salvation of all of God's people. He even calls for patience and compassion for those still drawn to the observance of Jewish cultic traditions (14.1–23). Paul expects to be accepted in Rome as one who hopes and prays and works for the deliverance of both Israel and the Gentiles.

Luke says that Paul's arguments in the synagogue at Corinth are designed to convince both Jews and Greeks (Acts 18.4). This indicates the presence in the synagogue of proselytes and God-fearers – uncircumcised and unbaptized Greeks – who are drawn to Judaism. The pattern exemplified by Paul at Corinth – working in the synagogues with Jewish Christian colleagues in an attempt to reach Jews and Greeks with the message of Christ – should be presumed as the goal for Paul's work in Rome, both in his preparatory epistle and in his presence there. This expectation is only partially realized. In Luke's account (Acts 28.16–31), Paul meets first with the local Jewish leaders. They return to his dwelling for further engagement, but the reception is mixed. Paul then turns to the Gentiles, receiving all who will come to hear him (Acts 28.28–31). Luke makes no mention of Paul's contact with any synagogue or with any church.

Thus, the Jewish profile of Roman Christianity is evident in its first appearance in the edict of Claudius and in its literary representation in the writings of Paul. There is a clear correlation between this formative profile and the emerging Christian communities of Rome.

4.3 The Development of Christianity at Rome

Jewish Christianity exerts a strong influence upon Roman Christianity, even after the house churches and the synagogues seem to have separated. This impact may be seen in various texts associated with Rome.

The letter of 1 Peter brings greetings, in thinly veiled language, from the church at Rome (5.13) to the exiles in the diaspora (1.1–2). Whoever its author, the ethos of the letter draws upon the Jewish heritage of Christianity. Christian conversion and the Christian life are modelled upon the Exodus, upon the story of Noah, and upon the language of the cult.⁸¹ The followers of Christ are “to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (2.5). Believers are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (2.9). They are commanded to “conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (2.12).

While the letter is hardly Petrine, it does remember and draw upon a Roman tradition of Jewish Christianity. A similar context has been proposed for the letter to the Hebrews. “Who wrote this epistle only God knows,” said Eusebius (*HE* 6.25.14). The style and thought of the letter are clearly Hellenistic, particularly in its allegorical reading of Hebrew texts and traditions.⁸² The letter demonstrates the superiority of Christ to the prophets, to angels, and to Moses as well as the superiority of Christ’s priestly service and sacrifice to that of the levitical priests. It is clearly addressed, then, to a community that is conversant with the Old Testament and with the Temple cult (though the Temple is never mentioned by name). The central point, however, is the supersession of this tradition through Christ and Christian faith. Thus, the epistle to the Hebrews bears witness to both the remembrance of Jewish piety and to its replacement.

To whom might such a message be addressed? There are hints in the closing that have been interpreted as Pauline (*Heb.* 13.22–23), but the language and style of the letter do not support this suggestion. The only hint of its destination is provided in 13.24: “Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings.” It is unlikely that someone writing from Rome would send greetings from all of Italy or from “the Italians.” It is more plausible that a letter written to Rome would include greetings from Italians in the sending community.

It is possible that none of these clues represents historical reality, but they do provide literary context. The letter to the Hebrews presents itself as letter written to people who understand the Jewish cultic tradition but are encouraged to abandon it for a higher path. The best guess is that the letter is addressed to Roman Christians late in the 1st century. In this context, the destruction of the Temple is

⁸¹ See the discussion by Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 133–34.

⁸² Lampe, *Rome*, p. 77, notes a variety of techniques and content that link Hebrews to the Hellenistic synagogues and even to Philo.

well past (70 ce), and Christians are encouraged to give up hope for its reconstruction.⁸³

The final stage may be seen in the writings of Clement, dating from the late 90s ce. The letter of 1 Clement is likely written from Rome to Corinth.⁸⁴ This letter displays an extraordinary knowledge and concern for the Jewish cultic system:

We ought to do in order all things that the Master commanded us to perform at fixed times. He set offerings and liturgies, so that there should be no random and irregular pattern, but fixed times and hours. Moreover, he has set by his sovereign will where and by whom he desires these things to be done. Those, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed times are acceptable and blessed . . . To the high priest his proper liturgical ministries are allotted. To the priests their proper cultic place has been appointed. To the levites their proper ministries have been assigned. The lay person is bound by the rules laid down for the lay people . . . Not in every place are the sacrifices offered (perpetual offerings, or free-will offerings, or sin offerings, or trespass offerings), but only at Jerusalem . . . before the sanctuary, at the altar, after the inspection by the high priest. (I Clem. 40.1–5; 41.2)

Such concern for the Temple cult seems unjustified in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem (70 ce), but the purpose of such retrospection is to create a new order of living. First Clement does this by modeling the divine order in the Christian ministry: Christ, the apostles, bishops, deacons. The rabbis will also keep alive the memory of the Temple cult in their ordering of daily life under the dual Torah. Both lines of tradition represent a reappropriation of Jewish heritage.

Peter Lampe also notes the broad stream of synagogue traditions used in 1 Clement. Among these are traditions from the Hebrew Bible, but also from post-Biblical Jewish traditions.

In 1 Clem. 23:3f.; 46.2 are found citations from unknown, obviously Jewish apocryphal writings. In 1 Clem. 17:6 one encounters an unknown apocryphal quotation from Moses. Noah's sermon on penance (1 Clem. 7:6) derives from post-testamental tradition, not from Genesis 7. First Clement 43:2ff. embroiders Numbers 17 haggadically, as does also Jewish tradition . . . ; similarly also 1 Clem. 11:2. First Clement 31:3 offers the Jewish (not the Old Testament) tradition, that Isaac submitted himself to being sacrificed knowingly and willingly (e.g. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.232ff.). Numerous motifs in 1 Clem. 24–30 come from Jewish apocalyptic literature. The long prayer in 1 Clem. 59:2–61:3 reveals relationships to the synagogue prayer The Eighteen Benedictions, just as other liturgical material stands close to the synagogue. First Clement 28:3 agrees with the Hebrew Old Testament text . . . instead of the LXX . . . Hebraisms are also present in 12:5; 21:9; 28:3; 34:8; et al.⁸⁵

⁸³ This message would be particularly relevant for the brief reign of Julian as emperor (361–63 ce) and his failed attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 159–66, discusses various possibilities of authorship.

⁸⁵ Lampe, *Rome*, pp. 75–77. Already in 1900, Eberhard Nestle asked "Was the composer of 1 Clement of semitic origin?" in "War der Verfasser des 1.Clementbriefes semitischer Abstammung?" ZNW 1 (1900), 178–80. By 1966 K. Beyschlag was questioning the presence of

These materials are important not only for their content, but for the process of education and transmission that they exemplify. There was a clear and extensive tradition of Jewish teaching activity at Rome in the first two centuries.⁸⁶ The first Christians at Rome not only brought with them cultivated traditions of Jewish teaching; they also initiated a process for the preservation and transmission of these traditions within Christian circles. This transmission of Jewish tradition continued even within the circles of Gentile Christians. This does not, however, mean that Jewish Christianity in Rome disappears. At the end of the 2nd century the Christian work "De montibus Sina et Sion" (The Mountains of Sinai and Zion) is produced by an author who speaks Latin and Hebrew.⁸⁷ The unique appearance of the name Aron Cresteanus almost certainly represents a Jewish Christian, and Justin knows of Jewish Christians, likely in Rome, in the 2nd century.⁸⁸

One of the last witnesses to this heritage is found in the writings of Ambrosiaster. In his commentary on Romans, written around 375 ce., Ambrosiaster remembers the origins of the Roman church:

It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the time of the apostles and that those Jews who had believed [in Christ] passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the Law.... One ought not to condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith, because without seeing any of the signs or miracles, and without seeing any of the apostles, they nevertheless accepted faith in Christ, although in a Jewish manner.⁸⁹

A similar reflection, which is difficult to date, is found in the anti-Marcionite prologue. It reads:

The Romans lived in Italian territory. They were deceived by false prophets and under the name of our Lord Jesus Christ had been led astray to the Law and the Prophets. Writing to them from Corinth, the apostle recalls them to the true evangelical faith.⁹⁰

"Jewish Christian Targumim" in 1 Clement. See Beyschlag, *Clemens, Romanus und der Frühkatholizismus* (Mohr: Tübingen, 1966).

⁸⁶ See the extensive evidence cited by Lampe, *Rome*, p. 78, note 43.

⁸⁷ See Jean Daniélov, *Les origines du christianisme latin* (Paris, 1978), cited in Lampe, *Rome*, p. 79.

⁸⁸ These and other possibilities are cited by Lampe, *Rome*, p. 79. See especially, Justin, *Dial.* 47.3.

⁸⁹ The text is found at *PL* 17.46 and is cited in part by Brown, *Antioch and Rome*, pp. 110–11.

⁹⁰ Cited in Werner Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmore and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972 [German original, 1970]), p. 14.

4.4 Conclusion

Formative influence for the Christian communities in Rome may be found in two modes. Like Judaism, Christianity probably came to Rome along the trade routes from the east. The theology of the Jerusalem community, particularly of James, may be reflected in the first stages of Roman Christianity.⁹¹ Paul also mentions the “brothers of the Lord” as traveling missionaries (1 Cor. 9.5). Priscilla and Aquila are Jews who represent the first known Christian presence in Rome. They are best understood as Jewish Christians expelled from Rome around 49 ce because of their activity in the synagogues. They serve as Paul’s hosts in Corinth, where this pattern of synagogue ministry is repeated. Paul’s letter to the Romans shows that he knows Jewish names, including Priscilla and Aquila, at Rome, but he also knows Christians with Greek and Latin names. The content and rhetorical strategy of the letter suggest that Paul seeks to establish collegial relationships in a context highly influenced by Jewish traditions. While Paul only knows a limited number of Christians at Rome, he seems eager to persuade the churches of his abiding commitment to the faith of Israel – a case he will soon have to make as well in Jerusalem.

The second major influence is to be found in the Roman synagogues. Christianity emerges along the same trade route and in the same quarters as Judaism. The scattered, loosely organized existence of the churches probably reflects that of the synagogues. Early Roman Christianity is shaped by the language, texts, organization, and hermeneutical traditions of Jewish synagogues.

This dual line of influence does not end with the formative era. Subsequent generations demonstrate not only a cultured heritage from Judaism, but also an effective process for preservation and transmission of synagogal traditions. While some Roman Christians are a distinguishable entity by 62 ce, this probably represents no parting of the ways between synagogue and church.⁹² Jewish Christianity was the first type of Christianity in Rome, and long after Gentile Christians obtained a majority, the profile of Roman Christianity reflected Jewish Christian elements. A minority of Jewish Christian individuals and groups may have endured into later centuries.

⁹¹ Raymond Brown developed this hypothesis in some detail in *Antioch and Rome*. Tacitus also seems to think that Christianity came to Rome from Judea.

⁹² Nero singles out Christians and blames them for the great fire in Rome. However, in the late 2nd century Galen, who is in Rome, speaks in a collective way of “the followers of Moses and Christ” as if they are a single group who hold tenaciously to their beliefs (Galen, *de Puls. Diff.* 3.3; see also 2.4).

5. Alexandria

While earlier investigations focused on gnosticism, recent scholarship has explored the possibility that Egyptian Christianity has its roots in a form of Jewish Christianity.⁹³ If so, then the profile of Judaism in Egypt might hold the key to further developments among the followers of Jesus.

Judaism in 1st century Egypt is marked by its internal diversity, but also by its creative distance from Palestinian forms and practices. Philo's writings are testimony to a distinct tradition of interpretation, and the Jewish temple at Leontopolis, which claimed Zadokite origins, bears testimony to heterogeneity in practice. This pluriuniformity is confirmed by Josephus and by documentary materials.⁹⁴

The Jewish community in 1st century Alexandria was the largest in the Graecophonic diaspora. Though under Roman authority, Alexandrian Jews had their own legal structures and were encouraged to practice their religious traditions. Philo counted some one million Jews in Egypt, and the number in Alexandria likely exceeded 200,000. Philo says that two of the five quarters of Alexandria were Jewish and that Jews were found as well in other quarters. After 38 ce, however, Jews were forced into a single quarter. Josephus says that the pogrom of 66 ce was aimed at the *Delta* quarter of Alexandria.⁹⁵ Archeological evidence suggests the Jewish population lived in the northeastern section of town as well as the northwestern (*Delta*) quarter.

Even from limited sources, it is clear that Alexandrian Judaism was defined by its diversity. This can be shown simply from the writings of Philo, who describes a variety of attitudes toward the Law. These range, says Birger Pearson,

from a strict literalist interpretation to an espousal of the kind of allegorical interpretation represented by Philo himself, from a total rejection of Scriptures and their "myths" to a spiritual reading of the Scriptures leading to a rational abandonment of the observances of ritual law.⁹⁶

⁹³ The development of research is traced by A. F. J. Klijn, "Jewish Christianity in Egypt," in B. Pearson and James Goehring, ed., *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 161–75.

⁹⁴ See the discussion by B. Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations" in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, pp. 145–48. The profile given here draws from his description.

⁹⁵ The five quarters were assigned names from the Greek alphabet.

⁹⁶ Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt," p. 148.

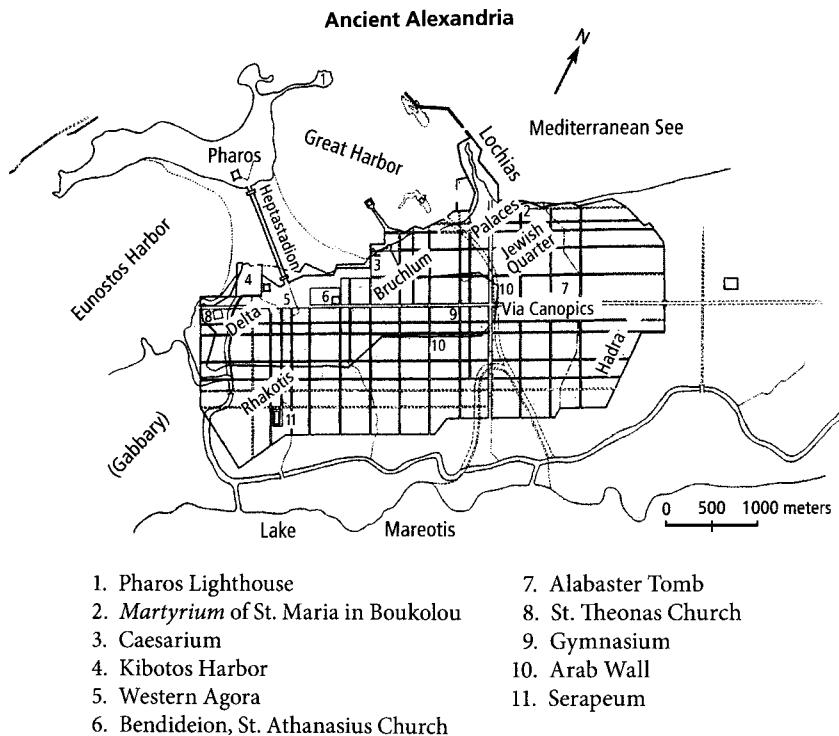


Figure 5.3: Alexandria⁹⁷

In addition to these different views on the Law, diversity of thought and practice is found:

Apocalyptic and gnostic groups were also probably present in the Alexandrian Jewish community. Many Jews also chose the path of total cultural assimilation and apostasy. Philo's nephew, Tiberius Alexander is the most famous case of this. On the other hand, a number of Gentiles affiliated with the Jewish religious community as proselytes.⁹⁸

While Christianity cannot be reconstructed as a simple clone, Alexandrian Judaism provides a plausible backdrop for the development of one area of Egyptian Christianity. It is reasonable to expect lines of coherence and continuity, but also of clearly articulated contrasts.

Extrapolating in reverse, Walter Bauer used 2nd century gnostic teachers such as Basilides, Carpocrates, and Valentinus to argue that formative Egyptian

⁹⁷ Sketch from Birger Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations," pp. 158–59. By kind permission of The Continuum International Publishing Group.

⁹⁸ Pearson, "Earliest Christianity in Egypt," p. 148.

Christianity was heretical in nature.⁹⁹ This approach and its finding are problematic. Such reverse extrapolation can suggest continuity, but it cannot demonstrate it. Beyond this, other trajectories could be traced back. Birger Pearson suggests that 2nd century texts such as the *Teachings of Silvanus* and the writings of Clement of Alexandria could plausibly emerge from a religious type of Platonism.¹⁰⁰ From works such as the *Epistle of Barnabas* and various Egyptian gospel traditions, one could trace back to less sophisticated, more praxis-oriented forms of Christianity.¹⁰¹ From the presence of the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John in 2nd century Egypt, one could trace back to a more canonical Christianity. It is clear, then, that Bauer's focus on heterodoxy and gnosticism must give way to a wider range of diversity in the formative stages of Egyptian Christianity. Materials from the 2nd century suggest at least four types: gnostic, platonic, halakhic, and canonical.

It is also reasonable to presume that Egyptian Christianity will reflect a diversity similar to that of Egyptian Judaism, and this expectation of heterogeneity is realized in 2nd century materials. Archeological data, however, is limited and, in the case of Christianity, mostly late. When Christian sites do emerge, they tend to cluster in locations that were the centers of Jewish life in the 1st century.¹⁰²

The suggestion that Christianity in Egypt is shaped by its Jewish roots finds further support in the literary representation. This is seen in at least six distinct lines of tradition.

The earliest and most extensive description is found in the profile of Apollos. Paul says that some at Corinth claim to belong to the party of Apollos (1 Cor. 1.12; 3.4–9, 21–23). Paul places no blame on Apollos for the divisions at Corinth, but he does call for an end to them. Paul does not claim to have converted or instructed Apollos; the only relational statement is that “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor. 3.6). Paul describes Apollos as he describes himself: “Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each” (1 Cor. 3.5). “The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose,” says Paul, “for we are God’s servants, working together” (1 Cor. 3.8–9).

Luke gives a wider, more intriguing characterization. Apollos is a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. (Acts 18.24–26)

⁹⁹ W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, trans. and ed. R. A. Kraft, et. al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977 [1st German edition, 1934]), pp. 44–53.

¹⁰⁰ Pearson, “Earliest Christianity in Egypt,” p. 149. Pearson suggests the Jewish side of this Platonism would be represented by Philo and the Christian side by Apollos.

¹⁰¹ Pearson, “Earliest Christianity in Egypt,” p. 149.

¹⁰² See the discussion of available data in Pearson, “Earliest Christianity in Egypt,” pp. 151–54.

In contrast to Paul's description, Luke finds deficiencies in Apollos. Since he knows only the baptism of John, Priscilla and Aquila, who are Jewish Christians, "took him aside and explained the Way of the Lord more accurately" (Acts 18.26). Apollos is then given a letter of recommendation for his travelling ministry in Achaia and Corinth. Luke describes his work by saying that "he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the messiah is Jesus" (Acts 18.27–28).

Apollos was a Jewish follower of Jesus from Alexandria, but it is not clear that he became a follower of Jesus *in Alexandria*. Nonetheless, his profile and location are significant. Working as a missionary in Asia Minor and Greece in the 50s ce, Apollos represents a Jewish Christian who combines rhetorical skill and eloquence, exegetical acumen in the Jewish scriptures, and knowledge about Jesus. Thus, Apollos is the model for a non-Judean Jewish Christian. His work is respected by Paul, and he is incorporated, with minor adaptation, into the Lukan story of the advance of the gospel.

One linguistic anomaly should be noted in the description of Apollos. Luke uses *The Way* four times in Acts. The definition is provided by its first use, where Paul goes to the synagogues of Damascus seeking out followers of *The Way* (Acts 9.2). The primary reference, then, is to Jewish Christians. In light of this the cluster of the three remaining instances within Acts 18.24–19.10 is noteworthy. Apollos comes to Ephesus as one "instructed in the Way of the Lord" who is able to teach accurately about Jesus (18.25). Nonetheless, he is taken aside by two Jewish Christians who "explained the Way of God to him more accurately" (18.26). In 19.8 Paul enters the synagogue at Corinth and speaks, unusually for Luke, about the kingdom of God. His work in the synagogue ends because "some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation" (Acts 19.9). Within the Lukan literary world, this cluster of images – focus on the teaching of Jesus, the kingdom of God, the activity of Jewish Christian missionaries, and the reference to *The Way* – are distinctive. But the treatment of this material is not; Luke has accommodated it into the Pauline mission and its road to Rome.

The doctrine of the *Two Ways* is found in various literary traditions, all of which show some form of engagement with Judaism. Among these are the Gospel of Matthew, the *Didache*, and the epistle to Barnabas.¹⁰³ The Barnabas tradition is associated with Alexandria.

A second literary appearance of Egyptian Christianity is found in the Pseudo-Clementine materials.¹⁰⁴ Clement journeys to Alexandria and there asks to meet someone who knew Jesus personally. He is directed to Barnabas, who also intro-

¹⁰³ Mt. 5.13–14; Did. 1.1–6.2; Barnabas 18–20. See also Lk. 13.23–34; Jer. 21.8; Ps. 1; Deut. 30.19; Jn. 10.7; 14.6. The *Two Ways* treatise is also found in later texts. A more detailed analysis is given in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁴ Ps-Clem. *Hom.* 1.9.1; 2.4.1. See Klijn, "Jewish Christianity in Egypt," p. 164.

duces himself as a disciple of Jesus. Barnabas is said to have taught Clement “the doctrine about the prophecy entirely.” The historicity of this report is questionable, but its significance is not; it testifies to a tradition that believes Alexandrian Christianity has its roots in Palestinian Judaism.

A third literary tradition centers around the role of Mark the evangelist. Eusebius says that he preached the gospel in Alexandria.¹⁰⁵ Eusebius also believes that Philo wrote about Egyptian Christianity in his “On the Contemplative Life or on the Suppliants.” Eusebius puts these two premises together and concludes that Christianity in Egypt “seemingly originated from the Jews and followed for the greater part the ancient Jewish customs.”¹⁰⁶ While Eusebius is probably wrong about both Mark and Philo, he reiterates the tradition that Jewish Christians were the founders of Egyptian Christianity.

A fourth literary witness is found in Clement of Alexandria. At the beginning of the 3rd century Clement writes the “Ecclesiastical Rule against Judaizers.”¹⁰⁷ It is impossible to know, of course, who and what are meant by Judaizers, but the perception of a problem and the implied difficulty of separating Christianity from Judaism are clear.

A fifth literary witness comes from Origen (185–253/254 ce). Origen warns his hearers about Jewish practices such as fasting and circumcision, and he knows Christians who attend both the church and the synagogue.¹⁰⁸ Origen is also willing to consult with Jews or Jewish Christians on the interpretation of biblical passages such as Numbers 12.5.¹⁰⁹

A sixth witness may be found in the way in that Clement and Origen treat the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. While their rejection of the Ebionites is strident, they do not express such hostility toward this purported Jewish Christian gospel. Another Alexandrian Christian, *Didymus the Blind*, quotes from the Gospel of the Hebrews.¹¹⁰

A final witness has been suggested in a 4th century manuscript from Oxyrhynchus. The text in p. Oxy. 6.903 appears to speak of visiting both church and synagogue. This account narrates a series of complaints of a wife against her husband. Following mention of an appearance before the bishops, the text may say that they went to the house of the Lord on the sabbath. Closer analysis of the manuscript, however, makes this reading doubtful. In the middle line of text below, they attend the “house of the Lord” (*κυριακον*), but it is far from clear that “in the sabbath” (*εν σαββατω*) follows. While it is clear that the lettering has been

¹⁰⁵ Eusebius, *HE* 1.16.

¹⁰⁶ Eusebius, *HE* 2.17.2–3. See Klijn, “Jewish Christianity in Egypt,” p. 164.

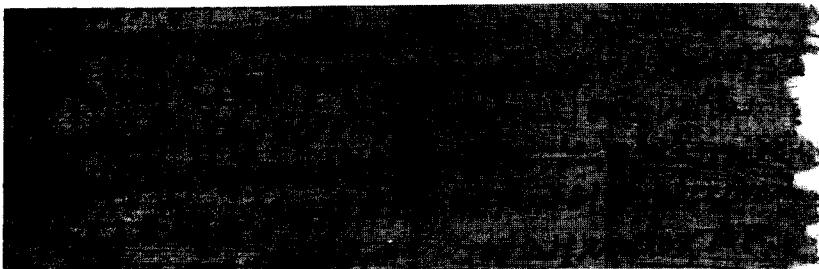
¹⁰⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 6.13.3.

¹⁰⁸ Origen, *fr. in Jo.* 114; *hom. in Lev.* 5.8. See the discussion of these passages in Klijn, “Jewish Christianity in Egypt,” p. 164–65.

¹⁰⁹ Origen, *hom. in Num.* 12.5.

¹¹⁰ *Didymus the Blind*, 184.9–10.

retouched, it is likely the reference is to a place name, such as Sambatho. If so, the references seem wholly Christian in focus.



p. Oxy. 6.903

Neither individually nor as a group can these various texts and traditions prove beyond doubt that Jewish followers of Jesus were the first type of Egyptian Christians. What they can show, however, is that a number of early Christian traditions were convinced that this was the case.

Moreover, the collected evidence shows an important convergence. It is reasonable to expect some level of congruence and continuity between Alexandrian Judaism and the formative Christian movement, and, although the evidence is rather late, this expectation is met in the first layer of available data. This expectation may be paired with the memory incorporated in the literary tradition. Works ranging from the 80s (*Acts*) to the 300s remember Jewish Christianity as the formative matrix for Egyptian Christianity. This hermeneutical intersection of expectation and memory is noteworthy, particularly if the later history would be dominated by the conflict between gnostic and orthodox forms of Christianity. The junction of expectation and memory does not guarantee that a type of Jewish Christianity is the only possible explanation for the emergence of Christianity in Alexandria; it does suggest, however, that it is the most plausible explanation. The evidence also suggests this Jewish Christianity was nourished from two streams of tradition: contact with Palestinian Judaism and engagement with the synagogues of Alexandria.

6. Opposition within Pauline Communities

Numerous controversies and lines of opposition are referenced within the Pauline correspondence of the New Testament. At least some of this tension appears to be grounded in attempts to observe Jewish Law along with faith in Jesus, but especially in the question of whether Gentiles should follow this path. These lines of testimony, however, are fraught with peril. Evidence for such tension is

found almost exclusively in canonical letters, and here such groups are represented and refuted solely from a Pauline perspective. Consequently, Pauline materials do not provide a direct witness to the nature of Jewish Christian activity among Pauline communities. At best, these materials may testify to the presence of such people and may provide a Pauline perspective on the social and theological location of such groups. Such literary representations are fraught with stereotype, with misrepresentation, and with apologetic interests. Any historical realities behind these descriptions must be recovered through critical analysis and through careful reconstruction.

The most dramatic of these arguments is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians. The geographical location of these communities is debated, and the social location proves even more elusive. Paul describes within the Galatian community those who preach a different gospel (Gal 1.6–9). While recognizing the authority of James, John, and Peter and even acknowledging the influence of Peter and James on his own ministry, Paul castigates others who only appear to hold authority (2.6). He describes messengers sent from James who oppose table fellowship with Gentiles, and he criticizes Peter for falling under their influence (2.11–14). Despite a lengthy treatise on the role of the Law (2.15–5.1), Paul reduces the issue to circumcision (5.2–6). Paul's description of his opponents provides the final stroke of his critique:

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. (6.12–13).

While the description by Paul is clearly a rhetorical construct serving his defense and argumentation, it may provide some clues to the social context of the Galatian communities. Paul appears to be describing fellow Jews who also follow Jesus – they are labeled as brothers who proclaim a gospel about Jesus Christ. The debate over circumcision is likely a single piece – perhaps not the most important piece – of a larger debate over the degree to which Gentile followers of Jesus are obligated to observe Jewish Law. While the specifics of this debate cannot be recovered, there is a strong historical plausibility to the core characterization of these messengers. They appear to be a group associated with James and Jerusalem who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by simultaneously following Jesus and observing Jewish Law. Moreover, they seem to expect that Gentile converts will follow this pattern, though it is unclear in what ways and to what extent.

Paul offers a similar description of opponents in Corinth. Messengers who are said to proclaim a different gospel and a different Jesus are described by Paul as superapostles (2 Cor 11.5). He labels these persons as “false prophets, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11.13). “Are they He-

brews?" Paul asks, "So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman – I am a better one." (11.22–23). At the end of his defense Paul concludes that "I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed, you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these superapostles, even though I am nothing" (12.11).

Paul's defense of his status and of his ministry among the Corinthians is marked by stereotype and vitriol, but the core description of his opponents matches that of Galatia. Paul's rhetoric likely points to historical groups of followers of Jesus' who assert both Hebraic heritage and apostolic standing – they seek to both follow Jesus and to observe some form of Jewish Law. Moreover, it is likely they seek to evoke some form of this pattern of faith among Gentiles followers of Jesus. The energy and vitriole of Paul's response suggests they exert significant influence in Corinth.

Paul's letter to the Philippians may reflect the presence of a similar group. Paul warns the church about dogs, evil workers, and "those who mutilate the flesh" (3.2). Paul once again reduces the issue to circumcision: "For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh" (3.3). Paul again defends his Hebraic heritage:

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the Law, blameless (3.4–6).

Such rhetoric makes sense only in the context of a debate between Jewish followers of Jesus over the continued role of the Law, especially in relation to Gentiles.

These scenes from Paul's correspondence suggest that he meets significant opposition to his strategy that Gentile followers of Jesus are free from obligations to Jewish Law. While his description of his opponents is framed in vitriolic defense of his authority and practice, there appears to be a consistent historical core. From a critical historical perspective, it is plausible that followers of Jesus who observe Jewish Law and claim apostolic endorsement influence some Pauline communities with their insistence that Gentile followers of Jesus also have some obligation to Jewish Law. This plausibility is enhanced by the wide temporal and geographical spread of this discourse: Paul notes the impact of such persons at various points in his ministry and across a geographical span that includes Antioch, Galatia, Corinth, and Philippi. Consequently, the most plausible explanation for this discourse is the presence and activity of some forms of Jewish Christianity.

7. Other Communities

Richard Bauckham thinks the formation of Christianity in central Mesopotamia deserves a closer look.¹¹¹ The church in Ctesiphon-Seleucia on the Tigris is said to have been founded by Mari, a disciple of Addai of Edessa, around the beginning of the 2nd century. A few scholars have defended the historicity of Mari, and Bauckham thinks the first few names on the bishops list deserve attention. Following Mari are Abris, Abraham, and Ya'qub (James). These are all said to be relatives of Joseph. The list says that 1) Abris is from the family of Joseph, the husband of Mary; 2) that Abraham is from the family of James, brother of the Lord; and 3) that Ya'qub (James) is Abraham's son. As Bauckham notes, apocryphal attention to the ancestors of Jesus and family members of his own generation are plentiful, but such attention to subsequent generations is actually rare. Bauckham finds a degree of plausibility in the suggestion that Palestinian Jews from the family of Jesus carried out a mission to Mesopotamia in the late 1st century and remained there as church leaders.

It is more likely that this list belongs to a larger tradition associated with the name of Thomas. Judas Thomas Didymus¹¹² (literally Jude the Twin) is said to stand behind a number of traditions. Addai (Thaddeus), one of the seventy sent out by Jesus, is said, after Jesus's death, to have been sent by Thomas to Edessa. Thomas himself is reported to have evangelized India and to have been buried at Edessa. The Mari who is listed as the first bishop of Ctesiphon-Seleucia is reported to be a disciple of Addai.

Even communities founded in the 2nd century sometimes hint at a formative Jewish Christian period. J. B. Segal notes that

In Adiabene, as at Edessa, Christian missionaries appear to have relied on the friendship of Jews. We have seen that at Edessa there was an important Jewish community, while at least one text indicates a tradition that the early Christian bishops of Adiabene carried Jewish names.¹¹³

It would be difficult to establish the historicity of these reports. What is significant, however, is the purpose of such accounts. In each instance local Christian traditions are said to have their roots, as nearly as possible, in Jewish Christian leaders from the apostolic age. Some even note the Jewish identity of the first missionaries and the first believers. There tends to be a discontinuity, however, between the foundational story and the ethos of the church that develops. In the account of the founding of Christianity at Ctesiphon-Seleucia, for example, the Jewish missionary Addai is said to preach a trinitarian version of the divinity of

¹¹¹ See the texts and the discussion in Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 68–70.

¹¹² Didymus (Greek) and Thomas (Hebrew), both mean *twin*.

¹¹³ J. B. Segal, *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). p. 69.

Jesus. Such stories have much to say about the interests of the churches that tell them, but they offer little insight about their origins.

8. Conclusion

Jewish Christianity has been defined as people and groups in antiquity whose historical profile suggests they both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness as a continuation of God's covenant with Israel. A critical survey of the earliest communities of Jesus' followers suggests a strong, sometimes dominant, presence of Jewish Christianity.

The earliest Christian communities arose in a variety of locales and contexts in the period between the death of Jesus and the framing of Nicene orthodoxy (325 ce). Few, if any, of these communities could claim to be founded by Jesus himself.¹¹⁴ Most communities claimed instead to be rooted in some form of apostolic tradition. Such claims to connection and coherence played a key role in social reconstruction and in identity formation in the earliest communities – a process not unlike that found in rabbinic Judaism. With the exception of the communities founded by Paul, such claims to apostolic roots presuppose, whether intentionally or not, a strong heritage in Judaism.

This claim to apostolic, Jewish origins takes two distinct forms: intrinsic and constructed. Constructed connections are extrinsic to the structure, location, and ideology of the community. These extrinsic constructions serve as a type of *gemeindegrundungslegende* (foundational myth): their function is to legitimize a community that often stands at some distance from any apostolic orientation.

Such aetiological constructs take a variety of shapes. Luke seems to imply that the Emmaus community is formed by those who sat at table with the risen Christ (Lk. 24.13–35), yet he says nothing of the intrinsic character of this community. In other cases what is known of the community stands in rather stark contrast to the foundational story. Thaddeus, one of the seventy (Lk. 10.1–24), is said to have been sent by Thomas to found the Christian community at Ctesiphon-Seleucia, but his preaching is hardly apostolic. Such constructions root the community in Jewish Christian persons, but not in Jewish Christian ideas and practices. In a similar manner, by the time the church at Rome lays claim to the mantel of Paul and Peter, its structure and theology are far from that of the apostolic era. Despite its primitive roots, the Alexandrian church supplements its history with a later apostolic story about Mark. The churches founded by Paul appear to exhibit

¹¹⁴ From a historical perspective only Galilean communities and tradents of the Sayings Tradition (Q) might claim such origins. Luke posits such a connection between Jesus and the Christian communities in Jerusalem and, apparently, in Emmaus. Paul claims his apostolic status is based on an appearance from the risen Lord. The Edessa community claims its origins in a letter from Jesus.

only limited influence from Jewish Christianity: they exhibit the influence of a Jewish founder (Paul), but they are essentially Gentile Christian in profile.

In contrast to these constructions, several communities show an intrinsic connection to the Jewishness of the apostolic era. Evidence for the formative role of some form of Jewish Christianity appears in a variety of forms: chief among these are literary connections, theological focus, archeological data, and sociological profiles. The strongest witness is provided by the confluence of multiple lines of evidence. Such a confluence may be found in several ancient communities.

A strong Jewish Christian presence in the Galilee is expected. While some evidence may be cited, a dominant and enduring Jewish Christian presence in the Galilee cannot be demonstrated. Eastern forms of Christianity traced through Edessa, Persia, and India recall apostolic origins, but Jewish Christian influence is difficult to demonstrate. On the other hand, the four primary sees of orthodox Christianity – Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria – each hold evidence of a formative period under the influence of some form of Jewish Christianity.

Luke insists that the resurrection of Jesus established the earliest communities in and around Jerusalem. This primal community is, for Luke, both the extension of the Jesus movement and the reformation and renewal of Judaism. Paul seeks to establish himself as an apostle who is independent of, yet equal to, the apostolic witnesses in Jerusalem. At the same time, Paul shows a deep concern for respect from and reconciliation with the Jerusalem leadership. James, brother of Jesus, appears in Luke and Paul as a rather flat character: his identity, both positive and negative, is found in his role as leader of the Jerusalem community. Other testimony to James provides a rich and nuanced portrait: brother of Jesus, witness of the risen Lord, first bishop of Jerusalem, patriarch of the family of Jesus, pious Jew, faithful martyr. Thus, literary, theological, sociological, and perhaps even archeological data¹¹⁵ converge in the Jerusalem community. Between the time of Jesus' death and the beginning of the 1st Jewish War (66 ce), a Jewish community at Jerusalem provided the point of origin and the center of primitive Christianity. This community seems to have been led by the family of Jesus, and it likely exerted some degree of influence until the end of the 2nd Jewish War (135 ce). The influence of the Jerusalem community may be traced as late as the 4th century and as far afield as Egypt.¹¹⁶

The New Testament represents Antioch as an extension of the Jerusalem community. The founders are said to have come from Jerusalem, pivotal events are reported back to the Jerusalem leaders, and the mission to the Gentiles receives the blessing of and a letter of instruction from the Jerusalem leadership. The

¹¹⁵ There is some possibility that the Church of the Apostles stood on Mt. Zion at least until 70 ce. The ossuary of James may be a forgery.

¹¹⁶ In the Gospel of Thomas, Saying 12, which places its readers under the authority of James.

available evidence suggests that Christianity at Antioch, from the time of its founding up to the 1st Jewish War, had a Jewish Christian orientation. A transition may have been caused by the fall of Jerusalem, by a pogrom against Jews at Antioch, and possibly by the imposition in some synagogues of a *birkhat ha-minim* (prayer against heretics). Somewhere in the 80s or 90s the Gospel of Matthew incorporates Jewish Christian materials into a gospel dominated by the mission to the Gentiles. This transition appears to be completed by the time of Ignatius (90s ce), though the influence of Jewish Christianity remains. Therefore, a confluence of literary, theological, and sociological evidence suggests the Christian community at Antioch is rooted in some form of Jewish Christianity.

The history of Christianity at Rome is framed by a confluence of literary, theological, sociological, and archeological evidence. The expulsion noted by the Roman historian Suetonius and by Luke may point to an early Jewish Christian presence in the synagogues of Rome in the late 40s ce. Paul's letter to the Romans in the mid 50s ce presumes a Jewish Christian audience. The Christian community arose in Rome in the same quarters and in the same configuration as the Jewish synagogues; it was shaped by the same language, texts, organization, and hermeneutical traditions. Subsequent generations of Christians demonstrate not only a cultured heritage from Judaism, but also a seasoned process for preservation and transmission of synagogue traditions. While the demarcation of Gentile Christians may begin as early as 62 ce, the Jewish Christian presence and influence endured well beyond this. The memory of this influence endured even longer.

The sociological and archeological profile of Alexandrian synagogues is mirrored in later Christian developments. The literary profile, ranging from the 1st to the 4th century, confirms this connection along multiple lines of evidence. It is significant that a Jewish Christian heritage is remembered in a community dominated by the conflict between gnosticism and orthodoxy. This conjunction of expectation and memory appears to be a critical marker for the historical presence and influence of Jewish Christianity.

This examination of local evidence shows that Christian communities developed in a variety of ways, that they developed at different locations, and that they developed along unique chronologies. While no single trajectory can account for these diverse locales, modes, and stages, the movement that would become Christianity almost certainly has its origins in Jerusalem among the Jewish followers of Jesus. Indeed, what would become the four major sees of orthodox Christianity – Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria – all appear to originate in some form of Jewish Christianity. Moreover, the transition from a formative Jewish Christianity to the dominance of orthodoxy in the shape of Gentile Christianity differs – by degree, kind, and pace – for each of these communities.

Most attempts to write the history of primitive Christianity have dealt in broad strokes and have focused mostly on the outcome of this process. Closer attention to the origins and causes of this transition suggests that most major lines of western and African Christianity from antiquity experienced a formative stage dominated by Jewish ways of following Jesus. Furthermore, in each of these four major communities the memory of the formative role of Jewish Christianity appears to outlive its prominence – and perhaps even its presence.¹¹⁷

A sample of this process may be encapsulated in the canonical letter of James. While the content, theology, and address of the letter probably reflect a primitive form of Jewish Christianity, its linguistic profile suggests a later date¹¹⁸ and a Graecophonic context. The epistle of James thus invokes a primitive Jewish tradition for the purpose of contemporary ethical exhortation in a later, Greek-speaking context. Given this dual texture and the implied audience, the rhetoric employed by this epistle is extraordinary.¹¹⁹ The rhetorical focus of James 2.1–2 is distinctly Christian: it seeks to impose guidelines for Christian worship in the context of “the faith of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The ethical dimensions of worship are demonstrated in “not showing favoritism” to the rich. The context of this Christian worship, however, is striking: it takes place “in your synagogues.”

This chapter has investigated evidence for the sociological, literary, and theological profile of various ancient communities of Jesus’ followers. This analysis suggests that one key to the origin and development of primitive Christianity is the presence in its earliest communities of persons and groups who seek to continue God’s covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness.

Consequently, the religious map of antiquity must be revised to incorporate not only the Jewishness of Jesus, but also the revisionist forms of Jewishness evidenced among his earliest followers. The probability that such persons shaped the profile of the earliest communities of Jesus’ followers suggests that further evidence of Jewish Christianity may be found in the writings produced within these communities.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, the argument of Stéphane Verhelst, *Les Traditions Judéo-Chrétiennes Dans La Liturgie de Jérusalem Spécialement La Liturgie de Saint Jacques frère de Dieu* in Textes Et Etudes Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy #18 (Leiden: Peeters, 2003). Verhelst argues that the 3rd and 4th century liturgical traditions of both Jerusalem and Antioch show dependence on Jewish Palestinian documents. From this evidence he concludes that a Jewish Christian milieu has influenced the formation of these liturgical traditions.

¹¹⁸ Most scholars suggest late 1st century or early 2nd century.

¹¹⁹ James 2.1–2. Epiphanius says that Ebionites call their places of worship synagogues and recognize the office of elder and of leader of the synagogue (*Pan.* 30.18.2). Chrysostom is disturbed that a significant numbers of Christians in 4th century Antioch attend synagogue.

CHAPTER 6

The Earliest Christians Writings

The term Jewish Christianity is used here used to search for people and groups in antiquity who sought to fulfill God's covenant with Israel by simultaneously following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. A survey of the earliest communities of Jesus' followers highlighted the Jewish ethos of the Jerusalem community and suggested that various other communities originated in some form of Jewish Christianity – a memory that tends to endure through successive stages of community development. If this is the case, it becomes necessary to consider the impact of Jewish Christianity upon the literature produced within these communities. Did such communities narrate their identity and purpose by drawing upon Jewish Christian traditions? Is there evidence that such traditions have been countered and transformed in the development of new narratives of faith?

Most early Christian writings reflect the turbulent years after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple (70 ce) and the transition toward Gentile Christianity. Nonetheless, important markers for Jewish Christianity may still be found in some early Christian texts. This evidence appears in three forms. First, some New Testament texts have been characterized as Jewish Christian in their identity. Secondly, many New Testament texts appear to draw upon Jewish Christian sources. While these sources have been relocated and transformed, the recovery of the contours of these sources gives some insight into the literary heritage of Jewish Christianity. Furthermore, the strategies for reallocating these traditions may testify to their perceived value. Thirdly, some Jewish Christian texts likely had their own existence outside of the stream of tradition that would become canonical.

1. The Two Ways Tradition

A significant cluster of early Christian texts contains a tradition that highlights the two paths presented to each human: the way of life and the way of death. The clearest expression of this tradition is found in the initial passage of the *Didache* (1.1–6.1).¹ The opening lines declare “There are two ways, one to life and one to

¹ The *Didache* is a book of Christian instruction that is usually dated in the late 1st or early 2nd century. Its sources are likely from the 1st century. See the commentary by Kurt

death, but the difference between the two ways is great” (1.1). The *Didache* roots this instruction in the *Shema Israel*: “The way to life is this: ‘First, you shall love God, who has created you; second, your neighbor as yourself’” (1.2a). The tradition then articulates the moral imperatives of the path to life and contrasts them to the path to death (5.1). The *Two Ways Tradition* is found in various early texts:

1. The *Didache* (1.1–6.1)
2. The Epistle of Barnabas (18–20).
3. The *Doctrina apostolorum*
3. The Apostolic Church Order (4–13)
4. The Canons of the Apostles
5. The Epitome
6. The Life of Shenoute
7. Pseudo-Athanasius *Syntagma doctrinae*
8. *Fides patrum*

The literary relationship between these texts is complex. The *Didache* and *Barnabas* exhibit strong equivalence in their use of the *Two Ways Tradition*, but not in the remainder of their materials. Thus, they are more likely dependent upon a common source rather than upon each other.² The *Doctrina apostolorum* exhibits an even stronger equivalence with the *Didache* in its presentation of the *Two Ways Tradition*, but it contains no other materials. The most plausible explanation for this relationship is the use of a common source that contained only the *Two Ways Tradition*.³ The related tradition found in the *Apostolic Church Order* and in the *Canons of the Apostles* (4.1–13.14) has a more ambiguous relation to the *Didache*: it may derive from a common source⁴ or it may depend upon the *Didache*. The Arabic text known as the *Life of Shenoute of Atri* likely represents a creative and selective adaptation based on the whole of the *Didache*.⁵ The Pseudo-Athanasius text known as the *Syntagma doctrinae* is related to the *Fides patrum*. Their relation to the *Didache* is limited to the *Two Ways Tradition*, suggesting the use of a source common to the *Didache*.⁶

The selectivity and variance⁷ within this tradition suggests that the *Didache* does not provide the foundational document behind this line of tradition. It is

Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, trans. Linda Maloney, ed. Harold Attridge in *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998 [1st German edition, 1989]). His discussion of the *Two Ways Tradition* is found on pp. 30–52. See also Clayton Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

² See the discussion by Niederwimmer, *Didache*, pp. 30–31.

³ The possibilities are discussed by Niederwimmer, *Didache*, pp. 31–32. He suggests the translation from Greek to Latin was made in antiquity.

⁴ So Niederwimmer, *Didache*, pp. 32–34.

⁵ The appropriation of the *Didache* material is discussed by Niederwimmer, *Didache*, p. 34.

⁶ Niederwimmer, *Didache*, pp. 34–35.

⁷ Including the omission in some texts of the specifically Christian elements.

more plausible that an independent account of the *Two Ways Tradition* stands behind the *Didache* and much, though not all, of the later tradition. This position was posited as early as 1866,⁸ and Kurt Niederwimmer notes its continuing influence:

This model of interpretation ... appeared early in the history of Didache research, was presented in the widest variety of versions, and dominates research today ...⁹

The major debate has centered on whether the *Two Ways Tradition* is a Christian construction, as reflected in the *Didache*, or whether it was originally a Jewish tradition.¹⁰ The position, taken early in the history of research, that various expressions of the *Two Ways Tradition* go back to a Jewish text is strengthened by the analogy found at Qumran.¹¹ Sebastian Brock argues that even more decisive evidence is found in the Palestinian Targum tradition, which develops the two ways in association with Deut. 30.15 and 30.19. Brock argues that the two ways tradition originates in the linking of Deut. 30.15, 30.19, and Jer. 21.8 – a connection that likely goes back to at least the 2nd century BCE.¹² Further support is found in the fact that Christian colorings of the *Two Ways Tradition* in the *Didache* (1.3b–2.1) are absent from many of the other witnesses. This larger debate, of course, begs the question when it assumes that the text cannot be Jewish and also be oriented toward the teaching of Jesus.

Whichever position is taken on its foundational character, the use of the *Two Ways Tradition* is significant. This tradition has been appropriated as a Jewish Christian text in a variety of situations. Here the significance of Jesus and his followers is understood in terms of their teaching, and this teaching is framed wholly within a Jewish world view.¹³ If the foundational text is Jewish, the appropriation by Jewish Christianity is no less significant; indeed it shows the ease with which Jesus could be understood within a Jewish matrix, with little or no

⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles with Illustrations from the Talmud* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1886).

⁹ Niederwimmer, *Didache*, p. 35.

¹⁰ A Christian origin is argued by Edgar Hennecke, "Die Grundschrift der Didache und ihre Recensionen," ZNW 2 (1901), 58–72; Edgar J. Goodspeed, "The Didache, Barnabas and the Doctrina," ATR 27 (1945), 228–47. See also Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), who dismisses the need for such a reconstruction behind the Gospel of Matthew.

¹¹ The text is 1QS 3.18–4.26. See the discussion by Sebastian Brock, "The Two Ways and the Palestinian Targum," in *A Tribute to G. Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History*, ed. Philip Davies, B. T. White, JSOT Sup 100 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 327–38.

¹² Brock, "The Two Ways and the Palestinian Targum."

¹³ Niederwimmer tends to a circular argument to exclude reference to Jesus or his teaching from the earliest layers of the *Didache*. While he acknowledges that the κύριος of 4.1 probably refers to Jesus, he dismisses this address from the earliest form.

reference to christology, to a passion kerygma, to the resurrection of Jesus, or to his return.

Consequently, the appropriation, if not the formulation, of the *Two Ways Tradition* is a Jewish Christian phenomenon: it understands Jesus as the Jewish teacher in whose words lie the way of life. The impact of this Jewish Christian tradition may be traced in various other documents, including some in the New Testament.

2. The *Didache*

Whether the *Two Ways Tradition* was Jewish or Jewish Christian in its origins is debated, but its appropriation in the *Didache* (c. 100 ce) provides a clear example of Jewish Christian literature and theology. This orientation is created by selection, by framing, by addition, and by adaptation.

Many have argued that *Did.* 1.3b through 2.1 is an extensive insertion into the main body of the *Two Ways Tradition*. Following the brief introduction of the two ways, this section draws explicitly from the teachings of Jesus as represented in the synoptic gospels. The return to the foundational *Two Ways* tradition may be marked by the awkward and late reference in 2.1 to the "second command." If 1.3b–2.1 is a secondary intrusion, it serves no less effectively to present the teaching of Jesus as a demonstration of the Jewish concept of righteousness.

Other techniques are used to create a Jewish Christian orientation. The presentation of teaching of the *Two Ways* as a Jesus tradition is followed by specific attention to the life of the church. Included here are sections on the liturgy (7.1–10.7); on church order (11.1–15.4); and on the end times (16.1–8).

The larger section on the rites within the church (7.1–10.7) provides instruction on baptism (7.1–4); on fasting and prayer (8.1–3); and on the eucharist (9.1–10.7). The section on church order (11.1–15.4) represents an extraordinary attempt to facilitate both the past and the future. Respect and support are offered for the apostles and prophets who guided the first stages of the Jesus movement (11.1–13.7). At the same time, the emergent role of bishops and deacons is to be respected, and church discipline is required (15.1–4). This reconciliation of the older and newer forms of leadership is projected in 15.1–2:

Select, then, for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, mild-tempered men who are not greedy, who are honest and proven, for they too perform the services of prophets and teachers for you. So do not disregard them, for they are the persons who are honored among you, together with the prophets and the teachers.

The *Didache* concludes with a paranic call to faithfulness (16.1–2) in light of the approaching end times (16.3–8), with the ending likely lost. The eschatological description in 16.3–8 is based either on synoptic traditions or on apocalyptic materials known also to the synoptic gospels.

Thus, the *Didache* appropriates a Jewish tradition of instruction and parnesis on the way of life, then applies it as the key to following Jesus. The life of the church and its future are ordered in the light of this tradition. The *Didache* likely appropriates Jewish source materials, but it certainly presents a Jewish Christian understanding of the church.

This can be seen first in its appeal to authority. The way of life and the ordering of the community draw upon two streams of authority: the Old Testament (1.6; 14.3; 16.7) and the gospel of the Lord (8.2; 11.3; 15.3; 15.4).

Secondly, the *Didache* reveals a Jewish Christian understanding of the gospel. Each of the gospel references is followed by commands guiding the practice of the community: thus you shall pray (8.2); thus you shall do (11.3; 15.4); receive each other in peace (15.3). The point of reference is noteworthy: nowhere in the *Didache* does the term *gospel* point to a christological kerygma.¹⁴ The gospel is not connected to any idea of incarnation or to any concept of benefits drawn from Jesus' death and resurrection. In the *Didache* the term *gospel* has its content in the teachings of Jesus and its application in the ethical demands placed upon the community of his followers.

The Jewish Christian context is also seen in the leadership of the community: it is rooted in a tradition that is both archaic and charismatic. The apostles are the first generation of Jesus' followers who knew him, either in his life or in some resurrection appearance. The Hebraic concept of the prophet is used to describe itinerant proclaimers similar to those found in the synoptic gospels. These leaders represent the first generations, and their leadership is based on revelation and inspiration. The prophetic model is Jewish, but the apostolic work is uniquely associated with the Jesus movement. The author of the *Didache* must argue for an emerging order under the leadership of bishops and elders; it cannot be presumed. Indeed, the *Didache* must assert that bishops and elders deserve as much respect as prophets and teachers (15.1–2).

The fourth line of evidence is found in the purpose of the *Didache*, which is the ordering of the community of Jesus' followers in light of the coming catastrophe. The community rule does not envision any longevity for the community; it is designed instead to ensure its fidelity, through its practices, to the way of Jesus. By ordering its praxis by the tradition of Jesus' teachings, this community believes it embodies the ancient Jewish tradition of the way of life.

This history of development and this set of characteristics define the *Didache* as a Jewish Christian text. Likely written in Syria near the beginning of the 2nd century ce, the *Didache* is framed upon Jewish and Christian traditions as a guide for a community of Jesus' followers. The writings of the Old Testament, the teachings of Jesus, and eschatological urgency are combined to articulate the

¹⁴ Noted by Niederwimmer, *Didache*, p. 50.

ethical demands that guide the community – the way of life for those who await the returning Lord.

3. The Book of James

The canonical book of James is distinct from most other New Testament writings.¹⁵ James exhibits the form of a letter only in its opening verse. Its character is rather that of a collection of sayings and maxims aimed at paranesis – general ethical admonition. As is typical of paranetic material, the book of James is marked by its eclectic nature, by its absence of a sustained argument, by frequent use of catchword connections, by repetition of motifs, and by the general application of its teaching.¹⁶

The Jewish ethos of this work is evident throughout. Its opening lines address the work to “the twelve tribes in the diaspora” (1.1), and there is no mention of the Gentiles. The book is dominated by its focus on God (some 17 times), who is the Father (1.17; 3.9). Numerous models of faith are drawn from the Old Testament: Abraham (2.23); Rahab (2.25); Job (4.11); Elijah (5.17). Citations (4.6) and allusions to scripture (4.5) are employed, and there is an echo of the *Shema Israel* (2.19). The role of the Law¹⁷ and God’s preference for the poor are emphasized. Faith is shown through acts of mercy. In contrast to the extensive theological focus, the name of Jesus is mentioned twice (1.1; 2.1). The only titles applied to Jesus are Lord and Christ. There is no reference to revelation or to the significance of Jesus’ death; there are allusions to his teaching and reference to healing in his name. The community addressed by this work meets in a synagogue (2.2).

Some have even suggested that James is a Jewish document that has been Christianized through a few superficial interpolations.¹⁸ This thesis proves difficult to sustain, however, in light of references such as the new creation (1.18); the name invoked over the group (2.7); and the debate over faith and works, which

¹⁵ Among the commentaries and treatments are Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, rev. Heinrich Green, trans. Michael Williams in *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976 [11th German edition, 1964]); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). The letter of James is seen as a Jewish Christian work by James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) vol. 3, pp. 754–55.

¹⁶ See the general discussion by Dibelius, *James*, pp. 1–11.

¹⁷ The Law is perfect in 1.25; the Law of liberty is described in 2.12; the royal Law is evoked in 2.8.

¹⁸ This thesis was proposed independently by L. Massebieau, “L’Épitre de Jacques est – elle l’oeuvre un Chrétien?” *RHR* 32 (1895), 249–83; and by Friedrich Spitta, “Der Brief Jakobus,” in Spitta, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur des Urchristentums*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), pp. 1–239.

seems to reflect an awareness of Paul (2.14–26).¹⁹ Likewise, the use of Lord to characterize Jesus in a few places creates ambiguity over the term in other places. The most plausible position is that the book of James reflects a thoroughly Jewish way of following Jesus.

The Jewish Christian character of this book is especially noteworthy in light of its literary traits and its likely setting. Although it preserves Palestinian traditions, the work employs a relatively sophisticated Greek. Despite its eclectic, collective nature, the book exhibits a rather consistent and polished style, grammar, vocabulary, and rhetoric.²⁰ Seen from a historical perspective, the author is almost certainly not the brother of Jesus, the work likely responds to Pauline ideas, and the book is probably known by the writer of Jude. The most plausible location, then, is somewhere in the late 1st or early 2nd century in an area influenced by a hellenized Judaism.

This literary history should not be confused with its more primitive tradition history. The connection to the teaching of Jesus, the articulation of Jewish ethical instruction, and the eschatological urgency all suggest the book reflects a tradition of Jewish Christian thought and practice. The attribution to the brother of Jesus and the address to the scattered Israel only enhance this profile.

4. Jude, 2nd Peter

The canonical book of Jude exhibits similar traits. This work employs a competent Greek with a wide range of vocabulary, idioms, and rhetorical forms.²¹ Its conceptual world, however, is built upon the literature of Palestinian Judaism. Allusions and citations draw upon the Hebrew Bible, with Septuagintal language appearing primarily in the use of certain expressions. Over the short range of 25 verses, a host of Old Testament figures and images are invoked: the Exodus, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, Korah, Enoch, Adam. Jude also shows a striking knowledge and use of Jewish apocryphal works. The most prominent of these are *1 Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*. Jude also seems to know traditions of Jewish paranesis (instruction), haggadah (non-legal materials), and midrash (interpretation).²²

Jude is nonetheless a Christian work. Jesus bears the titles of Christ, Savior, and Lord (v. 25), as well as the unusual title Master (v. 4). The teaching of the apostles is invoked (v. 17). The opponents are chastised through midrash, but

¹⁹ See the discussion by Dibelius, *James*, pp. 21–26.

²⁰ Examples of these are provided by Dibelius, *James*, pp. 34–38.

²¹ For specific examples, see Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, in *Word Biblical Commentary* 50 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), pp. 6–7.

²² Bauckham, *Jude*, p. 7, finds examples of these in verses 5–7, 11. Verses 5–19 are a type of midrash.

their error is twofold: perverting the grace of God and denying “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (v. 6). This message is directed to a Greek-speaking community among whom there is internal conflict (v. 4). It is not clear what ideas are held and what forms of faith are practiced in this community, but it is abundantly clear what model the author wishes to see implemented.

Thus, the canonical book of Jude uses Jewish Christian ideas and interpretation to address a conflict between two groups of Jesus’ followers. The guiding ethos is that of Jewish apocalyptic thought with its accompanying warning and paranesis. Bauckham concludes that

the dominance of the apocalyptic outlook in Jude and his use of the Jewish apocalypses at any rate locates him in circles where apocalyptic was not just one influence, but the dominant vehicle through which faith in Jesus found expression.²³

Taken together, these various traits place the canonical book of Jude firmly in the realm of Jewish Christianity. This stance is self-conscious: the work is attributed to the brother of James and, by implication, to the brother of Jesus.

The canonical work known as 2 Peter lies one step beyond Jude. The tone of this letter is more clearly Hellenistic, and this community is probably further along the road toward orthodoxy. The work likely belongs to the literary form of a testimony. In such works the ideas of a teacher are encapsulated for the guidance of a later generation. In this way, 2 Peter seeks to give apostolic guidance to a post-apostolic era. It is less likely, then, that its audience and context are Jewish Christian. But the message it presents draws not only upon an apostolic image, but upon Jewish Christian conceptualizations. The most important instance of this is its high level of equivalence with the book of Jude. This may be explained in four different ways: 1) Jude depends on 2 Peter; 2) 2 Peter depends on Jude; 3) both depend on a common source; 4) both are by the same author.²⁴ Most scholars now favor the dependence of 2 Peter on Jude.

This question has little impact, however, on the location and mode of the letter. Second Peter addresses issues within a later stage of church history in a Greek-speaking environment. To do so, however, it constructs a testimony that draws upon the apostolic era and upon the conceptual world of Jewish Christianity.

5. The Sayings Tradition

The idea of an ancient collection of the sayings of Jesus was first articulated in the early 2nd century by Papias. Eusebius records that Papias also wrote a work entitled *Exegesis of the Words of the Lord*. Papias gave apostolic sanction to this tradition: “Matthew, then, composed the sayings in the Hebrew dialect, but each

²³ Bauckham, *Jude*, p. 10.

²⁴ These options are evaluated in Bauckham, *Jude*, pp. 141–43.

person interpreted them as one was able" (*HE* 3.39.16). It was Friedrich Schliermacher (1832) who suggested that Papias was speaking not of the canonical gospel of Matthew, which was composed in Greek, but of an Aramaic collection of sayings, written by Matthew and used as a source for the composition of his gospel.²⁵ Hermann Weisse (1838) was the first to articulate the idea that Matthew and Luke both reworked the Gospel of Mark, but they also drew independently upon a common source of the sayings of Jesus.²⁶ This model gained wider acceptance through the work of H. J. Holtzmann (1863).²⁷ The abbreviation Q. was used for a type of source material by Eduard Simons (1880), and Johannes Weiss began to use the symbol Q to refer to the collection of Jesus' sayings.²⁸ The reference to the Sayings Tradition as Q has been retained in modern scholarship.²⁹ By the time of Rudolf Bultmann (1921), a distinction was made in the form of the collection used by Matthew and that used by Luke.³⁰

5.1 The Form and Content of the Sayings Tradition

The idea of a sayings collection used by both Matthew and Luke depends on affirmation of Markan priority. Only when the Gospel of Mark is seen as the basis for both Matthew and Luke does the common sayings tradition emerge: sayings found in both Matthew and Luke, but not drawn from Mark, almost certainly come from a common source, written in Greek.³¹ This shared material is known as the *double tradition* of sayings, and scholars have typically favored the Lukan order of presentation.

²⁵ The history of research for the Sayings Tradition is traced by James M. Robinson in *The Critical Edition of Q*, ed. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John Kloppenborg (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); by John Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Research in the 20th century is traced by Alan Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source: Genre, Synchrony, and Wisdom Redaction in Q* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

²⁶ Weisse's position is found in *Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch und philosophisch bearbeitet* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1838), vol. 1, pp. 55–56.

²⁷ H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptischen Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1863).

²⁸ Eduard Simons, *Hat der dritte Evangelist den kanonischen Matthäus benutzt?* (Bonn: Universitäts Buchdruckeri, 1880); Johannes Weiss, "Die Verteidigung Jesu gegen den Vorwurf des Bündnis mit Beelzebul," *ThStKr* 63 (1890), p. 557.

²⁹ An alternative (the Alpha Tradition) was suggested in Edwin Broadhead, "On the (Mis)Definition of Q," *JSNT* 68 (1997), 3–12. In this context I will refer to Q as The Sayings Tradition.

³⁰ Sometimes referred to as Q^{mt} and Q^{lk}.

³¹ When material translated into Greek exhibits exact verbal agreement in numerous places, a written Greek source should be presumed.

The double tradition is not identical with the Sayings Tradition (Q); it simply provides the primary access to the Sayings Tradition. On theoretical grounds, the Sayings Tradition may also be represented in some sayings from the triple tradition (Mark, Matthew, Luke), in some sayings found in only one of the synoptic gospels, in non-canonical sayings of Jesus, and in some form of incipit or conclusion to the collection.³² Despite this theoretical framework, the double tradition of non-Markan sayings found in Matthew and Luke remains the basis for reconstruction of the Sayings Tradition. Since the Lukan order is generally preferred, the scholarly standard also employs the versification of Luke.³³

The Double Tradition Passages in the Lukan Order

Matthew	Luke
3:7–12	3:7–9,16–17
4:1–11	4:1–13
5:1–12	6:20–26
5:39–42,44–48; 7:12	6:27–36
7:1–5; 10:24–25; 15:14	6:37–42
7:16–20; 12:33–35	6:43–45
7:21,24–27	6:46–49
7:28a; 8:5–10,13	7:1–10
11:2–6	7:18–23
11:7–11	7:24–28
11:16–19	7:31–35
8:19–22	9:57–62
9:37–38; 10:7–16	10:2–12
11:21–23	10:13–15
10:40	10:16
11:25–27; 13:16–17	10:21–24
6:9–13	11:2–4
7:7–11	11:9–13
12:22–30; 9:32–34	11:14–20,23
12:43–45	11:24–26
12:38–42	11:16,29–32
5:15	11:33
6:22–23	11:34–35
23:4,6–7,13,23,25–27,29–32,34–36	11:39–52
10:26–33; 12:32; 10:19–20	12:2–12
6:25–33	12:22–31
6:19–21	12:33–34
24:43–51	12:39–46

³² The theoretical extent of the Sayings Tradition is explored in Edwin Broadhead, "The Extent of the Sayings Tradition (Q)," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

³³ Thus, Q 4.1–13 would be reconstructed from Matthew 4.1–11 and Luke 4.1–13.

Matthew	Luke
10:34–36	12:49–53
16:2–3	12:54–56
5:25–26	12:57–59
13:31–33	13:18–21
7:13–14; 25:10–12; 7:22–23;	
8:11–12; 20:16	13:23–30
23:37–39	13:34–35
12:11	14:5
23:12	14:11; 18:14
22:2–10	14:16–24
10:37–38	14:26–27
5:13	14:34–35
18:12–14	15:4–7
6:24	16:13
11:12–13	16:16
5:18	16:17
5:32	16:18
18:7	17:1
18:15,21–22	17:3–4
17:20	17:6
24:26–28,37–41; 10:39	17:23–24,26–30,33–35,37
25:14–30	19:12–27
[26–30]	[22–27]
19:28	22:28–30

Because Matthew and Luke often have different forms of a saying, the text of their source must be reconstructed on critical grounds. A group of scholars working as the International Q Project attempted a systematic reconstruction; this appeared in 2000 as *The Critical Edition of Q*. As the contours of the Sayings Tradition began to emerge and to be filled out through reconstruction, attention turned to other critical issues: the framing of the collection; its literary history; its tradition history; its theology; its tradents.

Since this material contains the sayings of Jesus, the collection has played a central role in historical Jesus research.³⁴ Recent research in the Sayings Tradition and in the historical Jesus tends to divide along the line of eschatology versus sapiential. A number of scholars argue that the wisdom sayings are foundational to the Jesus material, with eschatological forming a later addition,³⁵ other

³⁴ This was especially true in the period designated as the New Quest. Here the search for the historical Jesus was largely an attempt to isolate which of the sayings attributed to him were authentic. Parable research also sought the implications of this format for the historical identity of Jesus. The most recent period of scholarship has turned more attention to the deeds of Jesus and to his relationship to his social and religious context.

³⁵ These scholars tend to assign primary value to an earlier (sapiential) version of the

scholars continue to give priority to the eschatological sayings. The way past this divide may lie in recognizing the compatibility of traditions of wisdom and eschatology.³⁶ Most scholars, however, agree that the foundational material and the worldview of Jesus are both rooted in Jewish concepts, whether of eschatology or wisdom.

Consequently, the Sayings Tradition belongs to the literature of Jewish followers of Jesus.³⁷ Its wisdom sayings and eschatological expectation both draw upon Jewish traditions, but they do so in order to articulate the central place of Jesus in God's salvation. This is evident not only in the form of its sayings, but in the theology and sociology they imply.

5.2 A Theology of The Sayings Tradition

The Sayings Tradition is noteworthy for what it says about Jesus and John, but it is also noteworthy for its ideas about God, about Israel, and about the role of Jesus in God's salvation.³⁸

The Sayings Tradition speaks early and rather often of the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist.³⁹ Unlike the synoptic gospels, there is no effort here to diminish the role of John. Christopher Tuckett, for example, finds in the Sayings Tradition a

wholehearted support for John's teaching and a willingness to incorporate the tradition of his teaching into Q itself with no hint that John's message had been superseded, or rendered in any way invalid, by the ministry of Jesus himself.⁴⁰

John the Baptist plays two crucial roles in the Sayings Tradition: he places the tradition under the framework of Jewish prophecy, and he initiates the eschatological movement that provides the central drama of the Sayings Tradition. The

Sayings Tradition and to the Gospel of Thomas. The secondary layer in the Sayings Tradition is said to be eschatological; in the Gospel of Thomas it is said to be gnostic.

³⁶ These traditions operate alongside each other not only in the Sayings Tradition, but also in the book of James and in the *Didache*. This co-existence is found in all three of the synoptic gospels.

³⁷ Technically speaking, it may not be correct to speak of these tradents as Jewish Christians, since Jesus is never described as the Christ in this material. These are, however, Jews who follow Jesus.

³⁸ Among the more careful and balanced attempts to describe the thought world of the Sayings Tradition is that of Christopher Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996). See also Ron Piper, *Wisdom in the Q-Tradition*, SNTSMS 61 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); *The Gospel Behind the Gospels. Current Studies on Q*, ed. Ron Piper, NovTSupp 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Ivan Havener, *Q: The Sayings of Jesus* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987); John Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969).

³⁹ Q 3.7–9; 3.16–17; 7.18–35; 16.16.

⁴⁰ Tuckett, *Early Christianity*, p. 109.

eschatological aura of John includes both his proclamation about the Coming One and the era of crisis that has begun with his own ministry.⁴¹

Eschatology lies at the heart of the Sayings Tradition, especially in its focus on the imminent appearance of the Son of Man. This eschatological tone cannot be easily separated and assigned to a later stratum; eschatology appears to be a part of the foundational layers, and it intrudes into various sapiential traditions.⁴² Eschatological expectation defines the character of John and controls the understanding of Jesus, who is the coming Son of Man. The life and mission of the community is framed in the context of this imminent crisis. Indeed, eschatology appears at the beginning (3.7–9, 16–17) and the end (17.23–24, 26–30, 33–35, 37), forming a frame for the Sayings Tradition.⁴³ In addition, Jesus' instruction to his disciples and his debate with opponents are set in an eschatological context. Thus, the Sayings Tradition is dominated by Jewish eschatological thought in its focus, in its framing, and in its content.

This futuristic eschatology serves as the basis for a type of ethical exhortation. The vision of the future in the Sayings Tradition is designed to bring about changes in the present. The Sayings Tradition directs its sharpest polemic against “this generation” (11.47–51), who are at times presented less favorably than the Gentiles. The rejection of the message of Jesus (and thus of the Sayings Tradition) is presented as a type of violence and is understood as a reflection of the violence suffered by all prophets of God.⁴⁴ The message of Jesus is understood as a part of the Wisdom tradition, which has suffered a similar history of violence and rejection. In this way a deuteronomistic pattern of history is invoked for the message of Jesus, but especially for its rejection by this generation. This pattern is tied specifically to the figure of the Jesus as the Son of Man (7.31–35). This creative characterization of Jesus and the hermeneutic that supports it are rooted in thoroughly Jewish traditions and modes of interpretation. The audience of this ad-

⁴¹ This dual track is emphasized by Tuckett, *Early Christianity*, p. 137.

⁴² Traditions such as the Lord's Prayer are eschatological in their orientation, as are the ethical instructions. The Sayings Tradition does employ some common patterns from Jewish apocalyptic materials, so it is perhaps more appropriate to speak generally of Jewish eschatology rather than to expect conformity to a strictly defined genre of apocalyptic. Eschatology can be traced through the portrait of John the Baptist (3.7–9, 16–17), the beatitudes (6.20–23); the end of the Sermon (6.47–49); the parables of mustard seed and leaven (13.18–21); the standards of judgment (11.49–51; 12.8–10; 13.18–21, 23–30, 34–35); the parable of the supper (14.16–24); the parable of the talents (19.12–27); the message of the kingdom (10.9; 11.2–4, 9–13; 12.22–31); the parable of the thief and the servants (12.39–59); the lesson from Noah (17.23–37). Tuckett, *Early Christianity*, pp. 139–63, surveys such texts, but he also addresses scholarly attempts to diminish the role of eschatology.

⁴³ This frame was noted by T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1949).

⁴⁴ On the formation of this idea, its widespread use, and its historical validity, see the work of Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*, WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967).

dress is Jewish followers of Jesus; the opponents are Jews who have rejected Jesus and his message.⁴⁵

In light of this eschatology, the Sayings Tradition presents a unique understanding of Jesus. He is the envoy who brings the message of Wisdom.⁴⁶ In line with this characterization, Jesus is also the rejected prophet, wrapped in images drawn from Isaiah. He is also the Son of Man who suffers violence and rejection at the hands of this generation, but who will come with judgment in the near future. This unique blending of Jewish motifs sustains a portrait of Jesus as God's rejected messenger.

The model for discipleship is shaped by this eschatological view of Jesus. The extraordinary lifestyle demanded of his followers should not be understood in terms of a sectarian philosophy such as Cynicism, but rather as a prophetic strategy and sign in light of the coming end. It should be noted as well that this lifestyle reflects that of Jesus and that its proponents suffer a rejection similar to his.⁴⁷

The Sayings Tradition exhibits a rather conservative approach to the Jewish Law. Where Jesus does violate tradition, such as in the Sabbath (14.5), he appeals to a Jewish debate over exceptions to the Sabbath limitations. Torah observance seems, for the most part, to be assumed.⁴⁸ In correlation with this focus, there seems to be little, if any, interest in a mission to the Gentiles.

The Sayings Tradition seems to reflect a strong consciousness of Pharisees. Jesus' polemic never questions the validity of Pharisaic rules; indeed, he affirms traditions such as tithing and some form of purity. At the same time, the tension described in the Sayings Tradition also seems to envision Pharisees. This is especially true in the woes pronounced against Pharisees in Q 11.39–42. The polemic, however, is not anti-Jewish; it seems rather to suggest the opponents miss the heart of what it means to be a faithful member of Israel. If anything, such opponents are not Jewish enough, and they are condemned primarily because they have rejected or ignored the followers of Jesus. Such images may point to the social and religious context in which the Sayings Tradition emerges.

The Sayings Tradition is also noteworthy for what it does not say. There is nothing here of the incarnation or of a divine status for Jesus. Nothing is said of heavenly origins. Equally noteworthy is what is not said about Judaism: there is no critique of the Law and no statement against the Temple.

⁴⁵ The attempt to see in "this generation" the failure of all of Israel is not convincing. For this position, see Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990).

⁴⁶ Wisdom is personified in feminine traits in Jewish tradition. She comes among humans to speak God's message, but is rejected.

⁴⁷ On the problems with the Cynic motif proposed in some recent scholarship, see Tuckett, *Early Christianity*, pp. 368–90.

⁴⁸ See the discussion of specific texts by Tuckett, *Early Christianity*, pp. 393–424.

5.3 The Social and Religious Situation

The Sayings Tradition almost certainly reflects some Jesus traditions as they are preserved and transmitted prior to 70 ce. There is a Palestinian ethos to this material, though its literary history likely emerges in rural Syria and is taken up, perhaps in Antioch, as a part of the Gospel of Matthew. The primary dialogical pole is a Pharisaic form of Judaism. The Sayings Tradition represents both a respect for Pharisaic tradition and a repulsion at its current practices.⁴⁹ Although a few specific charges are raised (11.39–42), the central problem is the rejection of the message of Jesus and his followers. Thus, the Sayings Tradition seems to stage an intramural dialogue and debate that is reaching a critical mass. While the outcome of this historical moment cannot be recovered, its context is clear: this is a debate between Jews who follow Jesus and closely related Jews who have chosen another path.

5.4 Summation

The Sayings Tradition stands at a crucial juncture between the historical figure of Jesus and the destiny of some of his earliest followers. Both John and Jesus are remembered here as Jewish prophets in whom the last act of God's history with Israel has begun. The tradents of the Sayings Tradition envision a final mission to Israel before the imminent arrival of the Son of Man and the time of judgment. It appears this mission has not met with success, but with rejection – or perhaps apathy. Disappointment is expressed through polemic and warning against those in Israel who are unresponsive. From the perspective of the Sayings Tradition, the final verdict is being handed down. Seen from a historical perspective, two groups with different, but related, ways of being Jewish have reached a decisive juncture in their relationship. Jewish followers of Jesus compose one side of this debate.

This historical profile is both local and limited: it should not be projected upon the whole of rabbinic Judaism or emergent Christianity. In one time and one place, Jews who revere and practice Torah are dividing over the message of Jesus.

⁴⁹ This engagement with the Pharisees may be especially noteworthy in the pre-70 era, when Pharisees are one of a number of Jewish sects. This is less the case by the time of the Gospel of Matthew, which is post-70, and the primary engagement with the Pharisees is more expected. This should not be overstated, however. Pharisees were important before 70, and other groups remained active for some time after 70.

6. The Gospel of Matthew

Most critical scholars believe that the Gospel of Matthew reflects a post-70 debate between Pharisaic leaders of the synagogue and a group of Jesus' followers.⁵⁰ Recent scholarship has offered a range of ways in which to understand the stance of the Mathean community in this relationship. For some, the community is itself Jewish, and this is an intramural debate. Most, however, describe the Mathean community as one that was rooted in the synagogue but is now in the process of a separation; this rupture is seen as imminent or as recently past.

Before any decision is made about the final form of this gospel, however, the process of composition deserves closer attention. The various traditions gathered into this gospel and the process by which they have been incorporated provide important evidence for its purpose and location.

The key for understanding the Gospel of Matthew lies in its closing verses:

But the twelve disciples went into the Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had designated to them. And seeing him they worshipped, but some doubted. And when he had drawn near, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "As you go, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age." (Mt. 28.16–20)

This scene provides the goal toward which the entire gospel has reached, and it also provides the starting point for the life of the community that lives by this story. Here the pieces of the narrative come together, creating a two-sided map. On one side this map gives coherence to the past events; on the other it sketches a way into the future.

In this passage the christology of the gospel reaches its summit: Jesus, whose earthly task was teaching the way of the Kingdom of God, has now been given authority over heaven and earth. Here the theology of this gospel is completed: God's work for Israel is now made valid for the nations of the earth. The sending of the disciples with the teaching of Jesus also unveils the ecclesiology of this work, as well as its missiology. This commission provides the context from which to understand the eschatological framework of this gospel. The conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew thus provides the decisive juncture that completes the story of Jesus and initiates the history of the community. By unstacking the various pieces and processes that lead to this climactic point, one can observe the character and purpose of this gospel.

⁵⁰ This idea was made prominent by the work of W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

6.1 The Narrative Construction

The strategy for reaching this junction is complex, but revealing. Five major speeches or discourse units demonstrate the teaching of Jesus and serve as pillars for the narrative construction. These five discourse blocks (5–7; 10; 13.1–53; 18; 23–25) are set apart by both structure and strategy. Each unit concludes with a Mathean formula that signals a completed speech from Jesus: “Now when Jesus had finished saying these things ...” (7.28; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1). In addition to this signal, each discourse is preceded and followed by a section of narrative in which the deeds of Jesus are described. These units serve as examples of what Jesus taught, and they create a plot that alternates between the narrative account of what Jesus did and the collected reports of what he said.

These teaching units are woven into a strategic narrative framework. The Gospel of Matthew frames the story of Jesus around a rough biographical sketch based on the chronological and geographical sequence of Jesus’ life. Beginning with his lineage and his birth, the story line traces the activity of Jesus from his baptism at the hands of John through his itinerant ministry in the Galilee and in Judea. Jesus moves then to Jerusalem and confronts the leaders of Israel. In Jerusalem he is executed and buried, only to reappear in the Galilee to a handful of followers.

The resulting gospel represents an attempt to clarify the status and location of one group of Jesus’ followers. There is a positive relationship to the Law and to God’s work with Israel, but there is a negative relationship to some group of Pharisaic Jews. Reflected here is a Christian community concerned for its place in the story of Israel and the Jewish people. This concern is seen even more clearly in the sources used to construct this gospel.

6.2 A Gathering of Traditions

The Gospel of Matthew draws upon a variety of sources. While this represents a literary process, it also implies a sociological dimension.

6.2.1 The Gospel of Mark

The dependence on the Gospel of Mark is extraordinary. The Gospel of Mark has some 661 verses and the Gospel of Matthew some 1068. The Gospel of Matthew uses some 600 verses, or about 90%, of the Gospel of Mark, and this borrowed material accounts for well over half of the Gospel of Matthew. Borrowed material is generally compressed by one-third from its Markan length.⁵¹

⁵¹ If the Gospel of Matthew is written on a scroll, the writer could survey the available material and adapt borrowed materials so that the whole narrative fit on a single scroll or on a limited number of scrolls.

Beyond the statistical content, the Gospel of Matthew takes its general outline from the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Luke exhibits a similar dependence on the Gospel of Mark. This dependence is highlighted by the fact that Luke and Matthew both depart from the Markan outline on occasions, but almost never on the same occasions. Beyond this, the Gospel of Matthew, when it does depart from the Gospel of Mark, generally returns to the Markan outline and continues forward.⁵²

The dependence of the Gospel of Matthew on the Gospel of Mark is not simply a literary one; key theological concepts and patterns are also taken over. The values of one community and its tradition have been embraced by another community. It is not unreasonable, then, to see the Gospel of Matthew as a revised edition of the Gospel of Mark.⁵³

6.2.2 *The Sayings Tradition*

The second major resource for the Gospel of Matthew is a written collection of the sayings of Jesus. Some 235 of the 1068 verses in the Gospel of Matthew (about 22%) may be attributed to this source. The preservation and transmission of these sayings logically require a transition from an oral collection in Aramaic to a document written in Greek. One written Greek version of this collection of Jesus' sayings serves as a key resource for the writing of the Gospel of Matthew.

While the Sayings Tradition is identified and reconstructed on literary grounds, the tradition represents more than a literary source. Behind this collection of sayings stands a Jewish community that, in view of the impending end of the age, employs the teachings of Jesus to extend a final mission to Israel. The Gospel of Matthew incorporates this tradition into its own presentation of Jesus.

6.2.3 *Special Mathean Materials*

A third major resource is the collected traditions of the community behind the Gospel of Matthew. Scholars identify these traditions by isolating passages that do not come from the Gospel of Mark and are not a part of the Double Tradition of sayings shared by the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. What remains is a collection of materials unique to the Gospel of Matthew.⁵⁴

⁵² Dale Allison and W. D. Davies, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 100–103, provide an analysis of this dependence. Mt. 14.1 to the end of the gospel agrees in sequence with Mk. 6.14–16.8. In the material in Mt. 1.1–13.58 there are five major transpositions from the Markan sequence. Allison and Davies believe the Mathean desire for triads, the topical collections, and stylistic patterns readily explain these transpositions.

⁵³ For an overview of the passages and order taken from the Gospel of Mark, see the "Index of Gospel Parallels" in *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, ed. Kurt Aland, 3rd edition (Münster: United Bible Societies, 1979), pp. 341–55.

⁵⁴ See the description and discussion of this material in Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 121–27.

This collection likely contained two types of material. There may have been stories, sayings, and collections that were a part of the tradition of the community of faith behind this gospel. Some may have been written, but they could just as easily be a part of the oral tradition of the community. It is impossible to say whether this material included the testimony of living witnesses or consisted wholly of traditions passed from one generation to another. Other special materials may reflect the editorial activity of those responsible for the writing of the Gospel of Matthew. Together these materials represent the special contribution of the community of believers who sponsor this gospel. Scholars often refer to this material as M; some scholars reserve this term for special sources, but others also include Mathean redaction. To the degree that M may represent a distinct source separate from the work of the editor, this material is likely composite in nature: it represents a variety of special traditions known and used within the Mathean community. This would probably include oral and written traditions as well as collections of proof texts from the Hebrew Bible.

Mathean redaction of traditional material makes it necessary to distinguish any special sources from their use by the editor. This is rather easy to do with Mathean use of Markan material, since the redaction can be compared with a written copy of the source. It is very difficult, however, to separate tradition and redaction in the special materials employed by the Gospel of Matthew. Using a principle of dissimilarity, a minimal form of M may be isolated.⁵⁵

To the extent that a special collection of M material may be distinguished, a few groupings emerge.⁵⁶ These are:

1. Infancy stories (1.18–2.23)
2. Three groups of sayings
 - a. 5.21–24, 27–28, 33–37
 - b. 6.1–18
 - c. 23.1–3, 5, 7b–10, 15–22
3. Sayings that may be from Q^{mt}: (5.5, 7, 8, 9)
4. Isolated sayings (5.41; 7.6; 10.23; 11.28–30; 16.17–19)
5. Traditions about the passion and the resurrection (27.3–10, 19, 24–25, 51b–53, 62–66; 28.2–4, 9–10, 11–15).
6. The parable of the coin in the fish (17.24–27)
7. A collection of some ten parables
 - a. 13.24–30 the weeds growing in the wheat
 - b. 13.44–46 the hidden treasure and the valuable pearl
 - c. 13.47–50 the fishing net
 - d. 18.23–35 the unforgiving servant
 - e. 20.1–16 the hired laborers

⁵⁵ It is likely that much of the special material is no longer recognizable because of the redactional patterns of the gospel.

⁵⁶ I am drawing here from the analysis of Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 121–27, but I have presented a different organization for the material.

- f. 21.28–32 the two children
- g. 22.1–14 the wedding banquet
- h. 25.1–13 the ten maidens
- i. 25.14–30 the servants and the talents
- j. 25.31–46 the final judgment

Among these materials two groups are noteworthy. First, the parable collection is linked precisely to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and suggests an underlying thematic unity.⁵⁷ Secondly, the three clusters of sayings (group a is 5.21–24, 27–28, 33–37; group b is 6.1–18; group c is 23.1–3, 5, 7b–10, 15–22) show a unique focus. The first group (5.21–24, 27–28, 33–37) uses a distinct formula ("you have heard ... but I say") to situate the teaching of Jesus in relationship to the Law of Moses. This cluster likely serves as a demonstration of the Matthean claim that Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (5.17). The other clusters (6.1–18 and 23.1–3, 5, 7b–10, 15–22) share a common focus and may have been linked in pre-Matthean tradition.⁵⁸ These two clusters define the relationship with a group of Pharisees. Followers of Jesus are to accept and revere the words of the Pharisees, who sit on the seat of Moses (23.2–3). On the other hand, they are to avoid the practices of the Pharisees, who are portrayed as hypocrites (6.3, 6, 17; 23.3). The followers of Jesus are called to pure intentions and a consistent focus on God (6.1, 3–4, 6, 17–18; 23.8–12).

Attention must be given to a more complex cluster of sayings found in Mt. 10.5–8 and 15.23–25. Here Jesus proclaims, in the presence of a Canaanite woman, that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15.24). He sends out his disciples, insisting they too go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10.6). The editing that surrounds these passages is complex, but the sayings themselves seem to represent a tradition known or used only by the Gospel of Matthew. While there is redactional activity in the use of these sayings, these are hardly editorial productions. These two sayings counter in an explicit way the primary purpose of this gospel, which is the initiation and sponsoring of the mission to the Gentiles (28.16–20). It appears that these sayings have been strategically placed in the ministry of Jesus and his first disciples so that they may be superseded by a special Matthean focus: the risen Jesus inaugurates a new mission and a new form of discipleship. This larger framing suggests the sayings of Mt. 10.5–6 and 15.24 are inherited tradition. Furthermore, the strategic treatment of this material implies that it cannot be ignored or bypassed. The most plausible historical explanation is that these sayings represent the mindset of a

⁵⁷ The stylized introduction formula ("the Kingdom of heaven is like" in 13.44, 45, 47; 20.1 or "to what shall I compare the Kingdom of heaven?" in 13.24; 18.23; 22.2; 25.1) may or may not be redactional. The thematic unity, however, is also intrinsic to the parables. See the discussion by Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 126–27.

⁵⁸ Suggested by Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 126–27.

group of Jesus' first followers – and perhaps of Jesus himself. The Gospel of Matthew cannot deny this tradition. It does, however, limit it to the lifetime of Jesus in order to subsume it in the larger mission of the church.

This means the Gospel of Matthew knows of special traditions, some of which show extraordinary connections to Jesus and his earliest followers. Among these are a collection of parables on the kingdom, a teaching unit that locates Jesus' followers in relation to a group of Pharisees, and a tradition in which the mission of Jesus and his followers is limited to the people of Israel. These are Jewish Christian traditions that are known in the Matthean context and are incorporated into the larger framework and purpose of the Gospel of Matthew.

6.2.4 *The Sermon on the Mount*

A special history lies behind the first major speech block in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 5.1–7.29).⁵⁹ Matthean redaction is found in the introductory setting (5.1–2) and in the conclusion (7.28–29). The remainder of the section provides a coherent unit that has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount. The Lukan counterpart is found in the Sermon on the Plain (Lk. 6.17–49). There is no Markan form of this material, so Jesus' sermon has been presumed to come from the Sayings Tradition (Q). The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain differ not only in their setting, but in their content. There is enough in common to require a source, yet enough difference to suggest a complex history of the tradition.

Plausible explanations for the relationship between the Matthean and Lukan sermon are limited in number. 1) Matthew and Luke inherit the same version of the Sermon in the Sayings Tradition, but they edit it quite differently. Luke's shorter and less developed form would be presumed closer to the source. 2) Luke and Matthew may know different forms of the Sayings Tradition: these would be called Q^{mt} and Q^{lk}. 2a) This could mean that Q^{mt} and Q^{lk} contained different versions of the Sermon and that some earlier version of the Sermon underlies both of these traditions. 2b) More plausibly, this could mean that Q^{mt} and Q^{lk} contained no Sermon, that the Sermon existed independently of the Sayings Tradition, and that it did so in at least two forms. This would mean Luke and Matthew each received a sermon in their special materials 3) Luke uses the form of the Sermon found in the Sayings Tradition; Matthew uses an older and independent form.

The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are located in roughly the same place in the gospels, they are surrounded by a similar narrative frame-

⁵⁹ The most compact description of this issue may be found in Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain in Hermeneia – a critical and historical commentary on the Bible*, ed. Adele Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

work, and they are followed by the same story. These factors suggest that the Sayings Tradition contained some form of sermon that was taken up by both evangelists. The internal coherence of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain is noted by Betz: "the material they use, the overall plan of composition they follow, and the functional purpose they have in mind."⁶⁰ Betz concludes that "These elaborations, therefore, must be the work of presynoptic authors/redactors."⁶¹ Betz thus concludes, along with a wide array of modern scholarship, that two different versions of the Sermon are already present in the Sayings Tradition.

The significance of this position is that it places the primary responsibility for differences not in the redactional activity of the evangelists, but in the sources they received. This is of crucial importance in light of the general orientation of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. The Sermon on the Plain omits some materials that are particularly concerned with the Jewish Law, with Jewish piety, and with Jewish practices (Mt. 5.17–48; 6.1–18). A variety of such traits suggests the Sermon on the Plain is intentionally shaped toward a Greek milieu. Both the Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon on the Mount are rooted in the Jewish ethos of the Jesus movement, but they seem to be shaped toward different audiences.⁶²

If this reconstruction of the tradition history behind the Sermon on the Mount is accurate, it points in different ways to a Jewish Christian literary heritage, but also to the Mathean reshaping of these materials. Betz concludes that the Sermon on the Mount

contains a consistent Jewish-Christian theology of a period earlier than Matthew, a theology remaining in the context of Judaism. Matthew assigned the SM to the important place of Jesus' first programmatic speech in his Gospel, but by the same token Matthew also relativized the SM. Taken as a whole, the Gospel of Matthew is a reinterpretation, revision, and correction of earlier sources, among them the SM.⁶³

This two-stage approach may be reflected in the Mathean redaction. The introduction in Mt. 5.1–2 directs the teaching of the Sermon to four primary apostles: Peter and Andrew, James and John. The conclusion in Mt. 7.28–29 suggests, however, that the teaching is for the crowds. This framing may echo the history of the tradition – a Jewish Christian tradition has been offered to a broader, more inclusive community and placed in the service of a larger mission.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Betz, *Sermon*, p. 44.

⁶¹ Betz, *Sermon*, p. 44.

⁶² So Betz, *Sermon*, pp. 43–44.

⁶³ Betz, *Sermon*, p. 44.

⁶⁴ The idea is suggested by Betz.

6.2.5 The Lord's Prayer

The most significant example of this process of reappropriation of tradition is found in the Lord's Prayer. This prayer (Mt. 6.9b–13) plays a key role in the construction of the Sermon on the Mount. It provides the center of the section on cultic instruction (6.1–18), but it may also be seen as the center of the Sermon.⁶⁵ This arrangement is probably already present in the traditions received in the Mathean community. Thus, the placement of the prayer and its general construction most likely come from the form of the Sayings Tradition known and used within the Mathean community (Q^{mt}).

It is striking, then, that the prayer in Luke 11.2b–4 has such a different format: 1) A significant amount of content is missing; 2) Where Luke does have the same content, there is exact verbal agreement in much of the material; 3) The prayer is not in the Sermon on the Plain (Lk. 6.17–49); it is found instead in the midst of the uniquely Lukan journey to Jerusalem (Lk. 9.51–18.14). This Lukan unit is not only unique for its narrative structure; it is the gathering place for various special traditions used only in Luke (the Samaritan parable in 10.25–37; the parable of the prodigal in 15.11–32; the parable of the unjust judge in 18.1–8; the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in 18.9–14). These changes would be difficult to account for simply in terms of Lukan redaction. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Luke's simpler, shorter form of the prayer represents his reduction of a prayer similar to that in Mt. 6.9b–13. Technically, the prayer of Jesus in Lk. 11.2b–4 could be labeled as a part of the Lukan special tradition (L).

This complex line of development sheds some light on the history of tradition of the Lord's Prayer and on its role in Jewish Christianity. From a literary perspective, all traditions assign the prayer to Jesus. It is historically probable that the prayer does go back to Jesus, but this does not provide a simple solution to its form or its development.⁶⁶ At its base, the Lord's Prayer is a Jewish prayer. This is true because it is prayed by Jesus the Jew, but this is also true because of its content, shape, and function.⁶⁷ This does not mean, of course, that this prayer is indicative of all elements and all traditions of Jewish prayer. Neither is this prayer to be judged by rabbinical standards; these have not yet been formulated. This is the prayer of a very distinctive 1st century Galilean Jew; it articulates, through traditional Jewish elements, the distinct vision of Jesus.

This Jewish prayer is taken up in three Christian recensions. The *Didache* (8.2) uses the prayer as a part of its catechism for believers. Following the presentation of the *Two Ways* (Did. 1.1–6.1, with a Christian interpolation in 1.3b–2.1) comes instruction on diet (6.3); baptism (7.1–4); fasting and prayer (8.1–3); the eucharist (9.1–10.7). The recitation of the Lord's Prayer stands near the center

⁶⁵ So Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, but also many others.

⁶⁶ See the discussion by Betz, *Sermon*, pp. 372–74.

⁶⁷ There is, for example, no christological element in the prayer itself.

(8.2–3) of this catechetical material. There is a high level of verbal agreement between the *Didache* prayer and Mt. 6.9b–13.

The Gospel of Luke apparently knows a shorter version of the prayer among its special traditions. Luke presents the prayer of Jesus in some relationship to the prayers of John the Baptist and his disciples (Lk. 11.1). The Lukan version of Jesus' prayer is taken up, along with other special materials, into the teaching that characterizes the journey to Jerusalem.

These traditions highlight the role of the prayer in the Mathean world. One of the sources available within the Mathean community is a coherent tradition of the Sermon on the Mount; at its center is a thoroughly Jewish prayer. In this pre-synoptic tradition a Jewish prayer has become the center and model for Jesus' instruction to his closest disciples; the Jewish prayer of Jesus has become a part of the Jewish Christian tradition of some of his early followers. From a source critical perspective, this is likely to be found in Q^{mt}.

At the third level, the prayer has been taken up into the worldview of the Gospel of Matthew. There it provides a contrast to the prayers of other Jews (Mt. 6.5–8), and it serves as a part of the turning to the Gentiles.

6.2.6 *The Scriptures of Israel*

A further resource for the Gospel of Matthew is found in the sacred writings of the Hebrew people. Allison and Davies offer the following analysis of citations and allusions.⁶⁸

- 17 citations shared by the Gospel of Matthew (Mt.) & the Gospel of Mark (Mk.)
- 39 possible allusions common to Mt. and Mk.
- 21 number of the 39 Mt./Mk. allusions also used by the Gospel of Luke (Lk.)
- 4 citations shared by Mt. and Lk., thus from Sayings Tradition (Q)
- 19 allusions shared by Mt. and Lk., thus from Sayings Tradition (Q)
- 21 citations peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew
- 50 allusions peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew

This results in a total for the Gospel of Matthew of approximately 42 citations and 108 allusions from the Hebrew scriptures.

Distinct use of Old Testament tradition may be found in the formula citations employed by the Gospel of Matthew. Following a narrative event, an Old Testament passage is cited as explanation of the event. Typically the story is seen as fulfillment of a prophetic expectation. The citation in Mt. 1.22 demonstrates this technique. Following the angel's announcement to Joseph of the birth of Jesus comes the comment that "All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet." A direct citation of Isaiah 7.14 follows. This formulaic fulfillment citation may be found in the following passages: 1.22; 2.6;

⁶⁸ Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, vol. 1, pp. 29–57.

2.15; 2.17; 2.23; 4.15–16; 8.17; 12.17–21; 13.14; 13.35; 21.4; 27.9–10. These various allusions and citations draw from the Hebrew scriptures to root the story of Jesus in the history of God's work with Israel.

Perhaps the most dramatic use of scripture is found in the twofold reference (Mt. 9.13 and 12.7) to Hosea 6: "Mercy I desire, and not sacrifice." No other New Testament passage refers to this verse.⁶⁹ In both Mt. 9.13 and 12.7 the Hosea passage is used as commentary on a conflict with Pharisees. In each case the conflict involves Jesus only indirectly, but the disciples directly. The use of this passage is transparent: it speaks precisely to the conflict between Jesus' followers and some group of Pharisees. The situation is important in the time of Matthew's gospel, but it may just as well reflect a pre-70 conflict such as that embodied in the Sayings Tradition.

It is unlikely that this extent of citation and allusion represents the work of a single author. Such reflection upon the scriptures suggests a studied tradition of biblical interpretation and the ability to preserve and transmit this tradition. It is plausible that a written collection lies behind the Mathean citations and allusions. While Gentile Christians practice christological interpretation, such a tradition can only have its origins in a form of Jewish Christianity. The Gospel of Matthew likely draws upon such a collection for its description of Jesus.

6.2.6 A Petrine Tradition

The unique role of Peter in the Gospel of Matthew also suggests a special Petrine tradition and a group who sponsors those traditions.⁷⁰ In taking up the Markan (Mk. 3.16–19) list of disciples, Mt. 10.2 prefacing the name of Peter with "first". In the Gospel of Matthew, Peter is often treated as a representative of the disciples: he asks questions in their behalf (Mt. 15.15; 18.21), questions to the disciples are directed through him (17.24), and it is Peter who confronts Jesus and is corrected by him (16.22–23; 19.27–30; 26.33–34). Most significantly, the story from Mark 8.27–30 has been altered to include a blessing on Peter. In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks the disciples who they say he is. It is Peter who confesses that Jesus is the Christ (Mk. 8.27; Lk. 9.20; Mt. 16.16). Only in the Gospel of Matthew does this confession elicit a response directly to Peter:

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt. 16.17–19).

⁶⁹ It is difficult to know if these verses are redactional or reflect a source.

⁷⁰ See Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, pp. 353–79; see also *Peter in the New Testament*, ed. Raymond Brown, Karl Donfried, and John Reumann (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973).

Another similar shaping occurs in the story of the transfiguration. When Peter suggests the building of three tabernacles on the mount of transfiguration, Luke accepts the Markan note that Peter did not know what to say (Mk. 9.6; Lk. 9.33). This negative note is omitted from the Mathean account of the transfiguration (Mt. 17.1–9). Thus, it becomes clear that Peter plays a distinct role in the Gospel of Matthew. While negative images of Peter remain – many of which are taken from the Gospel of Mark – the Mathean image of Peter is largely a positive one.⁷¹

Numerous scholars see Peter serving here as the link between the era of Jesus and the era of the church. Peter's distinct experience, both negative and positive, as a disciple of the historical Jesus serves as a model and as a bridge that links the Mathean community to Jesus. The unique experience of Peter is to become, in the Mathean age, the typical experience of disciples.⁷² Even as the teachings of Jesus (in the five speech units and elsewhere) create a *literary* tie to the earthly Jesus, so the figure of Peter as a learner (disciple) of Jesus creates a *personal* connection for the Mathean community. Ulrich Luz cites two primary reasons why Peter provided such a model in many areas of Christianity, but proved such a good fit for the Mathean community.⁷³ First, Peter's mission first to Israel then to the Gentiles placed him in a mediating role between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity. Secondly, Peter, unlike Paul and James the brother of Jesus, had a personal experience as a disciple of the earthly Jesus. Luz says, "According to Matthew Peter is foundational for the church because *Jesus* is foundational."⁷⁴ In addition, there is a clear connection between Peter and Syria, especially Antioch.⁷⁵ Thus, it is historically plausible to see behind the unique treatment of Peter in the Gospel of Matthew the influence of a group who hold Peter in high esteem by preserving and transmitting the traditions that connect him to Jesus.

It becomes clear, then, that a key strategy behind the composition of the Gospel of Matthew is the reappropriation of a variety of literary traditions. Among these are the Gospel of Mark, the Sayings Tradition (Q), special materials within the Mathean orbit (M), the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, the scriptures of Israel, and Petrine traditions. Each of these traditions is almost certainly rooted in some form of Jewish Christianity.

⁷¹ Peter is treated harshly at times in the Gospel of Mark. See my analysis of the Gethsemane scene and the scene of Peter's denial, both of which seem to have been shaped to portray Peter in a negative way, in Edwin K. Broadhead, *Prophet, Son, Messiah: Narrative Form and Function in Mark 14–16* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 88–111 and 146–161.

⁷² See Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, pp. 366–67.

⁷³ Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, pp. 367–68.

⁷⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, p. 368.

⁷⁵ See the evidence cited by Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, p. 368, and by Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 212–16.

6.3 Social Location: Text from Texts, Community from Communities

Following the acceptance of Markan priority among the gospels, scholars soon developed an awareness that the Gospel of Matthew drew upon two major streams of tradition: the Gospel of Mark and the Sayings Tradition. The remainder of the material was presumed to be generally Mathean. Closer attention to redactional activity revealed a more complex arrangement. Mathean redaction is not only to be found in the larger framework and in the area between source materials; redactional activity has been imposed to some degree upon every layer of tradition, both through selectivity and presentation. As a result, it becomes clear that the Gospel of Matthew not only collects and collates traditions, but it also reorchestrates these traditions into a grand narrative and a sustained christological orientation.

Attention to literary materials that point to various issues and groups within the Mathean community can provide important clues to the purpose and strategy of this gospel. It would be a mistake to understand the *resources* for the Gospel of Matthew solely in literary terms. Working with the presupposition that a strong literary tradition normally assumes tradents – a people group who endorse and transmit that tradition – the sources behind the Gospel of Matthew should be understood to draw upon the traditions of diverse groups of believers. This process is a sociological as well as a literary task, and it means that primitive Christian traditions are both preserved and lost.⁷⁶

It would also be a mistake to understand the *process* of the Gospel of Matthew in strictly literary terms.⁷⁷ Scholarship has often treated the author as a scholar at work in a library, drawing texts from here and there to construct a larger narrative. Even as the sources for the Gospel of Matthew are signs of a sociological configuration, so the editing of this text implies a sociological and theological task.

It would also be a mistake to understand the *product* strictly in literary terms. The Gospel of Matthew should be understood as the joining of many voices into a collective witness. This gospel is written to address specific questions and needs within a historical community and to offer a carefully-shaped message. This

⁷⁶ For example, by incorporating material from the Sayings Tradition, the Gospel of Matthew aids in the loss of that tradition to the Church; at the same time, the Gospel of Matthew provides a key component that allowed for the reconstruction of the Sayings Tradition in the modern era.

⁷⁷ The temptation to do this is ever present, since almost all that remains of early Christianity is its literary legacy. The literary productivity of the Christian movement was a late development, and the oral tradition continued into the literary period. Modern scholars are left with literature that is the end result of sociological and theological processes. While limiting the search to literary questions and results provides a more controllable process, it usually fails to consider crucial issues behind the production of Christian literature. This is forever the weakness of redactional and recent narrative studies – a weakness not present in the earlier attempts at form analysis.

message is designed not only to address the community of faith, but also to become their address to the world.

This constructive process reveals the ability of the Gospel of Matthew to take diverse traditions sponsored within its community and to weave them into a larger narrative that incorporates both past and present. In doing so, the tradents of such literature are potentially incorporated into the message of the larger community. Certain aspects of this process illuminate the question of Jewish Christianity. This is particularly significant if the Gospel of Matthew is located, as most scholars think, in Syrian Antioch in the last two decades of the 1st century.

While the Gospel of Mark provides the basis for the Gospel of Matthew, other traditions play a key role. Tradents of the Sayings Tradition seem to have settled somewhere near Antioch, bringing with them a sharply focused understanding of Jesus and his urgent mission to Israel. The tradition born by these Jewish followers of Jesus stands nearest to the living voice of Jesus himself, and their message and lifestyle demand respect.⁷⁸ This tradition is embraced by the Gospel of Matthew, but it is also subsumed within its larger narrative design.

Some Jewish Christian traditions are held within the special materials known to the Matthean community. These materials suggest some overlap with the Sayings Tradition, and certainly with its line of thought. The Jewish Christian material in the Matthean special traditions (M) may represent a settled form of the itinerant prophet tradition known from the Sayings. The limited mission of this group is assigned to the historical ministry of Jesus, and their conflict with Pharisees is applied to the Matthean context.

The image of Peter provides the perfect model for the transition underway in the Matthean community. In addition to apostolic sanction, the figure of Peter roots the tradition in a Jewish follower of Jesus who is, in fact, the first to carry the gospel to a gentile (Acts 10).

Finally, the extraordinary application of scripture to the story of Jesus suggests an extensive reflection upon the Hebrew Bible. This can hardly be the work of one redactor accomplished in a single process of writing. This hermeneutical reflection presumes a tradition, a temporal span, and the engagement of numerous participants.⁷⁹ More importantly, this tradition presumes the ability and interest to connect the story of Jesus to the promises of the Hebrew Bible: it suggests Jewish Christians.

In this way the Gospel of Matthew gathers a variety of texts into one text that provides a narrative account of the past and future with Jesus. Moreover, it is plausible that the Gospel of Matthew seeks to join the communities that sponsor these texts into one community.

⁷⁸ This position is explicit in the *Didache* and its treatment of the itinerant prophets.

⁷⁹ Some have suggested a school.

6.4 Summation

The Gospel of Matthew inherits the traditions of various communities of Jesus' followers. Among these are important lines of Jewish Christianity. The Gospel of Matthew does not ignore or bypass these primary traditions; it values them and incorporates them. In doing so, these traditions are both preserved and lost: they are reformulated to serve the larger purposes of a new narrative. The genius of this gospel is its ability to embrace ancient Jewish traditions but to employ them specifically in the service of the Gentile mission. This process suggests that diverse communities are being incorporated into a greater Mathean community. At the same time, the Gospel of Matthew uses these traditions to address a local conflict with some Pharisees. Even here, the transition cannot be globalized; it represents the response of one Christian group to its own context and concerns.

If the transition represented in the Gospel of Matthew occurs in Syrian Antioch, then the profile is extraordinary. In the era before the 1st Jewish War (70 ce), the followers of Jesus at Antioch appear to be predominantly Jewish Christians. Early in the next century Ignatius will portray Antioch as a community of Gentile Christians guided by bishops and deacons and elders on the road to orthodoxy. Between these two points the Gospel of Matthew is formulated. A second irony is apparent in the reception of the Gospel of Matthew. Although strongly rooted in Jewish Christianity and shaped by dialogue with a local synagogue, the Gospel of Matthew will be embraced as the favorite of the Gentile church and used by some in harsh polemic against all Jews.

7. Do Lukan Special Materials Reflect a Jewish Christian Source?

Source criticism described three lines of material in the Gospel of Luke: the materials and the framework drawn from the Gospel of Mark, sayings drawn from some form of the Sayings Tradition (Q), and Lukan special materials. Most scholars presume that the Lukan special materials contain not only Luke's redactional contributions, but also some other source materials. In the most careful definition, only this non-Lukan material in the special material should be designated as L. Because of the difficulty of separating tradition and redaction within the special material, scholars are generally cautious about describing the parameters of an L source. Among those who have tried, however, the suggestions are noteworthy.

Kim Paffenroth, for example, uses criteria of style, form, and theme to isolate from Luke 3–19 some 164 verses that exhibit two or more traits of non-Lukan style or vocabulary.⁸⁰ He notes the characteristics⁸¹ of this material:

1. Although similar to Q in its form and in its presentation of Jesus, L shows no interest in the itinerant mission of Jesus' disciples.
2. Jesus is not the aphoristic teacher of Wisdom so dominant in Q.
3. There appears to be no sign of persecution of the L community.
4. There is no apparent emphasis on asceticism or the renunciation of wealth.
5. The listeners appear to be from mixed economic circumstances.
6. Women and widows play an important role in this community.
7. Judgment seems to be more personal than apocalyptic.
8. The center of Jesus' message is found in his reclaiming the children of Abraham.
9. There is no idea of a Gentile mission.
10. Within this Jewish Christian community there is an emphasis on the breaking down of barriers between Jews and Samaritans; male and female; rich and poor; clean and unclean.
11. Their opponents are portrayed as Jews who follow strict laws of exclusion.

Paffenroth concludes that this material is thoroughly Jewish Christian and that it exhibits a stronger knowledge of Palestine than other parts of this gospel. While the case is far from proven, it is possible that Luke also drew upon Jewish Christian writings and traditions and incorporated them into his larger gospel project.

8. Conclusion

Do the earliest Christian writings reflect groups who both follow Jesus and maintain Jewishness? This is certainly true in a general sense. Early Christian writings borrowed Jewish frameworks such as apocalypticism and drew upon Jewish ideas such as Wisdom. Furthermore, almost all Christian writings draw in some degree upon the Hebrew Bible. Standing out from this general legacy, however, are a few works that suggest a unique connection to some form of Jewish Christianity.

First, a few of the texts and traditions under consideration may be Jewish, but not Christian. This is plausible for the *Two Ways Tradition*. This is possible, but less plausible, for the materials used in the canonical books of James, Jude, and 2 Peter.

Secondly, the current state of some texts and traditions can only be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity. This is especially true of those materials deemed

⁸⁰ Kim Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, JSNT Supp 147 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁸¹ Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, pp. 155–58.

to stand closest to the historical Jesus. In its present state of reconstruction, the Sayings Tradition says nothing of the Christian kerygma based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, it says nothing of a Christian movement, and it does not describe Jesus by the Christ title. The earliest tradents of the Sayings Tradition are probably not Christians, and it may be misleading to even refer to them as Jewish Christians. They appear to be Jews who follow Jesus and, like him, expect the imminent reformation and revitalization of Israel. It is probably only in its later stages or among its settled tradents, reflected in the Gospel of Matthew and in the *Didache*, that this community can be understood as Jewish Christian.

The canonical book of James can only be explained in terms of some form of Jewish Christianity. While situational texts never present comprehensive theological systems, it is noteworthy that the book of James shows no concern for the traditions that characterize Gentile Christianity. In the absence of such markers, there are no critical grounds upon which to presume these. The tradents of this material have embraced Greek language and rhetoric, but the conceptual world is one of Jewish parnesis and eschatology held by followers of Jesus and practiced in a synagogue setting; thus, it is best described as a Jewish Christian text.

The canonical books of Jude and 2 Peter possibly reflect a similar identity. While Jude is addressed to a later, Greek-speaking context, it draws upon the literature and the conceptual world of Palestinian Judaism to call for a renewed faithfulness to Jesus. Second Peter appears to be one step closer to orthodoxy, and it may no longer be Jewish Christian. Nonetheless, the Jewish Christian content of Jude, but also its conceptual framework, are used in 2 Peter to stir eschatological zeal and endurance among the followers of Jesus. Here the apostolic era and its worldview are being reformulated as a testimony to the post-apostolic generations.

The *Didache* can only be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity. This work presumes a Jewish community that seeks to distinguish itself from some other Jews. Sometimes this means nothing more than changing the days for fasting. In the larger framework, however, it is their commitment to Jesus that distinguishes them from the other group of Jews. The Jewish Christian identity of the *Didache* is particularly evident in its use of the *Two Ways Tradition*. Here following Jesus is presented as a way of fulfilling a Jewish parnetic tradition.⁸²

The Gospel of Matthew envisions a transition to a Gentile mission and becomes the favorite gospel of Gentile Christianity. It is not true, then, that the Gospel of Matthew can only be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity; it is, however, best explained in terms of a Jewish Christianity that is in transition.

⁸² A parallel to this process may be found in texts that interpret Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. While non-Jews will practice christological interpretation (sometimes against Jews), this interpretive process almost certainly originates among Jewish followers of Jesus.

The Gospel of Matthew seeks to facilitate this transition to the Gentile mission by incorporating numerous traditions, several of which can only be explained in terms of Jewish Christianity. The content of the Sayings Tradition is revered in the Mathean community, and this material forms a key part of the Gospel of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer likely reflect Jewish Christian material with a distinct literary history. The Jewish parables of the *Two Ways Tradition* is found in the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 7.13–14). Jewish Wisdom has a home in the Mathean world (7.24). Some parts of the special traditions (M) represent a mission limited to Israel and a conflict with some other Jews. The figure of Peter represents the ideal Jewish Christian – an apostle who embraces the Gentiles – and thus becomes a model for the Gospel of Matthew. The vast array of scriptural citations and allusions suggests a studied tradition of teaching and interpretation based on the Hebrew Bible, and these are used to frame the story of Jesus.

These traits all suggest a strong presence of Jewish Christians and Jewish Christian traditions in the Mathean landscape. The Gospel of Matthew respects these traditions, recognizes their authority, and incorporates them into a gospel oriented in three directions: 1) continuity with the Jesus movement; 2) a polemic against some other Jews; and 3) a mission to the Gentile world. These traits also imply a desire to incorporate Jewish Christians into the larger Mathean community.

Seen as a whole, this wide array of texts and sources suggests that the impact of Judaism on the earliest Christian writings is not limited to borrowed forms, ideas, and citations. A variety of Jewish traditions, practices, patrons, and conflicts support the commitment to Jesus in the earliest materials. It is especially noteworthy that Jewish forms of Christianity found in some early Christian writings are not presented as an alternative to Gentile Christianity or to an emerging orthodoxy. Such forms of Jewish Christianity likely represent attempts to preserve the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and they probably provide the matrix for most subsequent developments in the synoptic gospels.

For many scholars, the Gospel of Matthew represents the end of the way for Jewish Christianity, at least in Antioch.⁸³ Shortly after 70 ce Jewish Christian tradition was absorbed into the Gospel of Matthew, then the Gospel of Matthew was absorbed into the emerging orthodoxy. This, however, is not the whole story. This apparent “parting of the ways” between church and synagogue is certainly not true everywhere, but it may not even be true of the Gospel of Matthew and of Antioch. Some form of the Gospel of Matthew will emerge as a favorite text in later Jewish Christian circles, and some of these communities will thrive in the vicinity of Antioch. The idea of a Hebrew Matthew will endure into the medieval period. Patristic writers will preach against “Judaizers” at Antioch for another

⁸³ This position has been influential in New Testament studies for some forty years.

three centuries, and the debate ends only with the expulsion of Jews from Antioch in the 7th century. Sayings of Jesus will continue to circulate independently within Jewish Christian texts; James and Jude and others from the family of Jesus will be revered; and some Jewish Christians will use the figure of Peter to counter the followers of Paul. While the formulation of the canonical version of the Gospel of Matthew represents a crucial moment in the history of Jewish Christianity, it certainly does not write the final chapter of this story.

These insights may help to clarify the religious map of antiquity. A critical survey of the earliest communities suggested the presence and influence of groups who sought to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus, a Jewish prophet, and maintaining their own Jewishness. A critical survey of writings produced and used within these earliest communities bears further witness to a vital Jewish Christianity operating in different forms and locales. Even when not fully endorsed, these primitive traditions are often remembered and honored, and they are frequently reappropriated into subsequent productions.

Consequently, it becomes necessary to inquire whether the variegated Jewish Christianity reflected in some early communities and in many of their texts may continue to assert its presence or influence in different places, in various times, and in diverse modes. This points the quest for the impact of Jewish Christianity toward various other fields of investigation. Among these are patristic materials, rabbinic texts, writings attributed to Jewish Christians, and the archeology of antiquity.

PART THREE

Patristic Representations of Jewish Christianity

The term *Jewish Christianity* refers to persons or groups in antiquity who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by simultaneously following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. The investigation carried out in Part One suggests the origins of this religious phenomenon are to be found in the historical profile of Jesus, among the earliest communities of his followers, and in some of the texts they produced. The most extensive portrait of Jewish Christianity, however, is found in patristic literature. This material also provides the most complex and confusing presentation of the Jewish followers of Jesus. Careful analysis, critical evaluation, and persistent questions about sources, about historicity, and about apologetic interests are demanded at every turn.

Jewish Christianity emerges as a distinct concept only in the 2nd century. This happens when patristic writers speak explicitly about groups who maintain Jewish practices and ideas in their attempt to follow Jesus. Jewish Christianity becomes a definable entity for the patristic writers because it is defined as an *other* – an opponent that is to be feared and refuted. Because patristic writers are apologists and heresiologists, a critical analysis must not only read the patristic accounts; it must also read through and around and against patristic representations in search of historical evidence. The result of such a critical reading will not be a direct, coherent account of Jewish Christianity, but, at best, a collection of historical markers that may point to the existence, vitality, and persistence of Jewish ways of following Jesus.

While patristic material could be approached through a chronological survey or through a summary of each writer, such approaches result in multiple layers of contradiction.¹ A more helpful approach is to trace the lineage of a particular

¹ For example, it is not clear that 1st century references to Nazarenes are to be equated with 4th century references employing the same term. Ebionites may be a specific group in some periods, but the term is used in other eras as a broad category to label numerous groups as heretics. While comparing the entire corpus of each patristic writer would seem to be fruitful, this approach results primarily in a comparison of the heresy list of one commentator with another. Most patristic writers are not concerned to write a precise description of these groups, nor are they concerned to accurately distinguish one from the other. Their primary purpose is to illustrate the various heresies and to warn against the threat to the developing orthodoxy. A study of individual writers would produce a synoptic account of heresiologies, but this approach tends to blur rather than clarify the historical profile of the groups discussed. The approach taken here is to follow the representation of one group

group through various stages of presentation, seeking a history of development, if not of the group itself, at least of its representation.

Central to this hermeneutic is a careful distinction between literary history and tradition history. *Tradition history* refers to the historical and sociological process through which a tradition is formed and transmitted. *Literary history* refers to the sequence of texts in which that tradition appears. Literary history and tradition history are not identical, and they may not even share the same time frame. For example, a primitive tradition may first appear in a much later literary stage, and it may be reshaped by that staging. Moreover, the historical value of a tradition cannot be determined solely by its literary history.² Thus, literary history, tradition history, and historical value represent three separate entities of a literary representation.

This hermeneutical distinction will be applied to patristic representations of Jewish Christianity. Careful attention will be given first to the literary history that sustains the patristic representation of a particular sect. A second stage of analysis seeks to describe the tradition history flowing through this presentation. The historical value of such traditions will then be judged along a spectrum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. Such a critical, controlled hermeneutic of recovery and reconstruction offers the only reasonable hope for evaluating whether the patristic writings contain plausible evidence of the continuing impact of Jewish Christianity.

at a time and to subject that representation to extensive literary and historical analysis. This approach should prove to be more functional, and it keeps the analytical focus on the groups and not on the commentators. Critical analysis can rarely fully dismiss or fully embrace a literary representation of a group. It can, however, place this representation in a tradition history that makes clear its contexts and its patterns of development. Having done so, this representation can be judged along a critical continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. Some comparative analysis may be possible at the end of this process. This approach holds out some hope of sketching the larger landscape and the presence of Jewish followers of Jesus in that environment.

² A clear example of this distinction is found in the American tradition of *Brer Rabbit*. This cycle of folk tales has its first literary appearance in the late 19th century. In this literature, the folk tales are written accounts of stories told by Uncle Remus, a slave from the American south. The tradition history of these tales is much older and quite distinct: these stories originate in Africa, where they are told in a wide range of forms and locales.

CHAPTER 7

Nazarenes

Though not the most mentioned group, the patristic portrait of the Nazarenes is perhaps the most consistent. Since most patristic writers know this name is connected to the earliest followers of Jesus, some treat Nazarenes in a neutral or even positive way, while others explain that this group took a heretical turn only in later years. For these reasons, the Nazarenes provide a useful starting point for analysis of patristic representations of Jewish Christianity.

The New Testament era knows of no one pre-eminent name for the followers of Jesus.¹ The title Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 19.19) is drawn from his association with the village of Nazareth. The description of Jesus as Nazorean or Nazarene² is found first on the lips of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.22) at the head of a sermon on the role of Jesus. Peter uses the term again in Acts 4.10: “this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean.” Paul uses the title in his defense before Agrippa, where he speaks of the many things he did earlier “against the name of Jesus the Nazorean” (Acts 26.9). This title almost certainly accounts for the description of Jesus’ earliest followers as Nazarenes. Still, it is noteworthy that the Nazarene title, which presumes a Hebraic background, is used only once in the New Testament in relation to followers of Jesus. Here it is on the lips of Tertullus, the attorney who represents the case of Ananias and the elders against Paul (Acts 24.5). Despite this meager background, the term Nazarenes endures as a name for Jesus’ earliest Jewish followers.

This name, which is anchored in the linguistic world and in the storyline of Jesus’ first followers, emerges late in the patristic period as the most sharply-defined description of a Jewish Christian tradition. This is due primarily to the work of Jerome. His reference to the Nazarenes is not the earliest, but it stands apart because of its tone and coherence.

¹ The name *Christian* appears three times in the New Testament (Acts 11.26; 26.28; 1 Peter 4.16). The term assumes a Greek-speaking audience. The reference in Acts 26.28 is on the lips of Agrippa, addressed to Paul. Luke’s other use of the term (Acts 11.26) is linked specifically to the Antioch church, which is portrayed as the first group to systematically engage the Gentile world (and thus the Greek language). Other terms include *The Way* (Acts 9.2; 24.14, 22), *the brothers* (Acts 1.5), *the disciples* (Acts 6.2), *the church* (Acts 8.1), *the saints* (Paul’s favorite term, especially in epistolary introductions such as Phil. 1.1).

² I am using the terms Nazarene and Nazorean interchangably. Nazarene/Nazorean should, however, be distinguished from Nazirite and Nasarean.

1. Jerome and the Nazarenes

A chronology of Jerome's life helps to situate his description of the Nazarenes.³ Born in northeast Italy somewhere between 341 and 347 ce, Jerome stayed in the West until 372. Following a journey to Syrian Antioch in 372, Jerome spent from two to five years in the desert of Chalaïs ad Belum, some twenty-seven kilometers southwest of the Syrian town of Beroea. In this period Jerome says that he learned the Hebrew language from "a believing brother from among the Hebrews."⁴ In the period from 377–380 Jerome studied scripture under the tutelage of Apollinaris, who was condemned at Rome in 374 and again at Antioch, with Jerome present, in 378. Jerome has no apparent problem in studying with a declared heretic, but he does distance himself from specific ideas of Apollinaris: "While he instructed me in Scripture, I never accepted his disputable dogma on Christ's human mind."⁵ This relationship will prove instructive for Jerome's treatment of the Nazarenes.

After a trip to Constantinople, Jerome sailed in 382 to Rome in the company of Epiphanius, a relationship that would be important for the remainder of Jerome's life. Following a trip through Cyprus, Palestine, and Egypt, Jerome arrived in Bethlehem in 386. He seems to have never left Palestine again, though visits to Jerusalem and Caesarea are likely. The correspondence between Jerome and Augustine begins in 394/95. This exchange would expand to some nineteen letters and would cover a period of twenty-five years.⁶

Jerome offers a long line of commentary on the Nazarenes, and his knowledge and opinion of their work seem to undergo development. Jerome begins speaking of Jewish Christian groups and literature in 383 ce and may make reference to them as late as 419.

1.1 *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*

In 383 ce Jerome refers to the Hebrew text of a Gospel of Matthew.⁷ He again cites a Hebrew Gospel in 386 or 387, quoting a non-canonical saying of Jesus: "And never rejoice except when you look at your brother in love."⁸ In 391 Jerome ex-

³ Jerome's story is told by J. D. N. Kelley in *Jerome* (London: Duckworth, 1955). See also the description in Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 48–70.

⁴ Such information is found in letters from Jerome. *Ep. 125.12*, found in *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 22, 1079. Unless otherwise noted, translation of Jerome material is from A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

⁵ *Ep. 84.3* (PL 22.745), translation provided by Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 59.

⁶ See the discussion by Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 217–20.

⁷ *Ep. 20.5*.

⁸ This is found in Jerome's commentary on Ephesians (*in Eph. 5.4*).

plains a difficult passage from Micah 7.6 (the daughter-in-law rises up against her mother-in-law) by recourse to a Hebrew gospel, to Hebrew grammar, and to another non-canonical saying of Jesus. Jerome says the reader should understand the word of God to be the spouse of the soul and that whoever

should believe the Gospel which is edited according to the Hebrews and which we translated not long ago, in which it is said of the person of the Saviour: "My Mother the Holy Spirit just took me by one of my hairs," will not hesitate to say that the word of God originated from the spirit and that the soul which is the spouse of the word has a mother in law the Holy Spirit, which has in the Hebrew feminine gender, called *rua*.⁹

In 392 Jerome interprets Paul's claim in Galatians to have seen only Peter and James on his first visit to Jerusalem. Jerome notes the same account in Acts, then turns to another witness about James:

the Gospel which is called according to the Hebrews and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin, of which also Origen often makes use, says after the account of the resurrection of the Lord: "But the Lord after he had given his linen cloth to the servant of the priest went to James and appeared to him ..."¹⁰

Following this is an account of the appearance of Jesus to James, who has been fasting:

a little later, it says: "Bring the table and the bread," said the Lord. And immediately it is added: "He brought bread and blessed and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: 'My brother eat thy bread for the Son of Man is risen from those who sleep.'"¹¹

It is in 392 that Jerome first associates this gospel tradition with the Nazoreans. Jerome explains that the apostle Matthew was the first to compose a gospel in Judea and that he did so in Hebrew letters "for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed."¹² Jerome is not certain who made the translation into Greek, but he claims to know a great deal about the present state of the gospel:

The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Caesarea which Pamphilus the martyr so diligently collected. From the Nazoreans who use this book in Beroia, a city of Syria, I also received the opportunity to copy it.¹³

Jerome then concludes that this gospel quotes not from the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), but from the Hebrew, and he uses this fact to explain the origin of two citations.¹⁴

⁹ Found in Jerome's Micah commentary (*in Micha 7.6*).

¹⁰ Found in Jerome's work entitled *Lives of Illustrious Men* (*de vir. ill. 2*).

¹¹ *de vir. ill. 2*.

¹² *de vir. ill. 3*.

¹³ *de vir. ill. 3*.

¹⁴ *de vir. ill. 3*. "Out of Egypt have I called my son" and "For he shall be called a Nazarene."

From this date forward, Jerome will often associate the Hebrew gospel with the community of Nazoreans.¹⁵ It should be noted that Jerome most often refers to this text in order to explain an exegetical difficulty, and he sometimes values the Nazarene reading over canonical versions.

1.2 A Nazarene Version of Jeremiah

Jerome also claims to have seen a different version of Jeremiah circulating among the Nazoreans. In his comments on Mt. 27.9–10, Jerome notes that Matthew cites a proof text from Jeremiah, but the quotation is actually from Zechariah. This does not seem to be a problem for Jerome, and he seems to accept that the gospels sometimes cite the prophets in general without knowing exactly which book is quoted. He notes, almost incidentally, that he knows of a version of Jeremiah that does contain the prophecy cited in Mt. 27.9–10. Jerome says that recently “I read a certain Hebrew work, which a Hebrew person of the Nazorean sect offered me as the apocryphal book of Jeremiah, in which I found these words literally.”¹⁶

1.3 A Curse Against the Nazarenes

Jerome claims to know of a synagogue curse aimed specifically at the Nazoreans. In his commentary on Amos 1.11–12 Jerome says that “until today in their synagogues they blaspheme the Christian people under the name Nazoreans.”¹⁷ His commentary on Isaiah 5.18–19 applies the verses to the leaders of the Jews and says that “up to the present day they persevere in blasphemy and three times a day in all the synagogues they anathemize the Christian name under the name of the Nazoreans.”¹⁸

1.4 The Nazarene Commentary on Isaiah

A great deal is learned from Jerome’s dependence on the Nazoreans from his interpretation of the book of Isaiah, dating from 408/10 ce. Jerome seems to have come into possession of a Jewish Christian commentary on Isaiah, and this text impacts Jerome in two ways. First, it provides the key for his interpretation of

¹⁵ Found in the commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (*in Matt.* 12.13; 23.35); but also in the interpretation of Isaiah in 408 or 410 ce (*in Is.* 40.9–11); in the interpretation of Ezekial around 410 or 415 ce (*in Ezek.* 16.13; 18.5–9); in the argument against Pelagius around 415 ce (*adv. Pelag.* 3.2). In some places Jerome makes no attribution, and at places he also connects this gospel to the Ebionites.

¹⁶ *in Matt.* 27.9–10. Origen notes the same problem, but he is likewise unconcerned by the contradiction.

¹⁷ Found in the commentary on Amos (*in Amos* 1.11–12).

¹⁸ *in Is.* 5.18–19.

some difficult texts in Isaiah, and, secondly, it seems to convince Jerome that the Nazoreans hold an acceptable christology.¹⁹ While Jerome may in fact cite extensively from this source without giving credit, there are five or six major passages in which his dependence on the Nazorean Isaiah commentary is explicit.

1.4.1 *Isaiah 8.11–15*

For his interpretation of Isaiah 8.11–15 Jerome seeks help for the difficult prophecy that the Lord “will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over – a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Isa. 8.14). Jerome finds a solution in the Nazrene commentary:

The Nazoreans, who accept Christ in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law, explain the two houses as the two families, namely of Shammai and Hillel, from whom originated the Scribes and the Pharisees. Akiba who took over their school is called the master of Aquila the proselyte and after him came Meir who has been succeeded by Joannes the son of Zakkai and after him Eliezer and further Telphon, and next Joseph Galilaeus and Josua up to the capture of Jerusalem. Shammai then and Hillel were born not long before the Lord, they originated in Judea. The name of the first means scatterer and of the second unholy, because he scattered and defiled the precepts of the Law by his traditions and δευτερώσεις. And these are the two houses who did not accept the Saviour who has become to them destruction and shame.²⁰

Ray Pritz notes that the rabbinical order of succession given here is incorrect, and he thinks that Jerome has created the etymological description of Hillel.²¹ Nonetheless, this text suggests the Nazarenes were aware of rabbinic tradition and interpretation and that they carried on an extended debate with the rabbis.

1.4.2 *Isaiah 8.19–22*

Jerome also seeks help with Isaiah 8.19–22, which offers the following condemnation: “Now if people say to you, ‘Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, for teaching and instruction? Surely those who speak like this will have no dawn!’ Jerome turns again to the Nazrene commentary on Isaiah:

¹⁹ See the discussion by A. F. J. Klijn in *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 19.

²⁰ in Is. 8.11–15. The text may be found in CC (*Corpus Christianorum*) 73A.116; in PL (*Patrologia Latina*) 24.119; and the text and translation in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 220–21. The logion about consulting the dead concerning the living ones has a close parallel in the Gospel of Thomas at Saying 52: “His disciples said to him, ‘Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke in you.’ He said to them, ‘You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead.’”

²¹ Pritz, *Nazrene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 58–62.

For the rest the Nazoreans explain this passage in this way: When the Scribes and the Pharisees tell you to listen to them, men who do everything for love of the belly and who hiss during their incantations in the way of the magicians in order to deceive you, you must answer them like this. It is not strange if you follow your traditions since every tribe consults his own idols. We must not, therefore, consult your dead about the living ones. On the contrary God has given us the Law and the testimonies of the scriptures. If you are not willing to follow them you shall not have light, and darkness will always oppress you. It will cover your earth and your doctrine so that, when they see that they have been deceived by you in error and they feel a longing for the truth, they will then be sad or angry. And let them who believe themselves to be like their own gods and kings curse you. And let them look at the heaven and the earth in vain since they are always in darkness and they cannot flee away from your ambushes.²²

This material makes it clear that the Nazarenes pose themselves over against the developing authority of the rabbinic tradition. They criticize the line of interpretation that cites the precedent of dead teachers, offering in its place their own engagement with the scriptures of Israel.

1.4.3 *Isaiah 9.1*

Jerome then turns to the following passage in *Isaiah 9.1*. There he reads "But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphthali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations." Jerome finds in the Nazarene commentary a three-stage framework of salvation history.

The Nazoreans whose opinion I have set forth above, try to explain this passage in the following way: When Christ came and his preaching shone out, the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphthali first of all were freed from the errors of the Scribes and the Pharisees and he shook off their shoulders the very heavy yoke of the Jewish traditions. Later, however, the preaching became more dominant, that means the preaching was multiplied, through the Gospel of the apostle Paul who was the last of all the apostles. And the Gospel of Christ shone to the most distant tribes and the way of the whole sea. Finally the whole world which earlier walked or sat in darkness and was imprisoned in the bonds of idolatry and death, has seen the clear light of the gospel.²³

Ray Pritz finds evidence for a Hebraic text in the spelling of Naphthali. This form agrees with the Hebrew text over against both the Septuagint and against the canonical form of Matthew (4.15–16), where Nephthali is used.²⁴ Beyond this linguistic connection, the citation offers important information about the Naz-

²² *in Is.*, 8.19–22. The text may be found in CC 73.121; in PL 24.123f.; in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 220–23.

²³ *in Is.*, 9.1. The text may be found beginning in CC 73.123; in PL 24.123–25; in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 222–23.

²⁴ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 64–65.

renes. They differ from the Scribes and Pharisees on the role of Jewish tradition, they accept the ministry of Paul, and they welcome a mission to the Gentiles. No mention is made of imposing Jewish traditions upon Gentile converts. More significantly, Jerome likely finds here an acceptable christology and ecclesiology.

1.4.4 *Isaiah 11.1*

In a subsequent work Jerome confirms this christology and suggests the etymology of the Nazarene name. At *Isaiah 11.1* Jeromes reads “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Jerome finds a Nazarene connection helpful.

Next the Nazoraeans, a name which the LXX translates by “sanctified” and Symmachus by “separated,” is always written with the letter zain. Therefore on this flower which rose suddenly from the trunk and root of Jesse through Mary the virgin, the Spirit of God rested, because in him the whole fullness of the godhead took pleasure to dwell corporally; not as in the other holy ones moderately but according to the Gospel read by the Nazoraeans which was written in the Hebrew language: “The whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came upon him.”²⁵

Jerome seems to point here to the translation of the term Nazarite as a separated or holy one, but he chooses to establish another connection with the Nazorean title. Jerome seems to connect the Nazorean name to the Hebrew term for root (*nezer*),²⁶ then offers a christological interpretation of the trunk and root of Jesse. The virgin birth of Jesus is affirmed, as is his anointing with the spirit. Ironically, Jerome then takes the passage that is sometimes used to speak of Jewish Christians holding a limited, adoptionist christology (divine sonship received at Jesus’ baptism) and uses it to argue instead (in agreement with Col. 1.19) that “in him the whole fullness of the godhead took pleasure to dwell corporally.” It is not clear here whether Jerome is citing the ideas of the Nazarenes or is simply using their name to elucidate his own theology. At the least, Jerome sees no contradiction in this connection.

1.4.5 *Isaiah 29.17–21*

Isaiah 29.17–21 speaks of the renewal of Israel in which “the deaf shall hear … the eyes of the blind shall see. The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord, and the neediest people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.” In this renewal, “the tyrant

²⁵ *in Is.*, 11.1–3. See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 222–23.

²⁶ The Hebrew text of *Is.* 11.1 links the name of Jesse (*yisai*) with the term for root (*nezer*). See the discussion in Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 11–13; Robert. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel*, Suppl. to *NovTest* 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 97–104.

shall be no more, and the scoffer shall cease; all those alert to do evil shall be cut off...". Jerome offers these comments:

What we understood to have been written about the devil and his angels, the Nazoreans believe to have been said against the Scribes and the Pharisees, because the δευτερωταὶ passed away, who earlier deceived the people with very vicious traditions. And they watch night and day to deceive the simple ones who made men sin against the Word of God in order that they should deny that Christ was the Son of God.²⁷

The debate between Nazarenes and rabbinic tradition emerges anew in this citation. While A. Schmidtke sees the use of δευτερωταὶ as evidence of a Greek text, Pritz thinks otherwise.²⁸ He notes that δευτερωταὶ and δευτερώσεις are the most common rendering in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) for *misneh*, which means duplicity or repetition. The term lies behind the developing concept of *mishnah*, which came to mean teaching handing down from teacher to disciple. Pritz believes the Greek word became a technical term for the teaching of tradition, and this can be seen in the patristic writings. He argues there is no comparable Latin term available to Jerome, so his options are to simply transcribe the Hebrew or to use the normative Greek term. Pritz concludes that Jerome has used the Greek as a recognizable reference to the rabbinic tradition.

If this is true, the passage articulates the Nazarene perception of rabbinic authority. The founders of the rabbinic tradition are understood as those who watch day and night to deceive simple ones into a denial that Christ was the Son of God. For the Nazarenes, this mishnaic tradition has passed away and is to be replaced with obedience to the word of God.

1.4.6 *Isaiah 31.6–9*

Isaiah 31.6–9 calls Israel to turn back to Yahweh and to abandon their idols. As a result of this turning, Yahweh will fight against the Assyrians: "he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor. His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic, says the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem." Jerome turns again to the Nazarene commentary.

The Nazoreans understand this passage in this way: O sons of Israel who deny the Son of God with a most vicious opinion, turn to him and his apostles. For if you will do this, you will reject all idols which to you were a cause of sin in the past and the devil will fall before you, not because of your powers, but because of the compassion of God. And his young men who a certain time earlier fought for him, will be the tributaries of the Church

²⁷ The text and translation may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 222–23.

²⁸ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 66–68. See also Pritz's article entitled "The Jewish Christian Sect of the Nazarenes and the Mishnah," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. Division A (1982), pp. 125–30.

and any of its power and stone will pass. Also the philosophers and every perverse dogma will turn their backs to the sign of the cross. Because this is the meaning of the Lord that his will take place, whose fire or light is in Sion and his oven in Jerusalem.²⁹

In this interpretation, the call to Israel has become the foundation of the church, which lives under the sign of the cross. In this text the Nazarenes still hold out hope for a mission to the Jews.

1.4.7 Summation

These six passages that draw explicitly from the Nazarene commentary on Isaiah are instructive not only for their content, but also for the way in which Jerome employs them. In addition, they offer information about the historical framework of the Nazarene movement known to Jerome.

First, it is significant that Jerome uses these Nazarene texts, that he uses them with no hint of critique, and that he finds in them an acceptable christology and ecclesiology. Most notable is the fact that Jerome seems to turn to the Nazarene commentary to address his more difficult exegetical problems. In doing so, Jerome offers here no critique of the Nazarenes, nor does he plead their cause.

Secondly, the content of these citations tells us something about the world-view of the Nazarenes. They are well-versed in the Hebrew language, and they are engaged in collecting and preserving sacred texts. They seem to be acquainted with the targumic tradition of biblical commentaries, and their commentary on Isaiah shows some affinities with this method. The Nazarenes known to Jerome are familiar with developments in the rabbinic schools, but they reject the Pharisaic claim to authority. They do not acknowledge the authority of the oral tradition as it is embodied in the mishnaic tradition, but seek rather to interpret the scriptures for themselves. They accept the apostleship and the ministry of Paul. They affirm the mission to the Gentiles with no mention of imposition of Jewish law. Jerome understands their christology to be compatible with orthodoxy. These Nazarenes have an ecclesiology, that is, some concept of a universal church that includes Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus. They still hope for a renewed mission among the Jews. Thirdly, the Nazarene commentary offers some historical framework for the Nazarene movement. There is evidence here that late in the 4th century ce Jewish followers of Jesus are engaged in an ongoing debate with rabbinic Judaism. Their manuscript tradition bears witness to an alternate history for the Gospel of Matthew and for the text of Jeremiah. Their commentary demonstrates a Jewish pattern of interpretation employed in their debate with rabbinic Judaism.

²⁹ The text may be found in CC 73.404; in PL 24.357; in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 222–25.

1.5 Other References by Jerome

In addition to his use of the Isaiah commentary, Jerome has other things to say about the Nazarenes. His correspondence with Augustine in 404 ce deals with a variety of issues.³⁰ Jerome tells Augustine about the Hebrew version of Matthew (*ep. 20.5*), he rejects the translations of Aquila the proselyte (*ep. 57.11*), then he offers a lengthy reflection on the observance of Jewish Law (*ep. 112.13*). Here Jerome disagrees with the opinion that it is good for Jewish followers of Christ to keep the Law. This, he says, brings the danger that “we shall fall into the heresy of Cerinthus and Hebion, who believe in Christ and for this only have been anathematized by the fathers, because they mixed the ceremonies of the Law with the Gospel of Christ and in this way confessed new things while they did not cut loose from the old” (*ep. 112.13*). In the following line it is not clear if Jerome continues with that thought or whether he now speaks of a different group of Jewish followers of Jesus.

What shall I say of the Ebionites who claim to be Christians? Until now a heresy is to be found in all parts of the East where Jews have their synagogues; it is called “of the Minæans” and cursed by the Pharisees up to now. Usually they are called Nazoreans. They believe in Christ, the Son of God born of Mary the virgin, and they say about him that he suffered and rose again under Pontius Pilate, in whom also we believe, but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians. (*ep. 112.13*)

On the one hand Jerome seems to have labeled the Nazoreans as an Ebionite heresy. It is clear that he knows almost nothing about Ebionites, crediting their origins to a historical figure who, in the opinion of most scholars, never existed. When Jerome shifts to a description of the Nazoreans, his tone is more sympathetic. He claims they are found throughout the East and that they are cursed in the synagogues. His description of Nazorean beliefs is an orthodox litany reminiscent of the apostles’ creed. They believe in Christ, “in whom we also believe.” The one criticism raised against the Nazoreans is their adherence to Jewish identity, presumably in the form of Jewish practices.

Jerome, of course, is not writing a history of the Nazoreans, nor is he offering an apology in their behalf. His wider aim is the translation of scripture, the writing of commentaries, the defense of the gospel, and the attack on heresy. In his letter to Augustine, he is apparently, among other things, trying to impress. In the framework of these larger concerns, Jerome sometimes offers confusing and even contradictory information about Jewish followers of Jesus. His claim to have translated the Hebrew gospel is not entirely coherent. Jerome says in 383 ce that he does not know who translated the Hebrew version of Matthew into Greek.³¹

³⁰ Text and translation of relevant portions of the letter to Augustine may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 198–203.

³¹ Most scholars today believe that canonical Matthew was written in Greek, not translated from any language.

Jerome also says he had an opportunity to copy this work. In 392 he claims to have recently translated the Hebrew gospel into both Greek and Latin. He notes that Origen has used this gospel, and Jerome sometimes quotes the same passages as Origen, perhaps from Origen. In 415 ce we learn for the first time that Jerome thinks the Gospel according to the Hebrews was written in the Chaldaic and Syriac language (Aramaic), but with Hebrew letters. Jerome also says this gospel is used by the Ebionites. In his 404 letter to Augustine, Jerome seems to conflate Ebionites and Nazarenes, or perhaps to speak of two kinds of Ebionites.

Most scholars conclude that Jerome, like Epiphanius before him, sees the Nazarenes as heretics. Their conclusion depends largely on the one passage in which Jerome seems to castigate Nazarenes:

Strange stupidity of the Nazoreans! They wonder whence wisdom possessed wisdom and power possessed powers, but their obvious error is that they only looked at the son of the carpenter. (*in Matt. 13.53–54*)

Quite a number of scholars find here evidence that Jerome rejected the Nazarenes as heretics and was inconsistent in his description of them.³²

It should be noted, however, that Jerome is commenting on a passage about the appearance of Jesus in the synagogue of his home town (Mt. 13.54). In response to Jesus' teaching, the people ask "Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?" (Mt. 13.54). Jerome is clearly addressing this context. In his commentary he quotes Mt. 13.53–54a, then paraphrases it, noting that Jesus went to him homeland (*patriam*) and to the synagogue there. Jerome then cites the question of the people: "Whence came that wisdom, those powers?" The following line marks the beginning of Jerome's comments on the passage: "Strange stupidity of the Nazoreans! They wonder whence wisdom possessed wisdom and power possessed powers . . ." (*in Matt. 13.53–54*). As Ray Pritz correctly notes,³³ Jerome is speaking here of the people of Jesus' home town. Although the text never names Nazareth, Jerome presumes the reference to the home town of Jesus means he is in Nazareth – and thus speaking to Nazarenes. Jerome is reflecting on the gospel passage and is scolding the people (in the story) from Jesus' home town, not the Nazarenes of Beroea.

1.6 Summation

Despite some confusion and contradiction, Jerome seems to have no ongoing agenda for or against the Nazarenes. This stands in stark contrast to his less informed, consistently negative treatment of the Ebionites. Jerome's description of the Nazarene presence in Syrian Beroea, his access to their texts and his frequent use of them, his description of their debate with the rabbis, and his many refe-

³² Including Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 47.

³³ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 53–54.

rences to the synagogue curse against Nazoreans all seem plausible. In light of this evaluation, Jerome bears witness to a group of Jewish followers of Jesus who are active in Syria in the late 4th century ce. Their beliefs are largely those of the developing Christian orthodoxy, but their observance of the Jewish Law and their unique approach to scriptural tradition and interpretation set them apart. In addition, they appear to be the target of hostility from some synagogues, and they are participants in an ongoing debate with rabbinic Judaism.

2. Epiphanius and the Nazarenes

Epiphanius is apparently the first writer outside of the New Testament to mention the Nazoreans. He presents a confusing account of Jewish Christianity in general and of the Nazoreans in particular. The starting point for selecting out useful material is the context from which his writings emerge.³⁴

Epiphanius was born somewhere around 315 ce in Judea, and he died at sea in 402/403. He studied in Egypt and had knowledge of various languages – Greek, Latin, Coptic, Hebrew – in addition to his native Syriac. He returned to Judea in 335 and was elected bishop of Salamis, on the island of Cyprus, in 367. From that position he made a career of naming and fighting heresy. In 374 he attempted a comprehensive critique of all opposed to orthodox Christianity in a work entitled *Panarion: Refutation of All Heresies*. This work was summarized and republished after Epiphanius' death to include summary headings – *Anacephalaiosis* (428 ce). In 382 Epiphanius met Jerome in the city of Rome, or enroute to the city, and they became lifelong partners in the fight against heresy, particularly that heresy found in Origen's thought.

2.1 Confused Certainty

Epiphanius' earliest comments on Nazoreans and Jewish Christians appear particularly confused and unsubstantiated, yet he seems determined to offer some description and condemnation. After describing the Osseans, Elxai, the Sampsaean, and the Ebionites, he tries to demonstrate the relation between the various heresies:

For later this Elxai joined the Ebionites who lived after Christ, but also the Nazoreans who originated afterwards. Four heresies made use of him because they were won over by his deceit: those of the Ebionites and the Nazoreans who came after them, the Ossaeans who were before him and with him and the Nasaraeans ...³⁵

³⁴ For an overview of Epiphanius' career, see Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 29–47.

³⁵ *Pan.* 19.4.1. Unless otherwise noted, the text and translation of *Panarion* may be

The confused certainty of Epiphanius is seen in his first extended focus on the Nazoreans. After treating other groups, he turns in *Panarion* 29 to the Nazoreans.

They are succeeded by the Nazoreans. They lived at the same time, or before them, either with them or after them. In any case they are contemporaries. For I cannot exactly determine who are the successors of whom. For, as I said, they were contemporaries and possessed identical ideas. They did not give themselves the name of Christ or that of Jesus but they called themselves Nazoreans once.³⁶

Epiphanius then considers their relation to the Lessaeans, to believers who withdrew when Mark went to Egypt, to the Nazirites, and to the Nasaraeans. Epiphanius struggles with the fact that the first followers of Jesus were called by this same name, noting ironically that Paul accepted at his trial a name that other Jews called heretical. Epiphanius acknowledges this, but he maintains that later Nazarenes are heretics.³⁷

The core of Epiphanius' treatment is to be found in section 7 of *Panarion* 29. There he describes their location, their origin, their history, and their ideas. Epiphanius is specific about the location of the Nazoreans:

This heresy of the Nazoreans exists in Beroea in the neighborhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba, Chochabe in Hebrew.³⁸

Epiphanius is equally certain of the origins and history of development of the Nazarenes.

For from there it took its beginnings after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place, as I said. There the Nazorean heresy had its beginning.³⁹

Epiphanius' description of Nazorean theology begins with a premise: "they remain wholly Jewish and nothing else."⁴⁰ Noting that the only thing that separates them from other Jews is their belief in Christ, Epiphanius then describes a rather orthodox set of beliefs.

For they also accept the resurrection of the dead and that everything has its origin in God. They proclaim one God and his Son Jesus Christ. They have a good mastery of the Hebrew languages. For the entire Law and the Prophets and what is called Scriptures, I mention the poetical books, Kings, Chronicles and Esther and all the others are read in

found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*. The Elxai text quoted above is found on p. 161.

³⁶ *Pan.* 29.1.

³⁷ *Pan.* 29.5.4–6.2.

³⁸ *Pan.* 29.7.7.

³⁹ *Pan.* 29.7.7.

⁴⁰ *Pan.* 29.7.1.

Hebrew by them as that is the case with the Jews of course. Only in this respect they differ from the Jews and Christians; with the Jews they do not agree because of their belief in Christ, with the Christians because they are trained in the Law, in circumcision, the Sabbath and the other things.⁴¹

Despite this precise litany of doctrine, Epiphanius is not certain about Nazorean christology.

With regard to Christ I cannot say whether, misled by wickedness of the aforesaid followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus, they believe that he is a mere man or whether, in agreement with the truth, they emphatically declare that he was born of the Holy Spirit from Mary.⁴²

Epiphanius' evaluation of the Nazoreans is nothing more than a restatement of his opening premise: "The brevity of this exposition will also be sufficient for this heresy. For such people make a fine object to be refuted and are easy to catch, for they are rather Jews and nothing else."⁴³

Epiphanius cannot leave the Nazoreans without mention of the Jewish response. Though they are, in his opinion, Jews and nothing else,

they are very much hated by the Jews. For not only the Jewish children cherish hate against them but the people also stand up in the morning, at noon and in the evening, three times a day and they pronounce curses and maledictions over them when they say their prayers in the synagogues. Three times a day they say: "May God curse the Nazoreans." For they are supposed to believe more than these because they proclaim as Jews that Jesus is the Christ, which runs counter to those who still are Jews who did not accept Jesus.⁴⁴

The confused certainty of Epiphanius re-emerges in his final remarks on the Nazoreans.

They have the entire Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. It is carefully preserved by them in Hebrew letters, as I wrote in the beginning. But I do not know whether they also have omitted the genealogies from Abraham to Christ.⁴⁵

It is clear that Epiphanius' major purpose in the *Panarion* is to catalogue and to dismiss various heresies. He notes at a number of points that his inability to fully account for the origins, doctrines, and interconnections of these groups is not crucial. They are after all, confused heretics whose ideas can be easily dismissed. This attitude is evident in portions of Epiphanius' description of the Nazoreans. At points he seems to proceed with absolute clarity and to offer no critique of the Nazoreans. But Epiphanius never strays far from his central premise that these

⁴¹ *Pan.* 29.7.3–7.5.

⁴² *Pan.* 29.7.6.

⁴³ *Pan.* 29.9.1.

⁴⁴ *Pan.* 29.9.2–9.3

⁴⁵ *Pan.* 29.9.4

groups, including the one that drew its name from the first believers, are heresies and can be dismissed from the history of the church.

2.2 Analysis

Several connections may be helpful in analyzing the layers of Epiphanius' representation of the Nazoreans. One issue is Epiphanius' relationship to Jerome and his writings. In addition, the location of Epiphanius and his readership may prove significant. Beyond this, the larger context of heresiology may inform Epiphanius's work.

When his entire testimony is considered, Epiphanius offers substantial information about the Nazarenes.⁴⁶

From *Panarion* 29.7

1. The Nazarenes use both the Old Testament and the New Testament (29.7.2)
2. They read Hebrew, they know the Hebrew scriptures, and they preserve at least one gospel in the Hebrew language (29.7.4; 29.9.4).
3. They believe in the resurrection of the dead (29.7.3).
4. Nazarenes believe God is the creator of all things (29.7.3).
5. They believe in the one God and in his son, Jesus Christ (29.7.3).
6. They observe the Law of Moses (29.7.5; 29.5.4; 29.8.1–7)
7. The Nazoreans had their origin in the Jerusalem congregation that fled to Pella in the years prior to 70 ce (29.7.8).
8. Nazoreans were located in Pella, Kokaba, and Coele Syria (29.7.7).
9. Nazoreans were hated by the Jews and cursed in their synagogues (29.9.2–3).

From sections other than *Panarion* 29.7

10. The Nazoreans were joined by Elxai and they later adopted his book (19.5.4; 54.1.3; 19.1.4; 19.3.4–7; 19.4.1).
11. A historical figure named Ebion, from whom the Ebionites draw their name, came from among the Nazoreans (30.2.1).
12. The Nazoreans were earlier called Iessaioi (29.5.1–4).

The information that comes from sections outside of *Panarion* 29.7 is typical of Epiphanius' pattern of connecting heresies to founding figures and to each other. There we learn that Nazoreans were once called Iessaioi, they were joined by Elxai and spawned Ebion. Ebion is almost universally regarded, whether found in Epiphanius or elsewhere, as a non-existent figure that was created to explain the origin of the Ebionites. The same may be true of Elxai, though little else is known. The reference to Iessaioi is probably based on etymology rather than history.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The list is a reformulation of that by Ray Pritz, *Jewish Nazarene Christianity*, p. 35. The citations refer to the *Panarion*.

⁴⁷ A classic example of this creative reconstruction is found at *Anacephalaiosis* 8.1, which says: "They are also called Merinthians according to the rumour which reached us."

It becomes evident that Epiphanius' most coherent information on the Nazoreans is collected in a narrow section of the *Panarion* (29.7). It is also significant that what is found here largely agrees with Jerome's portrait of the Nazoreans.

The location of Epiphanius and the nature of his readership are also significant. He was born in Judea and returned there after his studies. Most of his life was spent as bishop of Salamis on the island of Cyprus. Thus, Epiphanius was in position to know some things, but not others. He has only rumors and repeated tales about Ebion and Elxai and the Iessaioi. It is more plausible that Epiphanius has better sources for the information presented in *Panarion* 29.7. In addition, Matthew Black noted that the two presbyters for whom Epiphanius wrote the *Panarion* actually came from Beroea of Coele Syria.⁴⁸ When Epiphanius locates Nazoreans in Beroea, it is unlikely he would tell the presbyters something untrue about their home towns.⁴⁹

It is also important to see Epiphanius' work in the larger context of those who write against heretics. J. B. Lightfoot argued that the heresy list of Pseudo-Tertullian is rooted in a rich source history that extends back to Ignatius and to Hippolytus.⁵⁰ The Pseudo-Tertullian list also serves as a backbone for subsequent lists. Thus, both Filaster and Epiphanius may be seen as revisions of the list of Pseudo-Tertullian.⁵¹ If this reconstruction is generally correct, we have an interconnected tradition of heresiology that extends from Hippolytus to Epiphanius. It is significant that, while Ebionites are mentioned frequently in such lists, Epiphanius appears to be the first to declare the Nazoreans as heretics.⁵² Some, such as Munck, have argued that this is evidence the Nazoreans developed as a late heresy.⁵³ Ray Pritz objects, and he offers a different reading of the developments: "... no one until Epiphanius considered them heretical enough to add

For either Cerinthus himself is also called Merinthus – we are not quite certain with regard to him – or there existed somebody else called Merinthus, his cooperator. God only knows However, there is no difference whether it be himself or somebody else, a co-operator, having the same opinions and working on the same ideas. For their entire malicious doctrine bears the same characteristics and they are called both Cerinthians and Merinthians."

⁴⁸ Matthew Black, "The Patristic accounts of Jewish Sectarianism," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 41 (1959), p. 299.

⁴⁹ Noted by Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, p. 121.

⁵⁰ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: Olms, 1973 [1890]), vol 1. See the reference on p. 2 and the longer treatment beginning on p. 413.

⁵¹ See the discussion by Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 71–76.

⁵² Filaster apparently has another group in mind when he refers to *Nazaraei*. His description of them elsewhere does not match well with the Nazarenes of Epiphanius. Even if Filaster means the Nazarenes, he may be dependent on Epiphanius at this point.

⁵³ Johannes Munck, "Primitive Jewish Christianity and Later Jewish Christianity: Continuation or Rupture?" *Aspects du Judéo-Christianisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), pp. 77–91.

them to older catalogues.”⁵⁴ Pritz also believes that Epiphanius is responsible for the confusion that pushed the Nazoreans off the pages of history.

The most important conclusion of this chapter is that the Nazarenes were not mentioned by earlier fathers not because they did not exist but rather because they were still generally considered to be acceptably orthodox. The history of the Nazarene sect must be clearly distinguished from that of the Ebionites. Once Epiphanius failed to do so, he introduced a confusion which continues until today.⁵⁵

2.3 Summation

Epiphanius declares the Nazoreans to be heretics solely on the basis of their observance of Jewish Law. He believes them to be descendants from the first followers of Jesus, he knows their name is the foundational one, and he offers no critique of their doctrine. Epiphanius is also aware that Nazoreans are persecuted by some other Jews. It is their observance of the Law that, for Epiphanius, makes them heretical.⁵⁶ This declaration is not only crucial for the fate of the Nazoreans; it also marks a key moment in the history of the relationship between Jews and Christians. Epiphanius’ dismissal of the Nazoreans is a formative moment in Christian anti-Jewish behavior. Those who honor and observe the Jewish Law are now considered heretics, even if they maintain all other elements of Christian faith. With Epiphanius, the Law itself has become heresy!

3. The Nazarenes after Jerome

The fate of the Nazoreans will be largely controlled by their representation in Epiphanius and Jerome. It is clear that subsequent writers have no contact with Nazoreans and draw what information they have from earlier writings. The work of Epiphanius and Jerome are repeated and expanded, but little of significance is added.⁵⁷

Augustine knows no Nazoreans, and he borrows most of his description from Jerome. However, the first letter from Augustine to Jerome (394/95 ce) shows that

⁵⁴ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, p. 75.

⁵⁵ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, p. 82.

⁵⁶ Epiphanius, in his derision of the Ebionites, will say that “Jesus did his best to heal mostly on the Sabbath,” (*Pan.* 30.32.1), that Jesus healed people *from* the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was abolished (see *Pan.* 30.32.9). See the discussion by Joseph Verheyden, “Epiphanius on the Ebionites” in *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry, WUNT 158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), p. 204.

⁵⁷ See the discussion of Filaster and of Didymus the Blind in Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 71–76.

Augustine works with a different set of presuppositions.⁵⁸ He commends the work of Jerome, but he brusquely urges him not to work from a Hebrew text. Augustine insisted the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) is far superior. Augustine also chided Jerome for suggesting that Paul's rebuke of Peter at Antioch, as recorded in Galatians, was intentionally simulated. To suggest falsehood in any text, says Augustine, brings the whole of the Bible under suspicion. J. D. N. Kelly calls Augustine's letter a double attack on Jerome's exegesis and his attachment to what Augustine called "the Hebrew verity."⁵⁹ This initial letter makes it clear that Jerome has a different respect for the Hebrew tradition and a more critical engagement with the developing Christian canon. While this letter failed to reach Jerome, a subsequent one did. Here Augustine again criticized Jerome for his interpretation of the conflict at Antioch and demanded a recantation. Augustine also chided Jerome for his failure to boldly warn his readings against the heretics discussed in his writings.⁶⁰

Augustine speaks of the Nazoreans on six occasions. In each instance he offers a negative treatment, and, unlike Jerome, he never quotes from their texts. Augustine acknowledges the Nazoreans as contemporaries in several texts,⁶¹ and he notes others who have written about them.

In his treatment of baptism, Augustine hints at the two-level interpretation (carnal versus spiritual) through which he will dismiss Jewish followers of Jesus. He also invokes the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch as the paradigm through which to understand this movement. Augustine says

... just as they persist to the present day who call themselves Nazarene Christians and circumcise the carnal foreskins in a Jewish way, are born heretics in that error into which Peter drifted and from which he was called back by Paul.⁶²

Augustine is confounded by the claim that Jewish followers of Jesus should do as Jesus and Paul did – follow the Law.⁶³ Nonetheless, he finds this position unacceptable. In his reply to Faustus, Augustine, unable to give a logical reply, resorts to ridicule:

If one of the Nazoreans ... was arguing with me from these words of Jesus that he came not to destroy the Law, being uncertain, I should have some difficulty for a while as to what to answer him ... But they are obviously misled, as well as you ... Do you too, like a Jew or a Nazorean, glory in the obscene distinction of being castrated? Do you pride

⁵⁸ See the discussion in Kelly, *Jerome*, pp. 217–20.

⁵⁹ Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 218. The letter apparently never reached Jerome.

⁶⁰ Kelly, *Jerome*, p. 219. Even this letter was delayed, and Jerome did not believe the copied version he did receive was authentic.

⁶¹ See *de baptismo* 7.1.1; *contra Cresconium* 1.31.36; *contra Faustum* 19.7. The text and translation of these texts and others in which Augustine speaks of the Nazoreans may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 236–40.

⁶² *de baptismo* 7.1.1.

⁶³ This is evident in *contra Faustum* 19.4 and in *ep. 116.16.1*.

yourself in the observance of the Sabbath? Can you congratulate yourself on being conscientious regarding the abstinence of swine's meat?⁶⁴

Unable to deny the validity of the Law, Augustine returns to a spiritualistic explanation that supersedes Jewish faith:

Although the Nazoreans confess that the son of God is Christ, they nevertheless observe everything of the old Law which Christians learned by the apostolic tradition not to observe carnally but to understand spiritually.⁶⁵

Ultimately, Augustine dismisses the Nazoreans: "They exist until the present day or, at least until recently, anyway as always with the same small number."⁶⁶

Even when his polemical attitude is taken into account, Augustine reveals little about the Nazoreans that cannot be known from Epiphanius (or from the *Anacephalaiosis* based on his work). Anything that Augustine says beyond Epiphanius may be nothing more than logical conclusions based on available information.⁶⁷ There is no strong evidence that Augustine has direct knowledge of Nazoreans or of their writings.

Nonetheless, the witness of Augustine is not without value. He tells us that, as far as he knows, Nazoreans are still present in his day (c. 400 ce). He also demonstrates that their theology draws upon biblical texts and is difficult to counter. Augustine further demonstrates an urgent and insistent need to label the Nazoreans as heretics. His dismissal of the Nazoreans is a minor strand of his larger declaration that any real observance of the Law is heresy. What Epiphanius introduced, Augustine canonized. All subsequent writers, and all of church history, would treat Nazoreans as heretics.

4. On the Distinction between Nazarenes and Ebionites

Epiphanius clearly speaks of two kinds of Ebionites: those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus and those who accept it.⁶⁸ Epiphanius' distinction of two groups of Ebionites may have some degree of precedent in Justin Martyr, Origen, and Eusebius.⁶⁹ Jerome distinguishes between Nazoreans, who differ from Chris-

⁶⁴ *contra Faustum*, 19.4.

⁶⁵ *de Haer.* 9.

⁶⁶ *contra Faustum* 19.7.

⁶⁷ See the discussion in Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 78–79.

⁶⁸ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, insists that Epiphanius is referring to the Nazoreans described in Jerome.

⁶⁹ Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (46.1) near the middle of the 2nd century, describes two types of Jewish Christians. Those who hold Jesus to be "man of men" are not saved, but those who believe in Christ and do not require Gentiles to obey the Law can be saved. This text may be found in *Patrologia Graeca* (PG) 6, 573. Origen, in his argument with Celsus, recognizes two types of Ebionites: "Let it be admitted, moreover, that

tians only in their observance of the Law, and Ebionites, who are easily dismissed as heretics. Augustine, for the most part, maintains this distinction. Ray Pritz has raised the interesting suggestion that knowledge of the Nazarenes falls along an east-west divide. People like Jerome and Epiphanius, who have spent time in the east where the Nazarenes are located, are able to distinguish Nazarenes from the larger Ebionite heresy. Those who remain in the west, like Augustine, cannot or will not make this distinction.⁷⁰ It is also noteworthy that this separate characterization of the Nazarenes is recognized in two non-patristic texts.

A rabbinical text suggests this distinction. Stephen Goranson notes that *b. Šabb.* 116a may be an example of texts that have been self-censored by the rabbis to prevent further hostility.⁷¹ The topic is whether the books of heretics (*minim*) should be saved from a burning building. With a slight change in spelling the text declares that Ebionite books are more worth saving than Nazarene books. This would be consistent with the distinction implied in Epiphanius and made evident in Jerome: the Nazoreans share the christology of the emerging orthodoxy. Beyond this, the saying would equate *minim* with Jewish Christians, whether Ebionite or Nazarene.

Even more dramatic is the distinction noted in the Persian empire in the mid 3rd century. King Shabor I of Persia waged a series of successful campaigns against Rome in the period from 255 to 260 ce. Shabor captured Antioch and began a deportation to various cities in Persia. Listed among the conquered cities is Aleppo (Syrian Beroea). The Persian victories were followed by a purging of foreign religious influence and a renewed commitment to Zoroastrianism. This reformation was led by the high priest Kartir, who was ultimately responsible for the death of Mani (c. 277 ce). Kartir boasts of his achievement, carried out under the reign of five kings, in an inscription at Naqs-i Rustam. After bragging that King Bahram had made him high priest and judge of the whole empire, Kartir recalls his deeds:

And Jews and Buddhists and Hindus and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were smitten in the Empire, and idols were destroyed and the abodes of the

there are some who accept Jesus, and who boast on that account of being Christians, and yet would regulate their lives, like the Jewish multitude, in accordance with the Jewish Law, – and these are the twofold sect of the Ebionites, who either acknowledge with us that Jesus was born of a virgin, or deny this, and maintain that he was begotten like other human beings ..." (*Contra Celsus* 5.61). The text may be found in *PG* 11, 1277. It is likely that Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (*HE* 27.3–6) picks up the distinction from Origen. This distinction is also found in Theodoret (c. 447). The delineation of two groups along the lines of the virgin birth is discussed in Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 20–23. Pritz believes this distinction is evidence of Nazarene presence before the name was used. Pritz notes that identification of one of Origen's Ebionite groups as Nazarenes was first posited by H. Grotius in the year 1679.

⁷⁰ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 108–110.

⁷¹ See the discussion in Stephen Goranson, "Ebionites," *ABD* vol. 2, pp. 260–61.

demons were disrupted and made into thrones and seats of the gods ... and the heretics and the destructive men, who in the Magian land did not adhere to the doctrine regarding the Mazdayasnian religion and the rites of the gods – them I punished, and I tormented them until I made them better.⁷²

It is noteworthy that in the aftermath of the deportation from Antioch, two distinct groups of followers of Jesus are named. One is the *Klystyd'n*, a derivation of the term Christian, referring to Greek speakers. The other group is called the '*N'sly*', a derivation of Nazarenes, referring to Aramaic speakers. Since Kartir had the audacity to inscribe his deeds, among other places, below the tombs of Darius and other leaders from the Achaemenid dynasty, it is unlikely that he included obscure groups. J. P. Asmussen insists that "A person as self-important as Kartir would not have named an unimportant and meaningless minority in an official inscription *ad majorem gloriam religionis zoroastricae*".⁷³ In addition to lending an external witness, this inscription may offer a partial explanation for the diminished numbers of Nazoreans, at least in the area of Antioch.

Kartir's inscription is not the only evidence for a Persian distinction between two groups of followers of Jesus. Shapir seems to have deported large groups from Antioch, including the bishop Demetrius. After the deportation there is a clash within Persia between competing groups of followers of Jesus. Asmussen traces this tension:

These prisoners, in other words, made up organized communities with their own religious language and their own church leaders, and they retained both in the Syriac-speaking, fellow-Christian surroundings. Thus, according to the 'Seert Chronicle', there were two churches at Rev-Ardashir in Persis, both with their own languages, Greek and Syriac. In Susiana, open strife developed between the two Christian parties because each had its own bishop and neither appeared to be willing to acknowledge or give in to the other. In the eyes of the Iranians they must have seemed two peculiar forms of Christianity that they took for granted a classification distinguishing between Greek-speaking and Syriac-speaking Christians."⁷⁴

The rivalry between communities at Nisibis and at Seleucia-Ctesiphon is mentioned frequently, and only persecution seems to bring some degree of unity.⁷⁵

⁷² See the discussion in M. Spengling, *Third Century Iran, Sapor and Kartir* (Chicago, 1953); P. Gignaux, "L'inscription de Kartir à Sar Mashad," *Journal asiatique* 256 (1968), beginning on p. 390. See also C. J. Brunner, "The Middle Persian Inscription of the Priest Kirder at Naqs-i Rustam," in D. K. Kouymjian (ed.), *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy, and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles* (Beirut: American University, 1974), pp. 97–113; Stephen Goranson, "Nazarenes," *ABD* vol. 4, pp. 1049–50.; M-L Charimont, "L'inscription de Kartir à la Ka'bah de," *Journal asiatique*, 248 (1960), 339–80; J. P. Asmussen, "Christians in Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 3(2), pp. 942–48.

⁷³ Asmussen, "Christians in Islam," p. 929.

⁷⁴ Asmussen, "Christians in Islam," pp. 929–30.

⁷⁵ Asmussen, "Christians in Islam," pp. 930–31.

While John of Persia was present at the Council of Nicea in 325 ce, a synod of Persian churches in 424 placed them outside the rule of the five major sees of the church (Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem). In the controversy that soon followed (428), the Persian Christians sided with Nestorius, who emphasized the human nature of Jesus and insisted adoration was proper only after his resurrection.⁷⁶

It is not possible to show that every recognition of two distinct groups of followers of Jesus after the Persian deportation points unambiguously to Jewish followers of Jesus who call themselves Nazarenes. Nonetheless, the linguistic distinctions are not without historical framework. Jerome and Epiphanius know of Jewish followers of Jesus in the vicinity of Antioch who call themselves Nazoreans. It is precisely from this area that Syriac speaking followers of Jesus are deported to Persia, where they are distinguished from other groups by the name Nazarene. This suggests some degree of plausibility to the connection.

5. Conclusion

Does the patristic representation of the Nazarenes point to an actual historical group who seek to fulfill God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness? The literary representation of the Nazarenes in the 4th century is relatively extensive. This literary representation is built upon a complex interaction of tradition history and literary history.

Three lines of tradition flow through the literary history of the Nazarene story:

1. Nazarenes are seen as heretics (by Epiphanius, Augustine, rabbis);
2. Nazarenes are seen as a distinct type of Christian (by *b. Šabb.* 116a, Kartir);
3. Nazarenes are seen as proponents of a useful textual tradition (by Jerome).

Critical analysis of this literary representation allows some evaluation of the historical reality of the Nazarenes. The historical dimensions of this profile may then be located along a continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable.

Five sources form the backbone of this representation of the Nazarenes.⁷⁷ Epiphanius is the first patristic writer to mention the name of the Nazarenes, which he assumes is drawn from the first followers of Jesus. His portrait of the Nazarenes is mingled together with that of the Ebionites, and the Nazarene identity is subsumed within Epiphanius' larger project, which is the naming and refutation of heresy. Nonetheless, Epiphanius distinguishes two groups of Jewish

⁷⁶ Asmussen, "Christians in Islam," pp. 930–41.

⁷⁷ Epiphanius, Jerome, Augustine, a rabbinical text, and a Persian text.

followers of Jesus based on their view of the virgin birth. With the exception of three speculative references located outside of *Panarion* 29.7, what Epiphanius says explicitly about the Nazarenes either agrees with Jerome or could be deduced from logical assumptions based on prior information. Epiphanius' portrait is a part of his heresiology and seems to reflect no personal knowledge of Nazarenes or their texts.

Jerome offers the clearest portrait of the Nazarenes, and he makes extensive reference to and use of their texts. Apart from one ambiguous text (*ep.* 112.13), Jerome offers a positive characterization, understanding Nazarenes to differ from other Christians only in their observance of Jewish Law. From Jerome we learn that

1. The Nazarenes live in Syrian Beroea
2. They use a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew
3. Jerome has copied and translated at least portions of this text
4. The Nazarenes have a different version of the book of Jeremiah that Jerome uses in his own commentary
5. The Nazarenes are cursed in the Jewish synagogues
6. There is a Nazarene commentary on Isaiah. Jerome claims to draw from this work, even citing it at numerous points, in his own commentary
7. The Nazarenes are conversant with rabbinic tradition and modes of interpretation
8. The Nazarenes oppose the rabbis and their mishnaic tradition
9. Nazarenes accept the ministry of Paul and welcome a mission to the Gentiles
10. Their christology, and perhaps their ecclesiology, seem acceptable to Jerome
11. The Nazarenes hold out hope for a successful mission to other Jews.

Augustine knows nothing new about Nazarenes, and his critique of their theology is strained. Augustine does, however, canonize their status as outsiders. The heretical label imposed by Epiphanius and Augustine becomes the normative description for Nazarenes.

One rabbinical text (*b. Sabb.* 116a) may confirm the distinction between Nazoreans and Ebionites, and it may show that the term *minim* (heretics), in some times and places, refers explicitly to Jewish followers of Jesus. The Kartir inscription implies that two groups were deported from Antioch to Persia in the mid 250s ce: Greek speaking Christians and Aramaic speaking Nazarenes. The division along linguistic lines continues in the Persian church.

When these sources are taken together, the literary representation of the Nazarenes is noteworthy. First, the basic characterization of the Nazarenes has multiple attestation from a variety of sources. There is a further suggestion of authenticity in the varied responses to this characterization. Nazarenes are considered heretics by those who oppose the observance of Jewish Law (Epiphanius, Augustine), they are considered *minim* by those who most faithfully observe Jewish Law (rabbis), they are considered a distinct foreign religion by the Zoroastrian High Priest, and they are treated in a rather neutral way by Jerome, who

considers them a most useful Hebraic source for biblical translation and commentary.

Most telling is the debate over distinguishing Nazarenes from Ebionites. The patristic implication that Nazarenes are more acceptable because they appear to share the christology of emerging Christian orthodoxy is reversed by the rabbis, who appear to favor Ebionites because they do not hold that view of Christ.⁷⁸

Secondly, the literary representation of the Nazarenes extends across a wide time range. The title is first associated with Jesus and his earliest followers, and it endures as late as the 9th century.

Thirdly, after critical analysis and the removal of improbable elements, the content of this representation has a reasonably consistent core. The Nazoreans are to be found in Beroea in the vicinity of Antioch. They have an extensive Hebraic tradition of biblical texts and interpretation. They confess Jesus as God's messiah, apparently in much the same way as other Christians. They seek to observe the Jewish Law, and they are despised by almost everyone who notices them.

Fourthly, there is a noteworthy coherence in what is not said about the Nazarenes. The portrait of the Nazarenes emerges through polemics, through repetition of stereotypes, and through creative and vindictive speculation. Nonetheless, there are some core characteristics that no patristic or rabbinic writer attempts to refute. No ancient writer argues that Nazarenes did not exist or that they had ceased to exist before 400 ce.⁷⁹ No one names a heretical founder or creates a demeaning etymology for their name. No writer accuses Nazarenes of gnostic leanings. None disputes the existence of their textual tradition, and numerous writers cite their manuscripts in neutral or even positive ways. No patristic writer argues that they did not observe Jewish Law. No one questions their understanding of God and the created order. It appears that no one accuses them of immoral practices. No one denies the hostility against them in some synagogues.

When these factors are considered, how plausible is this core representation of the Nazarenes? There is a strong historical probability that Jerome, in the late 4th century, knew of a specific group of Jewish followers of Jesus who called themselves Nazarenes. It is debatable whether he had direct contact with this group, but Jerome did use their texts freely and understood them to be like other Christians except in their observance of the Law. While Jerome had great interest in their texts, he seems otherwise unconcerned: he offers no compliments and he shows little interest in declaring them heretics. This portrait of the Nazarenes has

⁷⁸ This is noted by Goranson, "Ebionites" and in a sidebar in *Biblical Archeologist*, June, 1988, pp. 70–71.

⁷⁹ Apparently the first to speak of the Nazarenes in the past tense is Paschius Radbertus in the 9th century. See the discussion by Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, p. 81.

a high degree of historical plausibility and a relatively strong degree of probability.⁸⁰ It is improbable that any other patristic writer had extensive knowledge of Nazarenes, though several apparently knew their texts. Other patristic writers were more concerned with the representation of the Nazarenes as Ebionite heretics than with any actual reality. Although the heretical characterization would become normative, the acknowledgement of the Nazarenes persisted.

The historical profile of the Nazarenes is strengthened by two external witnesses. One rabbinic text probably recognizes the Nazarenes as a distinct group, and the Kartir inscription suggests Nazarenes were among the Aramaic speaking group of Jesus' followers deported from the region of Antioch in the mid 3rd century ce. The synagogue curse against heretics may provide further evidence of their existence.

The larger portrait of the Nazarenes found in patristic writings is historically untenable. Critical examination of the literary history and the tradition history behind this representation points, however, to a consistent core. The core traits of the Nazarenes – Jewish followers of Jesus with a Hebraic textual tradition, a commitment to the Law, and a location in the vicinity of Antioch – are supported by converging lines of evidence.⁸¹ In light of this analysis, the most plausible conclusion is that the core of the patristic representation of the Nazarenes is undergirded by a historical group who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Consequently, the burden of proof may be placed upon those who deny the historical reality of this core representation of the Nazarenes.

⁸⁰ Another way to analyze the issue is to consider what it would take to falsify this portrait and to evaluate the consequences of such a position. This would require that Jerome has lied about the existence of at least three texts. If this were the case, he might have copied some from Origen's account of the Hebrew Gospel, but he would have invented the idea of a Jeremiah text (which then was not important for his interpretation), and he must have created false citations from an Isaiah commentary. He would run the risk of someone actually looking for one of these Hebrew texts at Caesarea, and he would have invoked the anger of Augustine over a fantasy. Epiphanius would need to explain to the presbyters from Beroea why they never knew of Nazarenes in their home town. Some creativity would then be required to explain why a rabbinic text and a Persian inscription also understand the Nazarenes as a distinct group of Jesus' followers. Such a series of explanations would not be impossible, but it seems more plausible to accept that a core characterization of a historical group has been embellished, collated, and confused in a variety of ways.

⁸¹ For example, differing traditions converge around Antioch. Jerome, who has spent time in and around Antioch, locates them nearby. Epiphanius, writing for elders from that region, confirms this report. Kartir employs the Nazarene title to speak of one group of deportees from Antioch.

CHAPTER 8

Ebionites

Ebionite is the title most used in patristic literature to describe those who seek to both follow Jesus and maintain their Jewishness. Despite this prominence, the description of the Ebionites is complicated by the intent of the writers to warn against heresy and by their creative use of source materials. As with the Nazarenes, it is necessary first to trace the literary history that undergirds this representation. The next step is to seek a tradition history of the materials used.¹ Only then can some critical judgement be made on the historical realities that may underlie this process of representation.

1. What's in a Name?

A glance at patristic descriptions of Ebionites quickly reveals that the term is used in a variety of ways. The name is drawn from the Hebrew *ebyon*, meaning *the poor*. This has led some to associate the movement with the Jerusalem church, noting that Paul's collection was intended for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul himself says the pillars (James, Cephas, and John) placed only one requirement upon his Gentile mission: "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do" (Gal. 2.10).

Luke used the description in his first beatitude: "Blessed you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Luke 6.20). The term is also used at Qumran, where members are described as the "congregation of the poor."² Leander Keck has argued

¹ There is sometimes a fine distinction between literary history and tradition history, but the difference is an important one. Tradition history has to do with the stages and forms through which a piece of material develops. Literary history has to do with texts and layers of text in which a piece of material is found. For example, a saying of Jesus that is held in common by the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, but only by them, is usually identified as a part of the Sayings Tradition (Q). The literary history of such a saying is quite late in the process, since it is not found in Paul or in the Gospel of Mark. But scholars are quite confident that the tradition history of some of these sayings places them very close to the historical Jesus. In a similar way, I argued in the previous chapter that the Nazarene material in Jerome, which has a rather later literary appearance, nonetheless suggests an early, foundational role in the history of the tradition. Such distinctions may play a key role in the evaluation of historical authenticity.

² The reference from 4QpPs37 3.10 is one of several examples. The suggestion by J. L.

against any of these early locations as a source for the Ebionites described in patristic materials.³ Various church fathers also know the name refers to poverty, but they typically create a pejorative reference to a poverty of virtue or knowledge.

Quite a number of the church fathers think a historical founder by the name of Ebion gave the movement its name. There is no historical evidence to support this, but there is an abundance of evidence for the patristic literary tendency to associate each heresy with the name of a founder.⁴

The most popular use of the term Ebionite is as a description for a general category of heresy. This broad classification could include all who seek to follow Jesus but do not abandon Jewish customs such as circumcision and food laws. In most cases their view of Jesus, especially concerning his birth and his divinity, is also suspect. This usage has its parallel in the term *gnostic*, which often refers to a very diverse range of groups who believe that salvation requires abandonment of the present evil world. The use of Ebionites in this manner allows all sorts of connections among named heresies, and this pattern of use makes it difficult to identify any one specific group.

But it is clear in other places that patristic writers are indeed talking about specific groups. For some there is geographical location, a delineated history, detailed description of doctrine, and even reference to and citation from their texts.

To make the issue even more difficult, it is clear that some writers migrate among the various uses of the term as they warn against the teachings of the Ebionites. Therefore, one key to understanding patristic commentary on the Ebionites is to carefully track the way in which different writers use the term and to consider the possibility of multiple meanings within the works of any particular writer.

As with the Nazarenes, the approach to the Ebionites is not based upon a chronology or upon a fixed sequence of commentators. The analysis begins instead with attention to the major strands in the literary representation of the Ebionites. The most significant of these is provided by Epiphanius.

Teicher, "The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish Christian Sect of Ebionites," *JJS* 2 (1951), 67–99, that Ebionites are responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls, has been rejected by most scholars.

³ Leander Keck, "The Poor among the Saints in the New Testament," *ZNW* 56 (1965), 100–129; "The Poor among the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran," *ZNW* 57 (1966), 54–78.

⁴ This is true of Tertullian, Pseudo-Tertullian, Epiphanius, the *Anacephalaiosis*, Jerome, Filaster, and of most later writers.

2. Epiphanius at the Crossroads

Epiphanius (315 to 402/403 ce) had much to say about Nazarenes, Ebionites, and a host of other groups.⁵ His central purpose was to list and to refute all heresies that threatened the emerging Christian orthodoxy. Epiphanius was not a historian but a heresiologist. Therefore, his portrait of the Ebionites is not only biased; it is also marked by a tendency to stereotype and to generalize. It is unlikely that Epiphanius had extensive personal contact with Ebionites, but from the strands of evidence before him he created a broad, overarching category of heresy.

Nonetheless, Epiphanius sometimes seems to have particular groups in mind. He was aware of four major traditions of Jewish followers of Jesus. The first of these was the Nazarenes, whom he treated, for the most part, as a distinct, definable sect.⁶ His description of the Ebionites is built upon three other lines of tradition known to Epiphanius: a patristic tradition, a collection of Jewish Christian texts, and strands of an Elkesaitic tradition.⁷

3. The Classic Patristic Tradition

For his work on the refutation of all heresies (*Panarion*, 374 ce), Epiphanius had access to a long line of patristic comment on the Ebionites. A survey of this material will make clear the way in which Epiphanius borrowed from this tradition and reshaped it in his warning against the heresy of the Ebionites.

⁵ Epiphanius attacks some 80 different groups.

⁶ See the discussion of Epiphanius and the Nazarenes in the prior chapter.

⁷ This reconstruction is posited by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 19–43. A similar pattern is developed by Gerard Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). Glen Alan Koch, *A Critical Investigation of Epiphanius' Knowledge of the Ebionites: A Translation and Critical Discussion of Panarion 30*, unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1976, concludes that Epiphanius “has composed *Panarion* 30 by combining various resources at hand” (p. 366). Koch thinks Epiphanius combined patristic materials, the Gospel of the Ebionites, materials with similarities to texts found in the Pseudo-Clementines, and some information about Elkesaites, perhaps from the *Book of Elxai* (pp. 359–73). Koch concludes that “Epiphanius’ knowledge of the Ebionites is largely literary” (p. 368) and “one does not get a clear historical picture of the Ebionites from Epiphanius” (p. 368).

3.1 Justin Martyr

In a writing dated about 160 ce Justin Martyr shows that the construction of Christian identity still involves a lively exchange between Jewish and Christian heritage. In a work entitled *Dialogue with Trypho*, various questions are posed concerning Christian identity. Trypho, who is Jewish, wants to know if Jews who convert to Christianity but continue to observe Jewish Law will be saved. Justin tells Trypho that they will be saved if: 1) they do not force Gentiles to observe Jewish practices; 2) they do not refuse to associate with Gentiles; 3) they remain faithful as Christians (*Dial.* 47.1).⁸

This exchange is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it would be difficult to explain why Justin would create such a dialogue if he is not addressing an issue of concern. It is plausible to think that there are still Jews who follow Jesus and that some Christians think about this phenomenon. Secondly, Justin's narrative presumes there are at least two categories of Jews who claim to follow Jesus. Those who meet the demands he cites will be saved. His description implies that there are Jewish followers of Jesus who do not meet these demands, and they will not be saved. The book of Acts describes similar behavior among followers of Jesus (11.1–2; 15.1), some of whom are Pharisees (15.5). Indeed, the description in Acts could be seen as the source for Justin's description. But this solution is too simple. Justin only implies that Jewish followers who demand circumcision of Gentiles and avoid their company are still around. His narrative does not focus on them, but on the conditions under which Jews can be true followers of Jesus. Since this part of the discussion is not an explicit polemic, it is plausible that Justin envisions, or even knows, such Jewish followers of Jesus.

Thus, Justin, in the middle of the 2nd century ce, implies there are Jews who seek to follow Jesus, and he places this religious phenomenon into two distinct categories. While he gives no names to these groups, Justin articulates an idea that will emerge at various places in the patristic writings.

⁸ For various discussions of this passage see James Carleton Paget, "Jewish Christianity," *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol 3, pp. 756–57; Adolf von Harnack, *Judentum und Judenchristentum in Justins Dialog mit Trypho* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), pp. 84–90; Harnack, *The History of Dogma*, vol. 1 (English translation: London: Williams and Norgate, 1894), vol. 1, pp. 296–98; Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 19–21; Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality. The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), pp. 138–39; Georg Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," in W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (English translation: London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 273–75.

3.2 Irenaeus

Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200 ce) provides an important connection to the early history of the church: as a boy he heard Polycarp preach, probably in Smyrna. He also provides an important link between the east and the west: he was likely from Smyrna, but served as bishop of Lyon.⁹ Ascending to the office of bishop because of the persecution and martyrdom at Lyon, Irenaeus thundered against heretics and demanded unity for the Christian church. Irenaeus seems to be the first of the patristic writers to mention the Ebionites by name. He does so in the context of warnings against heretics, primarily gnostics, in his *Adversus omnes Haereses*.

In *adv. haer.* 1.26.1 Irenaeus warns against the heresy spawned by Cerinthus. Cerinthus, says Irenaeus, taught that the world was not created by the one God, but by an inferior power. Cerinthus also held a different christology. He taught that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but “was the son of Mary and Joseph in the same way as all other men.”¹⁰ Jesus was more versed in righteousness, prudence, and wisdom than others. The figure of Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism and left him prior to his death. Jesus suffered and rose again, but the spiritual Christ was beyond suffering.

Irenaeus turns then to the Ebionites, comparing and contrasting them to Cerinthus (*adv. haer.* 1.26.2). Ebionites, says Irenaeus, believe that the world was made by God, and they hold a different christology than Cerinthus (and Carpocrates). An important textual issue arises in this comparison. Irenaeus says Ebionites are not similar (non similiter) to Cerinthus and Carpocrates in their view of Jesus. Hippolytus seems to be following Irenaeus, but he says they are similar. Was his text of Irenaeus different than the one that survived into modern times? Did he change the reading? Did he have a different textual tradition?

Perhaps the deciding factor is provided by Irenaeus himself. In a later description, Irenaeus says that Ebionites read Isaiah 7.14 as it is translated by the Jewish proselytes Theodotian the Ephesian and Aquila of Pontus: “Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bring forth a son.” Irenaeus then says that “The Ebionites, following these say that he is begotten of Joseph ...” (*adv. haer.* 3.21.1). Elsewhere Irenaeus criticizes the Ebionites for not accepting that Jesus was divine through the virgin birth (*adv. haer.* 4.33.4; 5.1.3).

From a critical standpoint, this contradiction leaves at least four options. One possibility is that the text of Irenaeus has come to us in corrupted form, and Hippolytus accurately reflects that Ebionites are like Cerinthus and Carpocrates in

⁹ For a brief description of Irenaeus, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross, 3rd edition ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 846–47.

¹⁰ For all patristic writings on the Ebionites, text and translation may be found in A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*. The texts from Irenaeus are found on pp. 103–106.

their christology. A second possibility is that Hippolytus has simply changed the text, perhaps in light of what he reads elsewhere in Irenaeus. The third possibility is that Irenaeus is referring to two different types of Ebionites. Finally, Irenaeus may be inconsistent, especially since the verdict of heresy is already clear.

Klijn and Reinink make the case for the reading of “not similar.”¹¹ It is important to note that Irenaeus in *adv. haer.* 1.26.2 is talking primarily about their view of God, which differs from Cerinthus and Carpocrates. Further, there is no mention of virgin birth or any other doctrine at this point, only that the Ebionite christology is “not similar.” When discussing the Ebionite christology, there are other ways in which they differ from Cerinthus, even if they do agree with him on Jesus’ birth. This difference may be put in another way when Irenaeus says the Ebionites prefer the Gospel of Matthew, while those who hold the views of Cerinthus and Carpocrates prefer the Gospel of Mark (*adv. haer.* 3.11.7).

If Ebionite christology is “not similar,” the differences are perhaps in the Cerinthian distinction of Jesus and Christ. If they are similar, they hold in common the natural birth of Jesus. However one decides this issue, there is little impact on the larger description. Having located the Ebionites in the genealogy of heresies, Irenaeus provides an important picture of their doctrine and practice:

1. They believe that God is the creator of the world
2. They believe Jesus is the son of Joseph and Mary
3. The use only the Gospel of Matthew
4. They repudiate Paul as an apostate from the Law
5. The expound the Hebrew prophets diligently
6. They practice circumcision and other Jewish customs
7. They adore Jerusalem as the house of God.

This literary representation of the Ebionites is foundational; it will provide the basis for an extensive line of patristic commentary.

3.3 Tertullian

Tertullian (c. 155–230 ce) offers a few points of new information or conjecture.¹² He is the first to understand Ebion as a historical founding figure. He strangely compares the doctrine of the Ebionites to the gnostic leader Valentinus (*de praescr.* 33.3–5) and to Marcion (*de praescr.* 33.11), who rejected the Old Testament as the work of an inferior god. Tertullian also argues that Ebion’s greatest critics arose in the first generation. The apostle John wrote against those such as Marcion who denied that Jesus came in the flesh (John 1.14; *de carne Chr.* 24) and against people like Ebion, who denied that Jesus was the son of God (*de praescr.* 33.11). In Galatians, Paul refutes those who reject the virgin

¹¹ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 19–20.

¹² See the discussion by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 21–22.

birth (Gal. 4.4; *de virg. vel.*) and confronts those who “observe and defend circumcision and the Law” (*de praescr.* 33.3–5). While it is unlikely that Tertullian thinks the apostles are speaking directly to Ebion, he insists that they have already dismissed his heretical ideas.

Beyond the description of Ebion as a historical figure and the rejection of his ideas by the apostles, Tertullian adds little new to the portrait provided by Irenaeus. For Tertullian, Ebionites are heretics who reject the virgin birth and keep the Law.

3.4 Hippolytus

Hippolytus (died c. 236) writes about the Ebionites in two passages (*Refut.* 7.34; 10.22). Hippolytus continues the tradition that Ebion is a historical figure. He takes up Irenaeus’ comparison of Ebionites with Cerinthus and Carpocrates, but he also alters it. Unlike Cerinthus, the Ebionites say the world was made by the one true God, but, says Hippolytus, Ebionites share a similar christology with Cerinthus and Carpocrates.

1. Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary
2. He excelled in righteousness, prudence, and understanding above all other people
3. Jesus was justified by his practice of the Law, and for this reason he was named as Christ
4. It was at his baptism that the figure of Christ came upon Jesus
5. The Christ figure left at the passion and did not suffer with Jesus.

Hippolytus’ dismissal of the Ebionites thus centers on two central concerns: “... they speak of Christ in a similar manner with Cerinthus. They live, however, in all aspects according to the Law of Moses, saying that they are thus justified” (*Refut.* 10.22).

Hippolytus will also say that Theodosius of Byzantine, who is usually associated with the Ebionites in heresy lists, is a disciple of both Ebion and Cerinthus.¹³ This makes it clear that Hippolytus has built his characterization of the Ebionites around two poles: the information he knows from Irenaeus and his association of Ebionites with Cerinthus and Carpocrates. If this association is dismissed, Hippolytus adds nothing new to the work of Irenaeus.

3.5 Origen (185–253/254 ce)

Origen’s description of the Ebionites employs numerous traits that can be found in or presumed from Irenaeus.¹⁴

¹³ See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 23, n.1.

¹⁴ See the discussion and texts in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 23–25; 125–34.

1. Ebionites are Jews who believe in Jesus
2. They reject the virgin birth (*Ep. ad. Tit.; hom. in Luc.* 17).
3. Ebionites live according to the Law (*Ep. ad Rom.* 3.11; *contra Cels.* 2.1; *in Matt.* 16.12)
4. They believe circumcision is obligatory (*Hom. in Gen.* 3.5)
5. They make a distinction between clean and unclean food (*in Matt.* 11.12)
6. They reject Paul (*Hom. in Jer.* 19.12; *contra Celsus.* 5.65)

But Origen also knows or deduces other characteristics.

7. The name Ebionite comes from the Hebrew term for *poor* (*de princ.* 4.3.8)
8. Ebionites quote Jesus as saying that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (*de princ.* 4.3.8; see Mt 10.5–6)
9. Ebionites celebrate Easter on the day of Jewish Passover, using unleavened bread. In doing so they claim to be imitating Christ (*in Matt. comm. ser.* 79)
10. There are two groups of Ebionites: one accepts the virgin birth and one rejects it (*contra Celsus.* 5.61, 66; *in Matt.* 16.12)
11. There are Jewish Christians within the church (*Hom. in Lev.* 10.2)
12. Ebionites prefer the obvious meaning of the scripture (*in Matt.* 11.12)

Thus, Origen has added significant detail to the typical patristic portrait. What is the source of this material? While the etymology of the name may be deduced from a knowledge of Hebrew, Origen also seems to be conversant with the Ebionite scriptural tradition, and he knows about specific practices and beliefs. Does Origen know the texts of the Ebionites? He mentions and cites from a “Gospel according to the Hebrews” (*in John* 2.12; *Hom. in Jer.* 15.4; *in Matt.* 15.14), but he never explicitly connects this text to the Ebionites. The description of Ebionites who accept the virgin birth and of Ebionites who are in the church suggests direct knowledge or specific reports.

3.6 Pseudo-Tertullian (c. 250–300 ce)

A writing entitled *Opposition to All Heresy*, falsely attributed to Tertullian, draws upon the standard patristic description. Here the relation between Cerinthus and the Ebionites is cast in a more creative light: Ebion is a historical figure who is the successor of Cerinthus (*adv. omn. haer.* 3), but he differs with him on the creation. This description is little more than a condensation of Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Significantly, Pseudo-Tertullian is the first to note the Ebionite use of Mt. 10.24: “And because it is written ‘No disciple is above (his) master, nor a servant above (his) lord,’ he brings to the fore likewise the Law, of course for the purpose of excluding the gospel and vindicating Judaism” (*adv. omn. haer.* 3).

3.7 Eusebius (c. 260–c. 340 ce)

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (*HE*), seeks to write a coherent account of the development of the early church. While this form differs from the heresiologies, it is not yet historiography in the critical sense. Eusebius is willing to create connections and continuity from scattered sources, and this is most evident in the chapter he devotes to the Ebionites (*HE* 3.27).¹⁵

Eusebius offers a portrait of the Ebionites based upon a creative merging of insights from Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen. Eusebius concludes from Irenaeus that there are two types of Ebionites. Since Irenaeus says Ebionites differ in christology from Cerinthus, Eusebius takes Irenaeus' entire description to refer to Ebionites who accept the virgin birth. Since Hippolytus says Ebionite christology is similar to that of Cerinthus, Eusebius takes Hippolytus' entire description to refer to Ebionites who reject the virgin birth.¹⁶ This kind of grouping creates some contradictions, but the result is a broad image of Ebionites that fits well into Eusebius' larger project. Using such patterns of collection and construction, Eusebius presents an extensive portrait of the Ebionites.

1. The term Ebionite means *poor*, and this poverty can be seen in their understanding and in their christology (so Origen)
2. Ebionites believe Christ was a man, born as the natural son of Mary, who was justified by his progress in virtue (so Hippolytus)
3. Ebionites obey the Law
4. They do so in imitation of Christ
5. There is a second group of Ebionites who believe in the virgin birth
6. This second group rejects the pre-existence of Christ (deduced from Origen?)
7. They use the Gospel according to the Hebrews (deduced from Origen?)
8. They keep the Sabbath as well as Sundays
9. They observe other Jewish laws and customs
10. Ebionites were already denounced in apostolic times.

It is clear that Eusebius negotiates this much of the description from Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen. Other characteristics, however, appear for the first time.

11. Relatives of Jesus lived in Nazareth and Kochaba (*HE* 1.7.14)
12. Ebionites found a home in Chooba (Kochaba? *Onomasticon* 301.32–34).

Eusebius seems to know a tradition that places the family of Jesus and the Ebionites in the same region, but he does not develop this. In distinction from other patristic writers, his heresiology is subsumed within his larger projection of the development of the church. Beyond this, however, Eusebius has created a composite portrait based largely upon the patristic tradition he knows.

¹⁵ See the discussion and texts in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 25–28; 136–50.

¹⁶ This is the analysis of Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 25–28.

3.8 Summation

The existence of the Ebionites is recognized by a sequence of patristic writers from Irenaeus to Eusebius. The sum of what they say about the Ebionites is expansive and sometimes contradictory. They tell us that Ebionites

1. Observe the Jewish Law
2. Reject the virgin birth
3. Reject Paul
4. Expound the prophets
5. Use only the Gospel of Matthew
6. Adore Jerusalem
7. See God as creator of the world
8. Say Jesus excelled in righteousness
9. Say Jesus was justified by his observance of the Law
10. Say Jesus became Christ at his baptism
11. Say Jesus suffered, but Christ did not
12. Take their name from the Hebrew for *poor*
13. Emphasize that Jesus said he was sent only to Israel
14. Celebrate Easter on Passover
15. Divide into two groups over the virgin birth
16. Prefer the obvious meaning of scripture
17. Ebionites who accept Jesus' virgin birth reject his pre-existence
18. Ebionites keep Sabbath and Sunday
19. They found a home in Chooba (Kochaba?)
20. They claim to imitate Christ as in Mt. 10.24.

Some also mention a founder. They say that Ebion

1. Was a historical figure
2. Shared the christology of Cerinthus
3. Did not share the christology of Cerinthus
4. Was the successor of Cerinthus.
5. Was rejected in the time of the apostles

Attention to the rate of repetition creates a sharper image. The following chart shows the distribution of these characteristics.

Characteristic Irenaeus Tertullian Hippolytus Ps. Tertullian Origen Eusebius

Ebionites

1.	X	X		X	X
2.	X	X	X	X	X
3.	X			X	
4.	X				
5.	X				
6.	X				
7.	X				
8.			X		

	Irenaeus	Tertullian	Hippolytus	Ps. Tertullian	Origen	Eusebius
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Ebionites

9.		X				
10.		X				
11.		X				
12.			X	X		
13.			X			
14.			X			
15.			X	X		
16.			X			
17.					X	
18.					X	
19.					X	
20.				X	X	

Ebion

1.	X	X	
2.	X		
3.		X	
4.			X
5.	X		X

This chart demonstrates both the coherence and the diversity involved in the patristic portrait of the Ebionites. Several observations can be sustained by this overview. First, an important sequence of patristic writers testifies to the existence of Ebionite followers of Jesus. Secondly, Ebionites are heretics in the view of all of these writers, and this verdict is determinative for how they portray the Ebionites. Thirdly, the patristic descriptions cohere around a few traits and presumptions about the Ebionites: they are Jewish followers of Jesus who observe the Law, some of them reject the virgin birth, and they can be presumed to oppose Paul. Fourthly, this coherent center is filled out in diverse and contradictory ways by the patristic writers. They make logical assumptions and offer various descriptions of Ebionite beliefs, their practices, and their origins. Finally, there are clear lines of dependence among the patristic descriptions of the Ebionites.

4. Epiphanius and the Patristic Tradition

Epiphanius had access to the classic patristic portrait, and he used it extensively in his own description of the Ebionites. In various sections of his *Panarion: Refutation of All Heresies* Epiphanius takes up the characteristics described by other patristic writers, particularly Irenaeus, Pseudo-Tertullian, and

Eusebius.¹⁷ Epiphanius is more than a copyist, however, for he seeks to sketch lines of continuity that explain the origins of the movement and its relation to other heresies. More importantly, Epiphanius seeks a history of development that clarifies the seeming contradictions within his description of the Ebionites.

Epiphanius first connects the Ebionites to the Nazoreans.¹⁸ He distinguishes Nazoreans from Ebionites in *ancoratus* 13.3.¹⁹ He thinks that Ebion is the successor of the Nazoreans in *Pan.* 30.1.1. In *Pan.* 19.4.1 Epiphanius says that the Nazarenes come after the Ebionites and that both groups were joined and influenced by Elxai. It is clear that Epiphanius does not know the origins of Ebion or Ebionites, but that he is eager to locate Ebionites in the genealogy of heresies. It is also clear that Ebionites represent for Epiphanius an overarching paradigm of heresy:

Ebion from whom the Ebionites originated, is a successor of these and held the same conviction as these – a many-shaped monster and, so to say, resembling the serpent-like figure of the legendary hydra with its many heads – and he stood up against life. Though belonging to the same school as these, he proclaimed and learned yet other things than they did. For like somebody can compose an ornament from different precious stones and a garment from different cloths and can adorn himself in a striking way, so contrariwise he borrowed from each heresy the whole, horrible, pernicious and disgusting preaching, monstrous and untrustworthy, full of jealousy, and he represented them all. For from the Samaritans he took the monstruosity, from the Jews their name, from the Ossaeans, Nazoreans and Nazireans their ideas, from the Cerinthians their appearance, from the Carpocratians their viciousness and from the Christians he only wishes to have their name, certainly not the works, insight, knowledge and religious ideas of the Gospels and the Apostles. Though he had contact with everyone, so to speak, he came to nothing ...²⁰

Having thus introduced Ebionites, Epiphanius uses the *Panarion* to describe their history, their beliefs, and their practices.

1. Ebion, the founder, is a historical figure
2. Ebion originated from the Nazarenes and with them
3. The Ebionites originated at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (30.2.7–9)
4. While Christians fled to Pella (so Eusebius), Ebion fled to Kochoba, where his evil doctrine originates (30.2.8)
5. Ebionites and Nazarenes share a common heritage. They both originate from Christians who fled to Pella, and the Ebionites and Nazarenes influence each other (30.2.9)

¹⁷ See the discussion and texts in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 28–38; 154–96.

¹⁸ He seems to be the only patristic writer to do so explicitly.

¹⁹ See also *Anacephalaiosis* 2.30.1.

²⁰ *Pan.* 30.1.1–5.

6. Ebionites are scattered across a wide geographical area: Nabatea, Paneas, Moabitis, Kochoba, Adraa, and perhaps in the Transjordan. They spread to Asia, Rome, and Cyprus
7. Ebion believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph (30.2.2)
8. Ebionites accepted Ebion's doctrine on Jewish practices such as circumcision and the Sabbath
9. Ebionites accepted Elxai's ideas about Christ (19.5.4).

Much of what Epiphanius says about the Ebionites expands ideas found in earlier patristic writings. He repeats the standard description: Ebionites observe the Law and reject the virgin birth. Epiphanius believes (with Tertullian and Pseudo-Tertullian) that Ebion is a historical figure. He then fills out the legend of Ebion and describes connections to various other heresies. Most significantly, Epiphanius takes the Christian flight to Pella narrated in Eusebius and makes it the starting point for both Ebionites and Nazarenes. He locates the Ebionites in Kochaba, apparently in agreement with Eusebius. To this he adds a wide-ranging geographical sketch of Ebionite influence. Having filled out the tradition of Ebion and Kochaba, Epiphanius also invokes the influence of Elxai.

Epiphanius' treatment of the Ebionites reveals the larger purpose of the *Panarion*: to show that all of the sects share an essential depravity and are interconnected components of the great evil that threatens Christianity. From the few pieces of information he has inherited from patristic writings, Epiphanius sketches an overarching account of the Ebionite heresy. But this is only one strand of the tradition available to Epiphanius.

5. Jewish Christian Sources Known to Epiphanius

Epiphanius has access not only to the patristic traditions about the Ebionites; he also knows of various texts that he presumes to be Jewish Christian and that he associates with Ebionites. These texts provide the second ideological stream that flows through Epiphanius' description of the Ebionites.

5.1 An Ebionite Gospel

Epiphanius knows of an Ebionite version of the Gospel of Matthew.²¹

But they also accept the Gospel according to Matthew. For they too use only this like the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus. They call it "according to the Hebrews," which name is correct since Matthew is the only one in the New Testament who issued the Gospel and the proclamation in Hebrew and with Hebrew letters.²²

²¹ See the discussion in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 30–31.

²² *Pan.* 30.3.7.

Epiphanius says that the Ebionite gospel is “not complete, but falsified and distorted.”²³ He then cites various passages from this gospel. Particular attention is given to the calling of the disciples and to their role, with special focus given to Matthew. Here Jesus speaks in the first person:

When I went by the sea of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot and you Matthew, who was sitting at the custom-house; I called you and you followed me. I wish you to be twelve apostles for a testimony to Israel.²⁴

The image of the Ebionites in this material differs from the patristic characterization.

1. The Ebionite gospel says that John the Baptist ate honey cakes rather than locusts (*Pan.* 30.14.4)
2. The Ebionite gospel says that a voice spoke to Jesus at his baptism, saying, “This day I have generated you.” (*Pan.* 30.13.7)
3. The Ebionite gospel omits the genealogy of Jesus and begins with the baptism by John (*Pan.* 30.13.6; 30.14.3)
4. Jesus was born in a natural way (*Pan.* 30.14.4)
5. Christ came into Jesus in the form of a dove (*Pan.* 30.14.4).
6. The Ebionite gospel suggests that Jesus avoided meat: “I did not desire earnestly to eat meat with you this Passover” (*Pan.* 30.22.4).

From the Ebionite gospel Epiphanius concludes that Ebionites deny the virgin birth, that they believe Jesus became Christ at his baptism, and that they believe Jesus, following John, was a vegetarian. Epiphanius finds in the Ebionite gospel further confirmation of his basic premise: “Therefore taking many shapes Ebion shows himself, as I said, full of deceit, as if he were being a monster, as has been made clear by me above” (*Pan.* 30.14.6).

5.2 *The Periodoi Petrou*

Epiphanius also believes a work known as the *Periodoi Petrou* (Journeys of Peter) is an Ebionite text.

They also use some other books, the so-called *Periodoi* of Peter which were written by Clement, but they corrupted the contents, leaving not much that is true, since Clement himself refutes them in everything in the circular letters which he wrote and which are read in the holy churches, showing that his belief and his preaching bear a character different from what had been corrupted by those who wrote in his name in the *Periodoi*.²⁵

Epiphanius draws various ideas from this text.²⁶

²³ *Pan.* 30.13.2.

²⁴ *Pan.* 30.13.3.

²⁵ *Pan.* 30.15.1–2.

²⁶ *Pan.* 30.15.1–4; 30.16.1–5.

7. Ebionites reject Clement's teaching on virginity
8. They detest the prophets
9. They carry out daily ablutions, claiming to imitate Peter
10. They abstain from meat, claiming to imitate Peter
11. They avoid the "mixing of bodies" and its consequences
12. They accept baptism in addition to daily ablutions
13. They celebrate the eucharist once a year with unleavened bread and water
14. They hold a dualism of two powers (Christ and the devil) established by God
15. Jesus was born in the same way as all humans
16. Jesus was elected as Son of God when the dove descended upon him
17. Christ was created as one of the archangels (or higher) and rules over them
18. Jesus came to abolish sacrifices.

5.3 *The Anabathmoi Jakabou*

Epiphanius understands the *Anabathmoi Jakabou* (Ascents of James) to be an Ebionite text.²⁷ From this work he draws various conclusions about the Ebionites.

19. James preached against the temple, against sacrifices, against fire on the altar (*Pan.* 30.16.7)
20. Ebionites follow false apostles (*Pan.* 30.16.8)
21. They reject Paul as a Greek convert to Judaism (*Pan.* 30.16.8–9)
22. They argue that Paul converted to Judaism and had himself circumcised in order to marry the daughter of a priest (*Pan.* 30.16.8–9)
23. They say that when Paul was not allowed to marry her, he "became angry and wrote against circumcision, the Sabbath and legislation" (*Pan.* 30.16.9).

The texts identified by Epiphanius as *Periodoi Petrou* and *Anabathmoi Jakobou* may share in the literary heritage of the Pseudo-Clementine material. This line of tradition may or may not be Jewish Christian, but Epiphanius clearly understands it that way.²⁸

²⁷ *Pan.* 30.16.7–9. The *Anabathmoi Jakabou* is likely found in the Pseudo-Clementine materials as *Recognitions* 1.27(or 33)–71. Many scholars believe this material became a part of the foundational source document (*Grundschrift*) from which the Pseudo-Clementines are constructed. The most accepted theory is that the *Grundschrift* was composed of various sources, two of which may be identified. *Recognitions* 1.27(or 33)–71 is generally believed to contain the *Ascents of James*. The *Kerygmata Petrou* is mentioned in the introductory material to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, and many scholars think some form of *Kerygmata Petrou* is contained within the *Homilies*. For discussion on this controversial area of reconstruction, see F. Stanley Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," *The Second Century* 2 (1982), 1–33, 63–96. See also the clear analysis by Graham Stanton, "Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), pp. 305–24.

²⁸ Quite apart from the content of this material, it is closely linked to the patronage of Peter and of James. Epiphanius believes that Clement's version of this material has been corrupted.

5.4 Others Sources

Epiphanius points to other traditions that he believes are used by, or invented by, the Ebionites. In addition to works connected to Matthew (Ebionite gospel), to Peter (*Periodoi Petrou*), and to James (*Anabathmoi*), Ebionites “also mention other Acts of the Apostles in which is much that is full of impiety ...” (*Pan.* 30.16.6). Epiphanius believes the Ebionites make a special claim on apostolic tradition:

They accept the names of the apostles hypocritically, trying to persuade those who have been deceived by them and they invent books in their names as if these were from the hands of James, Matthew and other disciples. To these names they also add the name of John the apostle in order that their foolishness may come to light on all sides. (*Pan.* 30.23.1–2)

5.5 Epiphanius and the Jewish Christian Sources

Epiphanius thus invokes a number of texts that he understands to be Jewish Christian works. He then associates these with Ebionite thought and practice. Although some of these connections are simply reported, others seem to be based on Epiphanius’ knowledge of the texts. While this textual tradition is used to support Epiphanius’ major premise – Ebionites are a many-headed heresy – it also stands in tension with the classic patristic representation of Ebionites. How is Epiphanius to explain this contradiction?

6. The Elkesaites Bridge

Epiphanius finds himself caught in the crosscurrent of two very different descriptions of the Ebionites – one from the patristic sources and one from sources he believes to be Jewish Christian. For Epiphanius, the amorphous figure of Elxai provides the thread that links these two traditions. Epiphanius believes the Ebionites emerged under Ebion, but they took a new direction under the influence of Elxai. After describing a healing ritual practiced by Elxai, Epiphanius says:

I have already made it clear before that Ebion did not know anything about it, but that when in the course of time his followers joined Elxai, they received from Ebion circumcision, the Sabbath and the moral code, but from Elxai the imagination (phantasia), so that they suppose that Christ is a figure similar to men, invisible to men ...²⁹

Epiphanius takes this transition as the cue for attaching the christology of Elxai to the Ebionites.

²⁹ *Pan.* 30.17.5–6.

At first this Ebion asserted, as I said, that Christ was from the seed of a man, Joseph. In the course of time and up to the present day his followers started to think differently about Christ, since they directed their attention to chaotic and impossible things. I believe they soon got the same illusory ideas concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit as Elxaios, after the pseudo-prophet had joined them ...³⁰

Epiphanius has accepted the Ebion legend, and he knows or has created a connection to the figure of Elxai. In the process of developing the classical patristic portrait of the Ebionites, Epiphanius says that their practice was shaped by Ebion, but their christology was shaped by Elxai (*Pan.* 19.5.4). In the process of analyzing Jewish Christian texts, Epiphanius also says that Ebionites are influenced by Elxai and his book(s) (*Pan.* 30.17.1–8; 53.1.3).

Some of the Elkesaite connection seems to come from within the first two streams of tradition. This is especially true of the Jewish Christian texts, which speak of the descent of the Christ figure on Jesus, rejection of parts of the Hebrew Bible, abolition of sacrifices, and baptismal practices. Other elements seem drawn from a different stream of tradition.

Does Epiphanius have access to an Elkesaite tradition, or does he simply invoke the name of Elxai to compound the heresies of the Ebionites? A part of the material suggests there is some content behind Epiphanius' characterization.³¹ The report of Elxai's teaching is found in *Pan.* 19.1.4 through 19.2.1; in 19.3.1 through 19.4.3; and in 19.6. Further information emerges when Epiphanius discusses the christology of the Ebionites (*Pan* 30.3.1–6). Within his reconstruction of Elkesaite influence three types of material may be seen. First, Epiphanius seems to have a report on Elkesaite doctrine. The content and argumentation drawn from this report are typically eclectic and contradictory. Secondly, Epiphanius makes specific reference to a book of revelation connected with Elxai.³² Thirdly, Epiphanius seems to transfer the location (Transjordan) and the doctrine of the Sampsean sect onto the Elkesaites. From these three sources (the report of teaching, the book of revelation, the Sampseans), Epiphanius creates an Elkesaite history, doctrine, and location. This Elkesaite

³⁰ *Pan.* 30.3.1–2.

³¹ See the analysis by Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 92–142.

³² Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 127–29, says that Epiphanius viewed the Elxai book as a Jewish rather than a Christian heresy. Luttikhuizen argues that three specific features reflect Epiphanius' knowledge of Elxai's book or of a collection of materials taken from it. 1) One of Epiphanius' descriptions of the two giant figures has a parallel in Hippolytus and is likely drawn from a common source – Elxai's book of revelation. 2) The second of two groups of witnesses in *Pan.* 19.1.6 also has a parallel in Hippolytus and is likely drawn from Elxai's book. 3) Epiphanius says that the secret formula of *Pan.* 19.4.3 is found in the book of Elxai. Luttikhuizen, pp. 124–25, finds evidence for an Aramaic original and a Greek version. He also thinks the book itself was called *Elxai*.

anthology will serve, alongside the classical patristic description and Jewish Christian texts, as the third stream of tradition in Epiphanius' description of the Ebionites.

Because Epiphanius has already associated Elxai with the Ebionites, this additional material serves his cause. Epiphanius is now able to create a new history of the Ebionites that separates them from the apostles and ties them into the larger stream of heretical traditions. This new history also explains the wide divergence in Ebionite positions.

Epiphanius denies the Ebionite claim that they originate in the apostolic community in Jerusalem. He does this by belittling their name (*the poor*) and by pointing to Ebion as their founder.

But this double-eyed serpent, poor of understanding, falsifies everywhere. For Ebion translated from the Hebrew into Greek means "poor." For he is really poor in understanding, in hope and in works who believes that Christ is a mere man, and acquired in this way with a poor faith this hope concerning him. But they themselves are obviously proud of themselves, saying that they are poor because, they say, they sold their belongings in the time of the apostles and laid the money at the feet of the apostles and because they looked for poverty and the abolition of worldly goods. And, therefore, they say, everyone calls us poor ones. Also in this respect they do not preach the truth; because he was poor by nature, he was called Ebion. According to the prophecy, as I believe, this poor and needy man was given his name by his father and mother. How many other horrible and falsified matters full of wickedness are asserted by them?³³

Drawing upon various streams of tradition, Epiphanius thus creates a composite image of the Elkesaites. He then uses this composite image to expand and realign the characterization of the Ebionites.

24. Some Ebionites say that Christ is also Adam (*Pan.* 30.3.2–3; 53.1.8)
25. Other Ebionites say that Christ is a spirit created before all things and above all things (*Pan.* 30.3.4; see also Pseudo-Clementines *Rec.* 1.53; 2.42.5; *Hom.* 3.20.3)
26. Some say that Jesus was a man on whom the Christ figure descended (*Pan.* 30.3.6; 30.13.7; 30.14.4; 30.16.3; 30.18.5)
27. Some say Jesus was created as one of the archangels and rules over all of creation (*Pan.* 30.16.4; see also see also in the Pseudo-Clementines *Rec.* 1.55; 2.42.5)
28. Some say there are two aeons, one ruled by Christ and one by the devil (*Pan.* 30.16.2; see also in the Pseudo-Clementines *Rec.* 1.24.5; *Hom.* 20.2.2)
29. Some say Christ is the True Prophet (*Pan.* 30.18.5–6; see also in the Pseudo-Clementines *Rec.* 1.37, 39, 40, 45; *Hom.* 1.19; 3.19–21; 3.53.3)
30. Some describe the immense size of Jesus (*Pan.* 30.17.6–7; used of Elkesaites in *Pan.* 53.9)
31. Some reject sacrifices (from the Gospel of the Ebionites in *Pan.* 30.16.5; see *Hom.* 3.26.3; 3.56.4; see also in the Pseudo-Clementines *Rec.* 1.37, 39, 48, 54, 64)
32. They take an oath that invokes salt, water, earth, bread, heaven, air and wind (*Pan.* 19.1.6; see 30.17.4; see also in the Pseudo-Clementines *Hom.*, *Diamart.* 2.1; 4.1)

³³ *Pan.* 30.17.1–4.

33. They practice some form of baptism (*Pan.* 30.16.1; see *Hom.* 1.39)
34. They reject the prophets (*Pan.* 30.18.4)
35. They reject parts of the Pentateuch as false additions or as superseded by the gospel (*Pan.* 30.18.7; see Pseudo-Clementines *Hom.* 2.41.1–3; 2.50; 2.51.2; 3.50.1; 3.53.3)
36. Their young men are forced to marry (*Pan.* 30.18.2; see Pseudo-Clementines *Hom.* 1.39)
37. They permit remarriage (*Pan.* 30.18.3)
38. Ebionites call their places of worship synagogues and recognize the offices of elder and of leaders of the synagogue (*Pan.* 30.18.2)

7. A Summation of Epiphanius

Epiphanius seems to draw upon three distinct lines of tradition for his expansive portrait of the Ebionites. First, he knows the core of the patristic tradition, which he expands into a wide-ranging, interconnected heresy around the name of Ebion. Secondly, Epiphanius knows of various texts that he understands to be Jewish Christian and to represent the thought and practice of the Ebionites. Epiphanius takes the purported influence of Elxai to be a transitional moment that connects and clarifies the conflicting images presented by the two streams of tradition. Thirdly, because he believes Elxai to be the key, Epiphanius creates a composite image of Elkesaite tradition and links it to the Ebionites.³⁴ Only in this way can he create a framework for the exotic and eclectic catalogue of materials that he associates with the Ebionites.³⁵ The result is not a history of the Ebionites, nor even a coherent representation. The representation of the Ebionites, like that of the gnostics, is a broad swamp into which flow all sorts of poisons and pollutions and heresies.

8. The Tradition after Epiphanius

The patristic tradition that comes after Epiphanius is strongly influenced by his portrait of the Ebionites. Nonetheless, various patterns of expansion and development continue.

³⁴ Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, p. 131, suggests that all three streams of tradition may be present in the christological discussion in *Pan.* 30.3.1–6. In 30.3.1 Epiphanius is drawing upon the classic patristic tradition of Ebionites. *Pan.* 30.4–5 is drawing from the *Periodoi Petrou*, one of the sources seen as Ebionite by Epiphanius. *Pan.* 30.3.2 and 30.3.6 seem to reflect the composite influence of Sampsean, Cerinthian, and Elkesaite materials.

³⁵ While the framework may be coherent, the content is confused. The discontinuity and contradiction caused by such conflation does not hinder the purposes of Epiphanius. For Epiphanius, such conflict is indicative of the confused heresy of the Ebionites.

8.1 *Anacephalaiosis*

The work entitled *Anacephalaiosis* (Recapitulation) presents itself as a work of Epiphanius. Most scholars think this text originates around 428 ce, after the death of Epiphanius, as an attempt to summarize his work. Both repetition and development can be observed.

Anacephalaiosis categorizes the Sampsaeans and the Elkesaites by saying that “in everything they are similar to the Ebionites” (53.1–2). The connection is also made to Elxai, who is described here as a false prophet (53.1–2). The Elxai story is extended into the following generations. Two women descendants of Elxai (Marthana and Marthous) are said to be living in the area of the Dead Sea, where they are venerated as healers (53.1.1–9). The natural birth of Christ is affirmed (51.2.3; 51.6.7), and the later appearance of the Christ is implied (51.10.4). The influence of Elxai’s book is noted: “That book was also in use by the Ossaeans, Ebionites, and Nazoreans as I have already often said” (53.1.3). Various Elkesaite doctrines are enunciated, with the implication that these are shared by Ebionites:

They do not accept the prophets or apostles, and everything is presented by them in a deceitful way. Water, however, is honoured by them and they consider it to be God, saying, I believe that from water life was derived. They confess Christ in name, believing that he was created and that he appears time and again. He was formed for the first time in Adam and he puts off the body of Adam and assumes it again whenever he wished. He is called Christ and the Holy Spirit, who is a female being, is his sister. Both of them, Christ and the Holy Spirit, were 96 miles in height and their breadth was 24 miles, and much other silly prattle (53.1.7–9).

Like Epiphanius, the writer of *Anacephalaiosis* collapses various groups and beliefs into a single category of heresy. In a most creative twist, *Anacephalaiosis* then merges two historical figures – John the Baptist and John the evangelist – to argue for an apostolic orthodoxy.

Therefore, when the blessed John came and found that the people were preoccupied with the coming of the Christ from on high and while the Ebionites erred because of the earthly genealogy of Christ … , when he found, then, the Cerinthians and Merinthians saying that he was a mere man born of sexual intercourse, and the Nazoreans and many other heresies, when he came, then, as the last one (for he was the fourth to write a gospel), some began to invite him to speak to erring ones … and to say to them, he being the last one to come and seeing some people had turned to rough paths and had said farewell to the straight and true path: “Whither do you go? Whither do you proceed, who are proceeding on the rough and scandalous way which leads to the pit? Turn back.” (69.2.3).

The connections between *Anacephalaiosis* and the writings of Epiphanius are obvious. Both create a broad stereotype of the Ebionite heresy in order to warn against such dangers. The basic portrait of Ebionites in Epiphanius is confirmed, but it is also extended. Thus, *Anacephalaiosis* echoes the work of Epiphanius, both in its purpose and its message.

8.2 Jerome and the Ebionites

Jerome offers an extensive treatment of the Nazareans with specific references to their location, beliefs, and texts. In contrast, his portrait of the Ebionites is vague and stereotypical. His treatment of the Nazarenes is rather neutral, but he labels the Ebionites as dangerous heretics. In various works, Jerome points to characteristics of the Ebionites.

1. They are related to various other heresies (*de perp. virg.* 17; *adv. Luc.* 23; *in Tit.* 3.10–11)
2. Ebion was a historical figure who lived at the time of John (*adv. Luc.*; *Matt. Prol.*)
3. Ebion is a successor of Cerinthus (*adv. Luc.*)
4. Ebion and Cerinthus are typical representatives of those who confuse the Law and the Gospel (*ep. 112.13*).
5. Ebion did not believe that Jesus existed before Mary (*de vir. ill.* 9)
6. Ebionites are half-Jews (*in Gal.* 3.13–14)
7. They practice circumcision (*in Ezek.* 44.6; *in Gal.* 5.3)
8. They live according to the Law (*in Is.* 1.12)
9. They practice Jewish ceremonies (*in Is.* 1.13)
10. Ebionites look forward to the millennium (*in Is.* 66.20)
11. They reject Paul (*in Matt.* 12.2)
12. Ebionites show poverty of spirit (*in Is.* 1.3; 66.20)
13. Ebion is associated with Photinus (*in Gal.* 1.1; 1.11; *de vir. ill.* 107)
14. Theodotian and Symmachus are understood by some to be Ebionites (*de vir. ill.* 54)
15. Ebion made his own translation of parts of the Old Testament (*in Gal.* 3.13–14)
16. Ebion practiced baptism (*adv. Luc.* 26)
17. Ebion was cursed by the church fathers
18. Ebionites, like Nazarenes, use a Hebrew version of Matthew (*in Matt.* 12.13)
19. There are Ebionites who claim to be Christians (*ep. 112.13*).

Jerome's treatment of the Ebionites stands in stark contrast to his portrait of the Nazarenes. Most traits of his generic description of the Ebionite heresy can be found in or presumed from earlier writers. Distinct features are found only in his mention of the millennium, in the connection to Photinus, and, most significantly, in the translation tradition. Theodotian and Symmachus are converted Jews who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, and Jerome notes that some think they are Ebionites. Jerome further suggests that Ebion translated parts of the Old Testament. Since Jerome is in the process of translating the Hebrew Bible, it may be no accident that he has labeled his competition as heretics.³⁶ Apart from these exceptions, his portrait of the Ebionites repeats, in purpose and content, that of Epiphanius and other patristic writers.

³⁶ Jerome also warns against Aquila, “the proselyte and controversial translator, who has tried to translate not words only, but also their etymologies” (*ep. 57.11*). He criticizes the translation of Daniel in the Septuagint (*in Dan. prol.*).

8.3 Others

Various other patristic writers describe the Ebionites, but little new is added to their portrait. Filaster (383/391 ce), in a work entitled *Diverse Heretical Books*, says that Ebion was a disciple of Cerinthus. He notes that Ebionites do not believe that the son is co-eternal with the Father, but that Jesus, as a prophet, can claim to enjoy God's favor (*div. her. liber* 37).

Augustine repeats similar information in his treatise against heresy (c. 428). He says that Ebionites believe Christ was a man, they lived according to the Law, they were connected to Sampsaeans and Elkesaites, and that Elkesaites, under stress, were allowed to deny their faith (*adv. Haer.* 10).

Theodoret (c. 447) is also dependent on earlier writers. He says that Ebionites believe the Unborn was the creator of the world. Jesus, the son of Mary, surpassed all other humans in his virtue. Symmachus is named among the Ebionites. Ebionites are said to use the Gospel of the Hebrews. Theodoret describes two groups of Ebionites on the basis of their view of the virgin birth. Those who deny the virgin birth use the Gospel of the Hebrews; those who accept it use the Gospel of Matthew. The various traits described by Theodoret can be found in the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius or in some collation of their descriptions.³⁷

Timothy (c. 600) shows a similar dependence. His portrait draws primarily from the works of Eusebius and Epiphanius.³⁸

The portrait becomes more vague and stereotypical in later writings. Ebionites are remembered as heretics who deny the virgin birth and uphold the Law, and later generations are warned against their heresy.³⁹

9. Conclusion

The patristic description of the Ebionites is extensive, but it is also vague, stereotypical, and contradictory. Most importantly, the description of the Ebionites is controlled by the patristic agenda against heresy and by the patristic tendency to see diverse groups as expressions of one type of heresy. Does this literary representation connect to any historical group that sought to both follow Jesus and to maintain Jewishness?

³⁷ So Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 41–42. The texts are found on pp. 247–51.

³⁸ See the discussion by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 42. The texts are found on pp. 257–59.

³⁹ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 43, note an extensive line of later references.

9.1 Literary History

Patristic representation of the Ebionites is based on a literary history that begins as early as Justin Martyr (160 ce). This process extends through Augustine (428 ce), though echoes can be heard into the tenth century.⁴⁰ As the synoptic chart given above demonstrates, this portrait grows through repetition and development. The fullest accretion is reached in Epiphanius, who names some 37 characteristics. Following Epiphanius, a process of condensing and generalizing reduces the list to a stereotype.

9.2 Tradition History

Within this vast literary history a few lines of tradition can be defined. First, all patristic writers consistently treat the Ebionites as heretics. The one exception is a single paragraph from Jerome, who asks

What shall I say of the Ebionites who claim to be Christians? Until now a heresy is found in all parts of the East where Jews have their synagogues; it is called “of the Minaeans” and cursed by the Pharisees up to now. Usually they are called Nazoreans. They believe in Christ, the Son of God born of Mary the virgin, and they say about him that he suffered and rose again under Pontius Pilate, in whom also we believe, but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians. (*ep. 112.13*).

Jerome likely recognizes two groups of Jewish followers of Jesus. He associates Nazarenes with Ebionites, but he treats Nazarenes in a balanced way and makes extensive use of their texts.⁴¹ Otherwise Jerome confirms the larger patristic tradition that Ebionites are heretics.

A second line of the tradition history is the creation of an overarching category that includes all Jewish Christian heresies. Klijn and Reinink note that “Epiphanius starts from the mistaken assumption that everything Jewish-Christian must be called Ebionite and must have originated in the same group.”⁴² The hermeneutical impact of this assumption cannot be overestimated. The presumption of an all-inclusive category of heresy that shares a common origin erases the distinction between various groups, and it defaces the historical profile of every group of Jewish followers of Jesus.

A third tradition is found in the concept that all heresies take the profile of their founders. This presumption generates a growing legacy around figures such as Cerinthus, Ebion, and Elxai. On the basis of these personality profiles, various doctrines and texts and practices are described. When the second tradition (common origin) and third tradition (named founders) are linked, numerous

⁴⁰ See the *Nestorian History*, cited by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 271.

⁴¹ See the previous chapter.

⁴² Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 43.

connections are created between these leaders, and various texts are believed to be held in common.

A fourth line of tradition may be seen in traits that point to specific groups of Jewish followers of Jesus. This may present itself in two ways. First, certain traits are seen as true of all groups: they claim to follow Jesus, they observe the Law, and most hold suspicious views about the identity of Jesus. If such traits are attributed to Ebionites in general, then it is likely they are true of some specific groups. Secondly, a more helpful pointer may be found in traits that seem to characterize distinct groups of Jewish followers of Jesus. Chief indicators might be specific scriptural references such as Mt. 10.24–25 (the disciple should be like the teacher) and Mt. 10.5–6 (Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel) that evoke a patristic response. The patristic references to other gospels and texts used by Ebionites may also point to specific historical groups. Further pointers may be found in the mention of specific geographical locations.

9.3 Historical Plausibility

Despite the patristic use of the term Ebionites to describe an overarching, interconnected category of heresy, a few hints of historical plausibility remain. First, the extensive patristic edifice constructed against Ebionites suggests that they did exist, that they exhibited a diversity of forms in a variety of places, and that they were perceived as a formidable threat to the emerging orthodoxy.

Secondly, a type of multiple attestation is suggested by the geographical location of some who describe Ebionites. Origen, who writes from Egypt, offers a rather distinct description of the Ebionites. His work differs in significant ways from the description by Irenaeus, who writes from Rome. Epiphanius, who was a native of Syria and spent time in Judea, writes from the island of Cyprus. He knows the patristic accounts, but he also reflects specific interest in Transjordan sources.⁴³

The patristic debate with the Ebionites suggests a third line of historical plausibility. Quite a number of patristic commentators note that Ebionites claim to imitate Jesus. Several writers⁴⁴ tie this claim specifically to Mt. 10.24–25: “A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master. It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.” Since different writers connect this to different Ebionite practices,⁴⁵ multiple attestation is offered from differing perspectives. The criteria of dissimilarity⁴⁶ and of embar-

⁴³ This geographical diversity is noted by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 43.

⁴⁴ Pseudo-Tertullian (*adv. omn. haer.* 3); Pseudo-Hieronymus (*indic. de haer.* 10); Origen (*in Matt. comm. ser.* 79); Epiphanius (*Pan.* 28.5.1; 30.26.1–3; 30.33.4).

⁴⁵ Origen connects it to Passover, Epiphanius to circumcision, Pseudo-Tertullian to vindicating Judaism.

⁴⁶ In historical Jesus studies a classic criterion was that material associated with Jesus

rassment may also be invoked. Because patristic writers find it difficult, but necessary, to answer this scriptural claim, it is highly unlikely that this is a patristic invention. Such evidence makes it historically plausible, and even probable, that various Ebionite groups claimed Mt. 10.24–25 as the scriptural basis for their way of following Jesus.

The criterion of dissimilarity also applies to the Ebionite reference to Mt. 10.5–6: “Do not go into a path of the Gentiles and do not enter into a city of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Reference to this saying lacks multiple attestation, appearing only in Origen (*de. princ.* 4.3.8).

Although hints of historical plausibility emerge from the larger portrait of the Ebionites, the patristic manipulation of this material hinders detailed description of any one historical group underlying this representation. Nonetheless, significant impressions endure. While the strident patristic polemic effaces the Ebionite traditions and prevents direct knowledge, the level of patristic concern for the Ebionites provides indirect support for the existence of Jewish Christianity, for its diversity, for its influence, and for its endurance. While it is possible that patristic writers have created *ex nihilo* the wide-ranging representation of the Ebionites, it is more likely that they have manipulated and effaced the profile of an existing group or groups.

that was embarrassing to the church and did not affirm their theology and practice is more likely to come from Jesus himself. Double dissimilarity would separate such material from both Judaism and Christianity, making Jesus the most likely source. While this criterion carries a number of liabilities when applied to the historical Jesus, a simple form of the criterion can be useful in separating patristic views from those of their opponents.

CHAPTER 9

Elkesaites, Cerinthians, Symmachians

Patristic sources describe a few other groups as Jewish Christian heresies. While groups such as Elkesaites, Cerinthians, and Symmachians have been swept into the larger polemic against Ebionites, some distinguishing characteristics remain. This makes it necessary to ask whether these literary representations point to any historical groups who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness.

1. Elkesaites

There are four patristic witnesses to the Elkesaites.¹ Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius. In addition, the sect may be described in two other documents: a 10th century manuscript that is known as the *Fihrist* of al-Nadīm and the Cologne Mani Codex.²

¹ There are a variety of spellings for the name.

² The history of research, which is very limited and apparently includes only two monographs, is traced by Gerard P. Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). Prior to 1851 the debate centered on the relationship between the groups named by Epiphanius. From the time of the discovery of the larger portions of Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* (1842) and its subsequent publication (1851), scholars debated whether the group should be seen as gnostic (syncretistic) or as a part of the Essene movement. Both sides tended to define Elkesaites as Jewish Christian. In 1856 D. Chwolsohn noted that a passage of the 10th century Arabic *Kitāb al-Fihrist* by al-Nadīm names 'Iḥsh (possibly *al-Hasth*) as the head and founder of a sect of Babylonian baptists (Mughtasila). Chwolsohn identified this figure with the Elchasai of the patristic writings. He believed this sect was the Mandeans, and he argued that they developed directly from the sect founded by Elchesai. Previous reports from al-Nadīm say that Mani spent his youth in a community of Mughtasila. In 1912 W. Brandt published his study, entitled *Elchasai, ein Religionsstifter und sein Werk. Beiträge zur jüdischen, christlichen und allgemeinen Religionsgeschichte in späthellenistischer Zeit* (Leipzig, 1912; Amsterdam, 1971), cited in Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*. Brandt saw Elkesaites as a Jewish sect that substituted baptism for sacrifice. Elkesaites tried to influence Essenes and Ebionites, says Brandt, and their theology was adapted to better address Jewish Christians. A Greek codex on Mani was published in 1970 by A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Codex (*P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780*)," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 5 (1970), 97–216. This manuscript deals with the youth of Mani and his membership in a baptist sect founded or led by Alchasaios. A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for*

1.1 Hippolytus

Hippolytus, writing about 230 ce from Rome, attempted to catalogue and to refute a variety of heresies. His work was entitled *Refutation omnium haeresium* (Refutation of All Heresies). Two sections provide the first evidence for Elkesaites: *Ref.* 9.13–17; 10.29.³

Elchesai is mentioned in the prologue in 9.4 as a “strange demon” who (that is, his teaching) has recently arrived in Rome. The context is Hippolytus’ discussion of Calixtus, who is portrayed as overly tolerant of those who have sinned (12.20–26). Hippolytus says that Alcibiades offered even more leniency than Calixtus. In the context of the arrival of Alcibiades, Hippolytus introduces the work of Elchesai. Alcibiades comes to Rome from the Syrian city of Apamea, and he brings with him Elchesai’s book of revelation. Hippolytus claims to learn of Elchesai from the public activity of Alcibiades, but also from some writings. Hippolytus, in his *Refutation*, describes various features of the Elkesaite heresy.

1. Alcibiades, in the third year of Trajan’s reign, brought the book of Elchasai to Rome (9.13.1, 4)
2. Elchasai is said to have received this book from the Seres of Parthia and to have passed it on to Sobiae (9.13.1–2)
3. The book was a revelation by an angel of great size who represents the Son of God (9.13.2–3; 10.29.1)
4. There was a female angel of the same size, representing the Holy Spirit (9.13.3)
5. Alcibiades ordained a second baptism for forgiveness of sins, especially sexual sins (9.13.4; 19.15.1; 19.15.4,6)
6. He claimed to practice a type of asceticism (9.13.6)
7. He expects believers to practice circumcision and to live according to the Law (9.14.1)
8. He teaches that Christ was born a natural birth (19.14.1)
9. He teaches that Christ has been born and reborn in different bodies (19.14.8), sometimes of virgin birth (10.29.2)
10. He adopts the ideas of Pythagoras, using numbers and measures to foretell the future (10.14.1–2)
11. His followers believe in mathematics, astrologers, and magicians (19.14.2)
12. They employ rituals of healing (19.14.3)
13. They call on the name of “the great and most high God” and the name of “his son, the mighty king” (19.15.1,6)

Jewish-Christian Sects (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 54–73, believe that Epiphanius knew little about Elkesaites apart from the name. Epiphanius connected the christological ideas later found in the Pseudo-Clementines to the name of Elxai, and he said that Elxai influenced the Ebionites. Luttikhuizen believes there was a book of revelation that underwent various developments and uses. Hippolytus knew of this book through Alcibiades, and Epiphanius had some excerpts from it. Epiphanius linked this knowledge to unrelated sects in the Transjordan and created the patristic image of the Elkesaites.

³ The relevant portions of Hippolytus’ *Refutation* may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 112–22, and in Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 41–53.

14. They call upon seven witnesses described in the book: heaven, water, the holy spirits, the angels of prayer, oil, salt, and the earth (19.15.2,5)
15. They observe and avoid days by an astrological calendar (19.16.1–3)
16. They expect an impending crisis (19.16.4)
17. These teachings are designed for disciples only (19.17.1–2)
18. They teach that the principles of the universe were created by God (10.29.1).

It is important to note that Hippolytus' representation of Elkesaite teaching draws upon multiple stages of transmission. The story of Elchasai is known to Hippolytus only through the mediation of Alcibiades, who is considered a heretic. Hippolytus knows the teaching of Alcibiades in two forms: public presentation and written accounts. Hippolytus may or may not have access to the book of revelation. Finally, this complex of material has been reformulated in the context of heresiology: Hippolytus represents Elchesai and Alcibiades solely for the purpose of refuting them.

1.2 Origen and Eusebius

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, must defer to Origen's knowledge of the Elkesaites. Ironically, what Origen knows is found only in Eusebius (*HE* 6.38). A few characteristics are described.

1. The heresy of the Elkesaites disappeared soon after it began
2. They reject certain parts of the scriptures
3. They reject Paul altogether
4. They say believers can outwardly deny their faith if they retain an inward conviction
5. They follow a book which they say fell from heaven
6. They offer a different remission from the one Christ gives.

Eusebius thus offers a more condensed and more hostile report that reflects much of Hippolytus' account. Different from Hippolytus is the stress on the Jewish Christian nature of the movement: they accept most parts of the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel, but they reject Paul completely. As with Hippolytus, the issue of apostasy and restoration is important.

1.3 Epiphanius

Epiphanius treats the Elkesaites as one of the various sects that make up the Ebionite heresy. This blurs the contours of each of the movements. Although Epiphanius repeats elements found in Hippolytus and in Eusebius, it is not apparent that he is dependent on them. His treatment of the Elkesaites is found in chapters 19 and 53 of his *Panarion*.⁴

⁴ See also *Pan.* 30.3.1. See the discussion of Epiphanius and the Elkesaites in Klijn and

Three lines of tradition seem to contribute to Epiphanius' characterization of the Elkesaites. First, he appears to have reports on Elchesaiter doctrine and practice. Epiphanius introduces the Osseans and notes their location in the Transjordan area. (19.1.1–3). He notes that "later they were joined by a man called Elxai, in the time of the emperor Trajan" (19.1.4), then he begins to describe Elchasaiter belief and practice.

Epiphanius seems to draw upon the book of revelation as a second source. He describes it in various places (*Pan* 19.1.4; 19.3.4; 19.4.2; 53.1.3; *anaceph.* 28.6.4), and Epiphanius may be quoting from the book in two places (*Pan* 19.3.7; 19.4.3). In *Pan.* 19.3.7 Epiphanius says,

With these words he says that water is acceptable to God but that fire is strange to Him: "Children, do not go to what is fire, for in that case you shall err. For this is an error. For ... you see it as something quite near, but actually it is very far away. Do not go to that but rather to the sound of water."

In *Pan.* 19.4.3 Epiphanius says

Later in his book he speaks the deceitful words full of empty talk: "Nobody must look for the significance, but he must say the following words in his prayer: ... abar anid moib nochile daasim ane daasim nochile moib anid abar selam."

Epiphanius ignores the prohibition and offers a solution to the mystery (19.4.4). The riddle was likely solved in 1858 by two scholars working independently of one another.⁵ If the *ane* is taken as the midpoint of the riddle, then the five words before it are mirrored by the five words after it. Neither half of the riddle makes sense in the Greek version Epiphanius cites, but if the first five words are read right to left they represent a transcription of the Aramaic phrase "I bear witness to you on the day of the great judgment." The second half of the riddle repeats this phrase with the words, but not the letters, in the normal (Aramaic) order. The final word is then *selam*, Aramaic for peace.

The riddle is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it suggests that an Aramaic original of the book of revelation has been translated into Greek for a wider audience. The encryption of the Aramaic saying as a riddle in the Greek text would create a new level of mystery and secrecy. Secondly, the Aramaic saying reconstructed from this riddle may be a version of a saying of Jesus: "Everyone therefore who confesses me before humans, I also will confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10.33). Thirdly, the saying likely points to the context in which the book originates: persecution of Jews who supported Parthia against

Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 61–65 and the texts on pp. 154–97. Discussion and texts are found in Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai* on pp. 92–142.

⁵ I. Stern, "Elischa und Elxai," *Ben-Chananja* (Szegedin), 1858, pp. 35–37; M. A. Levy, "Bemerkung zu den arabischen Analekten des Herrn Prof. Hitzig," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1858), p. 712. See the discussion in Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 124–25.

the Roman invasion near the end of the 1st century. Fourthly, and most significantly, this layered tradition means that Epiphanius almost certainly did not create this material. He almost certainly found it in a text and felt obligated to respond.

In addition to the reports on Elkesaites doctrine and practice and his awareness of their book of revelation, Epiphanius seems to draw upon a third line of information. At various places Epiphanius associates the Elkesaites with the Osseans and with the Sampseans (*Pan.* 19.1.1–4; 19.2.2–4; 30.3.1; 53.1.1–9; *anaceph.* 28.4.1; 53.1). Epiphanius uses this association to locate the Elkesaites and to fill out their traditions.

From these three sources (the report of teaching, the book of revelation, the Osseans and Sampseans), Epiphanius creates an Elkesaites history, doctrine, and location. His characterization of the Elkesaites in the *Panarion* is expansive:

1. Elxai joined the Ossaeans during the reign of Trajan (19.1.4)
2. Elxai presented himself as a prophet (19.1.4)
3. He wrote a book of revelation or prophecy (19.1.4)
4. He had a brother named Iexai, who also had a book (19.1.4; 53.1.3)
5. Elxai originated among the Jews (19.1.5)
6. He was Jewish in his attitude, but he did not live according to the Law (19.1.5)
7. He practiced an oath that invoked salt, water, earth, bread, heaven, air, wind (19.1.5–6)
8. He practiced another oath invoking heaven, water, the holy spirits, angels of prayer, olive oil, salt, and earth (19.1.6)
9. He detested virginity and chastity, and he compelled people to marry (19.1.7)
10. He was more tolerant of those who had apostasized in the face of persecution (19.1.8)
11. He joined the Osseans, who now survive as the Sampseans (19.2.2)
12. His name means *hidden power*
13. Elxai has two descendants, Marthous and Marthana, who are venerated (19.2.5; *anaceph.* 53.1–2)
14. Elxai confesses Christ as the Great King, but Epiphanius is unsure if this refers to Jesus (19.3.4)
15. Elxai requires prayer in the direction of Jerusalem (19.3.5)
16. Elxai rejects sacrifices and the cult (19.3.6)
17. He and some of his followers refuse to eat meat (19.3.6; 53.1.4)
18. He favors water (baptism?) over fire (sacrifice?) (19.3.6–7)
19. Elxai describes Christ as a gigantic figure (19.4.1; 53.1.9)
20. The Holy Spirit, a female figure, is equally large (19.4.2; 53.1.9)
21. Elxai created a schism in the Osseans when he rejected the books of Moses (19.5.1)
22. Elxai joined the Ebionites and the Nazoreans (19.5.4)
23. Elxai's teaching was used by four heresies: Ebionites, Nazoreans, Ossaeans, Nasareans (19.5.4)
24. Sampseans are now called Elkesaites (53.1.1)
25. They live in the Transjordan (Perea), in the Moabitis region, in Iturea, and in Nabatititis (53.1.1)
26. The book of revelation was used by Ossaeans, Ebionites, and Nazoreans (53.1.3)

27. Elkesaites are neither Christians nor Jews nor Greeks (53.1.3)
28. They say that God is one and honor God (53.1.4)
29. They practice some baptisms (53.1.4)
30. They will die for the members of the family of Elxai (53.1.5)
31. They do not accept the prophets or the apostles (53.1.7)
32. They believe Christ was created and that he appears time and again (53.1.8)
33. They believe Christ was Adam and can assume Adam's body when he wishes (53.1.8)

Epiphanius is clearly collapsing a variety of traditions into the characterization of the Elkesaites, and he will collapse the Elkesaites into the Ebionites. Several themes seem to guide his presentation. First, he leaves no doubt that Elkesaites are heretics. Secondly, he tells of the continuing influence of a book of revelation associated with the name of Elxai. Thirdly, he is confident of lines of influence and overlap between various sects. Fourthly, he consistently portrays a Jewish foundation for the Elkesaites. Fifthly, he nonetheless shows various lines of heretical Christian development. Finally, Epiphanius is determined to locate the Elkesaites in the Transjordan region. Epiphanius interweaves these themes in creative ways to generate his larger portrait of the heresy of the Elkesaites.

1.4 The Kitâb al-Fihrist by al-Nadîm

The arabic work entitled *Kitâb al-Fihrist* was composed in 987/88 ce by al-Nadîm.⁶ A sect of Babylonian baptists (*Mughtasîlah*) have as their founder and leader a figure named 'Ihsîl (possibly *al-Hasîl*). Beginning with D. Chwolsohn in 1856, this leader has been identified with Elchasai of the patristic materials and the group has been associated with the Mandaeans or Manicheans.⁷ The leader apparently taught a male/female dualism, with opposition between the two poles. Abstinence from meat, wine, and sexual intercourse is probably taught. According to al-Nadîm, Mani's father joined the group, and Mani himself was a member for a time. According to al-Nadîm the group is still active (in the 10th century) in the region of al-Bata'ih, and he describes their practices:

They observe ablution as a rite and wash everything which they eat. Their head is known as al-Hasîl and it is he who instituted their sect. They assert that the two existences are male and female . . . They have seven sayings, taking the form of fables . . . They agreed with the Manicheans about the two elemental (principles), but later their sect became separate. Until this our own day, some of them venerate the stars. (9.1)

⁶ Discussion of the *Fihrist* may be found in Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 165–72 and in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 65–66. Relevant portions of the text may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 271.

⁷ Chwolsohn's work is treated in Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 6–7.

1.5 The Cologne Mani Codex

A manuscript first published in 1970 offers a similar portrait.⁸ The content of the Cologne Mani Codex was probably composed around 276 ce, near the time of the death of Mani. The manuscript itself likely comes from the 4th or 5th century. The Cologne Mani Codex tells of Mani's youth in a community of baptists under the leadership of Alchasaios. The manuscript insists that Mani's ideas conform to those of Alchasaios, but not to those of the baptists that Mani left. Mani is shown to be true to the practices of Alchasaios: not washing, not plowing, not eating bread. Mani is accused by the baptist community of not keeping their Law. There is also reference to a tradition of the forefathers known as the "Rest of the Garment."

The tradition behind the codex seems to rest on a Jewish foundation, but Christian interpretations are evident as well. When Mani is accused of not keeping their Law and of abolishing the commandments of the Savior, he replies with arguments taken from the Christian gospels (Cologne Mani Codex 91.20–93.23).

1.6 Summation

Is there any historical reality behind this complex portrait of the Elkesaites? As with previous groups, it is first necessary to distinguish the literary history of this representation from its tradition history.

1.6.1 Literary History

While presented in only six sources, the literary history of the Elkesaites is extensive. By tracing the appearance of the name of Elxai and its various cognates, a maximalist approach could follow this movement through various manifestations: a Jewish apocalyptic movement in Parthia, baptist sects in Babylonia, Mani and his followers, Jewish Christian sects in Transjordan, a sect in Rome, and dualist sects enduring into the 10th century. Luttikhuizen correctly warns, however, against such a compilation of the apparent cognates of the name Elxai.⁹ The following variations should be noted:

1. Elkesaites

This term refers to the religious movement founded on the book of revelation and mentioned by Hippolytus and Eusebius

2. Elkesaeans

This term refers to the Transjordan Sampseans

⁸ A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Mani-Codex", 97–216. The Cologne Mani Codex is discussed by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 65, and by Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, pp. 153–64.

⁹ Luttikhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, p. 224.

3. Alchasaios or *'Iḥši* or *al-Hasiḥ*
The name of the leader of the Babylonian baptists
4. Elchasai
Used by Hippolytus and Epiphanius to describe the Book of Elchasai
5. Elxai
Used with reference both to the book and to the teacher in the Transjordan sects
6. Some scholars also transfer the name Elkesaites to the Babylonian baptists.

While a maximalist interpretation overstates the unity of these traditions, Lutikhuizen may underestimate the connections.

1.6.2 Tradition History

Three lines of tradition may be identified in the literary representation of the Elkesaites. First, an apocalyptic book seems to emerge among Jews living in or near Parthia at the time of the Roman invasion (114–117 ce). The theme of persecution and the hope of deliverance seem to run through this work. The name Elxai, which means *the hidden power*, may refer more to the book than to any historical personality. All three elements of the book tradition – Jewish identity, apocalyptic literature, the name Elxai – provide fertile ground for further development.

The second tradition is found in the groups mentioned by Hippolytus, by Origin, by Eusebius, and by Epiphanius. While it is impossible to isolate one historical group, several traits reoccur in the patristic representation. Among these are the Jewish foundation, the impact of a revelatory book, distinct rituals of baptism and healing, various adaptations of Christian ideas and practices, and the use of the name Elxai.

A third stream of tradition centers around the Babylonian baptists. Several traits are persistent in this tradition: ablutions, a male/female dualism, the name of Mani, some cognate of the name Elxai.

1.6.3 Historical Plausibility

The question of historical plausibility must be divided into three parts: 1) Is there any historical reality undergirding these three streams of tradition? 2) Are they connected in any way? 3) Do they have anything to say about Jewish Christianity?

It is plausible that all three streams of this tradition – Parthian Jews, sects mentioned in patristic writings, Babylonian baptists – reflect the memory of historical origins. The idea of a Jewish apocalyptic text written in hope of deliverance from the oppressive power of Rome has numerous examples. The existence of sectarian movements like that of Alcibiades and those of the Transjordan cannot be doubted.¹⁰ Jewish baptist movements and the Manichean developments

¹⁰ At a minimum, the community at Qumran and the Essenes may be cited.

are well documented.¹¹ Why, then, are these all linked to the Elkesaite tradition, and what is the connection between them?

The most plausible link is the apocalyptic book associated with the name Elxai. This book would take its content from an apocalyptic literary response to the crisis experienced by Jews in association with the Parthian-Roman war. It is possible, and even probable, that this book takes its name from the Aramaic term for *hidden power*.¹² If this Jewish apocalyptic work lies at the fountainhead of the tradition, subsequent developments appear more plausible.

Hippolytus knows the tradition through one of its tradents. Alcibiades has come to Rome from the Syrian city of Apamea in the reign of Trajan (c. 100 ce or 120 ce).¹³ He brings with him a book of revelation that bears the name of Elxai, and he teaches from it in opposition to Calixtus and others at Rome. At the core of his teaching is the extension of tolerance and forgiveness for those who have failed in times of testing. Alcibiades' teaching likely represents a Jewish Christian appropriation of the Elxai literature.

Origen and Eusebius refer to a similar tradition. They note its Jewish Christian flavor, they describe its concern for tolerance and forgiveness for those who have denied their faith, and they note the key role of the book or revelation.

Epiphanius adds little in terms of content, since what he says about Elkesaite teaching can, for the most part, be found among other groups. His characterization of the movement is more significant. For Epiphanius, this is a Jewish movement that came into the Transjordan from elsewhere, bringing a book that exerted influence on various Jewish Christian groups.¹⁴

The Babylonian baptists and Mani do not share clear elements of the teaching described in patristic literature, and there is no mention of the Elxai book. At best, these traditions reflect a vague memory of and reverence for the name Elxai. It is also possible that there is no connection to the Elxai tradition or to its name.

If the Jewish apocalyptic tradition and the patristic Elkesaite traditions share a common link in the Elxai literature, what is the significance of this connection for Jewish Christianity? The connection made by Epiphanius does not advance our knowledge of Jewish Christianity. If the Elxai literature had an impact on

¹¹ See the article by Kurt Rudolph entitled "The baptist sects," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 473–95.

¹² The transliteration would be *hail(a) kas(a) ya(i)*. See the discussion and support for this title by Kurt Rudolph, "The baptist sects," pp. 483–92.

¹³ A precise dating is difficult. The new remission of sin is proclaimed (Epiphanius) for the third year of Trajan's reign, which would be 100/101 ce. Hippolytus may be quoting from the book of Elxai when he refers to the time in relation to Trajan's victory in the Parthian War, which lasted from 114–117 ce. These issues are discussed by Luttkhuizen, *The Revelation of Elchasai*, p. 62.

¹⁴ See Pan. 19.5.4. Epiphanius thinks that Sampseans, Osseans, Ebionites, Nazoreans, and Nasareans all fall under the influence of the Elxai tradition.

Jewish Christians in the Transjordan, this would be impossible to define from Epiphanius. His purpose is to taint all of the sects with the stain of Elxai and Ebion, neither of whom is likely to be a historical figure.

Alcibiades offers a more useful connection. It is plausible to see in Alcibiades a historical figure who appropriates Jewish texts within a Christian debate. More specifically, the teaching of Alcibiades may represent a christological use of an existing Jewish tradition – a pattern intrinsic to the definition of Jewish Christianity.

Seen from this perspective, the plausible historical core of the Elkesaites tradition is found in an apocalyptic Jewish text that has been reappropriated in a variety of contexts and locales. One of these reappropriations is found in the teaching of Alcibiades, and it is plausible that this represents the sole link, or the only recoverable link, to any form of Jewish Christianity.

2. Cerinthians

An extensive line of patristic writers tell of the heresy of Cerinthus and of the Cerinthians. This literary representation begins with Irenaeus and extends into the 14th century.

2.1 Irenaeus

The foundational description of Cerinthians is provided by Irenaeus. Writing in *Against Heresies*,¹⁵ Irenaeus says that

1. Cerinthus taught in Asia (1.26.1)
2. He taught that the world was created by a Power separate from the supreme God (1.26.1)
3. In so teaching, Cerinthus agreed with the Valentinians, Menander, Saturnis, Basilides, Carpocrates, Marcion, and those heretics called Gnostics (1.5.2; 1.23.5; 1.24.1; 1.25.1; 3.2.2)
4. He taught that Jesus was not born of a virgin (1.26.1)
5. He taught that Jesus surpassed all other humans in righteousness, prudence, and wisdom (1.26.1)
6. He taught that Christ descended upon Jesus after his baptism (1.26.1)
7. He taught that Jesus proclaimed the Unknown God (1.26.1)
8. He taught that Jesus performed miracles (1.26.1)
9. He taught that the Christ departed from Jesus and did not suffer with him (1.26.1)
10. He taught that Jesus suffered and rose again (1.26.1)
11. The apostle John met Cerinthus in the bath house and fled from his heresy (3.3.4)
12. John the apostle preached against Cerinthus and heretics of his type (3.11.1)

¹⁵ The relevant texts may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 102–106.

13. Cerinthus taught that the Creator was one God and the Father of the Lord was another God (3.11.1)
14. Those who share the ideas of Cerinthus prefer the Gospel of Mark (3.11.7)

Irenaeus makes it clear that he considers Cerinthus a historical figure who taught a form of gnostic heresy. Irenaeus contends that this heresy was already confronted in the apostolic age. The mention of Asia and the apostle John are typical of the larger patristic battle against various forms of gnostic thought. Some patristic evidence suggests a tradition in which Cerinthus works from a book of revelation that he claims was written by the apostle John. This would provide further reason for the invocation of John the apostle as the opponent of Cerinthus.

2.2 Hippolytus

Hippolytus shows both agreement with and divergence from the portrait of Irenaeus. In *Refutation*¹⁶ he says that Cerinthus

1. Was trained in the teaching of the Egyptians (*Prol. to Ref. 7.7; Ref. 7.33.1; 10.21.1*)
2. He influenced Theodotus (*Prol. to Ref. 7.9*)
3. Cerinthus taught that the world was not made by the supreme God, but by some Power (*Ref. 7.33.1*)
4. He said that Jesus was not born of a virgin (7.33.1; 10.21.2)
5. He said that Jesus was more righteous and wise than others (7.33.1; 10.21.2)
6. Cerinthus taught that Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism (7.33.2; 10.21.3)
7. He said Jesus preached the Unknown Father (7.33.2; 10.21.3)
8. He taught that Jesus performed miracles (7.33.2; 10.21.3)
9. Cerinthus said that Christ left Jesus before his suffering (7.33.2; 10.21.3)
10. He taught that Jesus suffered and rose again (7.33.2)
11. He taught that the Power which created the world was angelic, was far removed from the sovereignty which is above all, and is ignorant of the God who is above all (10.21.1)
12. The christology of Cerinthus is shared by the Ebionites, but Ebionites differ by seeing God as the creator and in their observance of the Law (10.22.1)

Hippolytus thus represents the next stage of development in the tradition of Cerinthus. In two dense sections (*Ref. 7.33.1–2; 10.21.1–3*) he sketches out their beliefs. He differs from Irenaeus in only a few points. Hippolytus says Cerinthus was trained in the ways of Egypt, that he influenced Theodotus, and that he believes the world was created by an angel. Hippolytus attempts to tie Cerinthus to the Jewish Christian Ebionites, but he is careful to note the distinction over creation and the Law.

¹⁶ The relevant texts may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 110–22.

2.3 Pseudo-Tertullian

The writing known as Pseudo-Tertullian represents a similar development. Basic components of the gnostic image of Irenaeus are confirmed in *Against All Heresies* 3, but further hints of Jewish Christian heresy appear.¹⁷ Here Cerinthus teaches

1. That the world was created by angels
2. That Christ was a human born of the seed of Joseph
3. That the Law was given by angels
4. That the God of the Jews was not the Lord, but an angel
5. Ebion was the successor of Cerinthus, though Ebion held a different view of God and of the Law.

Pseudo-Tertullian gives less of gnostic doctrine and raises the question of the origin of the Law. While he posits the connection to Ebion, he does not yet describe Cerinthians as Jewish Christian.

2.4 Eusebius

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, draws upon various sources and produces a distinct portrait of the Cerinthians.¹⁸ Eusebius says

1. Cerinthus appeared very early, at about the time of the Ebionites (3.28.1).

Eusebius then relates what he has learned from Caius about Cerinthus.

2. Cerinthus has a book of revelation that he attributes to “a great apostle” (3.28.2)
3. He teaches that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be set up on earth (3.28.2)
4. He teaches that Jerusalem in that time will become a place of sensual pleasure (3.28.2)
5. He says there will be a marriage feast lasting one thousand years (3.28.3).

Eusebius then relates what he has learned from Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, about Cerinthus.

6. That the kingdom of Christ will be an earthly one (3.28.5; see also 7.25.3)
7. That this kingdom will be a place of sensual pleasure (3.28.5; see also 7.25.3)
8. That this pleasure will involve festivals and sacrifices and the slaying of victims (3.28.5; see also 7.25.3).

Eusebius then relates what he has learned from Irenaeus about Cerinthus.

9. That Polycarp told the story of the apostle John fleeing a bath house because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, was inside (3.28.6).

¹⁷ See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 134.

¹⁸ See the relevant texts in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 136–50.

Finally, Eusebius says that some before him rejected the Gospel of John and the Revelation.

10. Some believe that Cerinthus wrote the Revelation (7.25.2).

Eusebius obviously depends on reports and on repetition to describe Cerinthus and the Cerinthians. Several traits are noteworthy. Eusebius is the first to attribute millenarian views to Cerinthus. Secondly, Eusebius seems to know nothing of the christology and little of the gnostic leanings described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus. The result is a portrait of heretics who expect a thousand year festival in Jerusalem after the return of Christ. Though some claim Cerinthians wrote the Johannine materials, Eusebius believes Cerinthians were rebuked by John.

2.5 Epiphanius

The treatment of the Cerinthians by Epiphanius is typical. He collects from different sources, forms new connections, and creates an extensive catalogue of the heresies of the Cerinthians. His main sources seem to be Irenaeus, the Pseudo-Tertullian material, and the New Testament. Epiphanius is the first to speak of Cerinthians as a group. He tells about Cerinthians in the *Panarion*¹⁹:

1. Cerinthians took their name from the leader Cerinthus (28.1.1)
2. Cerinthus is similar to Carpocrates (28.1.1)
3. He said that Christ was the natural son of Mary and Joseph (28.1.2; 51.6.7)
4. He taught that the world was made by angels (28.1.2; see *anaceph.* 2.28)
5. Cerinthus adhered to Judaism only partially (28.1.3)
6. He taught that the Law and the Prophets were given by angels (28.1.3)
7. He said the angel who gave the Law also created the world (28.1.3)
8. Cerinthus began his preaching in Asia (28.1.4)
9. He said that the world was not created by the supreme Power dwelling on high (28.1.5)
10. The Christ figure (the Holy Spirit) descended on Jesus at his baptism (28.1.5)
11. To him and through him was revealed the Unknown Father (28.1.5)
12. Jesus performed miracles because of the power that descended on him (28.1.6)
13. Jesus suffered and rose again (28.1.7)
14. The Christ figure flew away and did not suffer with Jesus (28.1.7)
15. Cerinthus claims to observe the Law (28.2.1)
16. Cerinthus was among those who confused the apostles in Antioch and attacked Peter. James wrote a letter denying any connection with these people (28.2.3–5)
17. Cerinthus advocated circumcision because he was himself circumcized (28.2.6)
18. Cerinthus did these things before he went to Asia (28.2.6)
19. Cerinthus was a pseudo-apostle (28.4.1)

¹⁹ The relevant texts may be found, among other places, in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 154–97.

20. Cerinthus was behind the turmoil that led to the arrest of Paul in Jerusalem (28.4.1)
21. Cerinthians use the Gospel of Matthew, but only partially, because they believe the genealogy demonstrates the natural birth of Jesus (28.5.1)
22. In support of circumcision, they quote from Matthew the command that disciples should do as their master (28.5.1–2)
23. They reject Paul (28.5.3)
24. Cerinthus says Christ was crucified, but has not yet risen (28.6.1)
25. Cerinthians prospered in Galatia (28.6.4)
26. They practiced baptism for the dead (28.6.4)
27. Some say that the dead will not rise at all (28.6.6)
28. Cerinthians are also called Merinthians (28.8.1)
29. They are succeeded by the Nazoreans (29.1.1)
30. Ebion took upon himself the appearance of the Cerinthians (30.1.3)
31. The bath house story about the apostle John involved Ebion rather than Cerinthus (30.24.1–7)
32. Cerinthus lived at the same time as Basilides, Satornilus, Ebion, and Merinthius (31.2.1)
33. Despite what some claim, Cerinthus did not write the Johannine literature (51.3.6; 51.4.1–2)

Because his description of Cerinthus is self-contradictory, Epiphanius offers a two-stage career for Cerinthus. His first activity was in Antioch and Jerusalem. There he is a proponent of circumcision who sows confusion among the earliest apostles. Here he shares much in common with other Jewish Christian sects, including a version of their gospel. In the second stage, Cerinthus appears in Asia as a preacher of gnostic ideas. It is likely that Epiphanius has various accounts from Ireneaus and Hippolytus and has added to them his own vitriole against Jewish Christian sects. Taking his cue from the precedent of the rebuke by the apostle John, Epiphanius places Cerinthus in the middle of the classic New Testament controversies in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Galatia.

2.6 Jerome

The transition to a Jewish Christian description of the Cerinthians is completed in Jerome.²⁰

1. Cerinthus is among those heretics who “tear up the gospels”: these include Saturninus, the Ophites, the Cainites, the Sethians, Carpocrates, and Ebion (*adv. Luc.* 23)
2. Ebion is the successor of Cerinthus (*adv. Luc.* 23)
3. Most of these heresies broke out in the lifetime of the apostle John (*adv. Luc.* 23)
4. Cerinthus is listed among other “adulterers”: Arius, Praxeas, Ebion, Novatus (*adv. Luc.* 26)

²⁰ Texts from Jerome may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 198–228.

5. At the request of the bishops of Asia, the apostle John wrote his gospel against the teaching of Cerinthus and Ebion (*de vir. ill. 9; in Matt. praef.*).
6. Cerinthus and Ebion are called antichrists in the Johannine epistles because they deny that Christ came in the flesh (*in Matt. praef.*)
7. Paul frequently attacks Cerinthus and Ebion (*in Matt. praef.*)

It is clear that Jerome knows little about Cerinthus and can only condemn him through association. While he retains one strand of the gnostic characterization – Christ was not born into flesh – Jerome interprets this as a Jewish Christian dogma. He associates Cerinthus with Ebion, then condemns them together under the patronage of the apostle John.

2.7 Filaster

Filaster offers, for the most part, a condensed version of traits found in Epiphanius. In a tight summary in *div. her. liber*,²¹ Filaster says

1. Cerinthus repeated the error of Carpocrates (36)
2. He taught that Jesus was born of human parents (36)
3. He taught that the world was created by angels (36)
4. He taught circumcision and observance of Sabbath (36)
5. He taught that Christ has not yet risen, but will rise (36)
6. Cerinthus rejects Paul (36)
7. He honors Judas (36)
8. He accepts the Gospel of Matthew, but rejects Acts and the other gospels (36)
9. He blasphemates the “blessed martyrs” (36)
10. He caused the dispute among the apostles over circumcision (36)
11. The apostolic decree in Acts was issued against him (36)
12. Ebion was a student of Cerinthus (37)
13. Cerinthus is credited by some for writing the Gospel of John and the Revelation (37).

New information is found only in the claim that Cerinthus honors Judas and blasphemates the martyrs. Beyond this, Filaster’s characterization draws upon Epiphanius and emphasizes the Jewish Christian nature of Cerinthus and his rejection in the apostolic age.

2.8 Pseudo-Hieronymus

Pseudo-Heironymus²² summarizes the work of Pseudo-Tertullian and Filaster in *indic. de. haer. 10*.

1. Carpocrates, Cerinthus, and Ebion succeeded each other
2. They say that one has to live wholly in accordance with the Law
4. This requires circumcision, Sabbath observance, observance of feasts

²¹ See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 230–33.

²² The relevant texts are in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 234–37.

5. They require this in imitation of Christ
6. They say Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary
7. Jesus had a prophetic spirit
8. Jesus is to return to judge the quick and the dead.

Although he emphasizes Jewish Christian doctrines, Pseudo-Hieronymus attempts to make the earlier gnostic focus coherent: Cerinthus stands between Carpocrates and Ebion in a succession of heresies.

2.9 Augustine

Augustine speaks of Cerinthians only in *De Haeresibus* 8.²³

1. They are the same as the Merinthians
2. They say the world was made by angels
3. They require circumcision and observance of the Law
4. They say Jesus was only a man
5. They say Jesus did not rise from the dead, but they expect a resurrection
6. They expect a thousand year reign of the earthly, sensual kingdom of Christ.

Thus, Augustine knows only what he has read in Epiphanius and Eusebius, and he echoes the syncretistic characterization of Cerinthians as gnostic-Judaistic.

2.10 Praedestinatus

The description by Praedestinatus around 435 ce is similar to that of Augustine, but it makes no mention of the millenarian expectations.²⁴ Cerinthians say

1. The world was created by angels (1.8)
2. That circumcision is required (1.8)
3. That the Old Testament commands must be kept literally (1.8)
4. That Jesus was only a man (1.8)
5. That Jesus did not rise, but he will (1.8)
6. Paul condemned the Cerinthians in Galatia and alluded to them in his letter to the Galatians (1.8)

2.11 Theodoret of Cyr

The description by Theodoret (c. 453 ce) is a blending of the work of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Eusebius.²⁵

²³ The text is given in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 238–39.

²⁴ References are to the text in *Corp. Haeres. I, Script. haer. min. Lat.*, which was edited by F. Oehler (Berolini, 1856), cited in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 242–45.

²⁵ The text is provided by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 246–51.

1. Cerinthus was active in the time of the apostle John
2. He spent considerable time in Egypt
3. He was instructed in the philosophical sciences
4. His followers were named after him
5. He said the one God over all was not the creator of the world
6. The world was created by powers who did not know God
7. Cerinthus, like "the Hebrews," taught that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary
8. Jesus excelled in insight and righteousness
9. Christ descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove
10. Jesus preached the Unknown God
11. Jesus performed miracles
12. Christ left Jesus at the time of his suffering
13. Cerinthus expected the kingdom of the Lord to last for a thousand years in Jerusalem
14. Gaius and Dionysius, bishops of Alexandria, wrote against Cerinthus
15. Cerinthus was the reason the apostle John fled from the bath house.

2.12 Timothy, Presbyter of Constantinople (c. 600 ce)

The Jewish Christian profile of Cerinthus continues to emerge in Timothy of Constantinople.²⁶

1. Cerinthus taught, with many others, that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary and was justified by his progress in life (*de. recept. haer* 28 b/c)
2. The Cerinthians took their name from their leader (28c–29a)
3. Some say Cerinthus was an Ebionite (28c–29a)
4. He claimed to receive a revelation from angels (28c–29a)
5. He introduced the idea of a thousand year sensual reign of Christ in the city of Jerusalem (28c–29a)
6. Polycarp says John the apostle fled the bath house to escape Cerinthus (28c–29a)
7. Cerinthus was behind the disturbance at Antioch in the apostolic era (28c–29a)
8. He chastized Peter over his acceptance of Cornelius (28c–29a)
9. He caused the disturbance against Paul in Jerusalem (28c–29a)
10. He taught that Christ was crucified, but will be raised only in the general resurrection (28c–29a)
11. Cerinthians practiced baptism (*ex. Nic. pand.*)

2.13 Final Witnesses

A later testimony to Cerinthus is found in a 12th century work (*in apocalypsim*) by Dionysius bar-Salibi.²⁷ He cites the work of Hippolytus and his rejection of the claim of Caius that Cerinthus wrote the Gospel of John and the Revelation. Dionysius then describes the work of Cerinthus: he taught circumcision, he opposed Paul, he taught that the world was created by angels, he said that Jesus was

²⁶ The text is given in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 256–59.

²⁷ Discussed by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 18, 272–73.

not born of a virgin, and he taught about “carnal food and drink and other blasphemies.”

The 13th century work of Honorius Augustodunensis emphasizes both Jewish Christian and millenarian traits. He says, “The Cerinthians are so called after a certain Cerinthus. These observe circumcision and preach that there will be a thousand years, after the resurrection, spent in fleshly voluptuousness” (*de haer. libell. 23*).²⁸

The echoes of the patristic tradition endure. They may be heard in the 11/12th century work of Paulus (*de haer. libell. 4*), in the 12th century work of Pseudo-Augustine (*sermo 169.5 de sancto Ioh. evang.*), in the 13th century work of Alexander Minorita (*expos. in apoc. 2.2.2.*), and in the 14th century work of Nicephorus Callistus (*eccl. hist. 3.14; 6.22*).²⁹

2.14 Summation

Cerinthus and Cerinthians are the subject of an extensive line of patristic comment. Their literary history grows through accretion to its fullest form in Epiphanius, who describes some thirty-three traits. Those who write in the aftermath of Epiphanius tend to condense his report, adding little new information.

Four lines of tradition dominate this literary history. At the first stage, which begins with Irenaeus, Cerinthus is presented mostly in terms of gnostic ideas and is associated with Egypt. A second line of tradition, beginning with Eusebius, emphasizes the millenarian speculation associated with Cerinthus. A third line of tradition may be seen in the evolution of a Jewish Christian identity and a connection to the Ebionites. The growing apostolic connection – that Cerinthus was active in the apostolic era and was refuted by the apostle John – represents a fourth line of tradition.

These four strands of tradition – gnostic, millenarian, Jewish Christian, apostolic – suggest different levels of historical plausibility. The apostolic stories appear to be rhetorical devices typical of heresiologies: contemporary heretics are said to have been dismissed by more ancient figures. The Jewish Christian connection also lacks plausibility. It appears to take root in a few traits and to develop rather slowly into a full characterization. The millenarian traits may belong to this Jewish Christian characterization.

The most plausible tradition is found in the gnostic characterization ascribed to Cerinthus. The association with Egypt and with Asia is plausible, but this could be typological; it may represent nothing more than the recognition that Egypt and Asia were known as the homeland of gnostic thought. The idea that gnostic ideas influenced Jewish and Jewish Christian thought is certainly plau-

²⁸ The text may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 272.

²⁹ These texts are cited by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 272–81.

sible, and it might account for the development of Cerinthus toward Jewish Christian and millenarian ideas. It is more likely that this characterization is a product of the heresiologists. Consequently, the most probable location of Cerinthus is not Jewish Christianity, but Christianizing gnosticism.

3. Symmachians

Symmachus is treated as a Jewish Christian author by some church fathers. Other writers treat Symmachians as a sect with gnostic tendencies.³⁰

Eusebius is the first to treat Symmachus as a Jewish Christian.³¹ In the *demonstration evangelica* (c. 320 ce), Eusebius says that Symmachus was an Ebionite, “a heresy of some so-called Jews who claim to believe in Christ” (7.1). To demonstrate this, Eusebius cites Symmachus’ translation of Isaiah 7.13–14, ending with: “See a young woman (*veavīç*) conceives and bears a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel.” Eusebius seems to notice that the Septuagint reading of *virgin* has been passed over by Symmachus in favor of the (more accurate) translation of the Hebrew term *‘almah* as *young woman*. This, of course, would change the meaning of Mt. 1.23, where Is. 7.14 is cited in reference to the birth of Jesus. On the basis of this translation, Eusebius may conclude that Symmachus is a Jewish Christian.

The second reference by Eusebius also involves the issue of translation and interpretation. In *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17, Eusebius warns that “As to these translators, one must know that Symmachus was an Ebionite.” Eusebius next describes the heart of the Ebionite heresy: it “consists of those who say that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, considering him a mere man and insisting strongly on keeping the Law in a Jewish manner . . .” (*HE* 5.17). Eusebius then offers proof of his conclusion, again citing the textual tradition:

Treatises of Symmachus are still extant in which he appears to support this heresy by attacking the Gospel of Matthew. Origen makes clear that he obtained these and other commentaries of Symmachus on the scriptures from a certain Juliana who, he says, received the books from Symmachus himself” (*HE* 5.17).³²

This line of testimony suggests that Eusebius condemns Symmachus on the basis of his translation of Isaiah 7.14 and his commentary on some Mathean texts.

Jerome offers a similar line of warning.³³ Jerome, translator for much of the *Vulgate* tradition and author of various commentaries, quite frequently criticizes

³⁰ Symmachus and the Symmachians are discussed in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 52–54.

³¹ For the relevant texts, see in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 136–151.

³² This tradition is affirmed and expanded by Palladius in *Historia Lausiaca* 147. The text is discussed by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 53.

³³ For texts, see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 198–229.

the competition. “But we are right,” says Jerome, “to reject Aquila, the proselyte and controversial translator, who has tried to translate not words only, but also their etymologies” (*epist. 57.11*). Jerome comments on the various translations of Habakuk 3.10–13:

Theodotian, however, as being poor and an Ebionite, but also Symmachus of the same dogma, following a poor reasoning, translate in a Jewish way . . . I shall say an incredible thing, but it is nevertheless true. Those semi-Christians translated in a Jewish way and the Jew Aquila interpreted as a Christian (*in Hab. 3.10–13*).

Jerome also speaks of “Aquila of Pontus, the proselyte, and Theodotian the Ebionite and Symmachus, an adherent of the same dogma, who also wrote commentaries on the gospel according to Matthew from which he also tried to establish his dogma” (*de vir. ill. 54*). Nonetheless, Jerome at places prefers the reading of Aquila or Theodotian or Symmachus (*in Dan. prol.; in Is. 11.1–3*)

Jerome thus posits a tight connection between the activity of Symmachus as translator and interpreter and his status as an Ebionite. His primary critique of Symmachus is his manner of translation and his commentary on passages from Matthew.

Origen also knows Symmachus as a translator. He lists the translation of Symmachus as one of the five editions of Zechariah, then cites his text in comparison to others (*in Matt. comm. 16.16*). It is not clear, however, that Origen thinks of Symmachus as Jewish Christian.

The description of Symmachus as an Ebionite translator endures. In his *Church History*, Nicephorus Callistus (1256–1335) says “It is necessary to know that among the translators, Symmachus belonged to the heresy of the Ebionites” (5.12). Nicephorus continues: “Symmachus published commentaries on the holy Gospel according to Matthew with which he believed he could fortify and strengthen his heresy” (5.12).³⁴

Thus, an enduring tradition describes Symmachus, in light of his translations and commentaries, as an Ebionite.³⁵ This makes it surprising that others speak quite differently of a group called the Symmachians. Ambrosiaster (c. 375 ce) says that Symmachians believe in Christ and observe the Law of works. “Like the Symmachians,” says Ambrosiaster, “who take their origins from the Pharisees who, observing the entire Law, call themselves Christians” (*comm. in ep. ad Gal. prol.*). Augustine speaks of those who were unhappy with the apostolic decree not to require Gentiles to become Jews, then says that Faustus calls these people Symmachians or Nazoreans (*contra Faustum* 19.17; similarly in *contra Cresconium* 1.31.36). Filaster (383 ce), however, says Symmachians were disciples of

³⁴ The texts may be found in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 276–81.

³⁵ This distinction is discussed by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 52–54. They also provide the texts under discussion.

Patricius, who was known for gnostic ideas, and that they were libertines (*de haer.* 62–63).³⁶ Marius Victorius (c. 350 ce) says that Symmachians originate from James, the brother of the Lord (*(in ep. ad Gal.* 1.15; 4.12). James is said to be the first to preach Christ and the necessity of living like the Jews. He is considered by Symmachians to be one of the twelve apostles (*in ep. ad Gal.* 4.12). Symmachians confess Christ, but “they say that he is Adam and a general soul and other blasphemies of a similar kind” (*in ep. ad Gal.* 4.12).

Klijn and Reinink note that “those who speak of Symmachus as an Ebionite do not mention the Symmachians and that those who write about the Symmachian group do not consider Symmachus to be an Ebionite.”³⁷ These two very different portraits are developed along distinct axes. Those who speak of Symmachus know his work as a translator and interpreter. It is the Hebraic perspective of his publications that undergirds their verdict that he is an Ebionite. In contrast, those who do not know Symmachus or his work feel free to speak of the various heresies of the Symmachians. Another axis may also be identified. With the exception of Jerome, who is working from Judea, the Latin fathers do not speak of Symmachus, but of Symmachians.

This complex literary history has a rather simple tradition history. Two streams of tradition are defined around 1) the textual work of Symmachus and 2) the ideas about the sect of the Symmachians. Is there plausible historical value to either stream?

The stories of the Symmachians as a sect – their origin, profile, beliefs, and practices – cover almost all the spectrum of heretical beliefs and make any historical judgment suspect. The work of Symmachus as a person is more noteworthy. It is historically plausible that Symmachus is known to Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome for his translation of the Hebrew Bible and for the Hebraic quality of his other writings. It is clear that Symmachus translated the Hebrew Bible in distinction from the Septuagint. If Symmachus also evoked the scorn of patristic writers by his interpretation of parts of the Gospel of Matthew in light of the Hebrew Bible, then it is plausible to speak of him, in agreement with Eusebius and Jerome, as a Jewish Christian.

4. Conclusion

Elkesaites, Cerinthians, and Symmachians have been swept into the larger patristic polemic against Ebionites. The extensive literary representation of these groups is built upon a much smaller tradition history. These lines of tradition have a limited historical plausibility. Cerinthians are probably not Jewish Chris-

³⁶ Discussed by Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 54.

³⁷ Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 54.

tians. A Jewish Christian form of the Elkesaites tradition may develop in Rome. Symmachians are mostly a patristic construct, but Symmachus likely represents a formidable force as a Jewish Christian translator and interpreter of scripture.

CHAPTER 10

Judaizers

Previous chapters searched for groups in antiquity who sought to realize their identity by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Such groups almost certainly composed important segments of the earliest communities of Jesus' followers. In addition, some of the groups labeled as heretics by the patristic writers are characterized and represented in a way that suggests they reflect some type of Jewish Christianity.

A third line of testimony deserves attention. Various patristic writers speak of individuals within the church who continue to observe Jewish practices. No heretical title is given and no group identity is assigned to these individuals; they are perceived by patristic writers as Christians in need of instruction or correction. Most scholars have referred to these individuals as *Judaizers*. Some attempt must be made to locate this phenomenon in relation to Jewish Christianity.

1. The Problem of Definition

The term *Judaizers* is itself problematic. First, the term must be distinguished from the general influence that Jewish faith, practice, texts, liturgy, and institutions exert upon Christianity. Marcel Simon insists that Judaizing refers to

the more specific and more readily defined effects of the Jewish impact, which produced a kind of enlarged Jewish-Christian movement. This movement was characterized by a combination of orthodox Christian elements with features drawn from Judaism, or with Judaizing tendencies.¹

Simon's description does not fall within the parameters of the definition of Jewish Christianity used here. Furthermore, even with Simon's clarification the term Judaizing remains problematic. It assumes, from the standpoint of the individuals, that these are Christians who have added to their faith certain Jewish practices. This definition presumes, from the standpoint of the church leaders, that these are Christians who are missing out on the insight that Christianity surpasses, transforms, and replaces all that is of value in Judaism. From either

¹ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A study of the relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 [1st French edition, 1964]), p. 306.

standpoint, these individuals are characterized as nothing more than a variation on the faith of orthodox Christianity.

This characterization – Christianity with a serving of Judaism on the side – implies a rather strange and complex evolution. The major presumption is that most are Gentile Christians who have taken an interest in things Jewish. Others are presumed to be God-fearers or proselytes to Judaism who, though converted to Christianity, have reverted to some of their Jewish practices. The least discussed option is that these individuals are Jewish by identity. In this case their attachment to Jewish practice would be neither an innovation nor a reversion; it would represent a continuation of Jewish practice within the context of church membership.

The difference in the situation of the three arenas studied thus far – the primitive communities, Jewish Christians described in patristic writings, and church members chided for Jewish practices – may be more a matter of context than content. The first communities likely represent the primary pattern for following Jesus in places like Palestine and Syria, at least up to 70 ce and perhaps beyond. Their pole of opposition was found primarily in the synagogues,² which also provided their primary place of recruitment. The Jewish Christian sects of patristic literature existed, for the most part, in a changed context. The period from 70 ce (1st Jewish War) until 325 ce (Nicea) was not dominated by any one pattern of Judaism or Christianity; Jewish Christian sects were a part of the variegated mix from which rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity would later emerge triumphant.

Those typically labeled as Judaizers likely exist in yet another context. Between 250 ce and 350 ce orthodox Christianity and rabbinic Judaism are becoming definable entities, and they are gaining privileged status, including the power to sanction or to ignore all competition. Historians, leaders, and authoritative canons are emerging to chronicle and to insure the dominance of these two traditions. Both rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity are redrawing the map of the religious landscape, marking out clear boundaries that both define and exclude.

Despite growing polarization, there is important testimony that some yet live between synagogue and church. Patristic evidence is clear that these individuals are considered members of the Christian church. Though mildly irritating, they are not excommunicated nor even labeled as heretics. It is reasonable to ask whether a similar level of tolerance and ownership may have existed on the part of the synagogues they attend. They are labeled as “Judaizers” precisely because they can and do continue to attend synagogue and to observe ritual practices and feasts associated with the life of the synagogue.

² Though some tension may exist with the work of Paul and various other Christians.

It is also clear that Judaizers have been defined solely from the viewpoint of Christian leadership. If this bias is laid aside, a number of questions emerge. It is recorded that such individuals were chastized on Sunday by leaders like Origen and Chrysostom for having once again attended synagogue and observed Jewish rituals. Is it possible these same individuals were chastized on Sabbath by the rabbis for once again attending church and observing Christian rituals? The term Judaizers assumes a Christian perspective on their activity; would it be equally valid to refer to them, from a Jewish perspective, as *Christianizers*? Could these believers claim to follow an apostolic model for participation in Jewish worship (Acts 3.1–10)? Such questions highlight the difficulties involved in every attempt define the term Judaizers and to describe their historical location on the religious map of antiquity. In an age when church and synagogue were assuming identity and authority, these individuals appear as the ones in between.

2. A Practical Phenomenon

Whatever their social location and whatever the route by which they reached this position, their practices fall clearly within the range of Judaism. Such practices are not without precedence among those who follow Jesus.

A key component in Luke's account of the early church is the connection of Jesus' first followers to the institutions of Israel. Peter and other apostles continue to worship and to evangelize in the courts of the Jerusalem Temple (Acts 2.46; 3.1–26). Near the end of his life, Paul returns to the Temple to fulfill a Nazirite vow (Acts 21.17–26). Throughout his travels, Paul is shown as going first to the synagogues of the diaspora, preaching Jesus as the Jewish messiah. At no point do Peter, Paul, or any other of Luke's characters forbid Jews who follow Jesus from practicing Judaism.

Paul sounds quite different when he speaks for himself in his letter to the Galatians: "Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the Law until faith could be revealed" (Gal. 3.23). Nonetheless, his primary critique is aimed at those who expect Gentile converts to practice Judaism and at Gentile converts who seek circumcision: "Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the Law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh" (Gal. 6.13). In his letter to the Roman community, Paul is not overly concerned about eating meat offered to idols: "We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do" (Rom. 8.8). Those who are worried about meat sacrificed to idols should not eat it. Those who are not bothered need not worry about such food, but they should worry about offending fellow believers (Rom. 8.9). Rom. 14.5–6, however, could hardly refer to pagan festivals:

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

Though he could be referring to the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), Paul is likely speaking of the Jewish Sabbath. Some regard this day as significant and some do not. Some fast on this day and some do not. Writing to a congregation that he did not found, Paul expresses tolerance for both positions. In doing so, he does not distinguish between Jewish converts, Jewish proselyte converts, Jewish God-fearers who converted, and pagans who converted. “The faith you have,” says Paul, “have as your own conviction before God” (*Rom. 14.22*).

Such questions about Sabbath and other Jewish festivals arise periodically in the patristic era. Jerome implies that Jewish converts continue to circumcise their sons, to observe Sabbath and kosher laws, and to sacrifice a lamb on 14 Nisan, the day of Passover.³ Some leaders will reinterpret the Jewish Day of Atonement,⁴ and others will argue that it is no longer compatible with Christianity.⁵ Origen (185–253/254 ce) shows that church members in Caesarea are celebrating *Yom Kippur*:

You women who observe the Jewish fast – as if you did not know that Day of Atonement that exists since Jesus Christ – you have not heard of the hidden atonement, but only of the apparent. For to hear of the hidden atonement is to hear how God put Jesus forward as an atonement for our sins and that he himself is an atonement for our sins, not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.⁶

Who are these women?⁷ Are they Christians attracted to the novelty of *Yom Kippur*? Are they God-fearers who revert to this practice? Are they Jewish Christians who retain the central festival of Judaism? Or is Origen insulting men by

³ See Jerome's *ep. 112.15*. This is discussed in Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 325.

⁴ See, for example, Hegesippus' transformation of *Yom Kippur* in his *Hypomenemata*, dated around 180 ce. See the discussion in Stökl Ben Ezra, “Christians’ observing ‘Jewish’ festivals of Autumn” in *The Image of Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry, WUNT 158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), p. 68.

⁵ See *St. Ephraem’s Hymn*: “My brethren, keep far from the unleavened bread in which is symbolized the sacrament of Judas. Flee, my brethren, from the unleavened bread of Israel, for beneath its whiteness there is hidden shame. Do not accept, my brethren, the unleavened bread of this people whose hands are stained with blood.” The text is cited in Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 324.

⁶ From Origen’s *Twelfth Homily on Jeremiah*, chapter 13. The translation is that of Stökl Ben Ezra and is found in his article entitled “Christians’ observing ‘Jewish’ festivals of Autumn,” p. 68.

⁷ There is a difficult grammatical issue here. The sentence opens with a masculine relative pronoun followed by a feminine form of the participle. Some translate the addressees as men, some as women. The suggestion that Origen may be insulting men by feminizing them is mine.

feminizing them? It is impossible to say.⁸ But it is clear that Origen considers them a part of his congregation and subject to his authority. He presumes they are present to hear his sermon, and he presumes that they observe Yom Kippur in addition to other practices.

These passages make it clear that, in Origen's eyes, Christianity and Judaism are different systems of belief and practice; they are mutually exclusive alternatives. It is also clear that, in the eyes of some in his audience, they are not.

This conflict endures into the 4th century. Two lines of controversy demonstrate this. The first concerns the date of Easter. Already in the *Didache*, at the end of the 1st century, Christian leaders seek to transform Jewish fast days without abandoning them.⁹ The key battleground, however, will come in the relationship between Easter and Passover. In the first stages of the debate, leaders attempted to distinguish the meaning of Easter from Passover, but they continued to accept the Jewish calendar. The *Didascalia*, written in the 3rd century, asserts a distinct meaning for Easter, but sets the beginning of Holy Week on 14 Nissan, the Jewish date for Passover.¹⁰

The long campaign of the Church to separate Easter from Passover is seemingly accomplished at the Council of Nicea in 325 ce. As Marcel Simon notes:

The council of Nicea pronounced upon the question of the date of Easter, and the imperial authority sanctioned its decisions. It was henceforth forbidden to celebrate Easter, even with specifically Christian rituals, at the same time as the Jewish Passover. And the practice laid down by the *Didascalia* thus became heretical.¹¹

Still the practice of determining Easter by Passover continued. A work entitled the *Diataxis* influences the later sect of the Audians. There they read: "Observe when your brethren of the circumcision do so. Observe it together with them."¹²

Geography may play a key role in such debates. Aphraates is a contemporary of Chrysostom who works in Mesopotamia. Living in permanent contact with strong Jewish communities, Aphraates' church exhibits a distinct paschal practice, beginning Holy Week on the day of the crucifixion. But Holy Week, in this tradition, runs from 15 to 21 Nisan, corresponding to the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread.¹³

⁸ It is not at all clear that such categories of faith would be recognized by those on either side of this debate.

⁹ See *Didache* 8. They change the fast days from Monday/Thursday to Wednesday/Friday. This change is taken up and explained in the *Didascalia* (see 5.14.8 and 5.14.21).

¹⁰ See the discussion in Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 315–16.

¹¹ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 316.

¹² The *Diataxis* is cited in the work of Epiphanius. See *Haer.* 70.10, cited in Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 316.

¹³ See the discussion by Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 318–20.

The Easter/Passover controversy is not limited to sectarian elements or to isolated churches. It makes its strongest appearance in the churches led by Chrysostom, who also provides the second line of evidence.

Preaching in Antioch in the last years of the 4th century, Chrysostom thunders against the members of his congregation who persist in Jewish practices:

many even of those who are reckoned to belong to us and who say they think as we do, go along, some for the sake of the spectacle and others even to take part in the celebration and associate themselves with the fast. It is of this pernicious practice that I intend now to rid the Church.¹⁴

Like Origen before him, Chrysostom highlights the participation of women.¹⁵ It is significant to note that this participation is not limited to one event. Simon notes that “The occasion for the preaching of the homilies is that of the great autumn festivals of the Jews, Tabernacles, New Year, and Yom Kippur.”¹⁶ Likewise, participation is not limited to a few people. Chrysostom sounds embarrassed by the scale of involvement: “And even if there are many who are observing the fast, you should not let it be known nor advertise the difficult situation of the church, but let us heal it.”¹⁷ Neither is the participation limited to worship events. Members of Chrysostom’s congregation also seek healing at the synagogue and take solemn oaths there.¹⁸

Though declared heretical and placed under imperial sanction at Nicea (325 ce), such practices were not extinguished until the 8th century. Long after Nicea, Audians and Novatians celebrate Easter in connection with Passover.¹⁹ The Council of Laodicea (7th century), repeats the prohibition against participation in Jewish festivals.²⁰

Leaders of the orthodox churches faced a double difficulty in their attempt to extinguish observance of Jewish holy days. Simon observes that “in order to avert the danger, it was not enough to simply change the dates. The Judaizers’ response to that was to celebrate two festivals instead of one.”²¹ The *Apostolic Con-*

¹⁴ *Hom.* 1.1. The passages from Chrysostom are discussed in Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 326. For the texts, see *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul Harkins, vol. 68 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1977).

¹⁵ *Hom.* 2.3; 4.7.

¹⁶ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 326.

¹⁷ *Hom.* 8.4. The translation is mine.

¹⁸ *Hom.* 1.6; *Hom.* 1.3. Chrysostom issues extensive warnings against the healing of the rabbis. See the discussion in Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 327, 355–58. See also the introduction to Chrysostom’s work by Paul Harkins in *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, especially pp. xxxi–l. Christians may seek healing at the synagogue of Daphne and at the shrine of the Maccabean martyrs.

¹⁹ Pseudo-Chrysostom, in *Pascha* 7.1, list the sects that follow Easter in a Jewish way. See the discussion in Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 321–22.

²⁰ Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 324–25.

²¹ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 322.

stitutions, a liturgical text from the 4th century text, recognizes both Sabbath and Sunday as days of rest.²² Marcel Simon believes such practices can be found in a wide range of geographical locations.²³

3. Conclusion

Do those described as Judaizers represent any historical manifestation of Jewish Christianity? Is their attraction to Jewish practice a core element in their identity, or is it a supplement to Christian orthodoxy?

The literary presentation of Judaizing is concerned with two elements: the relation of Easter to Passover and the participation of church members in synagogue. Two lines of tradition run through this literary representation. In the representation of church leaders, these are Christians with an attraction to Jewish events. The vitality and endurance of this phenomenon suggests a different profile among practitioners: some treat participation in Jewish life as fully coherent with their membership in the church. It is more difficult to say how they understood or project their own sense of identity.

As with other traditions, the historical value of the Judaizers can only be described on a continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. It is possible that the phenomena described as Judaizing represents converted pagans or Gentiles who have been attracted to some aspects of Jewish practice. Such two-stage conversions are plausible. Jewish practices would represent an *innovation* for such converts. It is also possible that Judaizers were once associated with Judaism as God-fearers or as proselytes, but have now become Christians. Such three-stage conversions are more complex, but still plausible. In this case Jewish practices would represent a *reversion* to things learned from their earlier experience in the synagogue. What is less plausible is that either of such groups would receive ongoing tolerance, welcome, and support from the synagogues. It is, however, possible that some church members are welcome at synagogue because they continue to hold and practice Jewish identity. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to think that members of all three categories may, on occasion, observe synagogue worship.

Equally plausible is the position that such individuals are neither Judaizers nor Christianizers. The phenomena addressed by Origen, Chrysostom, and others suggest there are believers whose religious identity is found somewhere

²² *Const. Ap.* 8.33.1–2. Slaves are to be given rest on both Saturday and Sunday. It is likely that Saturday services are celebrated because of the creation, while Sunday services celebrate the resurrection. The Saturday (Sabbath) services may be intentionally designed to keep church members away from synagogues. These passages are discussed by Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 323, esp. n. 68.

²³ Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 328–38.

between church and synagogue. It is true of church leaders – and likely true as well of rabbis – that such behavior is discouraged. It is also clear that some practitioners treat this dual participation as normative behavior and that it will not disappear easily or quickly.

What has this to do with the quest for Jewish Christianity? First, even if this phenomenon is seen as isolated and periodic, it bears witness to the innovative potential inherent in Jewish and Christian practice. Secondly, it provides further testimony to the variegated nature and practice of both Judaism and Christianity in the first three centuries and to the late development of definitive identity markers and boundaries. Thirdly, if there is any continuity to such practices, this bears witness to the amazing durability and variability of Jewish ways of following Jesus. Fourthly, the phenomenon of those who exist between church and synagogue is not simply an ideological one; it is real, and it is practical. As Marcel Simon notes, both the organized and the spontaneous forms of this phenomenon “grew up in the same regions in the East, close to Judaism’s important centers.... Its geographical distribution is sufficient to establish that its essential cause was direct contact with the Synagogue.”²⁴ Fifthly, the phenomenon of those who live between church and synagogue testifies to the significant divide that often exists between those who speak for a religious tradition and those who practice it. At a time when rabbis and bishops alike were proclaiming the exclusive authority and the clearly defined boundaries of their traditions, some practitioners persistently lived outside those boundaries. Sixthly, an ancient divide emerges anew as the church approaches Nicea. Christianity in the West grows more unified in its doctrine and structure, more monolithic, and more Latin. The East is noted increasingly for its distinction from western orthodoxy, but also for its internal diversity.

From a historical perspective, then, it is not clear that the term *Judaizers* refers to any specific group who should be labeled as a form of Jewish Christianity. The concept of Judaizers seems to be a Christian construct, and it may have its primary reference to Jewish practices rather than to any form of Jewish identity.

Whether by *innovation* (by Gentile converts), *reversion* (by God-fearers or by proselytes), or *continuity* (by Jewish Christians), this controversy does suggest that a blending of Jewish and Christian practices persisted at least into the 4th century. The extent and the intensity of the patristic angst certifies that such practices are a perceived threat in various times and places and modes. Moreover, critical standards of plausibility suggest the patristic writers did not overstate the presence and impact of this phenomenon. It is more likely that they understated its significance.

²⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 306–307.

CHAPTER 11

Retrospective: Patristic Representations of Jewish Christianity

Do patristic writings point to groups in antiquity who seek to fulfill God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness? Previous chapters subjected to critical analysis the patristic representation of specific groups. This chapter offers a retrospective overview that seeks to judge whether and to what extent the patristic materials confirm the historical existence of Jewish Christianity.

1. Literary Representation

Patristic writers offer a literary representation of Jewish Christianity that is extensive, variegated, creative, and contradictory. Its development is marked by repetition and accretion. Two hermeneutical designs control this presentation.

The patristic representation of the sects is dominated by the *hermeneutics of heresiology*. While the rubric of church history is sometimes used, the patristic representation of the sects functions as a rhetoric of dismissal.

The hermeneutics of heresiology determine the *form and style* of the presentation: heresy lists have become running commentaries designed to support genetic histories. The *tone* is set by this function: shock, grief, anger, and vitriole flow through this literature. The hermeneutics of heresiology also control the *rhetorical strategy* of this material: basic errors of faith and practice are explained, a founding figure is identified, geographical locations are specified, connections to other heresies are clarified. A part of this strategy is a litany of consequences – rejection, failure, extinction. Among the voices invoked for this censure are biblical and apostolic sanctions, the primary value of truth and true faith, the logic of orthodoxy. The tool of last resort is dismissal through definition: they are heretics, and they are Jews.

In contrast to this hermeneutics of heresiology, the patristic representation of the Judaizers is controlled by the *hermeneutics of reproof*. In contrast to the rhetoric of exclusion, this approach is centripetal: it intends to reclaim and maintain its own. Such reproof is sometimes implied in the treatment of various heretical groups, since the message is usually addressed to Christian audiences, but

this hermeneutic is explicit in the attempt to stop the practices associated with Judaizing. In this case, those who have gone astray are not labeled as excluded heretics, but as wandering members of the family. A rhetoric of recall employs warning, reproof, and various other threats in an effort to define the boundaries between church and synagogue.

This literary representation of the sects and of the Judaizers serves to delineate those outside and inside of Christian faith, and it becomes a type of received testimony. It is passed from place to place, from generation to generation, and it plays a central role in the construction of identity and social boundaries.

2. Traditions

In addition to the traditions associated with individual groups, major streams of tradition flow through the larger patristic representation of Jewish Christianity. The most significant of these larger traditions is a mapping process that involves the naming and locating of heresies. If *christening* is understood as the ritual of initiation that provides a name and a social location within the Christian community, then patristic representation of the sects may be seen as a conscious *de-christening*. The tools employed in the characterization of the sects – name, beliefs and practices, founder, location, history, consequences, dismissal – all serve to name the heresy and to locate it outside the boundaries of the church. Some groups had good beginnings, some were marked by naiveté, but all end up beyond the limits of orthodoxy.

A second major line of tradition is evident in the foundational myths framed around biographical sketches. In the logic of this worldview, it is clear that Ebionites were founded by Ebion and that Symmachus was followed by Symmachians.¹ In the world of patristic representation, the tradition of the founder is a key marker in the description of heresy.

A third major line of tradition is found in the need to create overarching categories of heresy. Two major types dominate the landscape: gnostics and Ebionites. As a consequence, genetic links between various groups are described. Presuming shared ideas, practices, books, histories, and territories, a few major types are used to locate heretical groups on the religious map of antiquity.

A fourth line of tradition describes the inevitable consequences of such heresies. According to patristic accounts, false doctrine, evil practice, idolatry, and libertinism all follow in the wake of such movements.

The fifth stream of tradition flowing through the larger patristic representation describes a history of rejection associated with the sects. Apostles are said to

¹ From a historical perspective, Ebion is likely fictional, though Ebionites are real; Symmachians are likely a constructed image, though Symmachus is real.

have rebuked such heretics and to have fled from their presence. Biblical texts refute them, as do truth, logic, common sense, and orthodoxy. Heretics are, in the perspective of patristic writers, guilty by association. As a final resort, dismissal by definition is practiced. The fact that they think and act in heretical ways shows that they are heretics; because they are labeled as heretics, it is certain that they act and think in heretical ways.

These major streams of tradition provide both the consequence and the cause of the patristic representation. Such traditions reveal a great deal about the poetics and rhetoric – the motivation and method – of patristic design. These lines of tradition also provide important starting points for historical analysis.

3. Historical Analysis

Literary representations such as the patristic reports sustain various streams of tradition, and such traditions may point to historical realities. The difficult problem, of course, is to know what those historical realities are and what is their relationship to the literary representation. The historical reality may be found in what is represented, but it may be found in its polar opposite. Historical reality may reside in what is not said or acknowledged. Texts and traditions may tell more about the context than about the text, and they may tell more about the author than about the subject.

Historical analysis of a literary representation that serves an ideological goal can rarely be absolute. Few things are completely impossible, and little can be proven beyond doubt. In such cases historical analysis must work within a range of possibilities, and it must speak, for the most part, in the subjunctive voice. Consequently, the patristic representation of Jewish Christianity can only be evaluated along a historical continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. In addition to this critical continuum, categories of general and specific plausibility may prove useful.

3.1 General Plausibility

The patristic representation of Jewish Christianity supports a realm of general plausibility. First, the nature of the patristic portrait – its extent, its diversity, its intensity – makes it probable that Jewish Christianity represents a historical entity. While it is possible that the massive bulwark of heresiology is raised against an imagined foe, this explanation holds little plausibility. It would be extremely difficult to explain such a patristic assault in the absence of any historical threat. While it may be difficult to know from the patristic representation *how* Jewish Christianity existed, the fact of its historical existence is probable.

Secondly, the variegated nature of Jewish Christianity represents a general area of plausibility. The varieties of belief and practice assigned to Jewish Christians demonstrate a large measure of contradiction, confusion, carelessness, and incompetence. Nonetheless, significant hints of authentic diversity remain. Patristic descriptions tend to cluster along an East-West divide, different categories of Ebionites are described by several writers, different understandings of doctrine – creation, christology, resurrection – emerge. These differences in thought are sometimes correlated to geographical locations. Even if the greater portion of this diversity originates in the mind of the patristic writers, it is unlikely that this accounts for all variations. The most plausible explanation is that patristic writers magnify and confuse an existing diversity.

Thirdly, the interconnected nature assigned to Jewish Christian sects contains a general level of plausibility. It is almost impossible that sects such as Ebionites and Cerinthians held the wide range of diversities and dependencies assigned to them by Epiphanius. But it is highly plausible, and even probable, that different sects were related in a variety of ways. Before the dominance of the rabbis emerged in the 3rd century ce, various Judaisms inhabited the landscape.² The same is true of Christianity before the dominance of Nicea (325 ce) and imperial patronage.³ A Jewish Christian sect could, in theory, reflect one of these many Judaisms and/or any one of these many Christianities. A plurality of Jewish Christian sects would be normative; it would reflect the polyvalence that characterized both Judaism and Christianity through most of this era. A variety of interconnections between such sects should be expected.

Furthermore, like Jewish and Christian sects, Jewish Christian sects could be expected to relate in a variety of ways to movements such as gnosticism, philosophical schools, paganism, magic, and others. While the patristic portrait is hyperbolic, the interconnected nature of individual sects contains a reasonable level of historical plausibility.

A fourth area of general plausibility may be reflected in the perceived threat represented by Jewish Christianity. It is possible that this represents nothing more than paranoia, repeated and magnified through a succession of patristic writers. If so, such paranoia, directed as it is against Christian gnostics and Jews and Jewish Christians, seems strange in a world dominated by pagan religions and imperial authority. In a period after Nicea, when orthodoxy is gaining dominance, such paranoia would appear anachronistic.

Although the perceived threat represented by Jewish Christianity has been magnified and does, in fact, contain elements of paranoia, it is plausible that

² Josephus, writing in the last part of the 1st century, claims there are many types of Jews. Marcel Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, trans. James Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967 [French edition, 1960]), discusses some eleven groups.

³ Epiphanius names some eighty heresies, most of which are Christian.

there is a historical core to this representation. The vigorous resistance to Jewish Christianity is likely a subset of the larger angst and animosity toward all forms of Judaism. In the era before Nicea, it is not at all clear that Christianity, much less orthodox Christianity, will achieve coherence and dominance. After Nicea, it is not always clear that it will maintain its ground.⁴

In addition, orthodoxy finds more resistance in areas such as Egypt and Syria.⁵ Indeed, the developing Christian movement faced two distinct disadvantages. First, they lacked the official tolerance extended by Rome to Judaism. Recognized as an ancient and stubborn religion, Judaism was exempt from a number of the obligations of Roman civil religion. Christianity, on the other hand, was perceived as a recent sect or superstition and was subject not only to civil obligations, but also to sanction and extinction. The second disadvantage was that Christian movements found it necessary to explain themselves in light of their Jewish roots. The enduring stance of defensiveness, hostility, and even paranoia that marks the Christian response to Judaism was likely practiced as well against Jewish Christian sects.

A fifth area of general plausibility may be found in the vitality and endurance of Jewish Christianity. While much of the patristic representation is developed through repetition, accretion, and expansion, this does not offer a sufficient explanation for the persistent appearance of Jewish Christian movements. As in most polemical literature, the insistent answer suggests a persistent question. It is possible that the patristic response is directed at a long deceased straw figure, but it is not likely. The most plausible explanation for the intensity and the persistence of the patristic response to Jewish Christianity is that the question still exists, and it still matters.

While literary representations carry distinct bias and prove difficult subjects for historical analysis, the patristic treatment of Jewish Christians exposes a general realm of plausibility. Despite other possibilities, it is most plausible that Jewish Christian groups existed in a variety of forms and drew upon the diverse religious landscape of the ancient world. In an age of self-definition and boundary formation, Jewish Christianity likely presented a viable and persistent claim for its own piece of the map. The inertia and energy that lie behind the patristic representation are best explained by the existence of vital, variegated, collaborative forms of Jewish Christianity.

⁴ It is also noteworthy that Emperor Julian (361–63 ce) intended to reverse the rise of Christianity and to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

⁵ Some scholars think that Christianity in Egypt was primarily of the gnostic type. Syria, particularly Edessa, tended to follow its own route.

3.2 Particular Plausibility

In addition to the general realm of plausibilities, some specific aspects of the patristic representation of Jewish Christianity suggest plausibility. While no coherent, unified description may be framed on this basis, these specific aspects provide important markers for the reconstruction of Jewish Christianity.

First, there is historical plausibility in the distinct portrait of the Nazarenes (Nazoreans). While the distinction between two types of Ebionites was noted earlier, it is Jerome who locates Nazarenes as a specific historical group. Although Epiphanius disagrees with Jerome's general assessment, he confirms the core representation. Nazarenes are described as Jewish followers of Jesus who observe the Law. They are said to be found in the area of Syrian Beroea in the last half of the 4th century. They are credited with a noteworthy Hebraic tradition that includes both texts and commentaries. They are ignored or tolerated for most of the patristic period, and the assignment to the list of heresies is quite late. Heresiologists can find little to say against them, which is unusual.⁶ Patristic critics resort to guilt by association and dismissal by definition. Patristic writers after Jerome and the consensus of scholarly research have connected Nazarenes to Ebionites and dismissed them as a group. Once the critique of Jerome against the people of Nazareth has been clarified, Nazarenes and their texts present a plausible historical profile.

Secondly, strands of historical plausibility reside in the characterization of the Ebionites. The larger representation of Ebionites – as a collective heresy that incorporates almost every trend known to patristic writers – is untenable. It is plausible, however, to suggest that some pieces of this collective portrait have historical grounding. It is difficult, of course, to know which pieces. Patristic responses to Ebionite use of scripture, citations from Ebionite gospels, and reference to geographical location may provide historical markers. Multiple attestation from different contexts may increase the level of plausibility. As a consequence, the patristic representation of Ebionites suggests strands of historical plausibility, but it offers no historical access to any specific groups.

Thirdly, there is a strong probability that Jewish Christians defended their faith and practice by citing a saying of Jesus from Mt. 10.24–25:

A disciple is not above the teacher, nor the slave above the master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.

⁶ See, for example, the treatment of the Ebionites and the Symmachians, who are charged with every type of heresy.

Several patristic writers note the use of the saying by the Ebionites.⁷ Different patristic writers connect the saying to different Ebionite practices, providing multiple attestation. The criterion of dissimilarity is also applicable, as is the criterion of embarrassment. Patristic writers find it difficult or impossible to refute this claim, yet they persist in the effort. This makes it, by all critical standards, highly unlikely that this is a patristic invention. Some Jewish Christians claimed that their practice of circumcision, their observance of Passover, and their obedience to the Law are a conscious imitation of Jesus, and they supported this claim by citing Mt. 10.24–25. This is the most certifiable piece of historical data in all of the patristic representation of Jewish Christianity.

Fourthly, Origen (*de princ.* 4.3.8) notes that some Jewish Christians invoke the words of Mt. 10.5–6 that Jesus came only for the lost sheep of Israel. Though there is no multiple attestation for this reference, the criterion of dissimilarity does apply. The lack of attestation may be due to the inability of patristic writers to deny that, according to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus did say this. Patristic writers cannot answer this Jewish Christian claim, and they certainly did not invent it. Consequently, there is a high degree of probability that Mt. 10.5–6 formed a part of the rhetorical inventory of some Jewish Christians.

Fifthly, there is historical plausibility in the patristic references to Jewish Christian gospels and other texts. It is probable that Jewish Christians transmitted a distinct scriptural tradition. What that tradition contains will be discussed in the following chapter.

Sixthly, the process identified as Judaizing likely contains strands of historical plausibility. At a minimum, this phenomenon is much more complex than the name and description imply. Critical analysis requires that this process cannot be viewed solely from a Christian perspective. This phenomenon, despite the one-sided presentation, suggests that some believers operate somewhere between church and synagogue. Whether this is a question of identity or simply of practice is unclear. Patristic writers express their discomfort, embarrassment, and anger, but they recognize the persistence and vitality of this phenomenon.

Historical plausibility is not to be found in the patristic portrait of Judaizers, but in the underlying motivation for the patristic reproof. From a critical perspective, the vitality and endurance of this phenomenon is best explained by a sequence of historical traits: 1) the innovative potential inherent in Jewish and Christian movements; 2) the variegated and flexible nature of Judaism and Christianity, even in the 4th century; 3) the persistence of mixed practices, even in the era when rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity were becoming defined, dominant movements; 4) the proximity, both ideologically and geograph-

⁷ Pseudo-Tertullian (*adv. omn. haer.* 3); Pseudo-Hieronymus (*indic. de haer.* 10); Epiphanius (*Pan.* 28.5.1–2 of Cerinthians; *Pan.* 30.26.2 and 30.33.4 of Ebionites). The claim to imitate Jesus is sometimes noted without mention of Mt. 10.24–25.

ically, of Jewish Christianity to active synagogues; 5) the significant divide between religious leaders and other practitioners; 6) the continuing distinction between Christianity in the East and in the West.

4. Conclusion

The term Jewish Christianity is used in this study to describe the religious phenomenon of persons or groups in antiquity who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Part Two suggested the origin of this phenomenon is to be found in the historical profile of Jesus, then traced its impact upon the shape of the earliest communities of his followers and upon texts produced within those communities. Part Three traces the way in which Jewish Christianity became a definable entity with patristic writers because of its contrast with an emerging Christian orthodoxy.

While Jewish Christians are known primarily because of the patristic writings, they are also known despite patristic efforts to dismiss them. Employing the hermeneutics of heresiology and the hermeneutics of reproof, patristic authors have written over the stories of Jewish Christianity. As a consequence, Jewish Christianity cannot be known directly from the patristic materials; it can only be known peripherally through the shadows and echoes and counterpoints found within the patristic representation.⁸ There is little, if any, direct access to how such people thought and spoke of their own identity. What can be known are representations, characterizations, and identity markers that must be carefully evaluated in terms of historical plausibility. As a consequence, Jewish Christianity, particularly as it is represented in the patristic era, can only be recognized through an intentional, critical process of rediscovery, reconstruction, and redefinition.

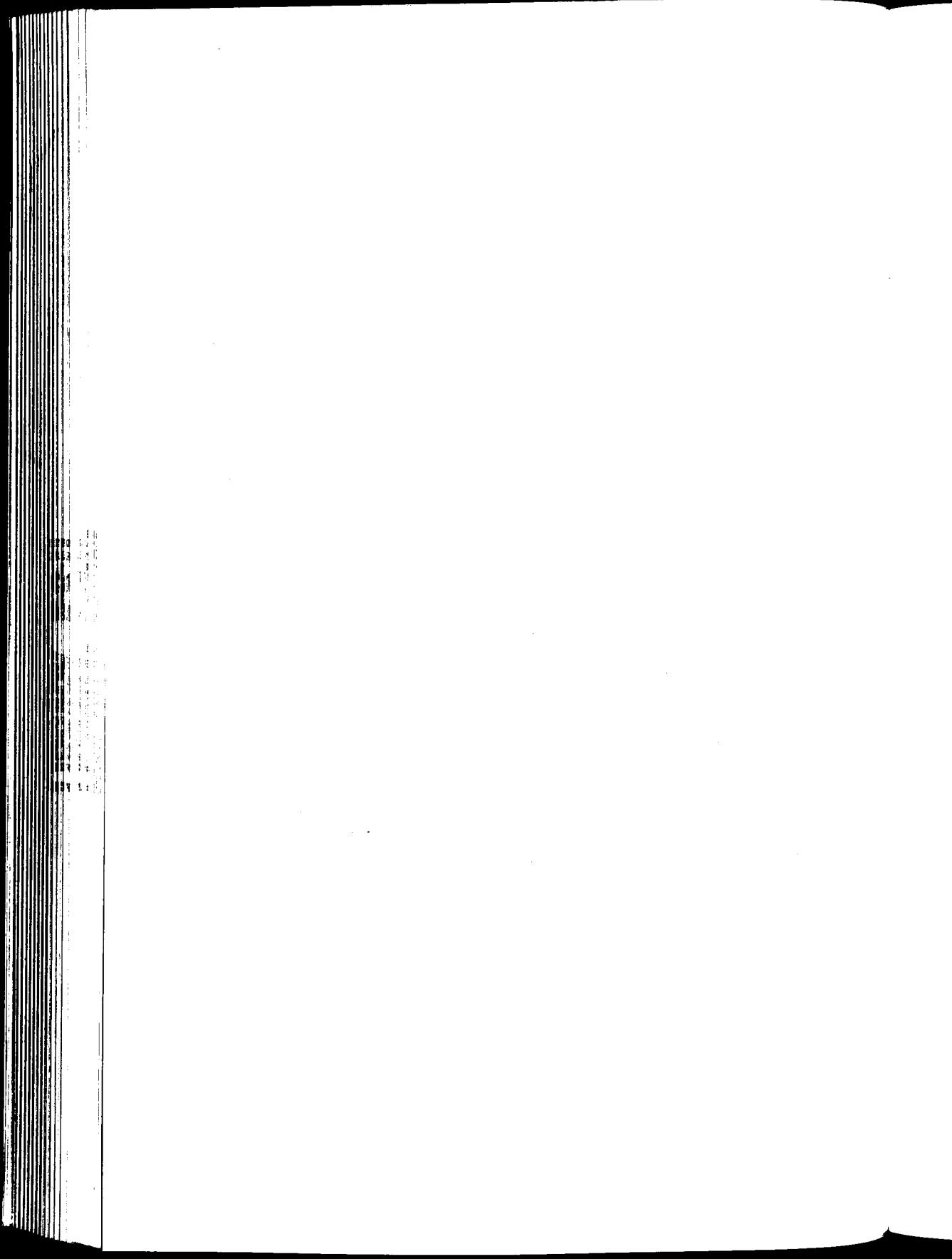
Such critical analysis suggests that showing through the fabric of the patristic accounts are significant markers that might serve as keys to the historical location of Jewish Christianity. These signs cannot be connected to form a coherent portrait, but they are noteworthy. These markers support a general realm of plausibility: Jewish Christianity existed as a vital, enduring movement and presented

⁸ In my opinion, one of the major problems in scholarly investigations of Jewish Christianity has been the attempt to gain a verdict directly from the patristic materials. Such analysis is destined for frustration and skewed results. The easiest position is to abandon the search as hopeless and to trivialize the issue of Jewish Christianity. Others persist in the effort to sketch a coherent portrait on the basis of patristic reports. Such readings tend to be marked by repetition, by overstatement and special pleading, and by strained conclusions. I have suggested here that Jewish Christianity can be known partially and peripherally through a critical analysis of patristic representations. What is learned here must become a part of a larger reconstruction that engages literary representations, but also draws upon a variety of other disciplines and hermeneutics.

a variety of forms, locations, and connections. These markers also support the historical plausibility of specific traits: Nazarenes wrote texts from Syrian Be-roea; some groups of Ebionites are historical; Jewish Christians claimed to imitate Jesus and cited his words; they preserved a significant textual tradition; despite the efforts of Christian leaders, some believers continued to live between church and synagogue. Such markers make it difficult to deny the ongoing presence and impact of various forms of Jewish Christianity.

When seen in critical perspective, the patristic materials offer a small collection of historical markers as plausible evidence for the continuing presence and vitality of Jewish Christianity. These markers contradict the grand narrative constructed in the patristic era, and they require significant revisions to the religious map of antiquity.

Other possible markers for Jewish Christianity must be sought in the remnants of texts ascribed to Jewish Christians, in rabbinic writings, and in the material evidence from antiquity.



PART FOUR

Other Evidence for Jewish Christianity

Part One defined Jewish Christianity as persons or groups in antiquity who sought to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Part Two looked for the origins of Jewish Christianity in the earliest Christian communities and writings. Part Three subjected the patristic representation to critical analysis. Part Four will look for other evidence for Jewish Christianity among the remnants of texts ascribed to Jewish Christians, in rabbinical writings, and from archeological data.

CHAPTER 12

Texts Ascribed to Jewish Christians

Patristic writers and medieval manuscripts bear witness to a significant textual tradition that they understood to represent Jewish Christian groups. Even so, the patristic writers and the recovered manuscripts do not give a clear portrait of Jewish Christian writings. In the manuscripts, works purported to be Jewish Christian are treated marginally – they are added as comments, notations, and alternate readings in the transmission of canonical gospels. In the patristic writings, works associated with Jewish Christians are almost always viewed as heretical; they are invoked most often for the purpose of dismissing them. Even when there are direct citations in texts or margins, current knowledge of such texts depends on the selectivity and the transcription of patristic heresiologists or orthodox Christian scribes.

This means that the evidence available through the church fathers and through notations in medieval manuscripts provides no direct access to Jewish Christian groups and their own self-perception or even to a full description of their textual traditions. In many cases there may be no historical reality standing behind such references. In other cases, texts are labeled as Jewish Christian in an arbitrary attempt to discredit them. This should not lead to the conclusion, however, that these references and notes are of no value for the attempt to describe Jewish Christianity.¹ These traits simply mean that descriptions of Jewish Christian texts must be subjected to critical analysis and reconstruction and that the insight they offer is gained peripherally. Any conclusions must be provisional, and they must be couched in terms of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. It is reasonable to ask whether such insights and conclusions may provide another valuable tool in the reconstruction of ancient Jewish Christianity.

¹ James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. I., *The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 765, thinks the fragments add nothing significant to our knowledge of Jewish Christianity.

1. Jewish Christian Gospels

Several patristic writers refer to Jewish Christian gospels, with some offering citations. Such references and citations, however, are fragmentary and selective, they are often conflated, and they serve almost exclusively in the patristic rejection of heresy. In addition, a few manuscripts of canonical texts offer marginal references to Jewish Christian gospels.

Since no ancient group speaks as the owners and tradents of these traditions, any analysis of these references depends on the judgment of patristic writers that these are Jewish Christian texts. When patristic writers label certain texts as Jewish Christian, this may simply represent a strategy for dismissing and excluding these texts. In a similar way, patristic writers label a diverse range of texts as gnostic in order to signify their heretical status. Nonetheless, some patristic reports appear less sinister.

Despite the selective and utilitarian nature of this evidence, a careful and critical analysis may find value in these reports of and references to Jewish Christian gospels. Throughout the process of critical analysis, however, it is important to maintain a clear distinction between two different goals: 1) discovering the source, content, and relationship of these texts, and 2) establishing the significance of these texts for a critical understanding of Jewish Christianity.

Critical scholarship in the Jewish Christian gospel tradition belongs to the larger field of the study of apocryphal texts from the New Testament era. While much work was done in the 19th century, the real impetus was provided by the appearance of a collected volume of what would become known as the New Testament Apocrypha. In 1904 Edgar Hennecke published the first volume of *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*. Wilhelm Schneemelcher aided in the publication of several editions of this work, and he became the sole editor for later editions. English translation of this collection was first available in the 1924 translation by M. R. James, and the third German edition was in translation by 1963/1965. Manuscript discoveries in the 1950s, particularly the Nag Hammadi library, stirred a revolution in this field. The 6th German edition of *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* appeared in 1990, and the English translation by R. McL. Wilson appeared in 1991.

A new edition of the Hennecke tradition is forthcoming. The series is edited by Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter. The first volume treats the apocryphal gospels, and the section on the Jewish Christian gospel tradition is authored by Jörg Frey.² Frey's work is also summarized in a forthcoming collection.³

² "Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien," in *Antike Christliche Apokryphen I: Evangelien*, ed. Christoph Marksches and Jens Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

³ Jörg Frey, "Zur Vielgestaltigkeit judenchristlicher Evangelienüberlieferungen" in *Jesus*

Earlier investigations usually worked from the hypothesis of a single Jewish Christian Gospel known to the patristic writers as the Gospel according to the Hebrews.⁴ These studies took the position that references to the gospels used by Nazarenes, Ebionites, and others all pointed to the same Jewish Christian gospel. However, closer analysis of the texts revealed important differences within this material, and recent scholarship speaks of two or more lines of tradition. While some scholars suggest that these are variations of the one original Jewish Christian gospel,⁵ most scholars now identify three distinct Jewish Christian gospels.⁶ Jörg Frey accepts three as the minimal number, but he notes that the complexity of the transmission and the fragmentary nature of the evidence means there may be more that are inaccessible to critical scholarship.⁷

1.1 A Hebrew Gospel Tradition

The first critical landmark is to distinguish the ways in which patristic writers speak of Jewish Christian gospels. A part of the confusion among patristic writers and some modern scholars roots in a failure to separate two types of references. Various patristic references should be understood as descriptive. They may refer to a particular text, but since they do not know what to call it, they describe it. A number of years before he first speaks of the Gospel of the Nazoreans, Jerome knows that Origen makes use of a Hebraic gospel, and Jerome himself seems to borrow from this tradition: “... as we read in the Hebrew Gospel that the Lord said to the disciples: ‘And never rejoice, except when you look at your brother in love’” (*in Eph.* 5.4). Here the term is used descriptively, even though it cites a specific text. At other places, it seems to be used as the title for a specific gospel. Origen, writing around 228 ce, says: “If somebody accepts the Gospel according to the Hebrews, where the Saviour himself says: ‘A moment ago my Mother, the Holy Spirit, took me by one of my hairs and brought me to the great hill, the Tabor’” (*in John* 2.12). This citation is repeated by Jerome (*in Is.* 40.9–11). Most scholars now

in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen, ed. Jorg Frey and Jens Schröter, WUNT (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, forthcoming).

⁴ On the history of scholarship, see H. Waitz, “Neue Untersuchungen über die sogenannten judenchristlichen Evangelien,” ZNW 36 (1937), 60–81.

⁵ So, for example, Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988).

⁶ Access to the critical discussion may be gained through Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. edition, trans. R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1, *Gospels and Related Writings* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991 [6th German edition, 1990]); A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). A short summary may be found in James Carleton Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” pp. 764–66. An accessible version of the texts may be found in Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷ Frey, “Vielgestaltigkeit.”

designate the gospel cited by Origen as the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Jerome probably knew some of this gospel from Origen, but after 392 ce Jerome refers mostly to the Gospel of the Nazoreans, which most scholars understand to be a different gospel. To make the matter even more complex, Jerome seems to use the phrase *the Gospel according to the Hebrews* sometimes to refer to materials he knows from Origen and sometimes to materials he gained from the Nazoreans. One task of critical analysis is to distill from patristic references to a Hebrew gospel when they are referring to a type of gospel and when they are referring to a specific gospel. Even reference to specific gospels must be critically evaluated. Patristic writers call a number of texts the Gospel according to the Hebrews, while critical scholars typically reserve this term for a specific Egyptian tradition.

Critical scholarship offers a wide variety of reconstructions. In addition to deciding on the number of Jewish Christian gospels, critical analysis must assign the various remnants to specific gospels, it must address the questions of source and location, and it must offer some reconstruction of the larger outline of such gospels. Only then can the analysis address the relationship of Jewish Christian gospels to Jesus, to primitive Christianity, to the larger gospel tradition, and to the question of Jewish Christianity.

Despite the complexity of the critical task and the variety of proposed reconstructions, scholars have reached a general consensus that the tradition of Jewish Christian gospels is represented in three specific texts: the Gospel of the Nazoreans, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews.⁸

1.2 *The Gospel of the Nazoreans*

Three patristic writers seem to refer to a Gospel according to the Hebrews and to a separate gospel written in Aramaic. Hegesippus, as reported by Eusebius (*HE* 4.22.8), drew upon four types of tradition:

1. From the Gospel according to the Hebrews
2. From "that of the Syrians"
3. From some things from the Hebrew dialect
4. From some things he remembered from the unwritten Jewish tradition.

This description of Hegesippus' sources highlights the materials available to various patristic writers: several specific gospels, etymological studies based on Hebrew vocabulary and phrasing, oral traditions. Most significant in Hegesippus is the distinction of two specific texts, one of which is written in Syrian (Aramaic).

⁸ For the fragments, reconstruction of the gospels, and commentary see P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Jewish-Christian Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, pp. 134–78; A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (Brill: Leiden, 1992); Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, pp. 9–18.

Eusebius seems to use this same distinction in his own work: he speaks of the Gospel according to the Hebrews (*HE* 3.25.3; 3.27.4; 3.39.7; 4.2.28), but also of a gospel in “Hebrew characters” (*Theophaneia* 4, 5). This may be understood to distinguish a Greek Gospel of the Hebrews from a gospel in Hebrew or in the Hebrew dialect of Aramaic, but it may simply point out that one gospel has used Hebrew characters to render words from another dialect (Aramaic).

The clearest references to an Aramaic gospel are from Jerome. He speaks of a Gospel according to the Hebrews that, he says, was used often by Origen (*de. vir. ill.* 2). After 392 ce, however, Jerome begins to refer specifically to a Gospel of the Nazoreans at Syrian Beroea. Jerome says that a copy of this gospel can be found in the library at Caesarea. He further notes that the Nazoreans allowed him to copy from their text, and he cites it frequently in his commentary on Matthew. Even in his later works, Jerome will sometimes refer to the Nazorean gospel as “according to the Hebrews,” and he believes that this is the gospel by Matthew (*adv. Pel.* 3.2). He sometimes suggests that this is also the gospel used by Origen, implying there is only one Jewish Christian gospel, but critical analysis suggests that he is using two distinct gospels. Jerome is the primary source for the nature and content of the Gospel of the Nazoreans; he cites from it some seven times, and it plays an important role in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.

Although Epiphanius tries to represent a single Jewish Christian gospel, he clearly knows of a distinct Nazorean gospel. Epiphanius is the first patristic writer to speak of the Nazorean sect, and he treats them as heretics. Although he knows the name goes back to apostolic times, Epiphanius creates a history of development, various associations with other heresies, and an exemplar of their theology, all of which demonstrate his claim that Nazoreans are heretics. Epiphanius does not appear to know the Gospel of the Nazoreans directly, but he associates it with Hebrew and with the Gospel of Matthew (*Pan.* 29.9.4).⁹

While ancient writers may be using a description rather than a title, modern scholarship refers to a distinct Gospel of the Nazoreans. The gospel is distinguished by several characteristics.

1. It is associated with the Jewish Christian Nazoreans of Syrian Beroea
2. It is written in Aramaic or Syriac
3. This gospel is essentially an Aramaic version of the Gospel of Matthew.

A variety of fragments have been assigned to the Gospel of the Nazoreans. Remnants of the text may be found in Jerome, but also in Origen, in Eusebius, and in five gospel manuscripts with references in the margins to a collection of Jewish Christian texts known as *To Ioudaikon*. Some of these marginal notes point to

⁹ Epiphanius seems to say that Nazoreans have the original Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew that was mentioned by Papias. Most scholars now reject the claim of Papias that a Hebrew text is behind the Greek Gospel of Matthew that was accepted into the canon.

textual difficulties, some offer alternative readings, and others provide lengthy additions.¹⁰ The list of fragments attributed to the Gospel of the Nazoreans has reached a rather standardized form.¹¹

1. Origen Commentary on Matthew 15.14
2. Eusebius *Theophaneia*, 4.22
3. Eusebius *Theophaneia* 4.12
4. Jerome Commentary on Matthew 6.11
5. Jerome Commentary on Matthew 12.13
6. Jerome Commentary on Matthew 23.35
7. Jerome Commentary on Matthew 27.16
8. Jerome Commentary on Matthew 27.51
9. Jerome *Against the Pelagians* 3.2 (part one)
10. Jerome *Against the Pelagians* 3.2 (part two)
11. Variant Readings in the *To Ioudaikon* collection
 - Matthew 4.5 in MS 566
 - Matthew 5.22 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 7.5 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 10.16 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 11.12 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 11.25 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 12.40 in MS 899
 - Matthew 15.5 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 16.2–3 in MS 1424
 - Matthew 16.17 in MS 566
 - Matthew 18.22 in MSS 566, 899
 - Matthew 26.74 in MSS 4, 273, 899, 1414
 - Matthew 27.65 in MS 1424

The reconstruction and translation of Bart Ehrman is given below.¹²

¹⁰ The nature of the marginal notes is discussed by Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, p. 25.

¹¹ A common list is shared by Vielhauer and Strecker, by Klijn, and by Ehrman. The only exception is that Vielhauer and Strecker add the notice from Jerome in *ad vir. ill* 3. Here Jerome notes that the Gospel of the Nazoreans quotes from a Hebrew version of the Old Testament. Jerome says that use of the Hebrew version of the Old Testament explains two citations that Matthew seems to attribute to the Old Testament ("Out of Egypt have I called my son" and "For he shall be called a Nazarene"). It is not clear, however, that Jerome says these verses come from the Gospel of the Nazorenes. He may only mean that those who understand Hebrew vocabulary and grammar and read the Hebrew Bible can comprehend why Matthew would make these two statements about Jesus. Jörg Frey accepts the same ten units of text with three variations: 1) Jerome has two versions of the report on Mt 6.11 and two versions of the report on Mt 27.51; 2) Origen's commentary on Mt 5.14 is placed at the end of the list; 3) Frey also lists some fifteen traditions from the medieval period. The order given here is that of Ehrman.

¹² Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, pp. 10–11.

The Gospel of the Nazoreans

1. It is written in a certain Gospel that is called “according to the Hebrews” (if in any event anyone is inclined to accept it, not as an authority, but to shed some light on the question we have posed) that another rich man asked [Jesus], “Master, what good thing must I do to have life?” He replied to him, “O man, you should keep the law and the prophets.” He responded, “I have already done that.” Jesus said to him, “Go sell all that you have and distribute the proceeds to the poor; then come, follow me.”

But the rich man began to scratch his head, for he was not pleased. And the Lord said to him, “How can you say, ‘I have kept the law and the prophets?’ For it is written in the law, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But look, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are clothed in excrement and dying of hunger while your house is filled with many good things, not one of which goes forth to these others.” He turned and said to his disciple Simon, sitting beside him, “Simon, son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 15.14)

2. [Cf. Matt. 25.14–30] For the Gospel that has come down to us in Hebrew letters makes the threat not against the one who hid the (master’s) money but against the one who engaged in riotous living. For [the master] had three slaves, one who used up his fortune with whores and flute-players, one who invested the money and increased its value, and one who hid it. The first was welcomed with open arms, the second was blamed, and only the third was locked up in prison. (Eusebius, *Theophania*, 4.22)

3. But [the Lord] taught about the reason for the division of the souls in the houses, as we have found somewhere in the Gospel used by the Jews and written in Hebrew, where he says, “I will choose for myself those who are good – those given me by my Father in heaven.” (Eusebius, *Theophania*, 4.12)

4. In the Gospel that is called “according to the Hebrews,” for the words, “bread to sustain our lives” I found the word “mahar,” which means “[bread] for tomorrow.” (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 6.11)

5. In the Gospel that the Nazareans and Ebionites use, which I recently translated from Hebrew into Greek, and which most people consider the authentic version of Matthew, the man with a withered hand is described as a mason, who sought for help in words like these: “I was a mason who made a living with my hands; I beseech you, Jesus, restore my health so I do not have to beg for food shamefully.” (Jerome, *Commentary in Matthew*, 12.13)

6. In the Gospel the Nazareans use, we find “son of Johoida” instead of “son of Barachia.” (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 23.35)

7. The name of that one (i.e. Barabbas) is interpreted to mean “son of their master” in the Gospel written according to the Hebrews. (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 27.16)

8. In the Gospel we have often referred to, we read that, “the enormous lintel of the temple was broken and split apart.” (Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 27.51).

9. In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which was actually written in the Chaldean or Syriac language but with Hebrew letters, which the Nazareans still use today and which is the Gospel according to the Apostles, or, as most believe, according to Matthew – a Gospel that can also be found in the library of Caesarea – the following story is found: “Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brothers were saying to him, ‘John the Baptist is baptizing for the remission of sins. Let us go and be baptized by him.’ But he replied to them, ‘What sin have I committed that I should go to be baptized’

by him? Unless possibly what I just said was spoken in ignorance.” (Jerome, *Against the Pelagians*, 3.2)

10. And in the same volume the following is found: “[Jesus] said, ‘If your brother sins by speaking a word against you, but then makes it up to you, you should accept him seven times a day.’ His disciple Simon said to him, ‘Seven times in a day?’ The Lord responded, ‘Yes indeed, I tell you – even up to seventy times seven! For even among the prophets, after they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, a word of sin was found.’” (Jerome, *Against the Pelagians*, 3.2)

11. Variant Readings Noted in New Testament Manuscripts

- On Matthew 4.5

The Jewish Gospel does not have, “into the holy city,” but “in Jerusalem.” (MS 566)

- On Matthew 5.22

The words “without cause” are not present in some copies, nor in the Jewish Gospel. (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 7.5

In this place the Jewish Gospel reads: “Even if you are resting on my breast but do not do the will of my Father in heaven, I will cast you away from my breast.” (MS 1424).

- On Matthew 10.16

The Jewish Gospel says, “more than serpents.” (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 11.12

The Jewish Gospel reads, “plunders.” (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 11.25

The Jewish Gospel says, “I give you thanks.” (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 12.40

The Jewish Gospel does not read, “Three days and three nights.” (MS 899).

- On Matthew 15.5

The Jewish Gospel says, “That which you would have had as a benefit from us is now an offering [to the Temple?].” (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 16.2–3

The passages marked with an asterisk are not set forth in other copies, nor in the Jewish Gospel. (MS 1424)

- On Matthew 16.17

The Jewish Gospel says, “son of John.” (MS 566)

- On Matthew 18.22

After the words “seventy times seven” the Jewish Gospel reads: “For even among the prophets, after they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, a word of sin was found.” (MSS 566, 899)

- On Matthew 26.74

The Jewish Gospel says, “And he made a denial, and swore, and cursed.” (MSS 4, 273, 899, 1414)

- On Matthew 27.65

The Jewish Gospel says, “And he gave them armed men to sit opposite the cave, to keep watch over it day and night.” (MS 1424)

To summarize the evidence, the Gospel of the Nazoreans is the most transparent piece of the Jewish Gospel tradition. It can be placed in a specific location (Syrian Beroea), its language is known (Aramaic or Syriac), and its origin can be assigned

a broad time frame (from the time of the Gospel of Matthew, 80–90 ce, until its first mention by Hegesippus in the late 2nd century). The length and general content of the Gospel of the Nazoreans can be expected to approximate that of the Gospel of Matthew.¹³ The Jewish focus of the gospel is clear from the concern for “your brothers, sons of Abraham” (Origen, *in Matt.* 15.14). The record of its impact extends from Eusebius in the late 3rd century up to marginal references in manuscripts of the 13th century.

1.3 *The Gospel of the Ebionites*

Epiphanius gives the most extensive description of the Ebionites. He constructs an account of their origins and growth, he gives a biographical sketch of their founder, he specifies their location, he catalogues their beliefs and practices, he demonstrates various associations with other groups, and he tells of their demise. To do so he draws upon patristic materials that he knows, upon a book connected to Elxai, upon Transjordan sects, and upon a series of books that he attributes to Jewish Christians. Central among these is the gospel that he associates with the Ebionites.

Modern scholarship refers to this text as the Gospel of the Ebionites. Several characteristics may be identified.

1. This gospel knows the synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke
2. Its verbal agreement with synoptic passages and its description of the diet of John the Baptist suggest it was written in Greek¹⁴
3. It exhibits a tendency to harmonize accounts from the synoptic gospels
4. The Gospel of the Ebionites shows some of the exotic theology found also in the Pseudo-Clementine materials, presumably in the *Periodoi Petrou* and the *Anabathmoi Iakobou*
5. Epiphanius associates this gospel with the area of the Transjordan.

There is basic agreement on the fragments that should be assigned to the Gospel of the Ebionites. All of these are found within a limited range of the *Panarion* of Epiphanius.¹⁵

¹³ Marginal notes are known for passages as early as Mt. 4.5 and as late as Mt. 27.65.

¹⁴ The change of a single letter in the Greek word for *locusts* (αγκρίς) may result in the term for *honey cakes* (εύκριτς).

¹⁵ The list of Klijn agrees in content with that of Vielhauer and Strecker, with the exception that Klijn omits *Pan.* 30.16.4, where Epiphanius tells of Ebionite beliefs without crediting this knowledge to the gospel. The next passage (30.16.5) does cite the gospel, and it is cited by Klijn. The list of Ehrman omits *Pan.* 30.13.7–8 from his list of references. He cites the text of 30.13.7–8, but incorrectly identifies it as 30.13.3–4. If Ehrman means to include 30.13.7–8, then the content of his list is the same as that of Vielhauer and Strecker. Although the lists present different ordering, they offer the same framework: 1) accounts of the baptism of Jesus; 2) the calling of disciples; 3) the avoidance of sacrifices and meat.

<i>Vielhauer and Strecke</i>	<i>Klijn</i>	<i>Ehrman</i>	<i>Frey</i>
Panarion	Panarion	Panarion	Panarion
30.13.6	30.13.2-3	30.13.6	30.13.2f.
30.13.4f	30.13.4-5	30.14.3	30.13.6 and 30.14.3
30.13.7f.	30.13.6	30.13.4-5	30.14.4f.
30.13.2f	30.13.7-8	30.13.3-4 (7-8?)	30.14.3f.
30.14.5	30.14.5	30.13.2-3	30.14.5
30.16.4f	30.16.5	30.14.5	30.16.4f.
30.22.4	30.22.4	30.16.4-5	30.22.4
30.22.4			

The reconstruction and translation of A. F. J. Klijn appears below.¹⁶

The Gospel of the Ebionites

1. The Gospel which is called with them according to Matthew which is not complete but falsified and distorted, they call it the Hebrew Gospel and in it can be found: There was a man called Jesus, about thirty years old, who chose us. And he came to Caphernaum, he entered the house of Simon, also called Peter, and opened his mouth and said: When I went by the sea of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and Thaddaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the Iskariot and you Matthew, who was sitting at the custom-house; I called and you followed me. I wish you to be twelve apostles for the testimony to Israel. (*Panarion* 30.13.2-3).

2. It happened that John baptized and the Pharisees went out to him and were baptized and all Jerusalem. And John was dressed in a mantle of camel's hair and a leather belt was round his waist. And his food was, it said, wild honey, of which the taste was that of manna, like cakes in olive oil. They say this to turn the word of truth into a lie and they say honey-cakes instead of locusts. (*Panarion* 30.13.4-5)

3. The beginning of the Gospel among them reads: It happened in the days of Herod the king of Judea that John came, baptizing with the baptism of conversion in the river Jordan. Of him it is said that he was from the family of Aaron the priest, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. And all went out to him. (*Panarion* 30.13.6)

4. And after much is said in the Gospel it continues: After the people have been baptized Jesus came also came and was baptized by John. And when he ascended from the water the heavens opened and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending and coming to him. And a voice from heaven said: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased, and next: This day I have generated thee. And suddenly a great light shone about that place. When John saw it, they say, he said to him: Who art thou Lord? And again a voice came from heaven which said to him: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. After this, it says, John fell down before him and said: I pray thee, Lord, baptize thou me. But he withheld him and said: Let it be, since so it is necessary that everything will be fulfilled. (*Panarion* 30.13.7-8)

5. Further they deny that he is a man, apparently from the word that the Saviour spoke when he was told: See thy mother and thy brothers stand outside, viz. Who is my

¹⁶ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, pp. 30.

mother and who are my brothers? And he stretched his hand over the disciples and said: Those are my brothers and my mother and my sisters who do the will of my Father. (*Panarion* 30.14.5)

6. As their Gospel mentioned above shows: I have come to abolish sacrifices and if you do not stop sacrificing the wrath will not cease from you. (*Panarion* 30.16.5).¹⁷

7. They, however, destroyed the true order and changed the passage; that is clear to everyone because of the words that belong to each other and they make the disciples say: Where do you wish that we prepare the Passover to eat for you? And they made him answer: I do not earnestly desire to eat meat with you this Passover. How then will this deceit not be brought to light, since, the order of the words is clear, the mu and the eta have been added? For instead of saying: I earnestly desired, they added the word not. Actually he said: I earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you. They, however, added meat and deceived themselves recklessly speaking the words: I did not desire earnestly to eat meat with you this Passover. (*Panarion* 30.22.4)

To summarize, the Gospel of the Ebionites is a Greek text known to Epiphanius and placed by him among Jewish Christian sects in the Transjordan. Its content draws in part upon the synoptic gospels, harmonizing their portraits. Its theology, however, seems to include a mix of ideas described by Epiphanius. The time frame for the Gospel of the Ebionites falls somewhere between the Gospel of Matthew (80–90 ce) and its appearance in the writings of Epiphanius (315–402/403 ce).

1.4 The Gospel according to the Hebrews

The third cluster of texts is found primarily in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, and Didymus the Blind. This may be the one Jewish Christian gospel that is assigned a name in antiquity. Several traits characterize the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

1. There is no sign of dependence on any canonical gospel, nor on any other Jewish Christian gospel.
2. There is, at least in the fragments, a high density of sayings material. Individual sayings are found in multiple forms and across a variety of texts.
3. The fragments suggest a theology influenced by Jewish, Hellenistic, and gnostic traditions.
4. The name of the gospel likely distinguishes it from one or more gospels used by Gentile Christians in the same locale.
5. Since the majority of works containing fragments of this gospel are from Alexandria (Clement, Origen, Didymus), the Gospel according to the Hebrews is most likely of Egyptian origin. The apparent theology of the gospel is also compatible with this location.

¹⁷ Apparently listed incorrectly by Klijn as 30.14.5.

There is more debate about the collection of fragments that properly belong to this gospel, and there seems to be less concern for order in the reconstructions.

Vielhauer and Strecker	Klijn	Ehrman
1. Cyril of Jerusalem	1. Clement, <i>Strom.</i> 2.9.45.5	1. Clement, <i>Strom.</i> 2.9.45
2. Jerome, <i>in Is.</i> 11.2	Strom. 5.14.96.3	2. Origen, <i>comm. on Jn.</i> 2.12
3. Origen, <i>comm. on Jn.</i> 2.12 <i>Hom. on Jer.</i> 15.4	POxy. 654.5–9 GThom. 2.80.14–19	3. Didymus the Blind, <i>comm. on Psalmos</i> 184.9–10
Jerome, <i>in Is.</i> 40.9 <i>in Ezek.</i> 16.13	2. Origen, <i>comm. on Jn.</i> 2.12 <i>Hom. on Jer.</i> 15.4	4. Jerome, <i>in Eph.</i> 5.4
4. Clement, <i>Strom.</i> 2.9.45 <i>Strom.</i> 5.14.96	Jerome, <i>in Mic.</i> 7.5–7	5. Jerome, <i>de vir. ill.</i> 2
5. Jerome, <i>in Eph.</i> 5.4	3. Didymus the Blind, <i>comm. in Psalmos</i>	6. Jerome, <i>in Is.</i> 11.1–3
6. Jerome, <i>in Ezek.</i> 18.7	4. Jerome, <i>in Eph.</i> 5.4	7. Jerome, <i>in Ezek.</i> 18.7
7. Jerome, <i>de vir. ill.</i> 2	5. Jerome, <i>de vir. ill.</i> 2	
	6. Jerome, <i>in Is.</i> 11.1–3	
	7. Jerome, <i>in Ezek.</i> 18.5–9	

The differences in the list are due primarily to multiple attestation. Klijn and Ehrman accept the same list of seven fragments, but Klijn notes variations on several of the sayings. Jörg Frey accepts the same seven and places them in the same order.¹⁸ Frey notes the same multiple attestations as Klijn for fragment 1, but he notes two additional attestations for fragment 2 (Jerome's commentary on both Isa. 40.9–11 and Ezek. 16.13). Upon closer inspection, Vielhauer and Strecker accept the same list, with the omission of the fragment from Didymus the Blind and the addition of a fragment from Cyril of Jerusalem. Frey further notes the questionable fragments in Didymus' commentary on Ecclesiastes and in Eusebius at *HE* 3.39.17. Frey dismisses the birth account attributed to Cyril as certainly not an authentic fragment.

The ordering of these fragments is more difficult. If the fragments were to be ordered around the life of Jesus, there is a comment on Jesus' baptism (Jerome, *in Is.* 11.1–3) and a reference to the Passover (Jerome, *de vir. ill.* 2). Between these events could be placed the four sayings fragments (Origen, *Strom.* 2.9.45; Origen, *comm. on Jn.* 2.12; Jerome, *in Eph.* 5.4; Jerome, *in Ezek.* 18.7) as well as the naming of Levi/Judas (Didymus, *comm. on Psalmos* 184.9–10). If the passage from Cyril is relevant, it belongs at the beginning, since it is a birth narrative. This seems to be the pattern followed by Vielhauer and Strecker. Their translation is given below.¹⁹

¹⁸ Frey, "Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien."

¹⁹ Vielhauer and Strecker, "Jewish-Christian Gospels," pp. 177–78.

The Gospel according to the Hebrews

1. It is written in the Gospel of the Hebrews: When Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father summoned a mighty power in heaven, which was called Michael, and entrusted Christ to the care thereof. And the power came into the world and it was called Mary, and Christ was in her womb seven months. (From the Coptic translation of a discourse ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem)

2. According to the Gospel written in the Hebrew speech, which the Nazareans read, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit shall descend upon him ... Further in the Gospel which we have just mentioned we find the following written: And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: My Son, in all the prophets was I waiting for thee that thou shouldest come and I might rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my first-begotten Son that reignest for ever. (Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 11.2)

3. And if any accept the Gospel of the Hebrews – here the Saviour says: Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away on to the great mountain Tabor. (Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.12; Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah* 15.4; Jerome, *Commentary on Micah* 7.6; Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 40.9; Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 16.13)

4a. As also it stands written in the Gospel of the Hebrews: He that marvels shall reign, and he that has reigned shall rest. (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 2.9.45)

4b. To those words this is equivalent: He that seeks will not rest until he finds; and he that has found shall marvel; and he that has marvelled shall reign; and he that has reigned shall rest. (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5.14.96; Coptic Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2)

5. As we have read in the Hebrew Gospel, the Lord says to his disciples: And never be joyful, save when ye behold your brother with love (Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians* 5.4)

6. In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which the Nazareans are wont to read, there is counted among the most grievous offences: He that has grieved the spirit of his brother. (Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 18.7)

7. The Gospel called according to the Hebrews which was recently translated by me into Greek and Latin, which Origen frequently uses, records after the resurrection of the Saviour: And when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And shortly thereafter the Lord said: Bring a table and bread! And immediately it is added: he took the bread, blessed it and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep. (Jerome, *de vir. ill.* 2)

The omitted passage from Didymus the Blind²⁰ (*comm. on Psalmos* 184.9–10) reads:

It may appear that Matthew is named Levi in the Gospel of Luke. But in fact that is not so; it is Matthias, the one who replaced Judas, who is the same as Levi, known by two names. This is found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

²⁰ The translation is that of Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 16.

To summarize, the Gospel according to the Hebrews may be used as early as Papias (early 2nd century), but the first clear attestation is with Clement of Alexandria (around 150 ce). References to this gospel appear in a chain of Latin medieval writers stretching from Jerome to the 12th century, with particular favor among English and Irish texts.²¹ The Gospel according to the Hebrews is likely of Egyptian origin and was probably described in this manner to distinguish it from other texts.²² The length of the gospel is given by Nicephorus, who was Patriarch of Constantine from 806–815 ce. According to his Stichometry, the Gospel according to the Hebrews had 2200 lines, while the Gospel of Matthew had 2500.²³ The content and theology of the Gospel according to the Hebrews set it apart from canonical gospels and from other Jewish Christian gospels.

2. Pseudo-Clementine Sources

The use of the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the sources that lie behind them has played a key role in the history of research on early Christianity, particularly in reconstructions of Jewish Christianity. While the potential of this material is evident, critical analysis has proved difficult, and consensus has been rare.

Graham Stanton noted four basic problems that make critical analysis of this material difficult.

1. There are eight writings available in four sets, but their relationships are uncertain;
2. Some of these writings appear to be built on earlier sources, but also to have been edited by later hands;
3. These texts are found in eight languages, with some in fragmentary condition;
4. Isolation and interpretation of passages that might relate to Jewish Christianity is a complex undertaking.²⁴

The four sets of writings include:

1. The *Homilies*, which recount the life of Clement of Rome.
2. The *Recognitions*, which also recount the life of Clement.

²¹ These texts are discussed in Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, pp. 20–25 and in Frey, “Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien.”

²² Clement of Alexandria also quotes from a Gospel according to the Egyptians. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, trans. and ed. R. A. Kraft, et. al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977 [1st German edition, 1934]), pp. 50–53, thinks the title of the Gospel according to the Hebrews arose to distinguish it from the Gospel according to the Egyptians.

²³ This is noted by Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” pp. 41–42, 172.

²⁴ Graham Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), pp. 305–24.

3. The *Introductory Writings*, which include two letters addressed to James (the *Epistula Petri* and the *Epistula Clementis*), and a writing known as the *Contestation* or *Dia-martyria*;
4. The *Epitomes*, which are summaries of the *Homilies* and of the *Recognitions*.

Most scholars explain the similarities between the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* in terms of a common source, usually labeled as the *Grundschrift*, although other relationships are possible. Various theories place the *Introductory Writings* in some connection to the *Grundschrift*, the *Homilies*, or the *Recognitions*. Most believe the *Epitomes* are subsequent summaries based on the *Homilies* or the *Recognitions*. Thus, the Pseudo-Clementine writings invoke almost every possible issue in terms of authorship, textual history, history of tradition, source analysis, redaction history, and transmission history. Moreover, these texts appear to occupy an important juncture in the history of development of Christianity, especially in relation to Jewish Christianity. For this reason, the Pseudo-Clementine writings have intrigued scholars for some three centuries.

F. Stanley Jones has identified two trends in the history of research on the Pseudo-Clementines. Some date the Jewish Christian elements as early and argue, in support of the position of F. C. Baur, that Jewish Christianity played an important role in the early history of Christianity. Others try to refute Baur by devaluing Jewish Christian components or by assigning them a late date.²⁵

While reconstructions of Jewish Christian sources and their relationship have been numerous and sometimes fanciful, there is a growing scholarly consensus that *Recognitions* 1.27–71 contains a distinct literary unit with a Jewish Christian ethos, particularly in comparison with the rest of the *Recognitions*. Even within this limited block of material, both the use of sources and subsequent interpolation may be present.²⁶ Although debate continues about the larger literary history and tradition history of the Pseudo-Clementines, the material in *Recognitions* 1.27–71 will be used here to illustrate one strand of Jewish Christian material.

A significant amount of this material reviews the history of Yahweh's relationship with Israel. An account of Jesus' ministry as the True Prophet promised by Moses is followed by an extended focus on the struggles of the early Jerusalem church.

²⁵ F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71*, Christian Apocrypha Series 2, Texts and Translations 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). On the history of research, see Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research," *The Second Century* 2 (1982), pp. 8–14.

²⁶ Stanton, "Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings," p. 319, noted that there is also a general agreement that 1.44–52, with its focus on the True Prophet rather than the usual "prophet like Moses," is an interpolated block within 1.27–71. A different reconstruction of the larger unit is offered by Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community*, SLB Dissertation Series 112 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

The review of Israel's history extends from the creation to a date seven years after the death of Jesus (1.27.1–1.44.3). A dialogue between Clement and Peter (1.44.4–1.53) is followed by an extended debate involving Peter and other disciples (1.54.1–1.71.6).²⁷

Recognitions 1.27.1–1.28.4 echoes the Genesis creation account. An explanation about angels is added (1.27.5). The sun and the moon provide signs of times and days that are seen by all, but understood only by the diligent or learned (1.28.2). All things that exist are said to have been made for the sake of humans (1.28.4).

In the eighth generation sin enters the world when humans who had previously lived as angels began to have intercourse indiscriminately with women of beauty (1.29.1). This led to increasing evil among their descendants.

The giants of old were begotten in the ninth generation (1.29.3), but they are to be distinguished from the figures of Greek mythology. The bones of these giants are scattered in various places as a warning against unfaithfulness.

The story of the flood is told (1.29.4–5), including the prohibition against eating blood. In the thirteenth generation the land is divided among the descendants of Noah (1.30.2–3).

The fourteenth generation builds the first altar to practice magic and offer blood to demons (1.30.4), while the fifteenth generation first practices idol worship (1.30.5). The sixteenth generation witnesses a returning migration from the east to the land of their fathers (1.30.6). In the seventeenth generation Nimrod reigns in Babylon, builds a city, then migrates to Persia and teaches them the worship of fire (1.30.7). The eighteenth generation witnesses the emergence of various traits of civilization: walled cities, armies, judges and laws, temples, worship of royalty (1.31.1).

In the nineteenth generation the descendants of Noah's cursed son drive the inhabitants of middle earth into Persia. From these exiles Abraham is born in the twenty-first generation (1.32.1–3). Abraham, through his friendship with God, saves the world from destruction by fire (1.32.2). Abraham reads the signs of the heavens and recognizes God as the maker of the universe, an insight confirmed by a visit from an angel (1.32.3–4).

It is here that the True Prophet first appears. He reveals to Abraham the knowledge of deity, similarly disclosed the beginning and end of the world, and exhibited immortality of the soul and the habits of life by which God is pleased. He also declared that the dead will rise, the future judgment, the reward of the good, and the punishment of the evil, all regulated by just authority (1.33.1–2)

Abraham fathers two sons in his time of ignorance, and from them descend various nations (1.33.3). The following section traces the development of several people groups (Persians, Brahmins, Arabs, Egyptians) and suggests that circum-

²⁷ Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James*, p. 31, offers a slightly different outline.

cision originated among such groups (1.33.4–5). After coming to know God, Abraham and Sarah have Isaac, whose lineage is traced through Jacob to the twelve patriarchs and to the seventy-two leaders of Israel (1.34.1–2).

Seeing the suffering of Israel, the True Prophet appears to Moses and visits the plagues upon Egypt (1.34.3–4). Following the exodus from Egypt, Moses leads the people by an indirect route in order to purge them, through time and legislation, from the evil practices they learned in Egypt (1.35.1). Though they have seen God's deliverance and received God's law, the people of Israel build an idol on an Egyptian model (1.35.2–5). Knowing the difficulty of eliminating such practices, Moses took the halfway step of allowing sacrifice, but to God alone (1.36.1). In a similar way, the establishment of the Temple is seen as a compromise with the original intent that Israel should worship in a house of prayer (1.38.5).

This explanation is followed by a leap into the present situation of the narrative. The prophet predicted by Moses comes by the mercy of God and commands an end to sacrifice (1.39.3). In order to prevent total disbelief, the baptism in water replaces sacrifice as a means of forgiveness (1.39.2). Those who follow this command will be spared in the impending war, which will uproot the people and destroy their place (1.39.3). The signs and wonders performed by the prophet before this war will confirm this prophecy. Emphasis then falls on the unbelief of those who received this prophecy (1.39.2–3).

Because of this, the prophet chooses a new group of twelve apostles and a new group of seventy-two disciples (1.40.4). His miracles are seen as echoes of Moses' wonders in Egypt (1.41.1–2). The death of the newly arisen prophet is blamed on the impious (1.42.2). In order to make up for this unbelief and to fill up the number of descendants promised to Abraham, people from the Gentiles are called to take their place among God's people (1.42.1). The raising of Jesus is explained by his opponents as magic, but the truth is winning out (1.42.4–1.43.1).

The name of Jesus first appears in 1.43.1: "They frequently sent to us asking that we speak to them about Jesus whether he is the prophet whom Moses predicted, who is the eternal Christ." The issue of christology is presented as the only point of difference between "us who believe in Jesus and the unbelieving Jews" (1.43.2).

Seven years after the death of Jesus, the church is growing under the leadership of James, its bishop (1.43.3). In the season of Passover, the apostles gather to report (or to learn) about the growth of various communities. Priests are sent from Caiaphas the high priest seeking a debate to settle the differences between the "two faiths" (1.44.1–3). It is clear that the rehearsal of Israel's story and of Jesus' fate have set the stage for this central focus on the debate between followers of Jesus and other Jews.

Clement enters the story as a first person narrator in 1.44.4, and his statements bring Peter into the story (1.44.5). Peter reintroduces the concept of Jesus as the True Prophet, a confession acknowledged by Clement (1.44.5–6). Clement, how-

ever, seeks further instruction in what it means for Jesus to be the Christ, and Peter provides this instruction.

Returning to the theme of creation, Peter describes an innate hierarchy of things established by God in creation: all things have a superior for their category of being. This includes

an angel as the spirit over the spirits, a star over the stars, a bird over the birds, an insect over the insects, a fish over the fish, and over humans, a human, who is the Christ (1.45.2).

As other nations have a title for their king or leader, so the Jews embrace the title of *Christ*. In the beginning the Father anointed him with oil from the tree of life (1.45.4). Jesus will anoint those who follow him with this same oil, bringing immortality (1.45.5).

Peter then tells how this true anointing is imitated or modeled in the temporal anointing of priests, prophets, and kings. Arguing from the minor to the major, the greatness of the forthcoming anointing by God is praised (1.45.4–5). After debating the prophetic status of the first human being, Peter emphasizes the central point: the anointing of Jesus surpasses and replaces the temporal anointing of Israel's leaders.

But the high priest was anointed with the fabricated ointment and was esteemed worthy of the office of prophet. He kindled the altar fire, raised up the fire, and showed it to the whole world. Now after Aaron the high priest, the one who sprang forth from water also arose. I am speaking not about Moses, but rather about the one who was called the Son, Christ, through baptism. He was also called Jesus. He extinguished the altar that was burning there for sin, when he appeared, the unction of the high priesthood, prophecy, and kingship ceased (1.48.3–6).

The argument is then made that the surprising prophecy of rejection by his own and acceptance by the Gentiles has been fulfilled: "Thus all these things of the prophecy that was not believed were exactly fulfilled, and he became the hope of the nations" (1.50.4). The failure of many within Israel to recognize Jesus fulfills the prophecy of old and thus confirms the validity of Jesus' ministry.

It is noteworthy that the *Recognitions* consciously limits the debate to the christological question: "Our quarrel with them is this: whether this one who is coming and has come or another who has not yet come is the one prophet ..." (1.50.7).

Clement questions whether those who died before Christ's coming have missed out on the kingdom, and Peter answers that

From the beginning Christ has been in all generations, and he was secretly with those who wanted to be in fear of God and who were awaiting him as one who was far off (1.51.3).

A lengthy speech by Peter extends through the remainder of the unit (1.54.1–1.71.6). The Temple is specified as the scene of this speech, and a group of believers accompanies Peter and Clement (1.53.4). Peter first describes how, at the

time when Christ was coming to end sacrifices and to institute baptism, the enemy created sects among the people to prevent their redemption (1.54.1). These sects are then described in order: the Sadducees (1.54.2–3); the Samaritans (1.54.4–5); the scribes and the Pharisees (1.54.6–7); the disciples of John (1.54.8).

The disputation on the Temple steps begins with an introduction from various followers of Jesus. Matthew refutes the high priest on the issue of baptism (1.55.4); Andrew refutes a Sadducee on the issue of the resurrection (1.56.1–3); James and John, sons of Zebedee, refute a Samaritan on the resurrection, the conflict between Jerusalem and Mt. Gerazim, and the identity of the prophet predicted by Moses (1.57.1–5); Philip refutes one of the scribes on the charge that Jesus was a magician (1.58.1–3); Bartholomew refutes a Pharisee's charge that Jesus was not equal to Moses (1.59.1–3). James then takes up the question, arguing that the prophets should not be used to confirm the status of Christ, but rather that Christ confirms the status of the prophets (1.59.4–6). Lebbaeus then convicts the people for their persecution and rejection of Jesus (1.59.7). Simon the Canaanite refutes a follower of John the Baptist who places John above Jesus (1.60.1–4). Barabbas, who took the place of Judas,²⁸ speaks against hatred of Jesus, noting that "he took a body from the Jews and became a Jew" (1.60.5–7). Thomas refutes Caiaphas' charge that Jesus promised material rewards to the poor (1.61.1–3).

The climax of this debate is reached in the dialogue between Caiaphas and Peter (1.62.1–1.65.5). Caiaphas begins with a personal attack: "For while you were untaught and a fisher by trade you became a teacher by chance" (1.62.2). Peter turns the attack around, noting that his lack of training shows his correctness is based on the work of God, not on erudition (1.62.5–7).

A summary of the debate (1.63.1) is followed by a call to receive Jesus, to be baptized, and to affirm the Trinity.²⁹ No amount of sacrifices can replace this confession, and God is angered by the offering of sacrifices since the time of sacrifices has ended (1.63.4–1.64.1). This will lead to the destruction and replacement of the Temple and the proclamation of the gospel to the nations (1.64.2). The hosts of priests are angered by these words, but Gamaliel, who is a secret follower of Jesus, calms the group and calls for further debate the following day (1.65.1–5).

The climax of this document is reached in the debate between James, who is described as the bishop, and the leaders of Israel. Gamaliel opens with a plea for an open account of the new faith and a tolerant hearing by the people, including a promise they will not be harmed (1.67.1–7).

Caiaphas sponsors a debate between Gamaliel and James, now called the archbishop, on what the scriptures say about the Christ (1.68.1–2). James draws

²⁸ The Syriac text has Barabas; the Latin text has Barnabas, who is called Mathias.

²⁹ The Latin text adds "receive the eucharist."

from the Law, from the prophets, and from the book of Kings³⁰ to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ (1.69.1–4). He then calls for baptism in living water in the name of the Trinity (1.69.5–8). This debate lasts for seven days, and afterwards all the people and the high priest are called upon to be baptized (1.69.8).

The call to baptism is interrupted by a hostile person and his few followers (1.70.1). This thinly veiled image of Paul rebukes the priests and leads the attack on the followers of Jesus (1.70.2–6). In the ensuing riot, James is killed (1.70.7–8).

While the followers of Jesus were more numerous and more powerful, they chose not to kill, but rather to endure death at the hands of the minority (1.71.1). When evening falls, the Temple is closed and the disciples gather at James' house (1.71.2).

The following morning, the group of about five thousand disciples flees to Jericho (1.71.2). There they receive word from Gamaliel that the enemy has promised to massacre all who believe in Jesus and is headed to Damascus in search of Peter (1.71.5). Thirty days later the enemy passes through Jericho. The closing lines note the protection provided to the disciples by the yearly miracle of the whitening of the graves of two believers (1.71.5–6).

As this overview shows, it is almost certain that some form of Jewish Christianity of the late 2nd or early 3rd century stands behind *Recognitions* 1.27–71.³¹ This can be seen first in the consistent focus on the land of Israel: the history of Israel provides the background for this story, Jerusalem is its current setting, and Jericho is its final location. The christology of this document also testifies to its Jewish Christian identity: it centers on Jesus as the prophet promised by Moses, as the Jewish messiah, and as the one who completes Moses' attempt to put an end to sacrifices. Moreover, the debate about Jesus is addressed throughout to Jewish dialogue partners, with various segments of Judaism addressed. There is a consistent attempt to portray faith in Jesus as the goal and fulfillment of Israel's history and faith. Finally, Paul is not opposed for his mission to the Gentiles, but rather for his intrusion into the conversion of the Jewish leaders and the people of Jerusalem.

Recognitions 1.27–71 thus presents a reasoned defense of the integrity of a type of Jewish Christianity likely active in the late 2nd century. This Jewish Christian tradition sees itself connected to the apostles and to the foundational community in Jerusalem, but also to the effort to take the gospel to the nations.

³⁰ Book of Kings in the Latin, Book of Kingdoms in the Syriac.

³¹ See especially the argument of Jones, *An Ancient Christian Source*, pp. 157–167, and Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James*, pp. 176–180.

3. Justin Martyr's Sources

In the mid 2nd century, Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue*, recognizes two types of Jewish Christians. One type insists that all Christians are obligated to follow Jewish Law, while the other type does not require all followers of Jesus to keep Jewish Law. He concludes that only the second type of Jewish Christians will be saved (*Dial.* 47.1).

It is clear, then, that Justin knows and even honors some forms of Jewish Christianity. It is also possible that Jewish Christian writings may underlie a significant portion of the work of Justin Martyr. Oskar Skarsaune argues that Justin, in addition to his use of the New Testament and patristic materials, used three distinct sources.³² Skarsaune connects two of these explicitly to Jewish Christianity.

Skarsaune contends there is a source behind the proof from scripture passages in the *First Apology* (c. 150–155 ce) and in their parallels in the *Dialogue*. Skarsaune believes this source provides a creed-like account of Jesus' messianic career, proven on the basis of scripture.³³ The introduction to the scriptural proofs is given in chapter 31 of the *First Apology*, then the proofs are expounded in chapters 32–53. Skarsaune believes the outline for this scripture-based christological kerygma is provided in 31.7.

In the books of the prophets ... we found Jesus our Christ foretold as

1. coming to us
2. born of a virgin
3. reaching manhood
4. curing every disease and ailment, raising the dead to life
5. being hated, unrecognized, and crucified, dying
6. rising from the dead, ascending into heaven
7. and being called and actually being the Son of God, and that he would send certain persons to every nation to proclaim these things
8. and that men from the Gentiles rather [than the Jews] would believe in him.³⁴

Skarsaune then seeks to show how these various moments in the messianic career of Jesus are grounded in proof from scripture in chapters 32–53 of the *First Apology*.

³² Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study of Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile*. Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987). A summary of this work in relation to Jewish Christianity is found in Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources Used by Justin Martyr and Other Greek and Latin Fathers," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, pp. 379–416.

³³ Skarsaune calls this the "kerygma source" because he believes it provides a creed-like account of Jesus' messianic career.

³⁴ Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources," pp. 381–82.

1. The coming of the Messiah:
I Apol. 32 (Gen 49:10–11; Num 24:17/Isa 11:1/Isa 51:5).
2. The virgin birth:
I Apol. 33–34 (Isa 7:14; Mic 5:1).
3. The hidden growing up:
I Apol. 35.1–2 (Isa 9:5).
4. The healings:
I Apol. 48.1–3 (Isa 35:5–6 etc.).
5. The passion, death [and resurrection] of the Messiah:
I Apol. 35.3–11 (Isa 65:2/58:2; Ps 22:17/19; Zech 9:9);
I Apol. 38 (Isa 65:2/58:2; Ps 22:19/17/Ps 3:6; Ps 22: 8–9; Isa 50:6–8);
I Apol. 50–51 (Isa 52:13–53:12).
6. The ascension of the Messiah:
I Apol. 51.7 (Ps 24:7–8).
7. The present reign of the Messiah:
I Apol. 39–46 (Isa 2:3–4; Ps 19:3–6; Ps 1 and 2; Ps 96/1 Chr 16; Ps 110:1–3).
8. Gentiles believing rather than Jews:
I Apol. 53 (Isa 54:1; Isa 1:9; Jer 9:26).
9. The glorious return of the Messiah:
I Apol. 51:8–9 (Dan 7:13).
10. The resurrection of the dead to be judged:
I Apol. 52 (Ezek 37:7–8; Isa 66:24; Zech 12:10–12).³⁵

Skarsaune sees two striking characteristics in this extended treatment of Jesus' messianic status. First, he notes the nature of its christology:

in its over-all structure there is no trace of a Christology of divine pre-existence. The story of Jesus begins, as in Matthew and Luke, with the Messiah's human birth by the Virgin.³⁶

Secondly, there is a distinctly Jewish profile to the use of scriptural testimony. While New Testament testimonies tend to focus on the unforeseen and sometimes embarrassing elements of Jesus' career, the approach used by Justin follows a more traditional Jewish pattern of messianic interpretation. This is seen, for example, in Justin's opening use of Gen. 49:10–11 and Num. 24:17. In first century Jewish messianic expectation, these two passages were the most important proof texts in the Torah, and in Targum Onqelos they are the only Torah texts applied to the messiah. Furthermore, Justin's citation of Gen. 49:10 conforms to the Targum text rather than the Septuagint. Thus, the source used by Justin seems deeply rooted in the tradition of Jewish messianic exegesis. Skarsaune links the exegesis of this source to the difficulties caused by the Bar Kochba revolt – a generation before the writing of Justin.³⁷

³⁵ Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources," p. 382.

³⁶ Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources," p. 382.

³⁷ See the discussion in Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources," p. 383–85.

Following this internal analysis of Justin's tradition of scriptural proof, Skarsaune suggests that there are three parallels to this tradition: the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Recognitions 1.27–71* from the Pseudo-Clementine writings, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Moreover, this larger set of traditions has consistent connections to the thought world of the Gospel of Matthew.³⁸

Skarsaune believes a second source of interest underlies parts of the *Dialogue*.³⁹ In contrast to the proof from scripture source, this source has an interest in speculation over the divine nature of the messiah. Since Justin's testimony from scripture focuses on the expectation of a human messiah, it is subject to the criticism that such passages were already fulfilled in figures like Hezekiah or Solomon.⁴⁰ In his dialogue with Trypho, Justin poses this objection not from Trypho, but from "your teachers." Behind the *Dialogue* lies a tradition that emphasizes Jesus' power against the supernatural forces of evil. Here the Messiah is also portrayed as the pre-existent Wisdom who descends to earth and ascends in glory. Skarsaune also sees here a type of second Adam christology. The rabbinic question about the duality of Lords in various biblical passages also seems to be invoked: in this source the plurality is seen as a reference to Christ's activity throughout the story of Israel. For example, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 19.24 makes dual reference to the Lord: "The Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord." In *b. Sanh.* 38b a Jewish heretic raises the question about this duality of titles, and he is given a solution associated with the name of rabbi Meir: this is a scriptural idiom in which both terms refer to the one God of Israel. In Justin's *Dialogue*, however, it is Christ who is the Lord commissioned by the Lord in heaven to inflict these punishments.

Consequently, Skarsaune is arguing that Justin addresses concerns for his own context, including but not limited to those of Trypho, by drawing upon traditions of messianic interpretation developed by previous generations of followers of Jesus in debate with fellow Jews. Justin draws upon one line of tradition that emphasizes Jesus as the human messiah expected in Jewish thought, but he also employs a tradition with a higher characterization to distinguish Jesus from other messianic figures in Israel's history.

Because Justin probably does not know Hebrew, such arguments⁴¹ are almost certainly taken from early traditions in which followers of Jesus are engaging their Jewish colleagues in dialogue and debate over messianic exegesis. These traditions of debate likely come to Justin Martyr as written texts that he deems appropriate for his own work a generation or so later. It is also clear that he has

³⁸ Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources," pp. 385–89.

³⁹ Skarsaune develops this idea at length in "Jewish Christian Sources," pp. 398–401.

⁴⁰ Rabbi Hillel, for example, said in *b. Sanh.* 99a that "There shall be no messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah."

⁴¹ Some involve debate over the etymology of Hebrew terms.

not simply replicated these traditions, but he has incorporated them into his own specific agenda. While a Jewish Christian textual tradition is not the only possible explanation for Justin's composition, it is by far the most plausible explanation.

4. The *Apocalypse of Peter*

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is very likely the work of Jewish Christians, and it is probably written in response to the Bar Kochba war (132–135 ce).⁴² This position is based on several factors.

1. The dating of the text
2. Its assignment to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic
3. The reference of the text to the teachings of Jesus.
4. Evidence of Bar Kochba's harsh treatment of Jews who rejected his call to revolt.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is usually dated to the first half of the 2nd century. Its apparent awareness of 4 Esdra and of 2 Peter places it clearly after the 1st century. If Eusebius is correct that Clement regards this work as a part of his canon of scripture (*HE* 6.14.1), then the date is likely no later than 150 ce. Furthermore, Clement likely cites from the text.⁴³ Within this period, the most plausible point of reference for its treatment of false messiahs is the Bar Kochba revolt.

The *Apocalypse of Peter* belongs clearly to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic. Among the characteristic traits are its concepts of revelation, hidden mysteries, judgment, angels, hell, heaven, the book of life, the God of Jacob.

Christian references are found throughout. These include frequent use of the name of Jesus and various references to his teaching. Peter, of course, is the recipient of this revelation and instruction.

Evidence of Bar Kochba's harsh treatment of Jews who refused to follow his lead continues to grow. This is particularly evident in extant letters from Bar Kochba.

⁴² These issues are discussed in C. Detlef G. Müller, "Apocalypse of Peter," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), pp. 620–38; Richard Bauckham, "The *Apocalypse of Peter*: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokhba," *Apocrypha* 5 (1994), 7–111; Richard Bauckham, "Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War, with Special Reference to the *Apocalypse of Peter*," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham Stanton and Guy Stroumsa, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 228–38; Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 201–202.

⁴³ Clement's *Ecclogae propheticæ* 41.2 agrees with v. 26 of the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

These components are likely brought together in the use of Jesus' parable of the fig tree (Mk. 13.28–30; Mt. 24.32–35; Lk. 21.29–33) in chapter 2 of the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Here the fig tree is identified explicitly with the nation of Israel. When the boughs of the tree have sprouted in the end time, a false messiah will come to inspire hope. Those who reject this false Christ will be killed, and there will be many martyrs by his hand, a focus that goes beyond the canonical accounts.

Consequently, the *Apocalypse of Peter* is best explained as an apocalyptic text designed to vindicate and to bolster the faith of Jews who, because of their faithfulness to Jesus, have rejected the messianic revolt of Bar Kochba.

5. Other Jewish Christian Texts

A few other Jewish Christian texts are mentioned in patristic literature, with a few citations given. Epiphanius attributes a number of books to the Ebionites. According to Epiphanius, they have a gospel that is associated with Matthew (*Pan.* 30.13.2–3), they have a work associated with Peter (*Periodoi Petrou*, mentioned in *Pan.* 30.15.1–2), and they have a text linked with James (*Anabathmoi Iakobou*, mentioned in *Pan.* 30.16.7–9). It is almost certain that Epiphanius draws upon these texts, which he believes to be Jewish Christian, in his description of the groups. Epiphanius also says that Ebionites "mention other Acts of the Apostles" (*Pan.* 30.16.6) and that they make a special claim on apostolic tradition:

They accept the names of the apostles hypocritically, trying to persuade those who have been deceived by them and they invent books in their names as if these were from the hands of James, Matthew and other disciples. To these names they also add the name of John the apostle in order that their foolishness may come to light on all sides. (*Pan.* 30.23.1–2)

Since Epiphanius tends to blame Ebionites for all heresies, his description of their library may be overstated. It should be noted, however, that Epiphanius has attributed to them works that echo the canonical tradition, rather than gnostic or philosophical treatises.

An apocalyptic text known as the *Book of Elxai* is mentioned by Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius. The book seems to be a Jewish apocalyptic work that originates in Parthia in response to the invasion of Trajan (114–117 ce). It was brought to Rome and used in a Christian debate by Alcidiades.⁴⁴

Reference is made on occasion to a Gospel according to the Apostles (Jerome, *adv. Pelag.* 3.2, implied perhaps in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.2–3). If such a text existed, its title suggests that it is Jewish Christian in orientation.

⁴⁴ See the full discussion in the chapter above on the Elkesaites.

Jerome knows a version of the book of Jeremiah that belongs to the Nazoreans. He claims to have seen this text, and he uses it in his commentary on Mt. 27.9–10. Here Matthew attributes to Jeremiah a citation that is actually found in Zechariah. Jerome says this citation is found in the version of Jeremiah used by the Nazoreans.⁴⁵

Jerome knows a Nazorean commentary on the book of Isaiah.⁴⁶ He seems to use this text extensively, and he cites from it specifically on five or six occasions. Most significantly, the Nazorean commentary is used by Jerome to interpret some of the most difficult passages for his own commentary on Isaiah.⁴⁷ The passages cited by Jerome show that Nazoreans are well-versed in Hebrew and in Hebrew texts, they are acquainted with the targumic tradition of biblical commentaries, they know about rabbinic tradition but reject its authority, they reject the oral tradition in favor of their own interpretation of scripture, they accept the apostleship of Paul and affirm a mission to the Gentiles, and they still hope for a renewed mission to the Jews.

6. Conclusion

Reports of the fragmentary remains of Jewish Christian texts come to us through patristic usage, through scribal notes, and through scholarly reconstruction, all of which must be treated with great caution. Writers like Epiphanius evoke such texts in order to discredit and dismiss them. The marginal notes in various manuscripts, however, offer a more neutral approach. Jerome, Justin Martyr, and the Pseudo-Clementines make positive use of Jewish Christian materials. These diverse treatments create a type of multiple attestation, but along contrasting lines of usage. This diversity and multiplicity of usage may provide a partial, indirect witness to these textual traditions and to their tradents.

Major pieces of this tradition have a close connection to the Gospel of Matthew and may have originated in the latter part of the 1st century. Works attributed to Jewish Christians are first described in the 2nd century, and reference to them may be found into the 12th century. Therefore, the suggestion that the idea of Jewish Christian gospels is a patristic construct is possible, but not very plausible. Among other reasons, the textual work of Jerome and of some later scribes suggest a curious interaction with a very real tradition. Consequently, the attribution of this tradition to some type of Jewish Christians has a high level of historical plausibility.

⁴⁵ See the discussion in the chapter above on the Nazarenes.

⁴⁶ See the discussion of the Isaiah commentary in the chapter on the Nazarenes.

⁴⁷ Is. 8.11–15; 8.19–22; 9.1; 11.1–3; 29.17–21; 31.6–9.

The three major components of the Jewish Christian gospel tradition (the Gospel of the Nazoreans, the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel according to the Hebrews) suggest separate histories in terms of their origin, construction, and influence. It is likely that distinct Jewish Christian gospels emerge from Syria, from the Transjordan, and from Egypt. Different hermeneutics appear to guide these texts. The Gospel of the Nazoreans is likely a version of the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of the Ebionites seems to harmonize the synoptic gospels, but it develops a unique theology. The Gospel according to the Hebrews betrays no dependence on other gospels, and it synthesizes various theological interests.

It is vital to remember that the remnants of these gospels survive primarily because of the bias against them, so no balanced account is available. It must also be remembered that what survives are fragments. In terms of genre and framework, it is plausible that the gospels attributed to Jewish Christians followed a basic account of the life of Jesus, combining sayings and instruction into this larger framework, and is it possible that their length was comparable with the canonical gospels. Seen in this light, the development of Jewish Christian gospels may parallel that of the canonical gospels: significant moments in the life of Jesus form a general framework, and various other traditions are woven into this structure. The shaping of these gospels would be determined not only by the facts and sources, but also by the needs and designs of the communities that support such traditions. The development of the Jewish gospels might differ from that of the canonical gospels only in the fact that they tell the stories of a Jewish Jesus for the religious needs of a Jewish community. This course of development is plausible, but certainly not proven.

Here the limits of reconstruction are reached. It is easy to say that Jewish Christian gospels and other texts existed and perhaps flourished, but it is more difficult to say how they did so and to trace the course of their development.

More specifically, what is the significance of this textual tradition for our knowledge of Jewish Christianity? James Carleton Paget says that the fragments of Jewish Christian gospels “do not extend our knowledge of Jewish Christianity in any significant way.”⁴⁸ On the other hand, A. F. J. Klijn thinks

... each of them represents a special branch of Jewish-Christianity which was a far from homogeneous whole. In this light the contents of the Gospels contribute to a better understanding of what is commonly called Jewish-Christianity, but which could just as easily be called the earliest form of Christianity These Gospels also made an important contribution to the field of the development of what may be called the Gospel tradition.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Paget, “Jewish Christianity,” p. 765.

⁴⁹ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, p. 42.

Noting that terms like *apocryphal* and *Jewish-Christian* have biased the study of these texts, Klijn insists that "It is now time to give the Jewish-Christian Gospel tradition equal treatment to the so-called canonical Gospels."⁵⁰ In reality, the truth probably lies somewhere in between the positions of Paget and Klijn: it is plausible that the remnants of Jewish Christian gospels may give significant but limited insight into their history of development.

As Klijn noted, analysis of Jewish Christian texts has indeed suffered under canonical strictures. One example may be used to illustrate these boundaries. Although Papias says the Gospel of Matthew was written first in Hebrew, most scholars conclude, on solid linguistic grounds, that canonical Matthew was written in Greek, not translated. From this basis, works such as the Gospel of the Nazoreans are understood to be a translation of Greek, canonical Matthew into Aramaic. This is possible, but it is not a necessary conclusion. The region around Syrian Antioch was deeply influenced by a Mathean tradition of the life of Jesus. Tradents within this bilingual region (Greek and Aramaic) turned those stories into a gospel. It is possible that both the Greek canonical tradition and the Aramaic tradition of the Gospel of Matthew are first editions – they are original productions from the same matrix. While this scenario is hypothetical, such questions are worth a closer look and should not be excluded by the parameters of the New Testament canon. It is altogether possible that the Jewish Christian gospel tradition, when approached critically, may bring some clarity to other issues in the larger history of development of the gospel genre.

Can these traditions extend our knowledge of Jewish Christianity? There is little direct evidence from the remnants of Jewish Christian writings that aids a reconstruction of Jewish Christianity, and this is to be expected. Through careful hermeneutical consideration, however, there is much to be learned from the reports about and references to these texts. Such insights will not come directly, but through peripheral glances, through implication, and through a balanced concern for historical plausibility.

First, the reports of Jewish Christian texts suggest there was a vital and extensive tradition of construction, interpretation, translation, and transmission of biblical texts among Jewish Christian groups. Patristic writers and later scribes may exaggerate or misrepresent the presence of Jewish Christian gospels, but it is highly unlikely that they created this tradition *ex nihilo*. This is particularly true of Jerome, who makes positive use of these texts. Furthermore, while it is possible that patristic and scribal references account for all literary production of Jewish Christians, it is more likely that there is more than they report.

Secondly, these texts may give roots to some of the groups mentioned in the patristic literature. It would be possible, for example, to argue that Jerome has invented the idea of Nazorean scholars who supply him with texts. This argument

⁵⁰ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, pp. 42–43.

becomes less plausible when Jerome cites those texts and uses them to shape his own interpretations. Multiple attestation of such citations in diverse contexts also strengthens the plausibility of groups like the Nazoreans.

Thirdly, Jerome's citations may provide specific insights into the competence of the Nazoreans. Jerome implies they are trained in Hebrew texts and familiar with targumic traditions; they are familiar with rabbinic practices, but reject them; they accept Paul and affirm a mission to both Gentiles and Jews.

Fourthly, the tradition of Jewish Gospels may provide a primary piece of evidence for the production of gospels in Egypt, especially for gospels not dominated by gnostic ideas. The Nag Hammadi findings confirm Egyptian gospel production within a more gnostic worldview and offer an interesting contrast to Jewish Christian materials associated with Egypt. Moreover, the fact that the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Coptic Gospel of Thomas share common non-canonical sayings of Jesus deserves further attention.

Fifthly, it is clear that these texts mattered a great deal to patristic writers and orthodox Christians. Jewish Christian texts continue to be invoked and attacked into the 4th century. Their memory is maintained and scribal interest is evidenced into the 13th century. More importantly, various members of Christian orthodoxy continue to believe that these texts may prove useful in understanding Jesus and the apostolic era. It is noteworthy that Jerome and later Christian scribes treat such texts as important tools for interpretation and textual analysis.

Sixthly, although these texts are labeled as heretical, they probably represent a deeply-rooted attempt to understand the work that God has done in Jesus. The christologies represented in these works are not entirely foreign to Christian orthodoxy. Jesus is understood by some Jewish Christians to have been endowed with the power of the Christ. Similar to the *logos* of the Fourth Gospel, this power descends into human flesh in the person of Jesus. For some this happened at his baptism. A type of Wisdom theology is suggested.⁵¹ A vital understanding of the Holy Spirit and of prophetic dynamism is applied to Jesus. His impact on the Law is considered. The transmission of tradition through faithful witnesses is traced. Apostolic patronage is invoked around figures such as James and Peter and Matthew. The impact of the Hebrew scriptures is to be found throughout Jewish Christian theology. Thus, the patristic view that Jewish Christianity represents nothing more than a pollution and a perversion of orthodoxy cannot stand under critical inquiry. The Jewish Christian understanding of Jesus is not simply a diversion from orthodoxy; it appears as a distinct line of tradition that articulates the way in which God's work is fulfilled in the messiah Jesus. Moreover, the sources behind the Pseudo-Clementines and Justin Martyr suggest an ongoing, sophisticated engagement with Jewish traditions of exegesis, particularly in relation to the messiah.

⁵¹ Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, pp. 39–41.

Finally, the extent of Jewish Christian writings reported, the response they evoke from patristic critics, the interest they draw from commentators and scribes, and their persistence in the manuscript tradition all serve to reinforce the image of Jewish Christianity as a vital, variegated movement. From a critical historical perspective, is it not likely that the extent and the impact of Jewish Christian texts were overstated by the emerging Christian orthodoxy; it is more probable that the extent and the impact of these traditions were understated, underrepresented, and undervalued.

The surviving evidence for ancient Jewish Christian texts is fragmentary and arrives bound, for the most part, in the bias of its opponents. Nonetheless, critical analysis of this material suggests a plausible connection to ancient groups who fit the definition of Jewish Christianity. As a consequence, the religious map of antiquity is subject to revision.

CHAPTER 13

Rabbinic Evidence for Jewish Christianity

Do the rabbinic materials that began to emerge in the first century of the common era and coalesced in the following centuries reflect any awareness of and engagement with Jewish Christianity? The question requires four lines of inquiry:

1. rabbinic awareness and response to the figure of Jesus;
2. the question of *minim* (heretics) and the relation of this term to Jewish Christianity;
3. the possible formulation and use in synagogues of a *birkhat ha-minim* (prayer against heretics) and its possible relation to Jewish Christianity;
4. other signs of engagement with Jewish Christianity.

Groundbreaking work on such issues was provided by the 1903 survey of R. T. Herford.¹ Herford wished to offer “a work that shall let the Christian scholar know what the Rabbinical literature really does contain bearing on the origins and early history of Christianity.”² His survey is divided into four sections: passages relating to Jesus; descriptions and definitions of minim and minuth; polemical encounters between Jews and minim; polemical allusions to minim, minuth. He established some 98 categories and cited more than 100 instances from rabbinical literature that refer, in his judgment, to Jesus or his followers.

Scholarship in the wake of Herford tends to value rabbinical materials for their own sake and usually works with a shorter list and more nuanced definitions. Jewish studies since Herford have developed a critical sensitivity to the importance and the difficulty of dating rabbinical sources. Most scholars describe the development of rabbinic literature through four major periods.

1. The Tannaitic period (c. 50 to c. 200 ce) includes Pharisaic activity, the last stages of the 2nd Temple period, and the continued development of the oral Law.
2. The Amoraic period (c. 200 to c. 500 ce) saw the production of various literary materials: the Mishnah (c. 200 ce), the Tosefta (c. 300 ce), the Sifra (c. 300 ce), and the compilation of the Gemaras into the Palestinian Talmud (c. 400 ce).
3. This literary activity continued in Babylon, where the Gemaras were incorporated into a Babylonian Talmud in the Savoriaic Period (c. 500 to 700 ce).

¹ R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903).

² Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, p. viii. The emphasis is his.

4. The influence of the Babylonian academies into the 11th century is described as the Geonic period.³

Thus, the primary literature of the rabbis emerged over a period of 400 years, it developed along two distinct axes (Palestine and Babylonia), and it was presented in various formats. This means it is no longer possible to cite a handful of texts as indicative of rabbinic thought and practice, and it is very difficult to speak about historical developments, especially in the earliest stages. As far as possible, rabbinic comments must be understood to address specific time periods and interpretive contexts within the larger tradition. Even when a comment is assigned to a historical figure (such as Akiba from the 130s ce), this does not mean a text originates with that figure and in that context; it may show how later rabbis understood Akiba and used him to voice specific concerns against a much later, much different situation. The Palestinian Talmud (c. 400 ce), for example, treats earlier leaders and issues, but it probably does so in order to address the loss of Roman patronage and the rising dominance of Christianity in the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁴

In addition to the problem of date and context, many scholars now recognize that rabbinic texts do not provide a consistent, closed system of thought. At times, the process of rabbinic debate seems to be valued over any clear conclusions. Rabbis disagree with each other, and a ruling or connotation from one period may not be presumed throughout the whole corpus. The story of Baalam's ass, for example, may refer in some rabbinic contexts to Jesus; in others it may refer to Baalam's ass. Because of such features, any synthesis, even on a particular ruling or association, proves difficult to sustain.

The work of Travers Herford (1903) represents a stage in which these critical issues were not fully appreciated. His description of rabbinic references to Jesus is a broad and inclusive synthesis that gives insufficient attention to redactional stages and variations. While the questions raised by Herford retain their significance, it is difficult to describe the rabbinic perspective on any issue. As with the varied faces of Christian tradition, it is best to speak of a rabbinic position in a specific era and context. Do some rabbinic traditions address the religious phenomena of Jewish Christianity?

³ On the development of rabbinic literature, see Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996 [8th German edition, 1992]).

⁴ This is similar to the recognition in New Testament studies that the sayings of Jesus have been shaped and addressed to later audiences, making it difficult to recover the actual words of Jesus. The same is true of the narrative traditions of the New Testament gospels.

1. Rabbinic Materials and the Figure of Jesus

R. T. Herford identified some twenty passages that he interpreted as rabbinic references to Jesus. Among these, Herford gave priority to materials formulated in Palestine in the formative Tannaitic period (the Mishnah, the Tosephta, and three halachic midrashim: Siphre, Siphra, Mechilta). Herford argued for some ten lines of reference to Jesus in this material. Herford then turned to references in the Gemaras – the extended commentaries on the Mishnah carried out in the Galilee (4th century) and in Babylon (5th century).

The total number of rabbinic references depends upon a critical judgment of how many allusions and circumlocutions are actually speaking of Jesus. While some of the scattered rabbinic references to figures such as Jeshu, ben Pandira,⁵ and ben Stada may allude to Jesus, it is far from clear that all of them do. Indeed, Herford himself notes that “the Mishnah does not contain the names Jeshu, ben Stada, or ben Pandira. The Tosephta contains all three, but not the form *Jeshu ha-Nōtzri*.” (Jesus the Nazarene).⁶

The *Baraitas* are Tannaitic traditions distinguished as such in the Gemaras.⁷ In this material ben Stada is said to have brought magic from Egypt (b. Sabb. 104b) and to have been tried for heresy on the eve of Pesah (b. Sanh. 67a). A herald announces that *Jeshu ha-Nōtzri* is to be stoned and invites anyone to offer evidence in his favor. None is offered, and *Jeshu* is hung on the eve of Pesah, which is also the eve of the sabbath (b. Sanh. 43a). Finally, Jeshu is said to have had five disciples – Matthai, Nequai, Netzer, Buni, Thodah – who were all hung on the basis of scriptural judgments (b. Sanh. 43a–b).

While Herford attempts to trace a rabbinic lineage for this tradition,⁸ it is very difficult to sustain such continuity or coherence on critical grounds. At best one can say that a few rabbinic texts may allude to Jesus and that this imagery has been projected, accurately or not, onto the early stages of rabbinic literature.

⁵ The term *ben Pandira* may refer in some places to a tradition that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier. The conjecture that this is a satire on the claim that Jesus was born of a *parthenos* (virgin) is difficult to demonstrate.

⁶ Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, p. 351.

⁷ Some, however, are pseudo-Baraitas that are represented as Tannaitic.

⁸ Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, p. 352. Herford’s reconstructed lineage follows a line of important rabbis. The first tradent is R. Johanan ben Zaccai, who lived in Jerusalem and died around 80 ce. Herford contends that he “must certainly have seen and heard Jesus.” Johanan influenced R. Eliezer. One of the most important references to Jesus and his followers involves Eliezer, and Herford claims he was “the chief original authority for the Tradition about Jesus.” Eliezer influenced R. Aquiba, who gave him advice on how to distance himself from the teaching and influence of Jesus. Aquiba influenced, among others, R. Meir, and they both influenced the formation of the Mishnah. In my opinion, this lineage cannot stand up to critical analysis.

At the second stage of the material, the Palestinian Gemara seems to lose interest in the figure of Jesus. R. Abahu refers to one who says "I am God" and who claims that the son of man will go up to heaven (j. Taanith 65b). R. Reuben insists that God has no son (j. Sabb. 8d). Such stories may, however, be directed against the imperial claims of Rome. The stories of ben Stada are repeated, as is the healing in the name of Jeshu ben Pandira.

The Babylonian Gemara (5th century ce), however, appears to show a renewed interest in the figure of Jesus. It offers:

1. An explanation of Jesus, ben Stada, and Pandira (b. Sabb. 104b)
2. The claim that Jeshu ha-Nōtzri burned his food in public (b. Sanh. 103a; b. Ber. 17b)
3. An explanation that Jesus was a revolutionary who was near to the kingdom (b. Sanh. 43a)
4. An explanation of the noble ancestry and the ultimate corruption of the mother of Jesus (b. Sanh. 106a).
5. A report of the excommunication of Jesus (b. Sanh. 107b).
6. A description of Balaam and Jesus in hell (b. Gitt. 56b, 57a).
7. A report from the chronicle of Balaam that "Balaam, the lame, was thirty-three years old when Pinhas the Robber killed him." (b. Sanh. 106a).

Thus, the clearest allusions to Jesus and his followers appear at the latest stages of literary production (c. 600 ce). Such references or allusions to Jesus possibly reflect an earlier tradition, but there is no consistent reference and response to the followers of Jesus across the larger corpus of rabbinic literature.

How should this body of evidence be evaluated? While rabbinic texts probably make some references and allusions to Jesus, these accounts are difficult to date, and they may tell more about the time of the writers than of the subject. There is no attempt to present a comprehensive portrait of Jesus, there seems to be little knowledge of the content of the New Testament gospels, and there is little coherence with what is known about the historical activity of Jesus.⁹ This absence may be due in part to the self-censoring of rabbinic manuscripts in the period of Christian dominance. In their present form, however, rabbinic literature presents no systematic understanding of or polemic against Jesus and his followers. What is extraordinarily clear, however, is that a few rabbinic texts treat Jesus as an exemplary figure: he is, in these instances, a model of the *min* (heretic) and the practice of *minuth* (heresy).

⁹ Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* p. 356, notes that the reference to Ben Pandira is present in the earliest tradition, but not until the 3rd century is the connection to Jesus explained.

2. The Question of *Minim*

There is no clear rationale for the use of the term *min* and its plural, *minim* (מִנּוֹת) and מִנּוֹת) in reference to Jewish heretics. Martin Goodman notes its etymology as a reference to *kinds* or to *species*.¹⁰ The term appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but not in reference to heresies. Consequently, the term must be defined by what can be known of its usage, and this varies by time and place.

The primary frame of reference is its use by rabbis to describe other Jews who are judged to have made bad choices. The wide conceptual range tolerated within ancient Judaism suggests that these choices had more to do with practice (*halakah*) than with abstract ideas.¹¹ Thus, the primary reference of the term is to Jews who have gone astray.

This understanding is certainly present in the 4th century rabbinic explanation that God sent Israel into exile only after there were twenty-four sects of *minim* (j. Sanh. 29c). Other passages also suggest this usage is fundamental. Since Israelites who are circumcised do not go down into Gehinnom, there is the danger that the *minim* and the wicked of Israel, since they are circumcised, will avoid Gehinnom. One solution is that God “sends an angel and effaces their circumcision, and they go down to Gehinnom” (Shem. r. 19.4.p. 36d). The assumption here is that *minim* are circumcised.

A distinction can be made between the treatment of Gentiles and *minim*: “Gentiles, and those that keep small cattle and those that breed the same, are neither helped out [of a pit] nor cast into it. The *minim* and the apostates and the betrayers are cast in and not helped out.” (T.B. Mez 2.33). The later Babylonian challenge to this distinction likely confirms its clarity in the Palestinian schools: “Rab Nahman said that Rabah bar Abuha said there are no *minim* among the idolatrous nations. But we show that there are”(b. Hull 13b).

The terms *min* and *minim* will be applied, in different times and contexts, to a wide range of thoughts and practices. Martin Goodman warns against assigning a precise reference to each rabbinic usage:

the very fact that *minim* have been identified, in different passages, with Jewish Christians, Gnostics, Hellenistic Jews, Sadducees and others constitutes evidence that the rabbis who compiled these rabbinic documents used the term in a vague way.¹²

¹⁰ Martin Goodman, “The Function of *Minim* in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, Band 1: *Judaism*, ed. Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), pp. 501–10.

¹¹ So Lawrence Schiffman, *Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985); see also Schiffman’s “At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 115–56, but especially pp. 147–56.

¹² Goodman, “The Function of *Minim*,” p. 507.

However, these diverse uses likely represent expansions and variations upon the primary meaning – Jews who, in the judgment of other Jews, have gone astray.

In addition to this primary reference of the term *min*, a number of rabbinic passages appear to link the term *min* specifically to Jesus and his followers. The most dramatic of these is an early and enduring story of rabbi Eliezer, who was brought to trial for *minuth* (heresy).

When he had left the βημα, he was troubled that he had been arrested for sectarianism. His disciples came in to comfort him, but he was inconsolable. Rabbi Akiva came in and said to him: Rabbi, I will say before you a word; perhaps you will not be troubled.

He said to him: Say!

He said to him: Perhaps one of the sectarians said something to you of sectarianism, and it caused you pleasure.

He said to him: By heaven, you have reminded me. Once I was walking in the marketplace of Tsippori, and I found there Jacob, the man of Kefar Sikhnin, and he recounted a saying of sectarianism in the name of Jeshu the son of Pantiri, and it caused me pleasure, and I was arrested for the words of sectarianism, for I violated that which is written in the Torah, "Keep her ways far away from you, and do not come near the opening of her house, for she has brought many victims down!" Tosefta Hullin 2.24¹³

If Eliezer is brought before secular authorities, then he is likely charged with being a member of the outlawed sect of Christians. His acquittal is pronounced, but his greater concern remains: when and how did he commit *minuth*? Rabbi Aquiva stirs in him the recollection that, while in Sepphoris, Eliezer was pleased by the teaching of Jacob, who was a follower of Jesus.¹⁴ This follower of Jesus becomes known as Jacob the *Min*.¹⁵ While the story may be later and is possibly legendary, it projects a Palestinian outlook. The story presumes some of the followers of Jesus are Jewish, and it insists such followers are considered to be *minim*.

The terminology is also applied to texts. There is some question among rabbis over whether the scriptures of the *minim* are to be considered holy. The very question presumes the texts are Jewish and contain the name of God. Holy books required specific treatment and were said to "defile the hands."¹⁶ The answer is given in tYad 2.13: "The gospel and the books of the *minim* do not defile the hands ..."¹⁷ A similar distinction emerges from a debate over whether to save such texts. TShab 13 (14).5 sets the standard:

¹³ The text is provided and discussed at length by Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 26–31.

¹⁴ The story is found in various forms: b. A. Zar 27b; T. Hull 2.24; b. A. Zar 16b; Qoh. Rabb. on 1.8; Jalq. Shim'oni on Micah 1 and Prov. 5.8.

¹⁵ See b. A. Zar 27b; T. Hull 2.24; b. A. Zar 16b; Qoh. Rabb. on 1.8; Jalq. Shim'oni on Micah 1 and Prov. 5.8.

¹⁶ Lawrence Schiffman, "Tannaitic Perspectives," p. 154.

¹⁷ There is some debate over the meaning of the Hebrew term translated as gospel.

- 1) the gospels and the books of the *minim* are not to be saved from a fire on the Sabbath, even though they contain the name of God;
- 2) during the week, one should cut out the name of God from such books, then burn them;
- 3) just as such books are not saved from fire, neither are they to be saved from a cave-in or from water.

It is likely, though not certain, that some of the texts in question belong to followers of Jesus.

Finally, the terminology appears to be applied to the acts of Jesus' followers. The story of r. Eleazar ben Damah is told in several texts from the Talmud.¹⁸ When Damah is bitten by a serpent, he hopes to be healed by Jacob the *Min*, a follower of Jesus from Cephar Sama or Cepha Sechanja. Damah intends to prove from Torah that this is permitted, but he dies before he is able to do so. R. Ishmael proclaims Damah blessed because he died before he allowed Jacob to heal him.

These scattered references to *min* and *minim* provide no systematic description of how the rabbis view heresy and heretics. They do suggest, however, that the primary reference is to the behavior of other Jews, among whom are some followers of Jesus. While not all *minim* are Jewish Christians, it does appear that Jewish Christians are, in the eyes of some rabbis, *minim*.

3. The *Birkhat ha-minim*

The concept of *minim* appears to develop within Jewish thought and practice around the end of the 1st century ce. The Babylonian Talmud (5th century ce) says that the 12th of the Eighteen Benedictions (*berakhah*) was framed by Samuel the Little at the request of Gamliel II, dating it, in the view of the Babylonian academies, to the end of the first century ce (*Berakhot* 28b). The Palestinian revision of this *birkhat ha-minim* (literally, blessing of the heretics) reads:

And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be quickly uprooted in our days. And may the notsrin and the *minim* perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life and may they not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed art thou, Lord, who humblest the insolent.

Thus, the 12th Benediction appears in the literature of the Talmudic period (4th to 5th century ce), but it is projected onto an earlier era.

There is also a distinct line of Christian interpretation and use that may refer to the *birkhat ha-minim*.¹⁹ In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, which dates from

¹⁸ T. Hull. 2.22,23; j.Sabb. 14d; j. A. Zar. 40d, 41a; b. A. Zar. 27b; see also Qoh. Rabb 1.8.

¹⁹ This is traced by Pieter van der Horst, "The *Birkat ha-minim* in recent research," in *Hellenism–Judaism–Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction*, ed. P. van der Horst (Kampen: Pharos, 1994), pp. 99–111.

mid 2nd century ce, Justin Martyr insists that in their synagogues the Jews curse those who believe in Christ.²⁰ It is not certain that Justin Martyr is referring specifically to the 12th Benediction; his statement may point to a more general hostility. It is also possible that he is speaking of a local innovation from his own era rather than a formal, continuing tradition.

Despite these uncertainties, the specific curse of the 12th Benediction has been connected by various scholars to events in primitive Christianity. Noting the expulsion from the synagogue mentioned in John 9.22; 12.42; 16.2, J. Louis Martyn popularized the view that the Fourth Gospel represents a response to the hostility articulated in the *birkhat ha-minim*.²¹ W. D. Davies insisted that the Gospel of Matthew emerged from the tension that culminated in the *birkhat ha-minim*.²² Both of these schools of thought lead to the same conclusion: that this tension within the synagogue ultimately led to an expulsion or a withdrawal. Both proposed manifestations of this paradigm – Johannine or Matthean – imagine a group internal to the synagogue community with a distinctly Christian identity and envision a type of parting of the ways with rabbinic Judaism. Confirmation of this divide is said to be found in the patristic era when Epiphanius (374 ce) and Jerome (404 ce) speak about the Jews pronouncing curses in their synagogues against the Nazoreans.²³ In this way the *birkhat ha-minim* has been seen as a consistent and widespread tradition marking the divide between Jews and Christians. As Pieter van der Horst notes, “Both Jewish and Christian scholars draw this picture.”²⁴

From a critical perspective, the reconstruction of any such history of conflict proves difficult, and this traditional reading of the *birkhat ha-minim* is especially problematic. First, such descriptions have typically emerged in Christian scholarship and have described an early, sharp delineation between synagogue and church. In this model the synagogue is typically the aggressor. Moreover, Christianity is presumed to be a definable first century entity that was recognized as such and expelled by an equally defined rabbinic Judaism. Both the context and the content of these presumptions is suspect. Secondly, the original form of the *birkhat ha-minim* is difficult, if not impossible, to recover. Thirdly, the target of the curse must be determined. Fourthly, the variation and the development of the *birkhat ha-minim* must be considered. It is far from clear that a rather standard form of the prayer functioned in the same way across various times and places. Its usage may be local and sporadic.

²⁰ See, for example, *Dialogue* 16.4; 94.4; 95.4; 96.2; 108.3; 123.6; 133.6; 137.2.

²¹ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

²² W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

²³ Jerome's letter to Augustine (*ep.* 112.13); Epiphanius' *Panarion* (*Pan.* 30.15.1–4; 30.16.1–5)

²⁴ van der Horst, “The Birkat ha-minim,” p. 100.

Concerning the first question, the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity as coherent and definable entities is a development of the 3rd and 4th centuries; it is anachronistic to impose this coherence upon the 1st century. Such descriptions suggest that Christianity and Judaism were the same in every period, but also in every place. If there was in fact a parting of the ways, it occurred in different places at different times in different ways. In this situation, one model or paradigm does not fit all cases. More specifically, it would be wrong to presume that all such tension would be expressed in a standard form and use of the *birkhat ha-minim*.

Secondly, there is no easy access to the text of the *birkhat ha-minim*. There are some ten different versions of the 12th Benediction represented in various manuscripts and editions. A variety of external factors shape the tradition history of this text. Medieval versions tend to modify the language to make it less offensive to Christian authorities, directing the curse against Samaritans, the wicked, blasphemers, or the enemies. The two oldest extant manuscripts are from the Cairo genizah.²⁵ This particular reading – “May the *notrim* and the *minim* perish speedily” – is some 900 years removed from the original. This means that the text – its content, its context, and its audience – can only be known through a process of critical reconstruction. It cannot be presumed that there was a standard form and function for the *birkhat ha-minim* and that this has been recovered.

Thirdly, the audience of the curse cannot be presumed. The *notrim* may not be original; even if it was, it might refer to Christians, to Nazoreans, or to others. The term *minim* is likely original, but its meaning is debated. Even if the curse is about Christians, another audience may be intended; like much of the patristic invective against the Jews, the *birkhat ha-minim* may serve primarily as a warning to insiders not to defect.

Fourthly, it will become clear that the *birkhat ha-minim* underwent a series of transitions: it likely had its formative years in Palestine, it was applied in different ways in the recension of rabbinic material in Babylonia and Palestine, and it received another use in the patristic writings. In addition to these temporal stages, the role of the *birkhat ha-minim* probably varied by social and geographical location: different Christian communities seem to reflect contrasting experiences with the synagogue.²⁶

Recent scholarship has given more attention to these complexities and nuances. Reuven Kimelman concluded there was no evidence that ancient Jews directed the prayer against Christians.²⁷ He considers the terms found in the

²⁵ A *genizah* is a storage area in the synagogue, designed to hold discarded texts with sacred names. As the Cairo genizah reveals, many other texts ended up there.

²⁶ There is no real hint of such an edict in the Gospel of Mark, for example, or in the epistle of James, where listeners are given instruction on how to behave in synagogue.

²⁷ Reuven Kimelman, “Birkhat ha-minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Jewish

Genizah version (*notsrinm* and *minim*) and concludes that *minim* was a part of the original text. He warns, however, that terms cannot be presumed to mean the same thing in different contexts and across a span of some 500 years. Kimelman rightly insists that *minim* must be distinguished in three different stages of literature:

1. the early Palestine Tannaic literature, seen in the Mishna, the Tosephta, and Tannaitic midrashim
2. the literature of the Palestinian Amoraim or recension
3. the literature of the Babylonian Amoraim or recension

Kimelman concludes that the literature of Palestine – both the Tannaim and the Amoraim – consistently uses *minim* to refer to Jewish sectarians, but never to non-Jewish groups. He also concludes that a number of Tannaitic texts make it clear that *minim* sometimes refers to Jewish Christians. At its formative stages in the Palestinian Tannaim, the term *minim* refers to Jewish sectarians, among whom should be numbered Jewish Christians.

Kimelman is probably correct that *notsrinm*, though found in the Genizah text, was not a part of the orginal formulation of the *birkhat ha-minim*.²⁸ He is less convincing in his argument that the Fourth Gospel, Justin Martyr, and Origen speak of tension, but not distinctly of a curse against Christians in the synagogues. It may be the case, however, that the Fourth Gospel, Justin Martyr, and Origen do not refer to a standard form such as the 12th Benediction. Kimelman argues that the addition of *notsrinm* occurs in the latter half of the 4th century.²⁹ He concludes that the Genizah version, which contains this addition, should be dated no earlier than the 4th century. Even the Genizah version, says Kimelman, was intended against Jewish sectarians.³⁰

Kimelman speaks of Christians and Jewish Christians as distinct groups. He concludes there is no clear evidence of an ancient Jewish synagogue prayer against Christians. He believes that Christians were welcome at synagogue and that the *birkhat ha-minim* does not reflect a first century divide between Jews and Christians. It would, however, reflect hostility towards Jewish Christians.

Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. E. P. Sanders, (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 226–44.

²⁸ He offers two reasons for this. 1) If *notsrinm* preceded *minim* in the original, the Talmud would likely refer to the benediction as *birkhat ha-notsrinm*. 2) If *notsrinm* were original, one could expect it, like *minim*, to become a common term in rabbinic literature. It did not.

²⁹ As evidenced by Epiphanius and Jerome.

³⁰ Kimelman suggests that *notsrinm* was originally *nastrinm* and referred not to orthodox Christians, but to Nazoreans. A similar position is held by Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 95–107.

Lawrence Schiffman follows a similar line of argument.³¹ He believes the 12th Benediction went through three major stages. At the first stage is a benediction that existed prior to the 1st Jewish War (66–70 ce). The Jewish response to this war was an increasing call for unity. While Jewish Christians were becoming a minority within Christianity at this stage, Tannaic Jews came mostly into contact with Jewish Christians in Palestine. Because they were now seen as a threat to the unity of the Jewish people, the 12th Benediction was expanded to curse Jewish Christians and other *minim* – all Jewish. The point of the curse, says Schiffman, was to exclude such people from roles of leadership in the synagogues.³² The third stage is reached between 150 and 350 ce, when the 12th Benediction is a prayer for destruction of all the enemies of the Jewish people. This is especially true after 300 ce, when Christianity is predominantly a Gentile religion and is exerting its power over the Roman empire. At this stage the term *notsrim* is added to the 12th Benediction to address this growing threat.

Johann Maier and Steven Katz are less optimistic about reconstruction of the earliest form of the benediction.³³ Maier is doubtful about any hope of formulating the original text, noting the large time gap and the likely variation of use between regions. He believes, however, that the themes of prayers were fixed and can be recovered. Maier concludes that the 12th Benediction was created to address Jews who resisted rabbinic authority and practiced forms of syncretism and assimilation. Thus, says Maier, neither Christians nor Jewish Christians fell within the scope of the *birkhat ha-minim*.

Katz also despairs of any reconstruction of the original text, but he insists there was no reference to *notsrim* or Christians. The prayer was addressed against Jewish separatists and heretics and against arrogant Gentiles.³⁴

William Horbury offers a very different argument.³⁵ Horbury takes Justin's report as accurate and concludes that the *birkhat ha-minim* targeted both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Justin's remarks reflect a long line, ranging from the New Testament to the patristic writings of the late 2nd century, of reports of persecution of Christians at the hands of Jews. Horbury chooses to believe Jerome when he says the curse is against all Christians; the counter testimony by Epiphanius and by Jerome himself is considered by Horbury to be false. Horbury insists that use of the term *notsrim* to curse all Christians is not an innovation of the late 3rd

³¹ Lawrence Schiffman, "Tannaic Perspectives," pp. 147–56.

³² Because no leaders would pronounce such a curse on themselves.

³³ Johann Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum in der Antike* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982); Steven Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE," *JBL* 103 (1984), 43–76.

³⁴ Katz, "Separation," 43–76.

³⁵ William Horbury, "The Benediction of the *Minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *JTS* n.s. 33 (1982), 19–61, found also in Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), pp. 67–110. See also *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy*, pp. 3–25.

century, but is already apparent in the New Testament passages such as Acts 24.5. Horbury thus affirms the traditional view that Gamliel II (in the 1st century ce) reformulated the benedictions to speak against Christianity as a whole. Horbury also links this formal benediction to the various references to hostility in the later literature.

Despite the work of Horbury and others, it is not clear that an early, standardized form of the 12th Benediction was used in a consistent manner against all Christians. A curse against Jewish Christians is more likely, but consistent use of a standard curse is difficult to demonstrate.³⁶

How are these various treatments of the *birkhat ha-minim* to be evaluated? Seen from a larger perspective, the debate of the last twenty years centers on the question of a schism between Jews and Christians and is carried on in the context of post-Holocaust scholarship. Often overlooked in the intensity of this conversation is the range of nuances involved in identity formation and transformation. For the years after the fall of the Temple (70 ce) and the consequent dispersion, it is difficult to define what it means to be a Jew or to be a Christian, and later clarity should not be read back onto this formative period. This era of transition was marked not only by the movement of individuals between groups, but also by the relocation and reformulation of every type of Judaism.

Both the definition of *minim* and the framing of the *birkhat ha-minim* belong to this formative period. At its base, the term *minim* is used by some Jews to describe other Jews thought to hold inappropriate practices and ideas. A false picture can be obtained by an uncritical scan of the rabbinical corpus, where the use of the term varies by time and place. At the stages of the formation and first recension of rabbinic materials in Palestine, *minim* likely refers to other Jews. The list of suspects is rather short: Sadducees, Jews who collaborate with Rome, Jews who adapt Hellenistic culture, Jews drawn to gnosticism, Jews who resist rabbinic authority. While there are other ways to describe these groups, the term *minim* is used by some rabbis to refer to such Jews. It is probable that among those described as *minim* in the earliest periods in Palestine are Jewish followers of Jesus.

It is problematic, however, to extrapolate from this phenomenon to a standardized, widespread curse addressed against all followers of Jesus. It is more likely that different instances of tension produced a variety of responses. It is enough, particularly in this context, to suggest that Jesus and his Jewish followers were numbered among the earliest groups described as *minim* and that, in

³⁶ See the analysis by Steven Katz, "The Rabbinic Response to Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume Four: The Late Roman–Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 259–98, but especially pp. 280–94. See also pp. 272–76, where Katz distinguishes between the two types of bans mentioned in rabbinic sources: the *Niddui* was a means of communal discipline, while the *Herem* came to be understood as excommunication. Katz contends that only the *Niddui* was used in the period of Yavneh and that it was used only to correct individuals, not groups.

some places and on some occasions, they may have been one of the targets of the 12th Benediction.

A few rabbinic passages appear to refer directly or implicitly to Jesus himself. While there is little reflection of the historical profile of Jesus in these passages, their intent is clear: to portray Jesus as an apostate Jew. This characterization applies as well to the followers of Jesus.

In the Babylonian recension and in its later developments, the term *minim* and the *birkhat ha-minim* are expanded to a wider field of view and a different focal point. Eventually Gentile Christians and other non-Jewish opponents were, in some instances, included in the curse. This later form of the *birkhat ha-minim* may be one of the factors that fires the patristic rhetoric against all Judaism.

4. Other Signs of Engagement

Not all reference to Jewish Christians is contained in the concept of *minim* or in the curse of the *birkhat ha-minim*. In one rabbinic story the wife of Eliezer, who is the sister of Gamliel, hopes to share equally in the inheritance from her parents (b. Sabb. 116a). She goes before a “philosoph,” who apparently has the power to decide the case, and offers him a gold lamp – apparently as a bribe. He decides in her favor, declaring that the Law of Moses is superseded by the Gospel, which is said to declare that a son and a daughter shall inherit alike. Gamliel then takes a Libyan ass to the judge – apparently as a greater bribe – and the case is reversed. The judge declares that since the first ruling he has read further. In the end of the book he finds a passage that says “I am not come to take away from the Law of Moses, neither to add to the Law of Moses am I come.” The judge then cites further: “A daughter does not inherit.”

Several aspects of this story are noteworthy. It is projected at an early stage of the literature – earlier perhaps than the writing of the Gospel of Matthew. In this story, a judgement is made on the basis of a (Hebrew?) gospel that contains the saying of Jesus found at Mt. 5.17. The text is also said to grant equal inheritance to children. The saying that “I am not come to take away from the Law of Moses” is said to be found at the end of the book, and it may be followed by another unknown saying on inheritance. While this story seems to know some content of the Jesus tradition, it may be distinct from – and perhaps prior to – any canonical tradition. Further, it is noteworthy that a rabbinic question appears to be decided on the basis of a gospel text.

There may be some echo of this type of engagement in the epitaph of Faustina, a young girl from Venosa in the 5th or 6th century ce.³⁷ Her epitaph contains ten lines of Latin:

³⁷ A description may be found in Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An*

Here lies Faustina, daughter of Faustinus her father, 14 years (and) 5 months old, who was the only (child) of her parents. Two apostles and two rabbis spoke a lament over her, and she caused a very great grief to her parents and tears to the city. She was the great-grandchild of Faustinus, father, and grandchild of Vitus and Asella, first citizens of the city.

Between lines 8 and 9 of the Latin are two lines of Hebrew inscribed around a menorah. The Hebrew reads: "Resting place of Faustina; may (her) soul rest, peace."

The offspring of the rabbinic debate with Jewish Christians is perhaps found in the *Toledot Yeshu*.³⁸ Texts are known only from the 11th century, with indirect attestation from the 9th century. The tradition itself likely predates the Persian conquest of 614 ce and probably developed in Palestine and Syria under the Byzantines between the 4th and 7th centuries. Some individual traditions within the *Toledot Yeshu* may come from an earlier period. The *Toledot Yeshu*, which offers a legendary account of the rise of Christianity, has at some points been influenced by rabbinic references to Jesus and to his followers.

The *Toledot Yeshu* portrays Christianity as a movement that arose within Judaism. Jesus and his followers stand in tension with the main body of Judaism. It is the Wise Ones among the Jews who are responsible for the condemnation and execution of Jesus and his closest followers. This is done through a Jewish secret agent – Judas. Jesus' body is displayed to refute any claims that he has risen. As in the Babylonian Talmud, the five primary disciples of Jesus are also executed. At this point the passage from Sanhedrin 43a (Jesus was a revolutionary who was near to the kingdom) is placed into the text of the *Toledot Yeshu*, but without acknowledgment of its source.

In *Toledot Yeshu*, a similar fate awaits the community of Jesus' followers. The Wise Ones send another agent to infiltrate the apostles and to separate them from the community of the Jews. This Jewish agent is received among the apostles, and he lays down ordinances requiring separate Christian festivals, prayers, and customs. The simple-hearted Christians obey this Jewish agent and revere him under the name of Paul.³⁹

introductory survey of a millennium of Jewish funerary epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE) (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1991), pp. 146–47.

³⁸ See the discussion in William Horbury, "Judeo-Christians in the *Toledot Yeshu*," in *The Image of the Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, WUNT 158, ed. P. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 280–86.

³⁹ Horbury, "Toledot Yeshu," p. 284, notes that similar stories are told elsewhere to explain the origins of Samaritanism and of Islam. He also notes, p. 285, that Chrysostom and Jerome both believed that Paul's rebuke of Peter at Antioch was staged. A counter form of the *Toledot Yeshu* story may be present in the Pseudo-Clementines, where rabbi Gamaliel is said to conceal his Christianity in order to benefit Christians (*Rec.* 1.27–71).

5. Conclusion

While the larger debate has been framed mostly around when and where and how church and synagogue parted ways,⁴⁰ this focus is misleading. It is improper to talk about two competing streams of traditions and a “parting of the ways” if there were not yet ways to part, particularly in Palestine. It is probably more accurate to speak of an extended period of the “forming of the ways.”⁴¹ In the midst of this process of social formation, we should expect to find persons and groups who are characterized as understanding both their following of Jesus and their commitment to Jewishness as a continuation of God’s covenant with Israel. Do any rabbinic traditions confirm or clarify the existence of Jewish Christianity?

When read critically, a few rabbinic traditions scattered across various stages of the tradition seem to reflect an ongoing conversation with such Jewish followers of Jesus. First, the characterization of Jesus as a Jewish heretic is present in some passages. This characterization is applied as well to his followers: his disciples were executed on scriptural grounds, and followers like Jacob continue to trouble the rabbis. Secondly, among the variety of Jews who fall under the category of *min* are Jewish Christians. Thirdly, in some times and places, Jesus and his followers may be one target of a synagogue curse against heretics. Fourthly, rabbinic traditions seem to exhibit some concern about Jewish Christian texts. While the field of view expands in later literature to include Gentiles, the particular engagement between some rabbis and some Jewish Christians seems to endure at least into the 4th century.

The conversations between Jews and *minim* are noteworthy for what they say and do not say.⁴² Jesus’ messiahship is never denied and never confirmed: the issue is not raised. No hint of Trinitarian doctrine appears. What Jews and *minim* do talk about is scripture and its proper interpretation.

As a consequence, some elements of rabbinic literature may provide another witness to the existence and activity of Jewish Christianity. The initial hints of this conversation emerge near the close of the 1st century, and echoes continue into the late 4th century. This literary evidence helps to confirm that Jewish Christianity existed. Can it offer further insight into *why* and *how* Jewish Christianity existed?

The statements of the rabbis may take on greater profile when seen in comparison with the patristic references to those who seek to follow Jesus in a Jewish

⁴⁰ Particular focus is given to this topic in the work of James D. G. Dunn. See especially *Jews and Christians: The Parting of Ways, A.D. 70–135* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989); See also *The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991).

⁴¹ This question will be addressed in detail in Chapter 15 and in the Conclusion.

⁴² There is, of course, the possibility that this focus has been removed from rabbinic texts through censorship.

way. The patristic materials recognize that Jewish Christians compose the earliest community of Jesus' followers, yet this hardly tempers patristic slander of Jewish Christians. Epiphanius will even trace the lineage of some back to the Jerusalem community before dismissing them as heretics. The patristic attention to such individuals and groups and the persistent attempt to dismiss them as heretics, when seen through critical analysis, suggest the vitality and endurance of Jewish Christianity.

A similar hermeneutic may be applicable to those rabbinic materials that seem to refer to Jesus and his followers. The distance between the historical profile of Jesus and the rabbinic portrait of Jesu ben Pantira is obvious. The historical activity of Jesus as a prophet of the Kingdom of God and a critic of some religious practices of Israel is either censored, forgotten, or avoided. It proves easier to raise the attack against a caricature than to invoke the historical profile of Jesus. But why was Jesus remembered at all? Why was he not, like John the Baptist and Paul and the Church Fathers, simply ignored? The obvious rabbinic caricature of Jesus and the repeated insistence on his status as a *min* suggest that accounting for Jesus was sometimes perceived as a necessary task in the formative stages of rabbinic Judaism.

This hermeneutic is also applicable to the rabbinic portrait of Jesus' followers. The place of the Romans is understood, particularly after 70 ce, and Gentile Christianity does not immediately come into the field of vision of the rabbis, particularly in Palestine. But Jewish Christians are a part of the internal disruption occurring within all of Judaism, and it is likely they cannot be ignored. One stage in the process of identity formation for rabbinic Judaism is to articulate the social location of various types of Judaism.⁴³ Declaring Jewish followers of Jesus to be *minim* both includes and excludes them. By so describing Jewish Christians, the rabbis acknowledge – perhaps unwillingly – that they are located in the Jewish domain. At the same time, there is an attempt to proscribe Jewish followers of Jesus as outsiders. This attention suggests that such groups are a perceived threat.

Moreover, there is some concern among rabbis to account for the texts of Jewish Christians. The perceived threat posed by such texts suggests, from a historical perspective, the vitality of the literary tradition of Jewish Christianity and of their claim to a share in the heritage of Israel.

The late rabbinic description of Mary may offer a paradigm for the perception of Jewish Christianity: "She was the descendant of princes and rulers, she played the harlot with carpenters" (b. Sanh. 106a). The late rabbinic evaluation of Jesus may also be paradigmatic: "In the beginning a prophet," says the sage, "in the end a deceiver" (b. Sanh. 106a). The *min* Jesus was a revolutionary, some later rabbis say, who was "near to the kingdom" (b. Sanh. 43a). These passages may re-

⁴³ A process mirrored in the heresiologies of the patristic period. A similar mapping process can be seen in Josephus.

present the interpretive lens through which some rabbis perceive the Jewish followers of Jesus as both near and distant.

As with patristic writers, rabbinic awareness of Jewish Christianity and its texts and the rabbinic insistence on the apostate status of such persons may provide important historical markers. This rhetoric implies the existence, and perhaps the vitality, of Jewish Christianity as a historical entity that claimed a place in God's covenant with Israel. These markers also suggest that Jewish Christians may have been important dialogue partners in the formation of rabbinic Judaism: they, among others, helped to define what it would not become. Such negotiations form an important part of the religious map of antiquity.

CHAPTER 14

Archeological Evidence for Jewish Christianity

The remnants of the material culture of antiquity, composed primarily of structures, monuments, pottery, inscriptions, texts, and coins, provide important content and context for historical analysis. The absence of such material evidence may also be noteworthy. Nonetheless, it is difficult to use material culture as a primary witness, since the access to such culture is always limited and is mostly unbalanced.¹ Much of this imbalance is accidental, but it is also true that monuments and memorials are built by the victors, usually upon the foundations of prior cultures and religions.

Jewish Christianity has been defined as persons and groups in antiquity who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Is there material evidence of this movement in the first four centuries? If so, does this evidence contribute to a broader understanding of Jewish Christianity?² Can archeological evidence help to locate Jewish Christianity on the religious map of antiquity?

A number of scholars think so. The most extensive reconstruction is found in the publications of two Italian scholars working within the Franciscan order – Bellarmino Bagatti and Emmanuela Testa.³ At the heart of the Bagatti-Testa thesis is a Jewish Christian community similar to that described by F. C. Baur: a

¹ For example, there is a great deal of material evidence now available on the Qumran sect, but almost nothing of the Sadducees. There is no simple equivalence between archeological evidence and historical importance. The most obvious example of this is the paucity of material evidence for Christianity prior to the fourth century. The same imbalance may be true of Jewish Christianity.

² Detailed information and acknowledgements for archeological photographs and images are found in the List of Figures. I am especially grateful to the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum; to Peter Lampe; to Birger Pearson; to C. M. Dauphin; to Shimon Gibson; to Joan Taylor and Oxford University Press; to the Israel Exploration Society; to the *Biblical Archeology Review*; to the Continuum Publishing Group.

³ Their work was presented in a series of publications, but is summarized in Bellarmino Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, trans. E. Hoade (Jerusalem, 1971 [Italian mss. first published in French in 1968]). The portrait of Jewish Christianity formulated by Bagatti and Testa is traced in J. Briand, *The Judeo-Christian Church of Nazareth*, trans. M. Deuel (Jerusalem, 1982, [French edition 1979]). A detailed summary of their work is found in the extensive refutation by Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

Petrine group, later led by James, who practiced the Jewish Law and opposed the work of Paul. Drawing upon the work of Jean Daniélou, Bagatti and Testa looked for Jewish Christianity in distinctive ideas and practices: thus they typically looked for mystical, apocalyptic, and gnostic forms as signals of a distinctive Jewish Christianity. Bagatti and Testa believed this group developed a heterodox theology and venerated holy places, especially caves. Bagatti and Testa associated Jewish Christians with the *minim* slandered by the rabbis and with the Ebionite heretics abused by the Church Fathers.

The function of this hypothesis is unique. Bagatti and Testa argued that the veneration of and pilgrimage to Christian holy sites stirred by Constantine's patronage of Christianity was not a new phenomenon. Many of these sites, said Bagatti and Testa, were venerated and preserved by Jewish Christians. In this way, they imagined a continuity of veneration for the major Christian holy places.⁴ Based on their reconstruction of Jewish Christianity from literary sources, they expected to find evidence of Jewish Christian veneration beneath numerous Christian sites. Their hypothesis is primarily about the continuity of holy places, and Bagatti and Testa showed little interest *per se* in the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity. The Bagatti-Testa hypothesis was challenged by various scholars, with the most extensive analysis and critique offered by Joan Taylor.⁵

1. Ossuaries

Bagatti and Testa argued that various ossuaries (burial boxes for bones) contained Jewish Christian inscriptions. The strongest claims were made for ossuaries found in a Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.⁶ Bagatti interpreted the cross shapes used to designate the direction of the lid as versions of the Hebrew letter *tau* and insisted on a Jewish Christian provenance. He noted the names found there were common among Christians. Bagatti also found what appeared to be a *chi-rho* on an ossuary belonging to Judah, who is described as the son of Judah the proselyte. Bagatti interpreted this *chi-rho* in light of its later use as a Christian symbol in the time of Constantine and found here further evidence for Jewish Christianity. Joan Taylor notes a range of other options for understanding the abbreviation, she points out that the names are ordinary Jewish names, and she insists upon the primacy of the Jewish context of the inscription.⁷

⁴ Since Christianity had no official sanction, Jewish Christianity provided a necessary component for their theory of continuity.

⁵ Taylor, *Holy Places*.

⁶ The property belongs to the Franciscans and is known by the name *Dominus Flevit*.

⁷ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 9–12.

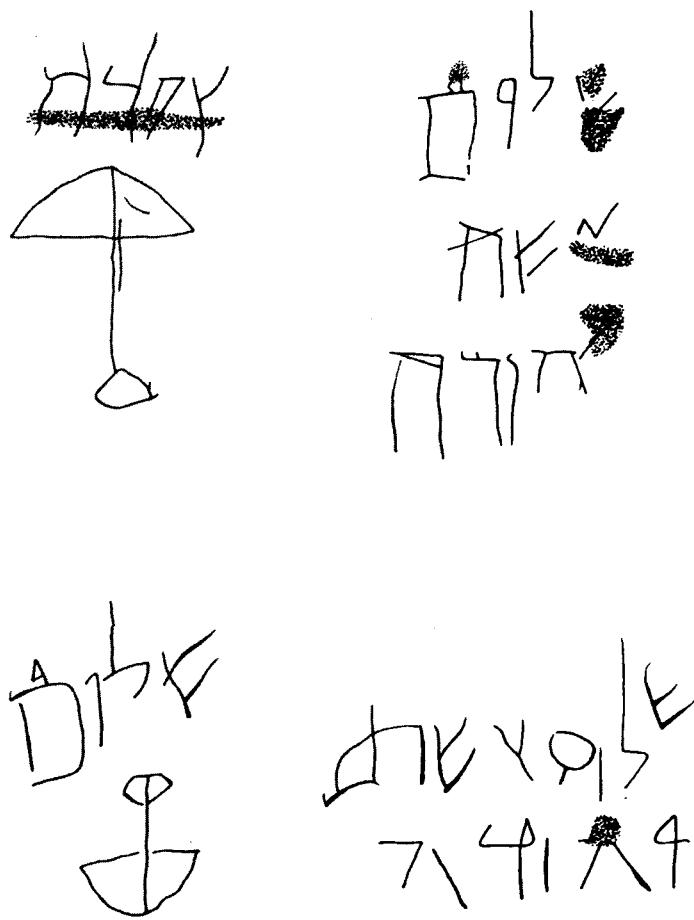
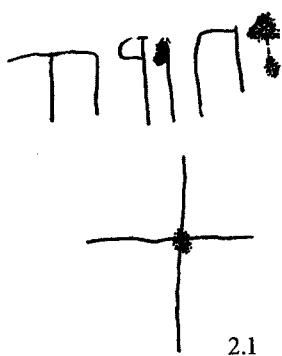
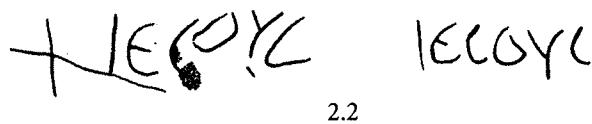


Figure 1: Ossuary graffiti from Jerusalem, Mount of Offence⁸

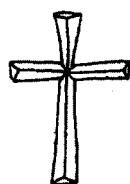
⁸ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 6, sketch based on C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Archeological Researches 1873-1874*, i (London, 1899).



2.1



2.2



2.3



2.4

Figure 2: Ossuary graffiti from Jerusalem, Mount of Offence⁹

⁹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 7, sketch based on Clermont-Ganneau (1899).

Hebrei
3.1

Hebrei
3.2

Figure 3: Ossuary graffiti from Jerusalem, Talpiot¹⁰

2. Stelai

Bagatti also identified a number of *stelai* (upright stone slabs or pillars) found near Hebron as evidence of Jewish Christianity. Bagatti identified the Archontics described in Epiphanius as a Jewish Christian sect located near Hebron. He then associated the *stelai* with the Archontics and used their ideas, taken from patristic writings against heretics, to describe the theology of Jewish Christianity. This connection is tenuous. It appears that no other writer, ancient or modern, associates Archontics with Jewish Christianity, and Taylor offers strong evidence that the *stelai* are forgeries.¹¹

¹⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 8, sketch based on E. L. Sukenik, "The Earliest Records of Christianity," *American Journal of Archeology* 51 (1947), pp. 361–65.

¹¹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 12–16.



Figure 4: Stelai from Khirbet Kilkish¹²

¹² Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 14.

3. The Nativity Cave

Bagatti and Testa also claimed that the cave below the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was used by Jewish Christians.¹³ The earliest literary reference to a Bethlehem cave is found in Justin (150s ce), who says that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled by the birth of Jesus in a cave near Bethlehem (*Dial.* 78.12–13). The 3rd century *Protevangelium of James* also tells of the birth of Jesus in a cave in the vicinity of Bethlehem. Origen, writing around 247 ce, says that local people in Bethlehem show a cave and a manger where Jesus was born (*Contra Celsum* 1.51). Eusebius (c. 260 to c. 340 ce) has a similar report: "It is agreed by all that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, as even a cave is shown by the local inhabitants there to those who come from elsewhere for a look" (*Dem. Evang.* 3.2.47). The Church of the Nativity was dedicated in 339 ce, some years after a visit to the site by the empress Helena. The church was located above a cave that likely served as a cultic site for the veneration of Adonis. Taylor notes that it is not clear that this is the cave referred to by Justin Martyr and the *Protevangelium of James*. She suggests the references by Origen and Eusebius show that by the end of the 3rd century a pagan cult site was identified as the birthplace of Jesus.¹⁴

The Bagatti claim that Jewish Christians venerated the cave beneath the Church of the Nativity falters on four major points. First, it is not clear that this particular cave was known to followers of Jesus. Secondly, it is not clear that Christians before the time of Constantine venerated this site, or any other site, as the place of Jesus' birth. Thirdly, even if Christians honored this particularly site by the late 3rd century, it is not at all clear that these are Jewish Christians. Fourthly, many scholars now think it more probable that Jesus was born in Nazareth. If so, the Bethlehem story is based on particular readings of the Hebrew Bible and would require some period of development; it is unlikely that the earliest followers of Jesus told of his birth in Bethlehem.

¹³ Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, pp. 133–34; Testa, "Le 'Grotte dei Misteri' giudeo-cristiane," *LA* 14 (1964), 65–144.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 96–112.

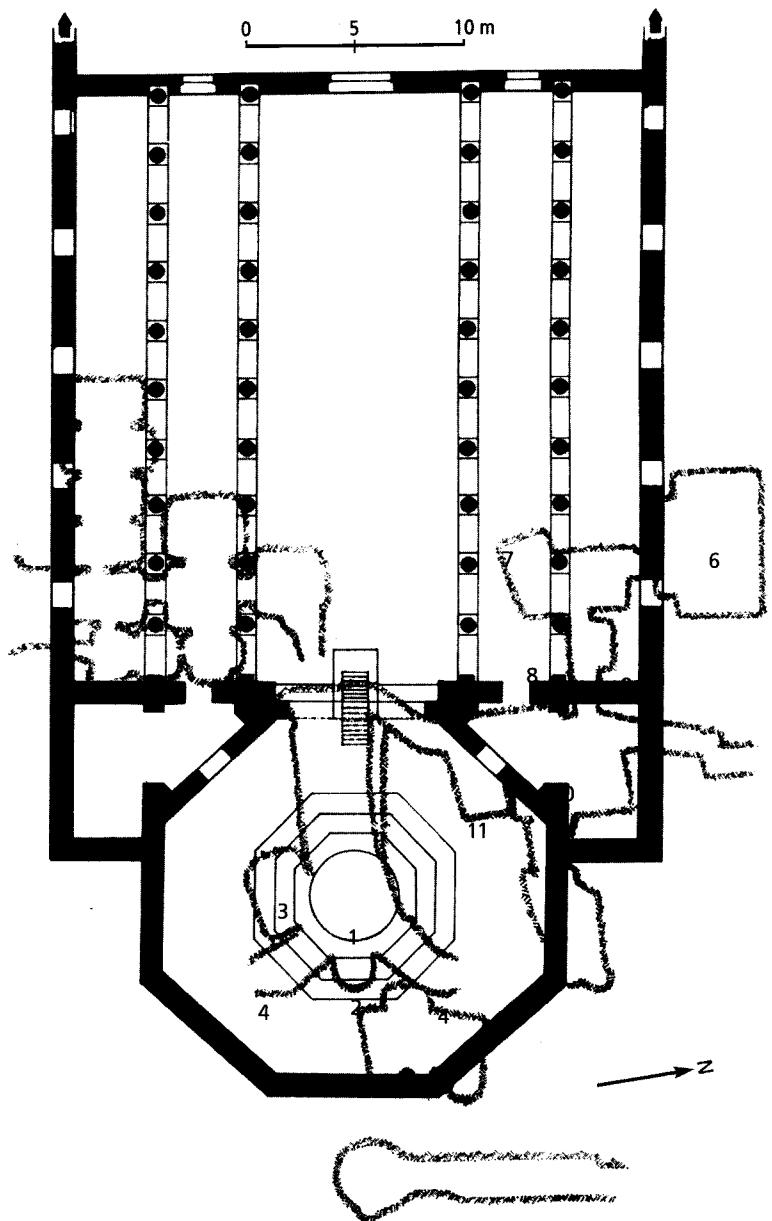


Figure 5: *Church of the Nativity and underlying caves*¹⁵

¹⁵ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 111, sketch based on L.-H. Vincent, "Bethléem: le sanctuaire de la Nativité," *Revue biblique* 45 (1936), 544–74.

4. The Golgotha Cave

Bagatti and Testa also argued that Jewish Christians used a constructed cave at Golgotha to venerate the tomb of Christ and that they did so prior to Hadrian's building of a temple to Venus on the site. Bagatti and Testa believed the cave was used first for divination by pagans, next was venerated by Jewish Christians, then was filled and covered with a temple to Venus by Hadrian.¹⁶

Bagatti and Testa think that Jewish Christians believed the grave of Adam lay beneath the rock of Calvary. This claim is based on a description by Origen in his *Commentary on Matthew* near the end of the 3rd century: "Concerning the place of the skull, it came to me that Hebrews hand down [the tradition that] the body of Adam has been buried there, in order that 'as in Adam all die' both Adam would be raised and 'in Christ all will be made alive.'" While the origin of this tradition cannot be determined, there appears to be no connection to the artificial cave beneath. The textual evidence for a cave beneath the rock of Calvary begins only in the 7th century ce, but even here the cave is on the Temple Mount. Taylor suggests the 6th century *Cave of the Treasures*, based on a Jewish legend that describes a different cave on the Temple Mount, may be the source for the idea of a cave beneath the rock of Calvary. She dates the artificial cave beneath the rock of Calvary some time after the Persian invasion (614 ce).¹⁷

Thus the idea that Jewish Christians venerated this cave is not based on any material evidence. Because they presume that Jewish Christians venerated caves, Bagatti and Testa transfer this presumption to the cave dug beneath the rock of Calvary. From a critical perspective, the most that can be concluded is that Origen knows a Hebraic tradition that Adam is buried beneath Golgotha. If the Adam-Christ connection is made by Origen, then he has appropriated this Hebraic legend. If the Adam-Christ connection precedes Origen, then this is likely a Jewish Christian tradition. If so, the tradition is a literary one; the material evidence is most likely created subsequent to the tradition and perhaps in support of the tradition.

¹⁶ The reconstruction of Bagatti and Testa is discussed in detail by Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 113–42.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 132.

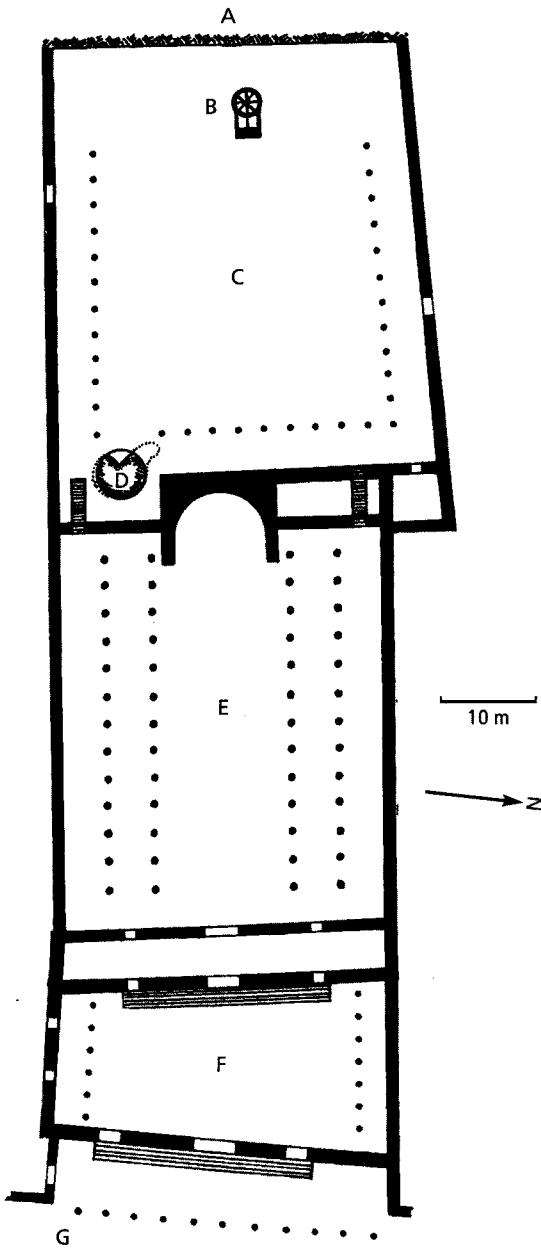
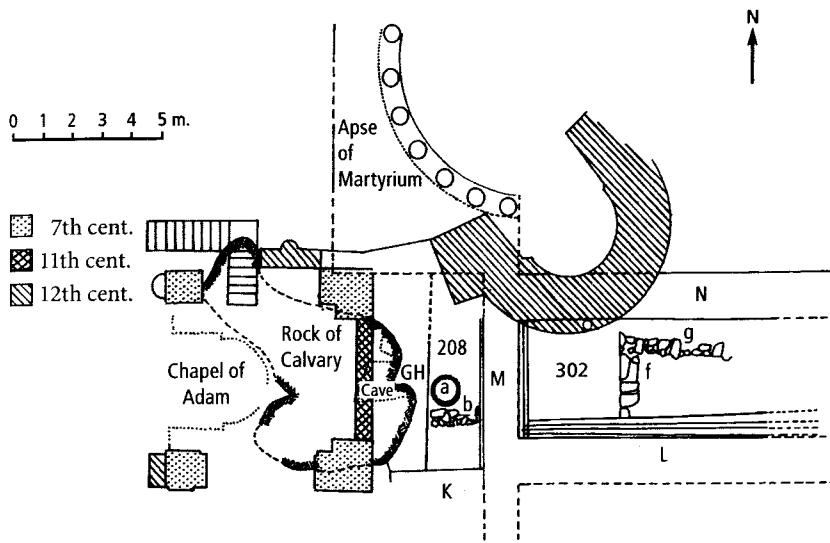


Figure 6: Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem¹⁸

¹⁸ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 115, sketch based on J. Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Figure 7: Golgotha¹⁹Figure 8: Cave cut into the east side of Golgotha²⁰

¹⁹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 125, sketch based on V. C. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1981–82).

²⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 134, photo from Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

5. The Mount of Olives Church (Eleona)

The Constantinian basilica on the Mount of Olives is built over a cave, and Bagatti claimed this cave was used for cultic purposes from the time of the apostles.²¹ Taylor notes that the cave was excavated by L.-H. Vincent in 1910, but no evidence of Jewish Christian use was found.²² The first literary mention of such a cave is found in the *Acts of John*, a gnostic text from the early 3rd century. In this text the beloved disciple named John flees from the crucifixion of Jesus and takes refuge in a cave on the Mount of Olives. Here he experiences an appearance of the heavenly Jesus and receives the illumination of the secret of salvation. Eusebius knows the tradition of a cave in his *Demonstration Evangelica* (c. 318 ce), and he also retains gnostic images:

According to the common and received account, the feet of our Lord and Saviour, himself the Word of God, truly stood ... upon the Mount of Olives at the cave that is shown there. On the ridge of the Mount of Olives he prayed and handed on to his disciples the mysteries of the end, and after this he made his ascension into Heaven (*Dem. Evang.* 6.18).

Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, connects the cave tradition to the church built by Helena:

The emperor's mother also raised up a stately edifice on the Mount of Olives, in memory of the journey into Heaven of the Saviour of all. She put up a sacred church, a temple, on the ridge beside the summit of the whole Mount. Indeed a true report holds the Saviour to have initiated his disciples into secret mysteries in this very cave. (*Vita Const.* 3.43)

None of this evidence points to a distinctly Jewish Christian veneration of the cave. Indeed, the tradition of the cave retains gnostic images.

What may be present in early traditions is a Jewish Christian connection, not to the cave, but to the Mount of Olives. Eusebius says that, before the patronage of Constantine, Christians were drawn to the Mount of Olives:

Those who believe in Christ from all over the world come and congregate, not as in the old days because of the splendour of Jerusalem, nor that they might assemble and worship in the old Temple at Jerusalem, but in order to learn together the interpretation, according to the prophets, of the capture and devastation of Jerusalem, and that they may worship at the Mount of Olives, opposite the city, where the glory of the Lord went when it left the former city. (*Dem. Evang.* 6.18).

While Eusebius speaks of believers coming from all over the world, the passage has Hebraic overtones. The description of the Mount of Olives as "opposite the city" recalls the perspective of Mark 13, where Jesus instructs his disciples about the endtime "while he was seated on the Mount of Olives over against the Temple."

²¹ Bagatti, *The Church of the Circumcision*, p. 134. The discussion by Taylor may be found in *Holy Places*, pp. 143–56.

²² Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 144.

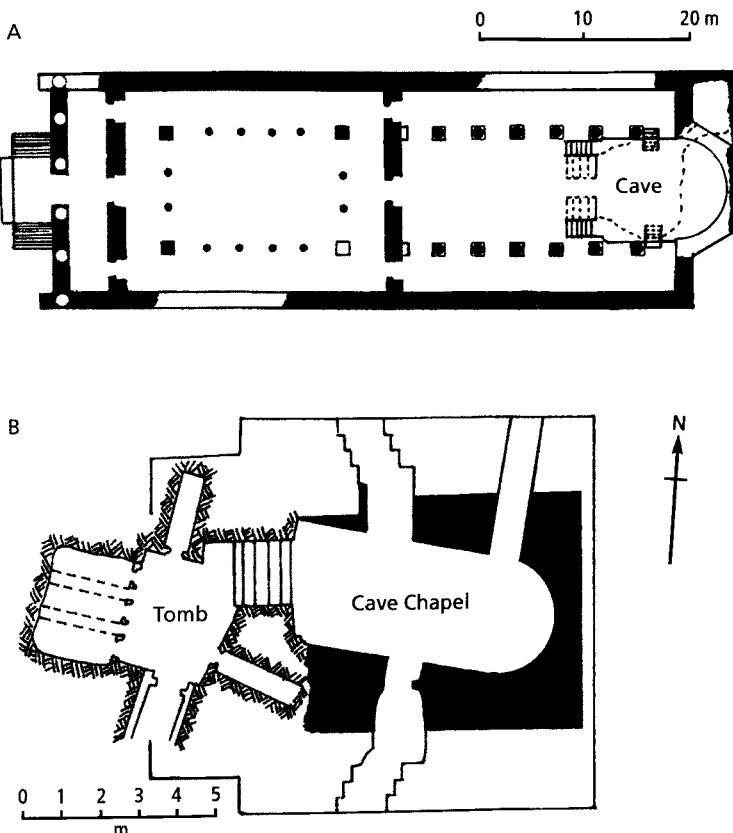


Figure 9: A: Eleona Church with underlying cave²³; B: Eleona cave with tomb²⁴

The searching of the prophets for explanations of contemporary events roots in a thoroughly Jewish practice. The influx to Jerusalem from many nations recalls the ingathering expected by the prophets and alluded to in Acts 2.9–11. The concern for the *shekinah* or glory of Yahweh is prominent in Hebrew narratives and in rabbinic debate. The obsession with the fate of Jerusalem occupies a central place in the Hebrew Bible and in rabbinic thought. Luke notes the continued connection of Jewish Christians of the first generation to various sites in Jerusalem (Acts 1.12; 1.19; 3.1; 3.9–10; 3.11; 5.12). As a consequence, it is plausible to see the association with the Mount of Olives described by Origen as rooted in a

²³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 145, sketch based on L.-H. Vincent, *Jérusalem: recherches de topographie, d'archéologie et d'histoire, ii Jérusalem nouvelle* (Prais, 1914).

²⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 145, sketch based on J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew it* (London, 1978).

Jewish Christian ethos. If such a tradition lies behind Origen's words, the evidence is wholly literary.

6. Various Caves and Tombs

Bellarmino Bagatti and Emmanuela Testa believed Jewish Christians had a general practice of using caves as "grottos of mystery" where they enacted cultic events.²⁵ They also thought Eusebius was drawing upon Jewish Christianity in his description of such caves (*Laud. Const.* 6.16–17).

Bagatti believed the grotto at Ein Karim was venerated by Jewish Christians, and this led in turn to the identification of the cave with Elizabeth and with John the Baptist. Bagatti and Testa held a similar position on the cave at Bethesda. The Jerusalem grotto between the two pools of Bethesda was accompanied by a structure with five porches in John 5.1–18, and it was known as a Jewish healing sight. The area became a site for the cult of Seraphis, then was converted in Byzantine times into a church. Taylor notes, however, that Byzantines transformed caves found in Jewish areas as well as in pagan areas. In a third example, Bagatti claimed the crosses found in the bell chamber of Khirbet el-Ain point to Jewish Christian usage, but Taylor again emphasizes the extensive Byzantine use.²⁶

None of the examples cited by Bagatti and Testa offer clear evidence of Jewish Christian use. It is only their presumption that Jewish Christians favored caves that suggests the reading of these various sites as Jewish Christian. Taylor finds a better explanation in the diverse use of caves by Byzantine Christians:

To conclude, caves of various types were used in Palestine by Byzantine Christians as holy places. Some of the caves had been significant in pagan, Jewish, and Samaritan tradition, and were provided with a Christian tradition that would supersede the former. Some of the caves had not been religiously significant before the Christians made use of them.... Byzantine Christians most likely derived the idea of employing caves as zones of sacredness from pagans, but caves could have a symbolic value to the Christian mind that was new.... Even caves which had formerly been used for nothing more than agricultural purposes could be utilized in the Byzantine period as holy places, because the idea of using caves in general as sites for numerous biblical events exerted such a powerful attraction.²⁷

Despite different conclusions by the first team to study the Bethany cave, Bagatti drew upon a 6th century text that spoke of Christ eating at Bethany and concluded this cave was one of three places where early Christians held cultic meals – Bethany, Gethsemane, and Zion.²⁸ Testa concluded that a Jewish practice of

²⁵ See, for example, Testa, "Le 'Grotto dei Misterei' guideo-cristiane," 14:65–144. Taylor responds to these various sites in *Holy Places*, pp. 157–79.

²⁶ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 169.

²⁷ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 179.

²⁸ Bagatti, "Espressioni bibliche nelle antiche iscrizioni cristiane della Palestina," LA 3

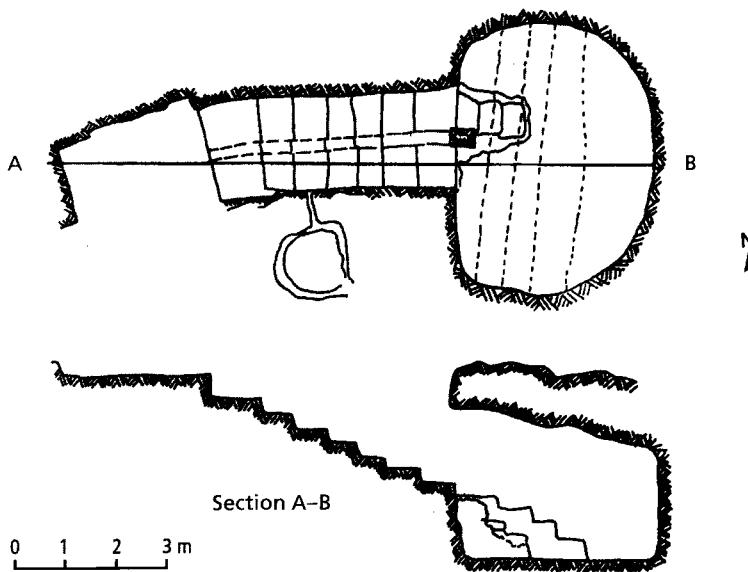


Figure 10: The cave at Bethany²⁹

cultic meals was continued by Jewish Christians in the cave at Bethany. Most scholars, however, agree with the initial assessment that all evidence points to a religious use of the cave from the 4th to the 7th century. Nothing distinguishes this usage as Jewish Christian.

Testa, based on his reading of the 6th century text of Eutychius of Constantinople, also described the cave at Gethsemane as a site for Jewish Christian messianic banquets.³⁰ Testa interpreted the description of a rock on the Mount of Olives, mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 ce, to refer to a cave. Actual mention of a cave is later, and even then it is infrequent.³¹

The cave appears to have served as the site of an oil press in Roman times, which may account for the name Gethsemane – likely a transliteration of a Hebraic term for oil press. John 18.2 notes that Jesus met often with his disciples in this place. Taylor finds here the most authentic of the cave sites: “It should not seem at all strange if Jesus and his disciples decided to use this cave as a place to sleep.”³² It appears, however, that religious use of the site is a Constantinian innovation:

²⁹ (1953), 111–48. Testa developed the idea in “Le ‘Grotte dei Mysteri’ giudeo-cristiane,” 128–31. Taylor discusses this claim in *Holy Places*, pp. 180–92.

³⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 181, sketch based on P. Benoit and M. E. Boismard, “Un ancien sanctuaire chrétien à Bethanie,” *Revue biblique* 58, pp. 200–51.

³¹ Testa, “Le ‘Grotte dei Mysteri’ giudeo-cristiane,” 123. This claim is discussed by Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 192–201.

³² These are listed by Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 198.

³³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 201.

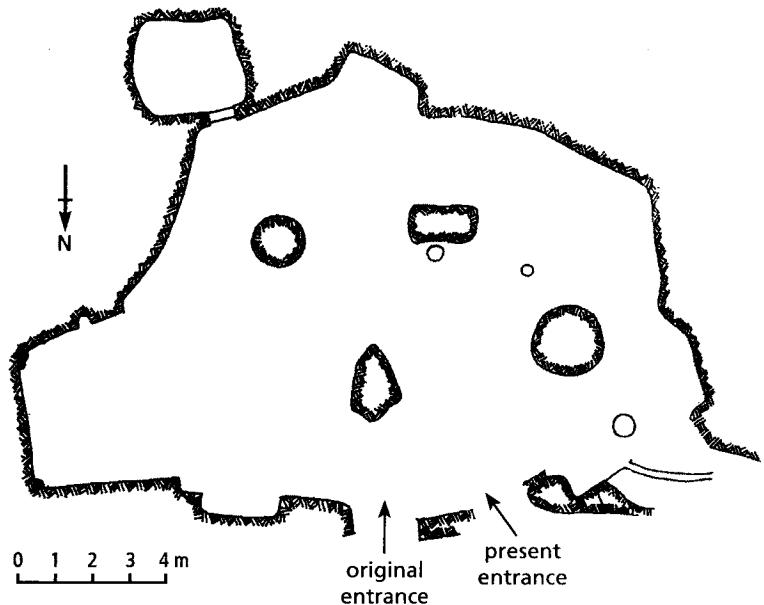


Figure 11: The cave at Gethsemane³³

the site was appropriated by the Church, along with an adjacent site, and these were determined to commemorate two important actions in the course of Jesus' Passion: the Cave of Gethsemane was understood to be where Jesus was arrested, and a nearby mass of rock was believed to be where he went to pray alone. The hypothesis that Jewish-Christians used the cave for their supposed suppers, however, is an idea unsupported by any evidence at all.³⁴

A similar conclusion may be reached on the Tomb of Mary located adjacent to the Cave of Gethsemane. While the tomb may be early, there is no indication of its authenticity as the tomb of Mary. The earliest datable evidence of usage shows that it continued to be used as a burial tomb in the 5th and 6th centuries. The earliest literary mention of a tomb of Mary likely dates from the Byzantine era, with mention by patristic writers or pilgrims dating from the 6th century. Bagatti's claim that Jewish Christians venerated the unadorned tomb is supported by no material evidence.

³³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 199, sketch based on V. C. Corbo, *Ricerche archeologiche al Monte degli Ulivi, Gerusalemme* (Jerusalem, 1965).

³⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 201.

7. Zion

The presence of an apostolic church on Mount Zion has been supported by Bagatti and Testa, but more recently by Bargil Pixner.³⁵ Pixner's argument is built on three claims: 1) the structure on Mount Zion identified to visitors as the tomb of David is actually a synagogue from the Roman period; 2) this was a Jewish Christian synagogue; 3) this synagogue was later known as the Church of the Apostles.

Pixner's argument is largely dependent on literary traditions. The basic identity of the site – the place to which disciples returned after the resurrection, the traditional site of the Last Supper, the location of Peter's Pentecost sermon – is drawn from the first two chapters of Acts. Few scholars would argue with his contention that the site was wrongly revered, from the 10th century on, as the site of David's tomb. Most would concur that Crusaders arriving in 1099 ce found the ruins of the Byzantine church and the remnants of tombs ascribed to David and to Stephen.

Disagreement arises over the results of a 1951 study of the site by Jacob Pinkerfeld.³⁶ Behind the Crusader memorial to David, Pinkerfeld identified a niche belonging to an older structure. Beneath the marble floors of the present struc-

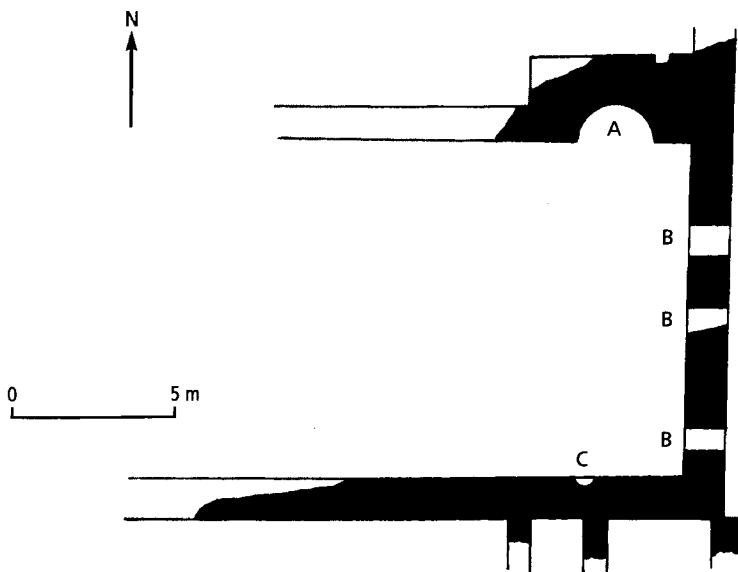


Figure 12: Earlier remains in the tomb of David, Mount Zion³⁷

³⁵ See, for example, Bagatti, *The Church of the Circumcision*, pp. 117–18. Pixner's argument may be found in "Church of the Apostles found on Mount Zion?" *BAR* 16/3 (1990), 16–35, 60.

³⁶ Pinkerfeld's results were not published, but they were accessible to Pixner.

³⁷ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 214, sketch adapted from B. Bagatti, "Ritrovamento archeologico sul Sion," *Liber Annuus* 31 (1981), pp. 249–56.

ture, Pinkerfeld found three earlier levels. The first of these (at 12 cm) was the Crusader floor, and the second (60 cm) belonged to a Byzantine structure. At 70 cm Pinkerfeld found another plaster floor and what appeared to be remains of a stone pavement. Pinkerfeld concluded that this floor belonged to the original building, together with the northern wall and its niche.

Controversy arises over the conclusions reached by Pinkerfeld and taken over by Pixner. Pinkerfeld concluded the niche and the deepest floor belonged to the same original structure, and he claimed that the niche was designed to hold a Torah scroll. On this basis, Pinkerfeld concluded the structure was a Roman era synagogue.

Pixner takes the matter a step further, arguing that this is a Jewish Christian synagogue. He contends that the synagogue is not directed toward the Temple Mount, as Pinkerfeld claimed, but is slightly askew and points toward the traditional site of Golgotha – now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.³⁸ Inscriptions recovered from the wall plaster were handed on to Bagatti and Testa, who saw one (figure 13) as an abbreviation for “Conquer, Saviour, mercy” and another inscriptions as “O Jesus, that I may live, O Lord of the autocrat.”³⁹ On the basis of this reconstruction, Bagatti, Testa, and Pixner conclude that the building was originally a Jewish Christian synagogue.

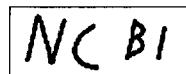


Figure 13: Mt. Zion inscription⁴⁰

Pixner then attempts to reconstruct the history of this synagogue. He argues that it was built by Jewish Christians returning to Jerusalem in the post 70 ce era. They found ample space and convenient supplies in the ruins of Mount Zion to build upon the spot they considered the site of the Last Supper – the Upper Room later used by James as the center of the Jerusalem church. Pixner finds confirmation of his theory in the writings of Eusebius and various patristic works. The first literary identification is found in Epiphanius (315–403 ce), who says that in the time of Hadrian (c. 130 ce), there was a small church of God standing on the site of the Upper Room. Pixner claims that no Christian church could be built before Constantine, so the structure must be Jewish Christian. Pixner draws upon the 10th century work of Euthycius, who says the Pella community returned

³⁸ Pixner cites the Constantinian orientation of the Martyrion toward the tomb of Jesus. Pixner also cites the conclusion of Bagatti that the church in front of Mary's tomb, considered by Bagatti to be Jewish Christian, is oriented toward the tomb of Jesus.

³⁹ What is actually present are Greek letters (which Bagatti and Testa see as an abbreviation of “Conquer, Saviour, mercy”) and one clear word (autocrat).

⁴⁰ Bargil Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found on Mount Zion,” *BAR* 16/3 (1990), p. 23.

to Jerusalem in the early 70s ce and built there their church. Pixner suggests this event is also remembered in the Odes of Solomon (Ode 4).

Judeo-Christian Synagogue



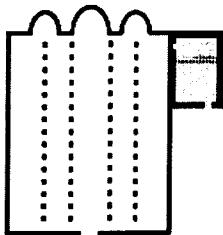
The Judeo-Christian synagogue, later known as the Church of the Apostles (late first century A.D.).

Octagonal Church & Church of the Apostles



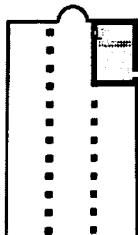
The Judeo-Christian synagogue, now known as the Church of the Apostles, next to an octagonal memorial church built by Theodosius I (ca. 382 A.D.). Seen here as portrayed in the Pudentiana mosaic.

Hagia Sion Basilica



The Church of the Apostles is now an extension to the Hagia Sion basilica (415–1009 A.D.). They are seen here in plan, at left, and as portrayed in the Madaba mosaic map.

Crusader Church of St. Mary



The Church of the Apostles (c. 1110–1219 A.D.), now incorporated within the Crusader Church.

Figure 14: Pixner's Reconstruction of the Church of the Apostles⁴¹

⁴¹ Pixner, "Church of the Apostles," p. 25.

Pixner also notes the mention of a synagogue on Mount Zion by the Bordeaux Pilgrim of 333 ce. Reference to the church is also noted from Cyril in 348 ce and from Eucherius in 440 ce. Finally, Pixner claims that the Madaba map (6th century) indicates that the Byzantine Hagia Sion was built alongside the Church of the Apostles, not over it.

A key problem in the theory of Bagatti, Testa, Pinkerfeld, and Pixner is the sequence of layers. If the walls identified by Pinkerfeld are Roman era, one is left with a Crusader structure built directly on top of Roman walls. This would require that no part of the Byzantine structure remained or was used, but that the Roman walls were "remarkably well preserved."⁴² Taylor notes several other problems.⁴³ The walls identified as a Roman era synagogue are aligned with the foundations of surrounding Byzantine structures excavated by a variety of other archeologists. The extraordinary size of the earliest wall blocks, which were likely recycled from Hadrian's time, suggests a much larger building than the synagogue proposed by Pixner. In the 6th century Madaba mosaic, the basilica of Holy Zion is the largest building in Jerusalem. Based on the area that was excavated in 1899, H. Renard estimated that Holy Zion basilica was 60 meters by 40 meters. This suggests the wall is designed to support the basilica rather than a small synagogue.

A number of other scholars have challenged the proposal that beneath the site of Hagia Zion is a Jewish Christian structure that was the "mother of all the churches."⁴⁴ Pinkerfeld identified the structure not as Jewish Christian, but as a Jewish synagogue. His claim was based on the size of the foundation stones, on the supposed orientation toward the Temple, and on his interpretation of the niche as a place for the Torah. Even this identification has been challenged. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor notes that

the architectural parallel to the niche that Pinkerfeld offers is that of the synagogue at Eshtemoa, which is dated to the fourth century AD. A synagogue on Mount Zion in that period is inconceivable and orienting niches are not attested in first-century synagogues (e.g., Gamla, Masada).⁴⁵

While O'Connor challenged the idea that this was a synagogue, others have challenged the claim that any part of the structure is Roman era. The missing Byzantine layer would require clarification, and the presence of Greek inscriptions at the earliest layers of a Jerusalem synagogue would need to be explained. Beyond

⁴² Taylor's language, *Holy Places*, p. 217. Bagatti claimed the Byzantine church was beside the synagogue, not over it.

⁴³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 205–20.

⁴⁴ The language of Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.* 5.9.17.

⁴⁵ Jerome, Murphy-O'Connor, "The Cenacle and Community: The Background of Acts 2:44–45" in *Scriptures and other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, ed. Michael D. Coagam, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence Stager (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 306.

this, the unusual height of the niche from the original floor (1.92 meters) and its large size (2.48 meters across, 2.44 meters high, 1.2 meters deep) suggest a different usage.⁴⁶ In addition, the presence of Jews or Jewish Christians on Mount Zion in the years following the destruction of Jerusalem (70 ce) cannot be presumed. Hillel Gava argues that

there was no Jewish Christian community on Mt. Zion during the Roman period. The entire hill was an encampment for the Tenth Roman Legion. With the legion's removal from Jerusalem at the end of the third century C.E., civilian settlement began in the area. By the fourth century C.E., the locations of the holy sites on Mt. Zion became established and the large Hagia Zion church was constructed there.⁴⁷

The literary evidence presents a mixed portrait. There are numerous references to the idea that the Holy Zion basilica occupies the site of an apostolic church identified with the Upper Room. This tradition is traced back to the visit of Hadrian in 133 ce.⁴⁸ On the other hand, all who speak of this tradition do so after the construction of the basilica of Holy Zion (likely between 333 and 348 ce). The Bordeaux Pilgrim reports in 333 ce that seven synagogues once stood on Mount Zion, but that only one remains. Cyril of Jerusalem is the first to speak of the Church of the Apostles on Mount Zion (c. 348 ce in *Cat. 16.4*). Near the end of the 4th century, Epiphanius reports that Hadrian (in 133 ce) found Mount Zion in ruins, but that "the little house of the community of God alone remained, where the disciples went up to the upper room after their return from the Ascension of the Saviour from the Mount of Olives" (*De Mens. et Pond.* 14). It is not clear how Epiphanius purports to know of this some 160 years later, but it is clear that he knows the tradition that the basilica of Holy Zion is built on the site of the Upper Room. Epiphanius also reports that the last of the seven synagogues stood until the time of Bishop Maximus of Jerusalem (335–49 ce). Thus, the literature reports one surviving synagogue (333 ce, but gone by 349 ce), one surviving apostolic church (purportedly 133 ce, but reported later by Cyril and by Epiphanius). It is significant that Eusebius never mentions the survival of an early house church in Jerusalem.

The merging of the two traditions – a surviving synagogue and the Church of the Apostles – seems to be found nowhere in antiquity; it was first suggested by Bagatti and Pixner. Their argument that the lowest layers of what is now venerated as the tomb of David are remains of the Church of the Apostles requires a number of presumptions.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 215–217, 219, believes this was the first shrine for the purported bones of Stephen.

⁴⁷ Hillel Geva, "Queries & Comments." *BAR* 24.2 (March/April 1998), 14. Pixner believes the structure is not Jewish because it is oriented toward the tomb of Jesus, but that Romans, prior to Constantine, would never allow Christians to build churches. Because of this and because of the niche, Pixner concludes the structure must be Jewish Christian.

⁴⁸ Epiphanius in *De Mens. et Pond.* 14.

1. That the Crusader shrine (after 1099 ce) was built directly upon walls and foundations from the Roman era, with no intervening Byzantine materials.
2. That this Roman era structure, because of its niche, was a synagogue.
3. That this synagogue was not Jewish because it was oriented toward the tomb of Jesus.
4. That this structure was not Christian because they could not build before 325 ce.
5. That this structure was therefore a Jewish Christian synagogue.
6. That this Jewish Christian synagogue contained graffiti in Greek.
7. That this Jewish Christian synagogue is the church seen by Hadrian in 133 ce.
8. That this Jewish Christian structure is the surviving synagogue mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 ce.
9. That Byzantine remains are absent from this site because the Holy Zion basilica was beside it, not over it.
10. That this Jewish Christian synagogue is the Church of the Apostles described by patristic writers after the building of the Holy Zion basilica (333–348 ce).
11. That this Jewish Christian synagogue is portrayed in a mosaic from c. 400 ce in the basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome and in a 6th century mosaic from Modaba.

Despite the fervor generated by this site, critical analysis allows only modest and tentative conclusions. From a literary standpoint:

1. There was a tradition that the basilica of Holy Zion was built over the Upper Room.
2. There was a tradition that one synagogue survived on Mount Zion until the time of Maximus (335–349 ce).
3. There was a tradition that the Church of the Apostles survived at least until the time of Hadrian (133 ce).
4. All reports of these traditions appear after the construction of the Holy Zion basilica (333–348 ce).
5. The association of the Church of the Apostles with the surviving synagogue is likely a modern phenomenon.

Archaeological conclusions are equally meager.

1. The present “tomb of David” and “Upper Room” on Mount Zion are mostly Crusader constructions.
2. The Crusader construction is built upon earlier walls and foundations.
3. The earlier walls are made of recycled stones of large dimension.
4. Like some nearby Byzantine structures, the earlier layers are oriented toward the supposed tomb of Jesus.
5. One of the earliest walls contains a niche of unusual height and size.
6. The plaster scraped from the walls by Pinkerfeld contains Greek graffiti.
7. There are four floor levels within the earliest walls: the present floor level is a marble slab, 12 centimeters below that is a plaster floor from Crusader times; at 60 centimeters is a Byzantine mosaic floor; at 70 centimeters is the earliest floor containing both plaster and stones.

Nothing in the archaeological evidence requires the conclusion that this structure was a synagogue. While it is likely the earliest walls were built from recycled Roman era stones, no archaeological evidence requires a conclusion that the walls themselves are built in the Roman era. If the second floor level is Byzantine, it is

reasonable to expect some remnants of Byzantine walls. The original floor is older than the Byzantine mosaic, but no one can say how much older. Joan Taylor and other scholars amply demonstrate that the literary and archeological evidence does not sustain the thesis of Bagatti and Pixner. It is difficult, however, to prove a negative, and Taylor's work does not prove that Bagatti and Pixner are wrong; she only proves their conclusions are unsubstantiated. No absolute verdict is allowed in either direction.

How then should the total body of the evidence be evaluated? Here again it is necessary to speak in terms of possibility, plausibility, and probability. It is plausible that the first meeting place of the Jerusalem community was remembered by subsequent generations and that some remnant of this site endured into the 4th century. If this was the worship center of the first generation of Jesus' followers, then it is a Jewish Christian site. It is also plausible that Jewish Christians referred to their places of worship as synagogues.⁴⁹ It is possible, then, that the basilica of Holy Zion was built on the site of the Church of the Apostles. If that is true, any archeological remains of the Church of the Apostles would likely be limited to the lowest floor level. Nothing in these remains provides meaningful information about the nature and extent of Jewish Christianity.

8. Nazareth

Nazareth provides an important component of the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis.⁵⁰ They argued that Nazareth was a Jewish Christian stronghold well into the 5th century and that Byzantine Christian shrines are a continuation of Jewish Christian veneration of holy sites in Nazareth. The most important of these Jewish Christian shrines, said Bagatti and Testa, was the Jewish Christian synagogue at Nazareth.

8.1 Literary Data

The Bagatti-Testa reconstruction of Nazareth is heavily dependent on their interpretation of literary data. In his publication on the sites, Bagatti treated the literature first, then the archeological data. He acknowledged that the literary texts concerning Nazareth "are the basis for an understanding of the monuments."⁵¹

New Testament scholars have long suggested that Luke tells the birth story from the perspective of Mary (1.26–56), while Matthew emphasizes the experi-

⁴⁹ James 2.2; Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.18.12).

⁵⁰ Bellarmino Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, trans. E. Horde (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969). The Italian original, *Gli scavi di Nazaret*, appeared in 1967. See the summary and analysis of Bagatti's position in Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 221–67.

⁵¹ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 9.

ences of Joseph (1.1–25; 2.13–15). Although a long history of scholarship sees this as an indication of diverse sources, traditions, and redactions behind the two gospels, Bagatti offered a novel explanation.⁵² He insisted that the gospel writers knew of two monuments in Nazareth – a house of Mary and a house of Joseph – and that these 1st century shrines gave rise to the differing nativity stories.

Bagatti also argued that Matthew's reference in 13.54 to "their synagogue" implies a contrast to "our synagogue."⁵³ Bagatti failed to note the New Testament presents no hint of any positive reception of Jesus in Nazareth. If any connection is to be drawn from the literary accounts, Nazareth is the last place one should look for Jewish Christianity.

Bagatti argued that the 3rd century *Protevangelium of James* is designed to promote Jewish Christianity in Palestine.⁵⁴ He extrapolated from the 4th century *History of Joseph* that early Christians venerated the tomb of Joseph in a cave at Nazareth.⁵⁵ Bagatti also believed the literary references to the family of Jesus⁵⁶ confirm that Jewish Christian relatives of Jesus lived in Nazareth throughout the first centuries of the common era. He believed that the curses against the *minim* point to Jewish Christians in the Galilee. Bagatti argued that the Nazareth shrines were not mentioned by Christians until the 6th century precisely because these sites were in the hands of Jewish Christians.⁵⁷ He read into the passing re-

⁵² Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 10.

⁵³ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 10. Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 222–23, correctly notes that Mark uses "their synagogues" to refer to the synagogue of a particular town (Mk. 1.39) and that his usage is taken up by both the Gospel of Luke (4.15) and by the Gospel of Matthew (4.23; 9.35; 13.54). Mt. 13.54 does say "their synagogue" over against "the synagogue" in Mk. 6.2 and Lk. 4.16. It is perhaps too much to construct a second synagogue on the foundation of a shifting pronoun.

⁵⁴ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 11. The majority opinion is that the *Protevangelium* was written outside of Palestine by someone who knew little of Jewish life or Palestinian geography. In the *Protevangelium of James*, the annunciation to Mary occurs not in Nazareth, but in Judea.

⁵⁵ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 12. This runs contrary to the nature of the *Protevangelium* text, which locates Nazareth in Judea not far from the Temple. Bagatti argues that the motif of burial in a cave sealed with a rock places the story in the 1st century and that the cosmic ladder imagery places it within Jewish Christianity. Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 223–24, correctly notes that both elements are found in various religious traditions and have no intrinsic connection to any known form of Jewish Christianity.

⁵⁶ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 10, draws upon New Testament references (Mt. 10.3; 13.55–56; 27.56; Jn 19.25; and a literal reading of "brothers of the Lord" in 1 Cor. 9.5). He also refers to Eusebius' report on the family of Jesus (*HE* 3.36.3) and to Eusebius' description of the letter to Aristides in which Julius Africanus describes relatives of Jesus in Nazareth and Kochaba (*HE* 1.7). Taylor's insistence that these relatives are Jewish rather than Jewish Christian is strained (*Holy Places*, pp. 31–36, 225).

⁵⁷ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 18. Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 226, correctly notes that patristic writers generally did not ignore their opponents. In the case of Jewish Christians, they expounded at length upon their errors.

ference to Nazarenes by Eusebius (*Onomasticon* 138.24 through 140.2) a distinction between Nazarenes of the patristic era and the first generation of Christians.

It is apparent that Bagatti reached the end of the literary analysis with the clear expectation of finding in Nazareth a continuing Jewish Christianity centered around shrines from the earliest periods of Christianity. It is also clear that his reading of the literary evidence is forced and that it shaped his understanding of the archeological data.

8.2 Archeological Data

The area around the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth contains a dizzying array of archeological sites (caves, agricultural sites, mosaics, cisterns, a church, and a basilica) and layers (Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Byzantine, Crusader, modern). Archeological work began as early as 1892. An 18th century church was demolished, and the area was explored by Bagatti in the 1950s. The modern basilica of the Annunciation was dedicated in 1968.

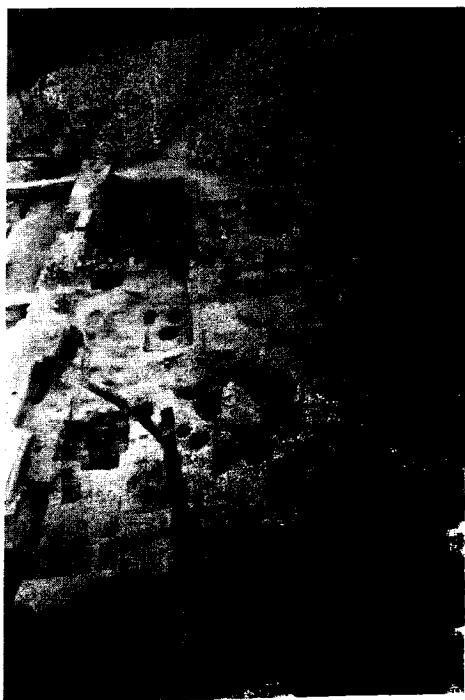


Figure 15: Agricultural sites at Nazareth⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 232, courtesy of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

The area around the Church of the Annunciation is marked by a number of rock cuts. Bagatti identified tombs from the Middle Bronze Age, silos from the Iron Age, wine and olive processing areas, storage compartments, and bell-shaped cisterns.⁵⁹ Surrounding areas have caves that suggest agricultural use in the Roman period.

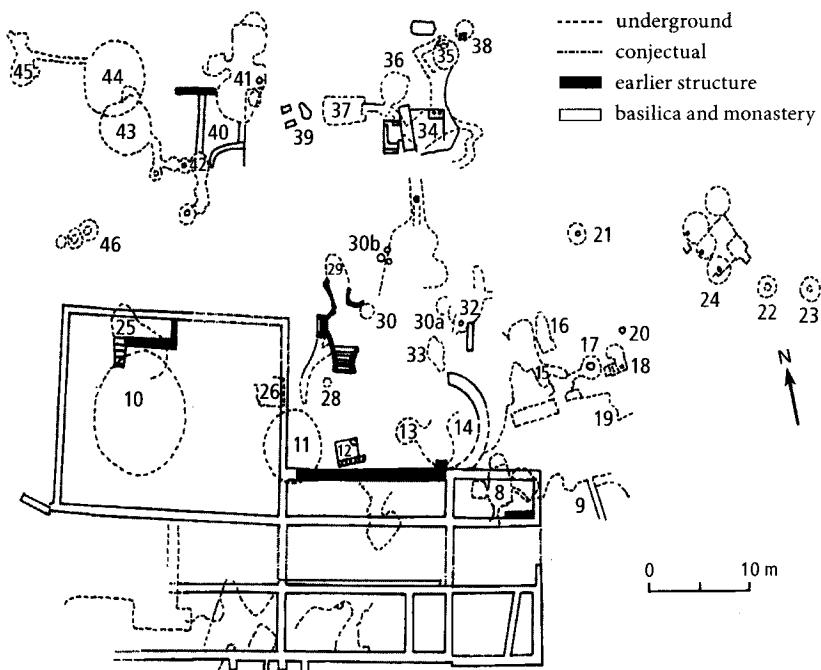


Figure 16: Agricultural sites beneath the Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth⁶⁰

Bagatti believed he has found evidence of early Jewish Christianity in a number of these sites. He saw in drawings from a nearby collection of Roman and Byzantine tombs an incorrect spelling of φωσ (light) and argued that this term has a special connection to Jewish Christians.

Bagatti established that a Byzantine basilica stood alongside of a shrine to the Annunciation. There was a monastery connected to this basilica and a cave complex beneath it. Nine mosaics are associated with this complex, seven of which

⁵⁹ See Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, pp. 2, 27–37, 245. Taylor discusses this material in *Holy Places*, pp. 230–67.

⁶⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 231, sketch based on B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969).

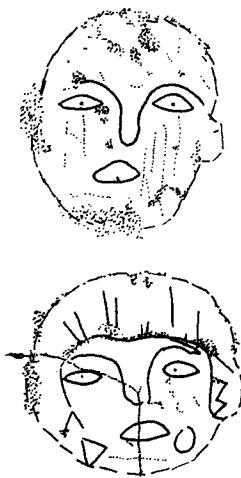


Figure 17: Bagatti's φωσ drawings⁶¹

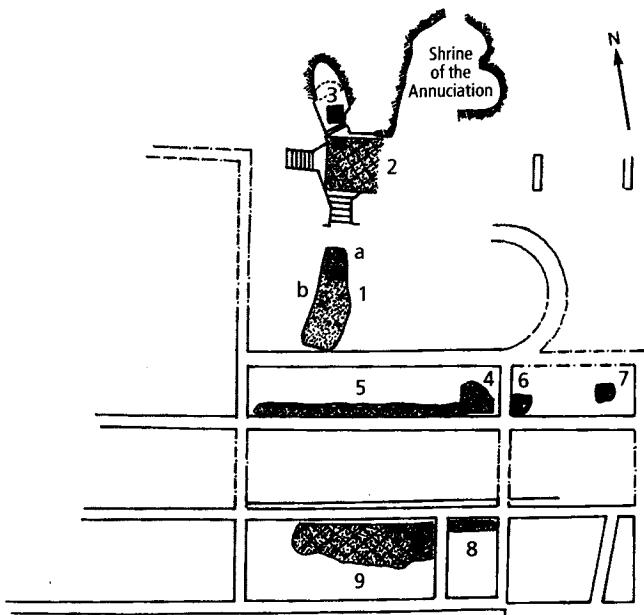


Figure 18: Mosaics at the Church of the Annunciation, Nazareth⁶²

⁶¹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 234, sketch based on B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 245, figures 197 and 198.

⁶² Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 236, sketch based on B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*.

likely are from the 5th to 7th century. The mosaic in the central nave and the mosaic in a small cave near the Grotto of the Annunciation both appear to be earlier.

The mosaic in the central nave is not oriented with the basilica, but with the steps leading into the complex of caves where the shrine of the Annunciation is located. The remnant of this mosaic is 89 cm wide and 169 cm long. At the southern end is a frame containing two crosses and some six small rectangles. Intersecting lines create three triangles on the east side of this block, with another triangle on the west side. Bagatti reads these geometric patterns as a Greek *delta* and *chi*, which he interprets as Jewish Christian symbols rooted in Pythagorean thought and gnosticism.⁶³ Moving to the north, the center of the mosaic contains a field with some six small crosses in the shape of a Greek *chi*. The center of this field is dominated by a wreathlike circle enclosing a symbol that combines a cross and a Greek *rho*. The northern section of the mosaic is mostly lost, but it appears to contain an oblong symbol similar to a table. A few tiles in the center of this section have been conjectured to contain a large Greek *mu*, perhaps in reference to Mary.

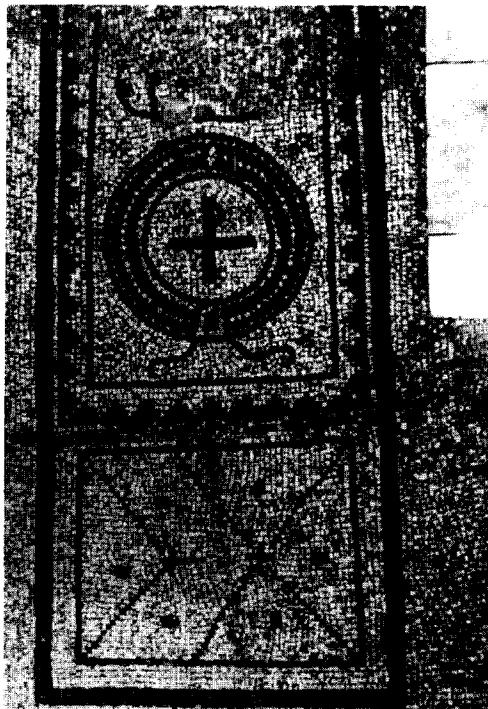


Figure 19: Mosaic 1 in the central nave⁶⁴

⁶³ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, p. 99.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 238, courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

The mosaic in the small cave to the north measures 107 cm square and contains similar images, including the cross-*rho* and a variation of intersecting lines.⁶⁵

Taken together, the nine mosaics present three stages. The two cross-*rho* mosaics are the oldest, and there is some evidence that a third mosaic from this era once covered the floor of the shrine of the Annunciation. The second stage is represented by six mosaics in the basilica, the monastery, and the Chapel of the Angel. A later mosaic of high quality has been placed over one of these second stage mosaics. It is clear that the cross-*rho* mosaics are earlier, but how much earlier? Bagatti argues that there is no good reason why these mosaics should not be dated prior to 427 ce, when Theodosius II banned the use of crosses in floor mosaics. Taylor counters this claim with examples in which this edict was ignored.⁶⁶ A similar cross-*rho* inside a wreath is found in a basilica nearby in the Galilee at Evron and can be dated from 415 ce. On this basis, Taylor assigns the oldest mosaics to the early 5th century.

Neither case can be proven. The cross-*rho* mosaics at Nazareth are earlier than the second stage Byzantine mosaics, but it is impossible to say how much earlier. There is no material evidence to support the claim by Bagatti and Testa that these mosaics are specifically Jewish Christian.

More intriguing is the basin that lies under the southern end of the cross-*rho* mosaic in the central nave. Taylor describes this area:

The basin ... under mosaic 1b measures 1.95 by 2 metres, and is entered by a flight of five rock-cut steps on the southern side. The basin (2 m. deep) and the steps are coated with lime plaster. In the north-east corner there is a further basin (70 x 60 cm.) with a smaller one inside, and on the northern wall there is a recess ... measuring 63 by 61 centimetres. On the north and west walls graffiti have been incised into the plaster whilst it was still wet ... it should be noted than an oxidized curved knife of a type used for grape harvesting, as Bagatti himself noted, was discovered in the recess.⁶⁷

A similar basin is found under the nearby Church of Joseph:

The rock-cut and partly built basin underneath the Church of St Joseph ... measures 2.05 by 2.20 metres, and is 2 metres deep. It is entered by a flight of seven steps. Both the floor, the steps, and part of the surrounding area were covered with mosaic, of which most still remains. The mosaic has a design of black rectangles on a white background. The sides of the basin are plastered. Sherds fixed into this plaster were identified by Bagatti as Byzantine, but he also noted that they could just as easily be late Roman. There is a small basin in the north-west corner, a narrow channel between the steps and the main part of the floor and a basalt rock inserted into the floor east of the basin.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Testa, *Nazaret guideo-cristiana* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 129–132, argues for Jewish Christian symbolism in this mosaic.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 242–43.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 244–45. She provides photographs and discussion of these Greek inscriptions.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 246.

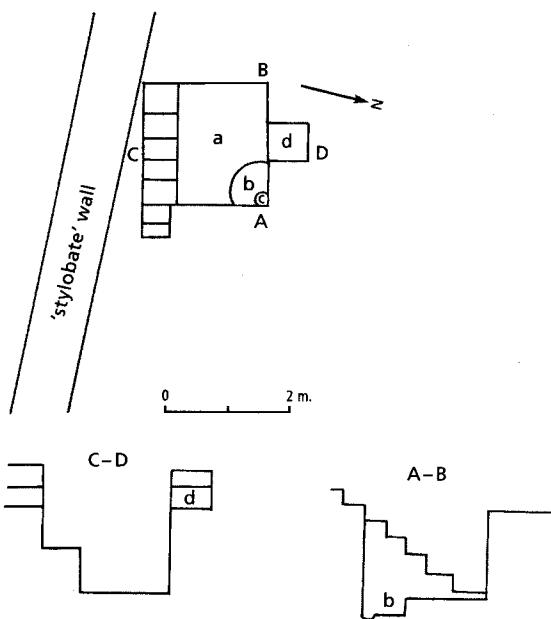


Figure 20: Basin under the central nave mosaic⁶⁹

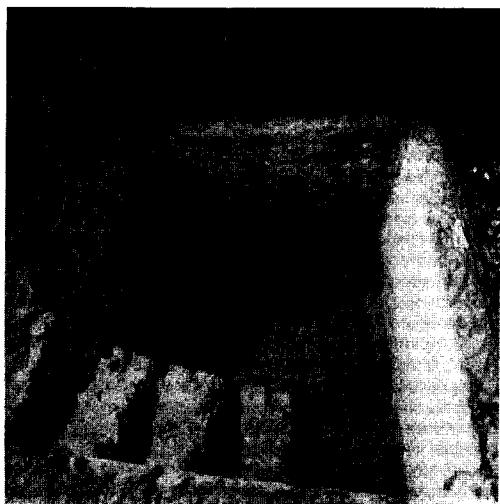


Figure 21: Basin beneath the Church of Joseph⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 245.

⁷⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 249, courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

Testa interpreted random and informal scratchings low on the first basin as clear signs of Jewish Christianity; Taylor reads them as the scratchings of children before the plaster dried and the vat was filled. For the second basin, Bagatti believed it is a Jewish Christian baptistry, while Testa believed the seven steps re-

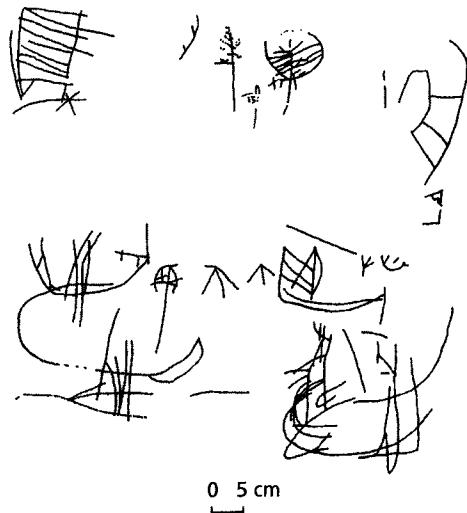


Figure 22a: Graffiti on the wall of the central nave basin⁷¹

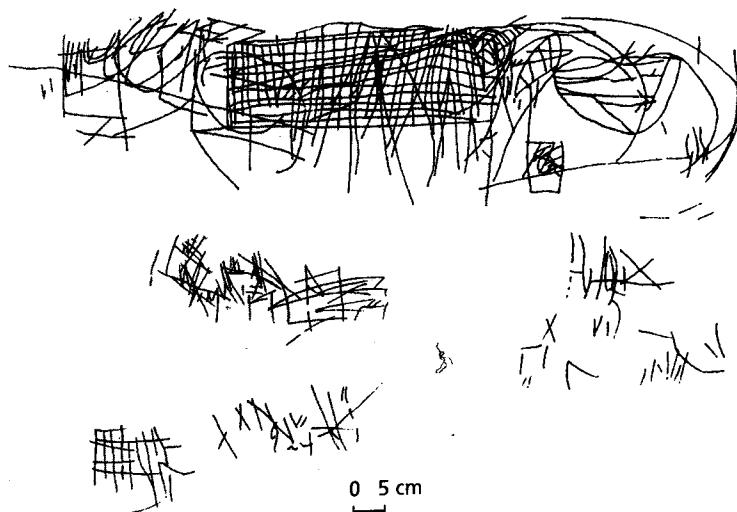


Figure 22b: Graffiti on the wall of the central nave basin⁷²

⁷¹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 247, sketch based on B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*.

⁷² Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 247, sketch based on B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*.

present the heavenly descent/ascent of Jesus, the channel represents the Jordan, the basalt stone is Christ, and the mosaic rectangles are angels.⁷³ Taylor concludes that both basins were agricultural, probably used in wine making. This is consistent with the surrounding area and with agricultural areas under the

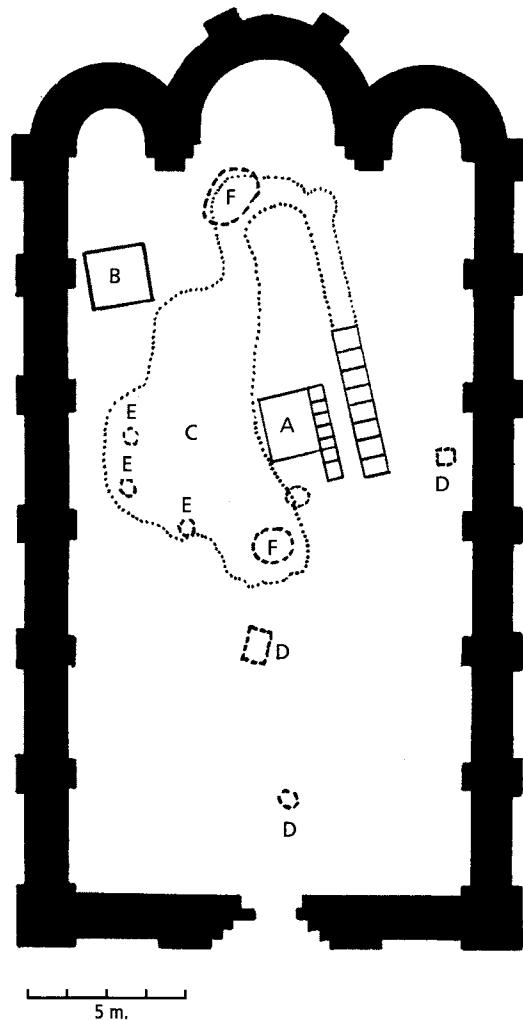


Figure 23: Agricultural sites and the basin beneath the Church of Joseph⁷⁴

⁷³ Testa, *Nazaret guideo-cristiana*, pp. 42–44.

⁷⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 248, sketch adapted from P. Viaud, *Nazareth et ses deux Églises de l'Annonciation et de Saint-Joseph d'après les fouilles récentes* (Paris, 1910).

Church of Joseph. The infill of the Annunciation basin contained Roman red-ware that likely dates from the latter half of the 4th century.

The final area of interest is a small grotto about 2 meters across found near the shrine of the Annunciation and behind the second cross-*rho* mosaic. The east wall contains six layers of plaster with extensive graffiti, all in Greek. Bagatti believed he found the Greek letter *kappa* in the inscriptions and concludes the cave was a monument to the martyr Conon, deemed by Bagatti to be a Jewish Christian. Further inscriptions were read, with a great deal of creativity, in support of this theory. The most dramatic find in this cave was an inscribed figure holding aloft what looks like a cross. Bagatti interpreted the headdress as Jewish and concluded that this was John the Baptist. A closer look suggests a helmeted Roman soldier with a shield and an emblem. Taylor notes the stance of the figure is familiar on Byzantine coins.⁷⁵



Figure 24: Drawing near the Shrine of the Annunciation⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 262–63.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 263, courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

The fate of the synagogue at Nazareth is also worth noting.⁷⁷ At the end of the 7th century, Peter the Deacon says the Nazareth synagogue became a place of Christian worship, and this story is repeated by a 13th century pilgrim named Buchard. It is Peter who recorded the first reference to a shrine to Mary at Nazareth by Egeria (c. 383). In 570 the Piacenza Pilgrim tells of visiting the synagogue and seeing there a book and a bench used by the child Jesus. He noted that Mary's house was by then a basilica. Four column bases from the synagogue were reported by Bagatti.⁷⁸ Mason's marks on the bases are present in the form of four Hebrew letters: *lamed, dalet, mem, tet*.

When the larger framework of the data is considered, there is no material evidence of the presence of Jewish Christianity in Nazareth. The Christian evidence at Nazareth, including mosaics, graffiti, and an early shrine, most likely dates from the third century forward. The underlying basins and fills do not show evidence of early veneration; they appear to be agricultural areas later turned into shrines. Even if two mosaics are from the Roman era, they offer no evidence of Jewish Christianity. The presence of two competing synagogues is unlikely, and the transition of the Nazareth synagogue to a Christian church is probably the result of Hadrian's punishment of Nazareth for supporting the Persian invasion of 614 ce. The absence of Jewish Christians in Nazareth seems to be confirmed in the literary evidence.⁷⁹ Despite the efforts of Bagatti and Testa, the archeological evidence suggests that Jewish Christians were no more welcome in Nazareth than was the Jewish prophet Jesus.

9. Capernaum

Two sites at Capernaum are of archeological interest for primitive Christianity and may bear evidence of Jewish Christianity. These are the synagogue and the house of Peter.

9.1 The House of Peter

In the western half of Capernaum an octagonal structure made of basalt was excavated in the years before and after World War I.⁸⁰ This structure consists of three concentric octagons that are 8 meters wide, 16.5 meters wide, and 23 me-

⁷⁷ See the discussion by Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 227–30; 264–65.

⁷⁸ Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, pp. 233–34.

⁷⁹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 36, notes that "There is no mention of *minim* or *Notserim* living in Nazareth in any surviving Jewish literature."

⁸⁰ Descriptions may be found in G. Orfali, *Capharnaum et ses ruines* (Paris: A. Picard, 1922), pp. 103–09; V. C. Corbo, *Cafarnao*, i. *Gli edifici della città* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975); S. Loffreda, *Cafarnao* ii. *La ceramica* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing

ters wide. Octagonal church plans are found elsewhere as early as 326 ce and continue into the 6th century. A peacock mosaic is at the center of this structure, and coins from the early 5th century were found under the mosaic. The 6th century Piacenza Pilgrim says there was a basilica in Capernaum where the house of Peter was once located.

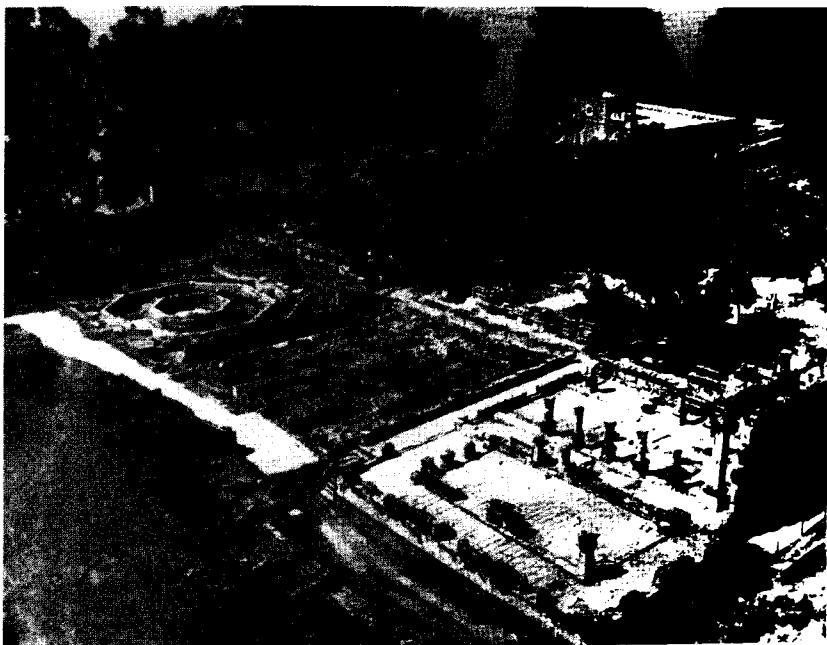


Figure 25: Octagonal Church (left) and Synagogue (right) at Capernaum⁸¹

In 1968 V. C. Corbo identified two major strata beneath the octagonal structure.⁸² At the fourth century level there is an enclosure wall that runs 27 meters on each of the north, west, and south sides and some 30 meters on the east side. This enclosure is partially divided by an inner wall that runs some 16 meters from the southern wall into the enclosure. At the center of the enclosure is a 10 by 11 meter structure that created three small rooms and one larger room (5.8 by 6.4 meters). This larger room was divided by an arch into eastern and western sections. There is evidence of rebuilding in some walls and in the roof, where a

Press, 1974); A. Spijkerman, *Cafarnao*, iii. *Catalogo della monete della città* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975); E. Testa, *Cafarnao*, iv. *I Graffiti della Casa di S. Pietro* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1972); Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 268–90.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 269, courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

⁸² The description is given by Corbo, *Cafarnao*, pp. 59–74. I am dependent in large part on the description, photographs, charts, and drawings provided by Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 268–88.

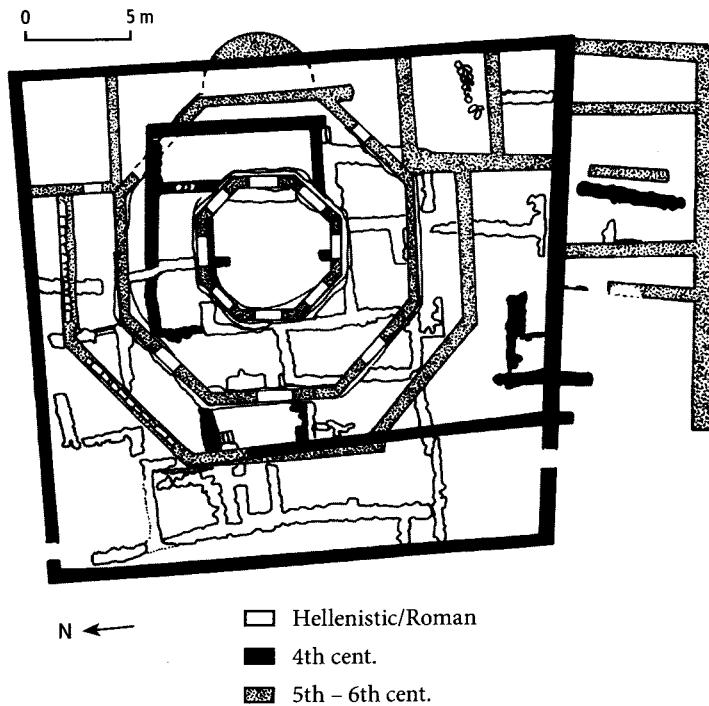


Figure 26: Strata in the Octagonal Church⁸³

roof of branches, earth, and straw has been replaced with a mortar roof. Plastered walls have been painted with plant motifs and geometric designs, and Christian graffiti is scratched upon the plaster. Two fish hooks were found in the destruction level of the fourth century ruins. The area within the larger enclosure walls contains extensive foundation lines from the Hellenistic/Roman era. It is not clear how many of these structures may have stood alongside or within the fourth century enclosure. The central structure itself seems to have been formed from parts of previous dwellings. Literary testimony to this 4th century structure is probably found in the report, recorded by Peter the Deacon, that Egeria visited Capernaum (c. 383 ce) and wrote that the “house of the prince of the apostles has been made into a church, with its original walls still standing.”⁸⁴

The graffiti of the fourth-century structure was extensive. Of these, some 151 are Greek, 13 are Syriac, and 2 may be Latin. Testa claimed that about 10 of the graffiti were Aramaic and believed these to be evidence of Jewish Christian pil-

⁸³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 271, sketch based on V. C. Corbo, *Cafarnao, i. Gli edifici della città* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975).

⁸⁴ The reports may be found in J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, rev. edition (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1981), p. 194. See the discussion by Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 276.

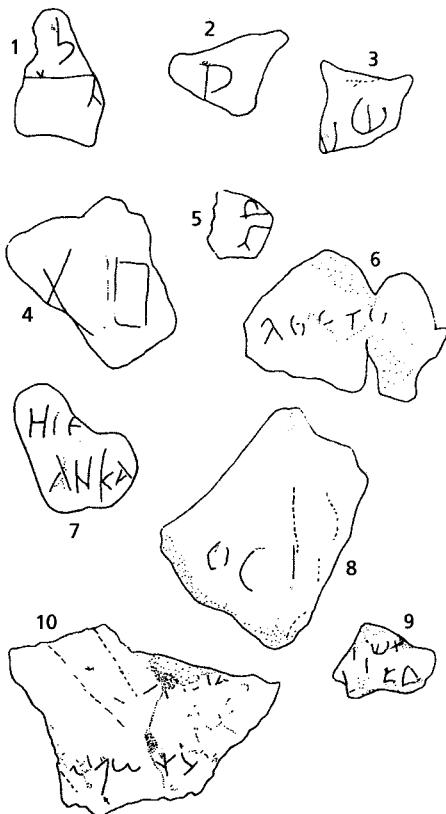


Figure 27: Fragments claimed by Testa to contain Aramaic⁸⁵

grims.⁸⁶ Taylor reproduces these fragments and offers convincing evidence that five of these are Greek and three or four others are debatable.⁸⁷ A reasonable case for Aramaic can only be made for two of the fragments.

Below the fourth century strata are extensive remains from the Hellenistic/Roman period. The compound containing the octagonal church is one of eight known housing compounds on the poorer west side of Capernaum. V. C. Corbo excavated four trenches within the central area of the octagonal church.⁸⁸ Six stages were identified, some with multiple layers. From top to bottom, the first

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 286, sketch based on Emmanuela Testa, *Cafarnao, iv. I Graffiti della Casa di S. Pietro* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1972).

⁸⁶ Testa, *Cafarnao*, p. 183.

⁸⁷ Several were clarified by simply inverting them. Taylor also suggests that one of the fragments that is not Greek may be Nabatean rather than Aramaic. The full discussion of the ten purported Aramaic fragments is found in *Holy Places*, pp. 284–88.

⁸⁸ Corbo, *Cafarnao*, pp. 79–98.

stage is the peacock mosaic of the 5th century octagonal church. The second stage contains two layers: a fill layer of red soil and the destruction layer of the 4th century house church or shrine. Below that was a third stage with some five layers, though this varies from one trench to the next. All trenches at this third stage contain a polychrome floor made of beaten lime, then the remnants of another pavement that has fragments of red plaster on a bed of stones, below which is another bed of large stones. From here the layers of the third stage vary across the room, suggesting that it once was two rooms or areas. In the westernmost trench are two more layers of basalt stone, each with a floor of beaten earth. Moving east, the next trench has the same two basalt layers, but the top one stops at a 4th century pilaster. The eastern section of this trench has, in the place of the two basalt layers, a layer of dark brown earth that extends into the two western trenches. In these two western trenches the dark brown layer has under it a very black layer of earth. Under these in the western trenches is a fourth stage, composed of three successive beaten lime pavements, each on a thin bed of black earth, then a limited bed of basalt stones. Near the 4th century pilaster is a fifth stage composed of four floors of beaten black earth, then a sixth stage composed of the initial fill. In

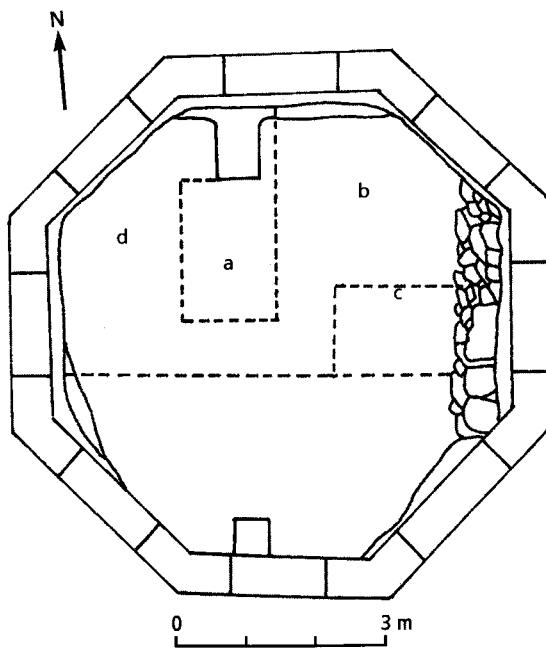


Figure 28: Excavation trenches within the central area⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 279, sketch based on V. C. Corbo, *Cafarnao, i. Gli edifici della città*.

the easternmost trench there was only fill below the levels of the beaten lime floors. The initial fill contained pottery from the 2nd and 1st centuries bce.

It is clear that the trenches represent different sequences of development and likely are part of different rooms or areas. It is also clear that the small area that served as the central octagon (8 meters across) and as the central room of the 4th century church (5.8 by 6.4 meters) exhibits a history of extensive use. The debate over the details of that history is intense.

Corbo believes that the sequence of three successive beaten lime floors found as the fourth stage in the western trenches provides the key to the structure. Beaten lime floors would represent a more expensive and elaborate adornment. They are prevalent in the wealthier eastern section of town, but found nowhere else in the poorer western settlements. Corbo dates the floors from the first century. He believes the fact that these distinct floors are found in the unusual room at the center of the 4th century church and in the center of the later octagonal church support two conclusions: this was, for an extended period, a holy site for Jewish Christians, and it was in fact the house of Peter.⁹⁰ Corbo accepts that the 4th century church may have been constructed by Joseph of Tiberias, whom he

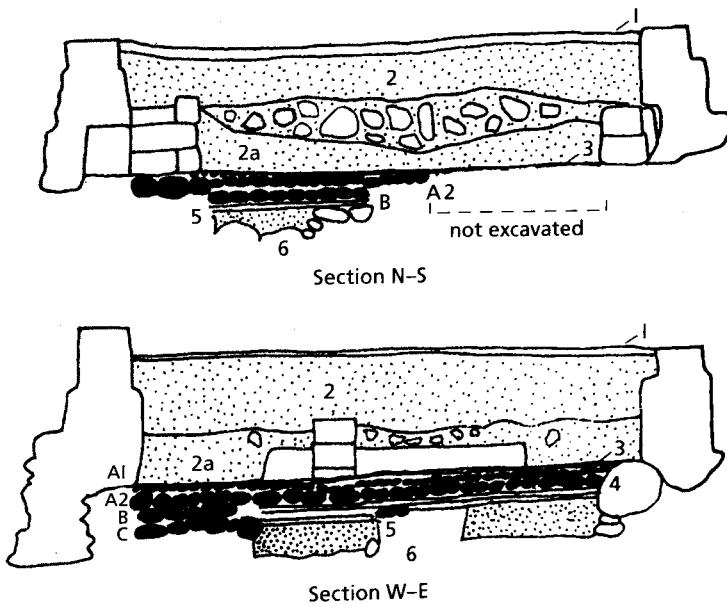


Figure 29: Cross section of the central area excavation⁹¹

⁹⁰ Corbo, *Cafarnao*, pp. 97–98. The certainty that these are Jewish Christians seems based in part on the rabbinic stories of *minim* at Capernaum. This position is discussed in Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 24–31.

⁹¹ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 280, sketch based on *Cafarnao*, i. *Gli edifici della città*.

understands to be a Jewish Christian. These conclusions fit neatly into the larger Bagatti-Testa hypothesis.

Joan Taylor reads the evidence in a different way.⁹² It is evident that one section of the room – that with three successive layers of beaten lime flooring – was treated differently. Taylor conjectures that the builders were simply maintaining the outline of the previous rooms to designate one area as special. She conjectures further that the less attractive side of the room was designated for pilgrims and that only clergy could walk on the beaten lime floors.⁹³ This impacts the date she assigns to the three beaten lime floors; she places them in a range between the beginning of the 3rd century and the middle of the 4th century. She agrees that this was a pilgrimage site. Taylor believes that, beginning with the 4th century house church⁹⁴ with its beaten lime floors and continuing with the later octagonal church with its peacock mosaic, Christian pilgrims traveled from various regions to visit what was described to them as the site of Peter's house – which it may have been.

When the Capernaum site identified as the house of Peter is viewed apart from this debate over holy places, does it offer any useful information about Jewish Christianity? From a historical perspective, Capernaum is one of the few sites where the activity of Jesus and his first followers can be located with some precision and certainty. The synoptic gospels present Capernaum as the centerpoint of Jesus' ministry.⁹⁵ It is highly probable that Jesus and his first followers had their primary residence in this small village and were active in its synagogue. It is plausible that the memory of Peter's house was maintained through subsequent generations, and it is possible that the site of this house is beneath the octagonal church.

Does this provide an example of Jewish Christian activity? Yes and no. If the earliest followers of Jesus are understood as Jewish Christians,⁹⁶ then Capernaum is probably a primary site for their activity. This is likely true both before and after the death of Jesus,⁹⁷ and this presence and activity probably did not end

⁹² Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 278–84.

⁹³ Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 283–84.

⁹⁴ Likely constructed, Taylor thinks, by the Christian convert Joseph of Tiberias. Since he was a Jew converted to Christianity, the Franciscan archeologists generally take him to be a Jewish Christian. Taylor does not.

⁹⁵ The Gospel of Mark creates a paradigmatic account for the first day of Jesus' ministry (1.21–39). After the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Jesus goes on the Sabbath to the synagogue in Capernaum. There he teaches with amazing authority, demonstrated by three miracle stories. Two of these occur at the house where Peter's mother-in-law is living. On the following day, Jesus and the disciples depart to carry this ministry to the synagogues of the Galilee. In the Gospel of Mark, central teaching units are set in "the house."

⁹⁶ They are certainly Jewish; the question is whether this generation should be called Christians, particularly before the death of Jesus.

⁹⁷ In the Gospel of Mark the risen Christ sends word to his followers that he will "go be-

with the first generation.⁹⁸ But this does not demonstrate an unbroken line of Jewish Christian presence and influence in Capernaum up to the time of Constantine. It does not tell us who first treated the house of Peter as a holy site and began the sequence of distinctive architecture, nor does it tell us when this happened.

9.2 *The Synagogue at Capernaum*

Some ninety meters from the octagonal church stands the site of the Capernaum synagogue. Excavations were carried out at this site in 1857, 1866, 1894, and from 1969 forward.⁹⁹

Most scholars now agree that the partially reconstructed white limestone synagogue should be dated to the 4th century ce.¹⁰⁰ The controversy lies in the dating of the black basalt structures that underlie the white synagogue. Stanislao Loffredo traces the evidence from the latest to the earliest.¹⁰¹ First, he notes that the white synagogue of the 4th century was built upon an artificial podium that places it well above the level of the rest of the town.¹⁰² Secondly, Loffredo says this raised platform was built up over an area of the village that was once inhabited; evidence of this is found in Hellenistic and Roman structures and a Late Bronze Age site (13th century ce). He notes that private houses were found beneath the side aisle, the porch, and the east court. Thirdly, Laffredo notes that the area beneath the central nave of the prayer hall exhibits a different history. Here only the stone basalt pavement is found, and he dates this to the first century ce. This pavement is said to cover an older layer of occupation that contained pottery and coins of the Hellenistic period. This means that the central area has a separate – and presumably older – history from the aisle, porch, and east court. Loffredo agrees with the assessment of Corbo that the pavement is from the first century and belongs to the synagogue where Jesus was reported to have worked.¹⁰³

fore them into the Galilee" (16.7). In the Gospel of Matthew, the disciples meet the risen Christ on a mountain in Galilee, and from there they are sent to the nations (28.16–20).

⁹⁸ See, for example, the tradents of the Sayings Tradition (Q).

⁹⁹ See the discussion by Herschel Shanks, *Judaism in Stone: the Archeology of Ancient Synagogues* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); M. J. S. Chiat, *Handbook of Synagogue Architecture*, Brown University Judaic Studies 29 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982); Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 290–94.

¹⁰⁰ There was some debate over whether such a grand Jewish structure would be allowed after the patronage of Christianity by Constantine. The archeological evidence suggests the synagogue is 4th century, with 5th century additions.

¹⁰¹ Loffredo has summarized this evidence and provided photographs in "Capharnaum" on the Franciscan Cyberspot: <http://198.62.75.4/www1/ofm/sites/TScpmenu.html>

¹⁰² James Strange, "The Capernaum and Herodium Publications (Part I)," *BASOR* 226:70, says that the mortar used for the 4th century pavement is not secondary. This should mean that the late 4th and early 5th century coins and pottery found there provide an accurate date.

¹⁰³ Loffredo, "Capharnaum."

This evidence shows, obviously, that the black basalt walls and pavement are older than the white limestone synagogue that sits upon them. But the evidence does not say how much older. Even a 1st century dating does not prove this to be the synagogue from the time of Jesus, who lived in the first third of the century. Only literary data and logical links sustain this connection.

Since there is no evidence of an earlier synagogue beneath the central basalt pavement of the 4th century synagogue, the basalt layer seems to represent the first public structure on the site. Since the gospels say that Jesus used a synagogue in Capernaum built by a Roman centurion (Lk. 7.5), logic and literature suggest the basalt pavement and walls are the remains of that synagogue. But the archeological evidence does not demand this conclusion. If there was a third synagogue – one from the time of Jesus – it likely existed in an unexcavated section of town. Thus far, no archeological evidence for another synagogue has emerged.

Seen in its larger framework, what is the significance of this data? The literary evidence suggests there was a synagogue in Capernaum in the time of Jesus. Archeological data makes its probable, though not certain, that the black basalt structure beneath the limestone synagogue was in fact the synagogue in which Jesus worked. This structure was visited by pilgrims such as Egeria, and, after Constantine's patronage, the white synagogue likely became a popular pilgrimage site.

What does this tell us about Jewish Christianity? The literature makes a strong case that the Jewish Jesus and his followers used Capernaum and its synagogue as the primary base for his ministry of healing and proclamation of the coming reign of God.¹⁰⁴ Rabbinic sources suggest that Capernaum continued to be a place where a heterodox form of Judaism was practiced.¹⁰⁵ But archeology only tells us that there was a sequence of synagogues at Capernaum, concluded by one of the most extraordinary examples known. Any suggestion that one of these synagogues may have given birth to and have continued to host a vibrant stream of Jewish Christianity must be demonstrated through other means.

¹⁰⁴ The curse against Capernaum (Mt. 11.23; Lk. 10.15) may emerge from the tradents of the Sayings Tradition (Q).

¹⁰⁵ The people of Capernaum are called *minim* by the rabbis in *EcclR* 7.3. In a second century story in *EcclR* 1.4, Hanina has a cursed placed on him by the *minim* of Capernaum, causing him to ride an ass on the Sabbath. There appears to be a veiled reference to Jesus as the cause of the curse.

10. The House of Leontis

Zeev Safrai believes the 4th to 5th century house of Leontis at Beth Shean (ancient Scythopolis, not far from Pella), is a Jewish Christian place of worship.¹⁰⁶ The house is a private dwelling in which a large courtyard has been created. At the center of this room is an extraordinary mosaic composed of three panels.



*Figure 30:
The Leontis mosaic¹⁰⁷*

¹⁰⁶ Zeev Safrai, "The house of Leontis 'Kaloubas'-a Judeo-Christian?" in *The Image of the Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petry, WUNT 158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 245–66. The report on the excavation of the site may be found in N. Zori, "The House of Kyrios Leontis at Beth Shean," *IEJ* 16 (1966), 123–34.

¹⁰⁷ Zeev Safrai, "The house of Leontis 'Kaloubas' – a Judaeo-Christian?" Safrai's sketch (p. 265) and plan (p. 264) courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society.

The uppermost panel shows Odysseus lashed to the mast of his ship to avoid the seduction of a nude Siren, who is riding a sea creature. Included in this panel is another sailor doing battle with a nude Siren and a sea creature. The inscription in this panel probably reads "Lord, help Leontis Kloubas." The second panel contains some 26 doves around an inscription that reads: "A dedicatory inscription that remembers for good Lord Leontis Kloubas, who contributed for his own salvation and that of the members of his family." The lower panel has a scene of the Nile that includes a ship, fish, fowl, plants, various animals, the Nile god, the post for measuring the flood depth, and an inscription labeling the city of Alexandria. Though it is damaged extensively, there appears to be a five-branched candlestick or *menorah* incorporated into the mosaic.

Safrai believes this room is part of a Jewish worship site, but with numerous elements not found in any other Jewish archeological site. Safrai concludes, on the basis of the following elements and conjectures, that the site is a Jewish Christian worship center.

1. The presence of the *menorah*
2. Leontis' brother has a Jewish name (Jonathan)
3. The adjective *Kaloubas* should be identified with the Ebionite leader named by Epiphanius as *Kleobios* or *Kleoboulos*
4. The greater acceptance of Roman culture and pagan motifs
5. The lack of orientation of the room or the mosaic toward Jerusalem
6. The twenty-six doves, which may represent:
 - a. the name of God (the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton)
 - b. the Ebionite idea that Jesus became the Christ at his baptism
 - c. the tradition of twenty-six generations until the giving of the Torah
7. Elxai, presumed to be Jewish Christian, associated water with divinity

Based on these elements and conjectures, Safrai concludes that

If our hypothesis that this house of Leontis was a place of worship for a group of Judaeo-Christians is correct, then it is the first archeological testimony regarding the practices of this sect. The earlier evidence surveyed by Bagatti is much more doubtful.¹⁰⁸

From a critical perspective, these connections and conjectures are tenuous at best. Perhaps the greatest problem is that there is nothing explicitly Christian in the house or the mosaic.¹⁰⁹ It is not absolutely clear that a *menorah* is present, and the orientation of the mosaic and its connecting wall are puzzling. The closest parallel to the room and its mosaic is found in the Roman villa at Sepphoris, with its beautiful woman, floral and fauna, and the measuring of the Nile for the city of Alexandria. Both sites may demonstrate the eclectic collection of motifs and

¹⁰⁸ Safrai, "Leontis," p. 255.

¹⁰⁹ The two ships and masts are suggested as allusions to the church and the cross. It is not certain there are twenty-six birds, and it is not apparent they are doves.

images that adorned wealthy Roman sites, though there is some religious purpose for the Leontis mosaic. It is not, however, demonstrably Jewish Christian.

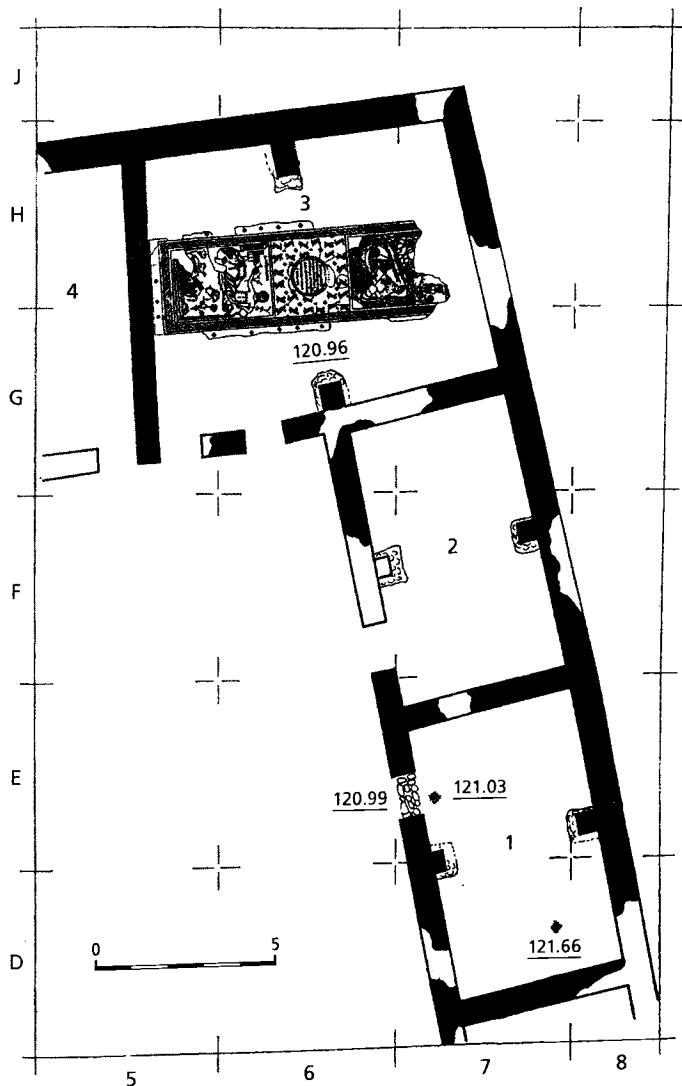


Figure 31: Orientation of the Leontis mosaic¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Zeev Safrai, "The house of Leontis," p. 264, courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society.

11. The Transjordan¹¹¹

The most plausible evidence for Jewish Christianity lies outside the realm of Palestine and outside the debate over the continuity of Christian holy sites. In the Bashan region west of the Jordan, four separate villages have produced inscriptions that include both Jewish and Christian symbolism. In each case a *menorah* is found alongside or conjoined with Christian symbols.¹¹²

The inscriptions at the village of Farj were noted by Claudine Dauphin,¹¹³ who concluded that Jews, Jewish Christians, and Monophysite Christians were able to live together in Farj in the Roman and Byzantine periods. One inscription contains four or five variations on the menorah image, combined in one instance with a fish and perhaps a cross, in another with a palm branch. A second inscription contains a cross, a menorah, a cross with a fish, a cross inside a circle, possibly a fishing net, and four Greek letters. A third inscription contains a cross, a menorah joined with a palm branch, and what appears to be an incomplete menorah. A fourth inscription contains three menorahs, each incorporating a bar to form a type of cross. The assertion by Taylor that these inscriptions were produced "for a Christian building at more or less the same time" in the later 4th to early 5th century is less than convincing, as is her insistence that "the possibility that the Jews of Farj were converted to orthodox Christianity is equally as likely as their being Nazoreans."¹¹⁴ For Taylor, even the presence of Nazareans would require a process of conversion from Judaism: "in the absence of further material that would absolutely confirm the situation one way or another, the Farj material is just possibly the work of converts to the Nazorean sect ..."¹¹⁵

Similar evidence was found in the same region at Khan Bandak and at But-miyeh by Schumacher almost one hundred years earlier.¹¹⁶ In 1925, W. F. Albright found the same type of inscriptions at the village of Nawa, ten kilometers north of Farj.¹¹⁷

Here at last in the Transjordan the literary and material evidence appear to cohere. Farj is less than 20 kilometers from the site identified by Michael Avi-Yonah as Kokaba (or Chochaba in Hebrew). Epiphanius, who is writing to priests from Coele Syria, designates the town by both its Greek (Kokaba) and Hebrew

¹¹¹ I am using the term Transjordan not in reference to any specific political entity, but as a general geographical designation for areas lying east of the Jordan River and its sources.

¹¹² See the discussion and analysis in Taylor, *Holy Places*, pp. 39–41.

¹¹³ C. M. Dauphin, "Farj en Gaulanitide: refuge judéo-chrétien?" *Proche-Orient chrétien*, 34 (1984), 233–45.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 40. Recent conversations with Taylor suggest she now holds the Transjordan evidence for Jewish Christianity in higher regard.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 41.

¹¹⁶ G. Schumacher, *The Jauian* (London: Richard Bentley, 1888).

¹¹⁷ W. F. Albright, "Bronze Age Mounds of Northern Palestine and the Hauran: The Spring Trip of the School in Jerusalem," *BASOR* 19 (1925), 5–19.

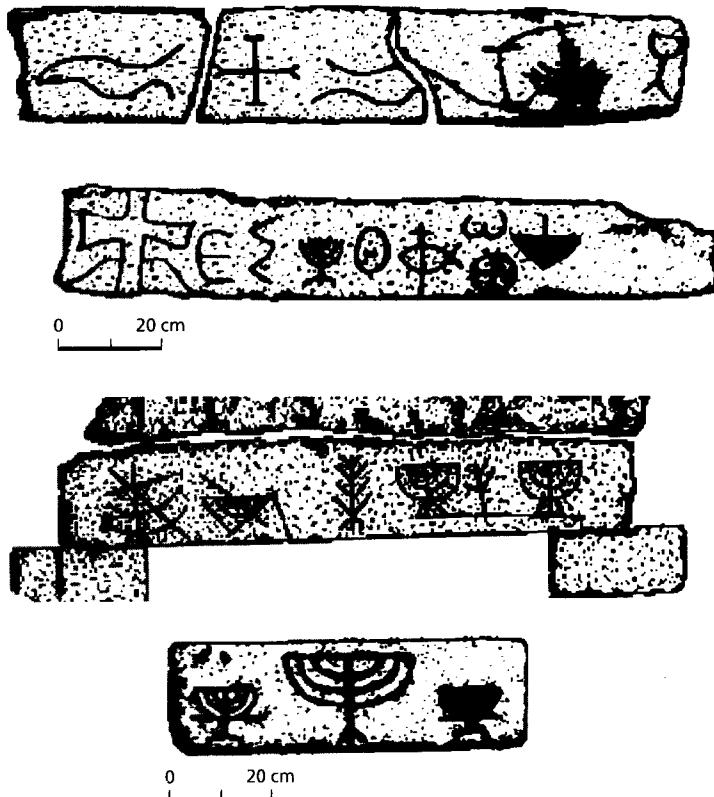


Figure 32: Inscriptions from the Golan¹¹⁸

name (Chochaba), and he is quite specific about its location. This, says Epiphanius, is the home of the Nazoreans.¹¹⁹

A second literary line coheres with the material evidence of Jewish Christianity in the Transjordan. Eusebius says that members of the Jerusalem church in the 60s ce were warned in a dream to flee the coming war with Rome. Eusebius says that they fled to Pella in the Transjordan region of Decapolis (*HE* 3.5.3). Epiphanius says that these refugees are the source of two Jewish Christian groups: Ebionites and Nazoreans (*Pan.* 29.7.7–8; 30.2.7; *De Mens. et Pond.* 15). Epiphanius also tells of the return of some of the Pella refugees and the continuation of the Jerusalem church (*De Mens. et Pond* 15).

¹¹⁸ C. M. Dauphin, "Farj en Gaulanitide: refuge judéo-chrétien?" *Proche-Orient chrétien*, 34 (1984), 233–45; DE L'ÉGLISE DE LA CIRCONCISION À L'ÉGLISE DE LA GENITILITÉ: Sur une nouvelle voie hors de l'impasse, *Liber Annuus* 43 (1993), 223–42. Drawings to scale by Shimon Gibson, used by permission of C. M. Dauphin and Shimon Gibson.

¹¹⁹ Epiphanius gives this description in the *Panarion* (29.7.7; see also 30.2.8–9).

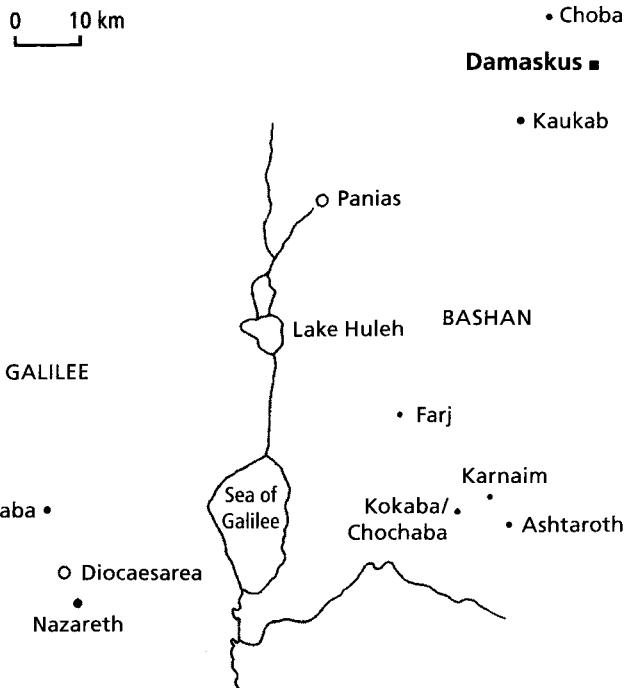


Figure 33: Transjordan sites, possible sites of Kochaba¹²⁰

It is not at all clear that the flight to Pella is a historical event, but there is probably some connection between the Pella story and the tradition of the Jewish Christians in the Transjordan. It may be that the Pella story was created to account for the presence of Jewish followers of Jesus in the Transjordan. It is also possible that Epiphanius created the Transjordan sects because he knew of the Pella tradition, though he would have difficulty convincing his local audience of a created sect. One tradition may have been invented to explain the other, but it is very unlikely that both traditions are fictional.

One further trait is noteworthy. Two synagogues have been excavated at Farj, one of which later became a Christian church. This may or may not be evidence of competing streams of Judaism within the village.

Taken as a whole, the evidence for Jewish Christianity in the area of Bashan in the Transjordan is noteworthy. The excavation and recognition of Jewish Christian inscriptions at four different villages by different archeologists working across the span of a century provides multiple, independent attestation. It is also significant that these findings form no part of the quest to show the continuity of

¹²⁰ Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 37.

holy sites. The coherence of this material evidence with two lines of literary traditions is noteworthy, and there is a strong degree of historical plausibility to the claim that Epiphanius knows of Jewish Christians in this region.¹²¹

The material evidence points to the presence of Jewish Christians in the Transjordan as late as the 4th and 5th century. These findings neither prove nor exclude the possibility of an earlier presence. Consequently, the Jewish Christian inscriptions of the Transjordan represent the most significant material evidence for the presence of Jewish Christianity.

12. Conclusion

The search for archeological evidence for Jewish Christianity has generated more heat than light. The work of the Bagatti-Testa group was carried out within the context of the Franciscan mission to serve as guardians of the Christian holy places. Working frequently on sites protected by the Franciscan order, Bagatti, Testa, and their followers sought to establish the continuity of Christian veneration of holy sites from the apostolic era forward. Such continuity is unthinkable in terms of orthodox Christianity, since Christianity was outlawed until Constantine. Prior to Constantine one might hope to find Christian texts and inscriptions, but not monuments, public buildings, or shrines. The only reasonable expectation of such continuity would lie in the hope that Jewish Christian groups, ignored by secular authorities as Jews, maintained sacred sites of worship and veneration. Such sites could be expected to be small and somewhat secretive. Bagatti and Testa presumed that caves provided the optimal sites for Jewish Christian worship.

Bagatti and Testa were not interested in Jewish Christianity *per se*. They borrowed from Jean Daniélou the approach of defining Jewish Christianity by distinctive doctrines. Bagatti and Testa took mysticism, gnosticism, apocalypticism, and Pythagorean ideas for the defining traits of a heterodox Jewish Christian theology. Their interest in Jewish Christianity was primarily utilitarian: it provides the line of continuity for Christian holy sites.

Various details of the archeological work of Bagatti and Testa have been questioned, and numerous scholars have challenged their larger model of Jewish Christianity. Joan Taylor gathered this evidence and added to it her own persistent critique of the work and the conclusions of the Bagatti-Testa school.¹²² Her rejection of the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis of cultic continuity through heterodox Jewish Christianity is thorough and decisive.

¹²¹ See the chapters above on the patristic representation of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites.

¹²² The initial work served as the basis for her doctoral dissertation at Edinburgh.

But Taylor sometimes overdraws her evidence. She seems to presume, at the time of *Christians and the Holy Places*, that her dismissal of the Bagatti-Testa claims meant that Jewish Christians played no important role in Palestine in the two centuries preceding Constantine.¹²³ She too quickly divides the landscape between easily definable groups of Christians and Jews, minimizing the complexity of such terms before the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity. Taylor has convincingly demonstrated that the Bagatti-Testa hypothesis is not sustained by the evidence. But it is hard to prove a negative, and Taylor has not thereby proven that Jewish Christianity did not endure in Palestine, nor even that Jewish Christians did not honor certain sites. Nonetheless, what Taylor has accomplished in *Christians and the Holy Places* is significant. She has demonstrated that decisive material evidence for Jewish Christian veneration of holy sites has not been found.

Apart from this holy war over holy sites, can archeology confirm or inform the existence of Jewish Christianity in the early centuries? Because rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Christianity emerged as definable entities, it is presumed that there is reason to look for material evidence of their development. Such expectations are brought to bear upon, and sometimes imposed upon, archeological data.¹²⁴ What is known or presumed to be known about orthodox Christianity or rabbinic Judaism provides one grid for analyzing archeological finds such as mosaics, pottery, structural layers. This same process must be valid for Jewish Christianity. If various forms of Jewish Christianity can be identified from the 3rd and 4th centuries, it is not unreasonable to look for material evidence of its development. This is particularly true since the first followers of Jesus were Jewish. In the case of Jewish Christianity, however, such expectations should be minimal. No type of Christianity seems to have left significant material traces of its formative years, and this is particularly true of groups that were eventually marginalized.

The evidence in the Transjordan seems to provide the one clear strata of material evidence for Jewish Christianity, and this coheres with what is known from the literary evidence. While the evidence from the Transjordan may be earlier, it is also possible that it begins in the 4th century ce. If there is any plausible ma-

¹²³ "There is, in fact, no literary evidence whatsoever for Jewish-Christians existing in Galilee, Samaria, or Judea past the beginning of the second century ..." says Taylor, *Holy Places*, p. 24. She does, however, acknowledge that "There may well have been Jewish-Christian pockets in villages and cities, as there may well have been such pockets all over the Empire ... ", p. 46. Again, the negative is difficult to prove.

¹²⁴ So, for example, the persistent query of whether two perpendicular lines represent a *tau*, a *chi*, or a cross. Fish, birds, boats, and masts are also closely examined, though they are frequent pagan motifs. Numbers are open to various interpretations, some of which are Christian. The St. Sabina image of the church of the circumcision may be a projection based on Acts, the *chi-rho* found in a Roman era synagogue inscription in Sepphoris may be later, and the *chi-rho* may not be an exclusively Christian symbol.

terial evidence of Jewish Christianity at its earlier stages, it is meager: a floor beneath the house of Peter, the foundational pavement of a Capernaum synagogue, the lowest strata of the Church of the Apostles. These are possible remnants of a primitive Jewish Christianity, but they are certainly not conclusive. Even if authentic, their preservation and veneration is likely a Constantinian innovation.

These remnants, at best, might confirm that Jewish Christianity existed. But the path is circular: the early evidence confirms that Jewish Christianity existed only if we already know that it existed. While the Transjordan inscriptions present strong evidence for the later stages of Jewish Christianity, at present there is no extant archeological data that adds intrinsically to our understanding of the formative years of Jewish Christianity.

PART FIVE

The Significance of Jewish Christianity for Contemporary Scholarship

The term Jewish Christianity is used in this study to search for ancient individuals and groups whose historical profile suggests that they seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Historical markers for Jewish Christianity emerge in some of the earliest communities of Jesus' followers and in some of their earliest texts. The patristic representation and the rabbinic debate suggest that some forms of Jewish Christianity continued to play an important role in the formative years of both traditions. This portrait is supported in the remnants of the Jewish Christian literary tradition. Taken together, this evidence suggests that Jewish Christianity was a vital and enduring part of the religious map of antiquity: it existed in different places, times, and modes through the first four centuries of the common era.

The final chapters will consider the impact of this evidence upon contemporary scholarship on the history and identity of Christianity. Particular attention is given to two areas of New Testament scholarship: 1) the presumed "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity, and 2) the developmental history of primitive Christianity.

CHAPTER 15

The “Parting of the Ways” and the History of Primitive Christianity

In the field of New Testament studies, most of the history of scholarship has presumed that Judaism and Christianity experienced a “parting of the ways.” Where this is presumed, the only remaining issues are when and how this split occurred. Scholars have defined several turning points:

1. the ministry of Jesus;
2. the division within the Jerusalem church between Hebrews and Hellenists;
3. the diversity and openness of the church at Antioch;
4. the mission of Paul to the Gentiles;
5. the 1st Jewish War (66–74 ce);
6. tension with the synagogues reflected in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John;
7. the 2nd Jewish War (132–135 ce).

Some scholars take one of these as the singular moment that marked Judaism and Christianity as distinct entities. Others imagine a process of separation in which there are several decisive moments.

1. Patterns of Parting in New Testament Scholarship

For many scholars, the line separating Judaism from Christianity was drawn by Jesus. Adolf Harnack articulated this position: “By their rejection of Jesus the Jewish people disowned their calling and dealt the death-blow to their own existence ...”¹ Harnack believed that Judaism was inferior to Greek culture, so Christianity naturally was attracted to Hellenism. Consequently, Judaism and Jewish Christianity, says Harnack, had no significant impact on the formation of the church.

Adolf Schlatter held a similar view of Jesus: “From the very beginning, his work had led him on a course that separated him thoroughly from Judaism.”² For

¹ Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904 [German edition 1902]), vol. 1, pp. 81–82.

² Adolf Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1923), trans. by An-

Schlatter, this parting of the ways is a historical reality recorded in the book of Acts, and the speech of Stephen provided the first occasion to recognize this fundamental difference.

Hans Conzelmann believed the ways parted in the preaching of Jesus: “It is immediately obvious that this preaching had to lead to a fundamental conflict with *all* the trends within Judaism.”³ This conflict, said Conzelmann, “is inherent in the existence of the church itself. It will last as long as church and synagogue exist side by side.”⁴

Building on the work of Conzelmann, Peter Stuhlmacher suggests that Paul founded a school and a teaching tradition among his followers.⁵ The christological tradition of this school was first published in the Pastoral Epistles in the aftermath of Paul’s death. But the origins of this christology, says Stuhlmacher, are to be found in Jesus’ messianic self-consciousness. This christology is the line of demarcation between Christians and pagans, but also between Christians and Jews who do not believe in Jesus as the Lord and messiah.⁶

Numerous scholars offer a nuanced form of this argument: a later split is the full flowering of the uniqueness of Jesus’ own ministry. Martin Hengel described several stages of parting.⁷ The earliest and most significant of these is between the Hebrews and Hellenists in the early Jerusalem community. Though both sides were influenced by the preaching of Jesus, Hengel believed it was the Hellenists who caught the liberal spirit of Jesus. He presupposed that

dreas Köstenberger as *The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), p. 206.

³ Hans Conzelmann, “Jesus Christ,” in RGG, 3rd ed. (1959), translated by Raymond Lord as *Jesus: The Classic Article from RGG Expanded and Updated*, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 54.

⁴ Hans Conzelmann, *Gentiles–Jews–Christians: Polemics and Apologetics in the Greco-Roman world*, trans. Eugene Boring (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992 [German edition, 1981]), p. 257.

⁵ Peter Stuhlmacher, “Das Christusbild der Paulus-Schule—eine Skizze,” in *Jews and Christian: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70–135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), pp. 158–175.

⁶ Stuhlmacher, “Christusbild,” p. 175, concludes: “Schauen wir zurück, ergibt sich eine klare Linie: Die von Jesu messianischem Sendungsbewusstsein ausgehende und in seiner Passion und Auferweckung gründende Christologie ist der eigentliche Beweggrund für die Trennung von den (nicht an Jesus als Herrn und Messias glaubenden) Juden (und Heiden) und den Christen. Die Traditionen der von Paulus begründeten Schule lassen besonders klar erkennen, wie diese Christologie entstanden ist und was sie besagt. Paulus und seine Schüler haben sie zur entscheidenden Lehrnorm der Kirche erhoben. Der von ihnen beschrittene Weg kann nur um den Preis des Evangeliums und des christlichen Glaubens rückgäng gemacht werden.”

⁷ Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1979 [1st German edition, 1979]).

the 'Hellenists' presented arguments the foundation of which is to be sought in the message of Jesus himself. They called for the abolition of Temple worship and the revision of the law of Moses in the light of the true will of God... . That means that the 'Hellenists' put forward the offensive claim that the significance of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel essentially superseded that of Moses in the history of salvation: the gospel of Jesus took the place of the Jewish gospel of exodus and Sinai as God's concluding, incomparable eschatological revelation. They understood their authority to make this criticism as a gift of the spirit, which they saw as a sign of the dawning of the eschatological age.⁸

The distinctions between Hebrews and Hellenists would grow starker. Hengel said:

The Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians had a more restrained – one might also say more conservative – attitude towards the Law. They remained more deeply rooted in the religious tradition of Palestine, which from the time of the Maccabees inevitably regarded any attack on Torah and Temple as sacrilege. Of course we should not suppose that in the earliest period even they were so strict about keeping the law as the Jerusalem community under the leadership of James seems to have been at a later stage ...⁹

Hengel believed the decisive break came at the apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2.1–10). Luke says the council resulted in a letter from the Jerusalem leaders that affirmed Paul's work and placed limited rules on Gentile converts. In Galatians Paul says nothing of a letter or of any rules imposed on Gentile believers. He reports instead on a division of the mission field: the leaders agreed "that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised" (Gal 2.9). The only obligation placed on Paul was to remember the poor.

Hengel believed this marks the parting of the ways between two types of Christianity. Paul drew upon the Hellenists' criticism of the Law and began an independent mission to the Roman provinces. Hengel has thus described two lines of separation, one internal and one external. For Hengel, Christianity has its primary development along an axis of liberal thought running from Jesus to the Hellenists to Paul and Gentile Christianity. While Hengel focused on the internal tensions, his model means that Christianity separated ideologically from Temple and synagogue in its earliest stages, and it did so because it drew upon the teachings of Jesus.

While Hengel focused on the apostolic council, the fall of the Temple at the end of the 1st Jewish War (70 ce) is seen by many, if not most, as the decisive moment. This view dominated through much of the 20th century. Of the four major types of Jews named by Josephus (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots), only the Pharisees were thought to have survived the 1st Jewish War with any real authority or coherence. This left Pharisees and Christians to fight over the heritage of Israel, a conflict that seems to be at the forefront of the gospels and Acts. The expul-

⁸ Hengel, *Acts*, pp. 72–73.

⁹ Hengel, *Acts*, p. 73.

sion of Christians from the synagogues and the formal curse against followers of Jesus were said to follow close upon the fall of the Temple, and these events seem to be echoed in the Fourth Gospel and in the Gospel of Matthew.

These events are often seen as the final episodes in the story sketched out by Luke: the Christian movement begins in Jerusalem among Jewish followers of Jesus, but it moves quickly into the Greek-speaking world under the patronage of Stephen, the Antioch church, and the missionary work of Paul. The turning of Paul's mission to the Gentiles is, for Luke, occasioned by the rejection of the gospel by the Jews (Acts 13.46; 18.6; 28.25). Many scholars see this separation completed in the aftermath of the fall of the Temple.

James Dunn envisions a longer, more nuanced sequence of developments. His 1991 analysis, entitled *The Partings of the Ways*, emphasized multiple points of departure, though chapter 12 is entitled "The Parting of the Ways."¹⁰ Dunn believes the strands began to pull apart in the 1st century over each of four main pillars of Second Temple Judaism: monotheism, election, covenant (Torah), and land (Temple). Dunn believes separation was not immediate or sudden: "It began with Jesus, but without Easter and the broadening out of the gospel to the Gentiles the two currents might have been contained within the same banks."¹¹ Dunn believes the Stephen episode and the book of Hebrews point to a distancing from the Temple that marks "the first parting of the ways."¹² For the Judaism focused on Temple and ethnic identity, Paul and the Gentile mission represent an irreparable breach: this can be described as a "further parting of the ways."¹³ For Jews who affirmed the unity of God in traditional terms, the affirmation of Jesus as the incarnation of the divine Word or of divine Wisdom had no place in the synagogue: this marked a "particularly crucial parting of the ways."¹⁴ "And so the ways parted," says Dunn, "and have remained apart ever since."¹⁵

Unlike much of 20th century scholarship, Dunn does not believe that the crisis precipitated by the 1st Jewish War and the fall of the Temple mark the final parting of the ways. The period between the two Jewish wars (70–135 ce), however, was decisive: "after the second revolt the separation of the main bodies of Christianity and Judaism was clear-cut and final; whatever interaction there was continued to be at the margins."¹⁶

¹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991). Some change of view is noted in the 2nd edition of 1996. Dunn edited an earlier work entitled *Jews and Christians: The Parting of Ways, A.D. 70–135* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989).

¹¹ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 230.

¹² Dunn, *Partings*, p. 230.

¹³ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 230.

¹⁴ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 230.

¹⁵ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 230.

¹⁶ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 238.

Dunn adds a further disclaimer to his reconstruction: “The parting of the ways was more between mainstream Christianity and Jewish Christianity than simply between Christianity as a whole and rabbinic Judaism.”¹⁷ Nonetheless, his assessment of Jewish Christianity is a typical reflection of the patristic view:

Whether Jewish Christianity could or should have been retained within the spectrum of catholic Christianity is an important question which it may now be impossible to answer. Within two or three centuries it had ceased to be important anyway, once the Jewish Christian sects withered and died, presumably by absorption into rabbinic Judaism on the one side, and into catholic Christianity on the other, or just by the slow death of failure to regenerate.¹⁸

When the history of scholarship on the “parting of the ways” is viewed as a whole, a clear line of development can be seen. At the first stage of scholarship, Jesus was understood in distinction from Judaism. Indeed, one method for isolating authentic sayings of Jesus was to apply a criterion of dissimilarity with 1st century Judaism. Scholarship eventually found in the Lukan account a more nuanced sequence: the gospel moves in a rather straight line from Jesus to the apostolic community to the Greek-speaking world to the capital of the empire. This transition was taken as a sufficient historical account for the development of Christianity as a Gentile, westernized movement. A third stage of sophistication was reached when the events of the 1st Jewish War were added to the picture. A parting of the ways and the dominance of Gentile Christianity now seemed to be the logical outcome of this catastrophe. A further level of sophistication took into consideration the events in the years between the two Jewish revolts (70–132 ce). This view suggested that a clear demarcation between Judaism and Christianity attained permanent status by 135 ce.

Most New Testament scholars describe Judaism after 135 ce in the model of the rabbis. Christianity is defined by the emergence of institutional leadership, by uniformity of doctrine, and in light of the developing canon. Any surviving groups of Jewish Christians are seen as heretical and terminal. The description of Dunn is representative:

The Jewish Christianity of which we read in the fathers is a group of heretical sects, already detached from mainstream Christianity. And though they could claim a high degree of continuity with primitive Jerusalem Christianity, the points at which the ways parted found them more on the traditional Jewish side than with Paul and John. Paul’s view of Torah was too much for them: he is remembered by them as an apostate. John’s high Christology was too strong for those who found it enough to continue regarding Jesus simply as a prophet.¹⁹

¹⁷ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 239.

¹⁸ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 239.

¹⁹ Dunn, *Partings*, p. 239.

Although New Testament scholarship has described the parting of the ways between synagogue and church with increasing nuance and has moved the date to as late as 135 ce, the presupposition is largely unchanged.²⁰ Even in its most sophisticated and lengthened forms, this paradigm is ultimately a version of the Lukan model: because of persecution and rejection, but also because of the will of God, Christianity had its roots in Judaism, but its full fruition in the Gentile church.

Several aspects of this paradigm are disturbing. Almost without exception, this model presumes there was a sense of inevitability to this separation: something within the teaching of Jesus or Paul or Christianity was ultimately incompatible with any form of Judaism that survived.

More disturbing is the sense of social evolution that sometimes accompanies this model. The Christianity that emerged from the struggle with Judaism is sometimes said to be liberated from legalism, nationalism, and hypocrisy and to be adapted in its mindset, language, and forms to the superior demands of the Graeco-Roman world. Christianity’s ideological conquest of the Roman emperor and the Roman empire are seen as the final evidence of this superiority.

2. The Parting of the Ways as a Paradigm for Christian Identity

This paradigm of parting has been used not only for reconstructing the relationship of church and synagogue: it also provides the blueprint for almost every reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a religious and social movement. Although more attention is given in these studies to issues of theology and to the sociological impact of missionary activity, the Lukan paradigm tends to dominate this field as well. In most reconstructions of primitive Christian identity, Judaism is the background from which Christianity emerges as a distinct religion. This pattern will be illustrated in the recent works of Gerd Theissen and Gerd Lüdemann.

²⁰ A brief overview of this process and its problems is sketched out by Andrew Jacobs, “Jews and Christians” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 169–72.

2.1 Gerd Theissen

The most recent and most nuanced reconstruction of primitive Christianity has been offered by Gerd Theissen.²¹ Theissen's work is representative of the manner in which the question of synagogue and church echoes through attempts to articulate the identity of primitive Christianity.

Theissen describes Christianity as both dependent upon and independent from Judaism.

That the cathedral built of such materials had really been built on its own foundations was confirmed in crises. These were always about the autonomy of the new religion. In these crises we rediscover the monotheistic dynamic which was inherited from Judaism. Only it gave the new religion the power to assert its independence.

The independence of the ritual sign language of primitive Christianity was at stake in the Judaistic crisis of the first century. It laid the foundation for the replacement of circumcision by baptism. For Gentiles who had newly been won over, and who could not take part in either the Jewish or the pagan sacrificial cult, the 'sacrificial death of Jesus' came into the centre. Gradually all other sacrifices were repudiated with reference to this one and only sacrificial death. The one and only human sacrifice in mythical imagination replaced the many violent animal sacrifices in reality. With the rite, all ritual commandments were relativized. Their relativization specifically affected the visible Jewish marks of identity – circumcision, the food laws, the Sabbath, the bond with the cult in the Jerusalem temple. In this way, in primitive Christianity much that separated Jews from those around them in everyday life disappeared. Primitive Christianity worked as a Judaism without frontiers. And this removal of frontiers corresponded to the monotheistic dynamic in Judaism. For one day the one and only God would be recognized by all peoples. In opening itself to Gentiles, primitive Christianity followed this dynamic. In defending this universal dynamic and opening itself up to all peoples, in the Judaistic crisis the independence of primitive Christianity established itself over against Judaism.²²

For Theissen, Christianity emerges through a dynamic, evolutionary process. He contends that

By its set of axioms primitive Christianity opened up a dynamic view of the world as process. In this process a new world breaks into the old world, in which the previous foundation of all evolution, the principle of selection, is included in, and partially abrogated by, solidarity....

It is not necessary to relate all axioms to such an evolutionary view of the world. Nor is it necessary to attribute an evolutionary consciousness to the men and women of primitive Christianity. We need only assume that all human beings are involved in a transition from a biological to cultural evolution – whether they know it or not. In their religious images and symbols they grope for the basic structures of reality and of their situation, long before they can put them into words. But where they encounter this situation

²¹ Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999 [1st German edition, 1999]).

²² Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, pp. 288–89.

intuitively, their sign worlds take on a power to disclose reality which goes far beyond the understanding of those who inhabit these worlds.

It was its accord with the human condition, with the situation of human beings in a world in a process of evolutionary change, that gave the religious sign world of primitive Christianity its inner plausibility.²³

For Theissen, Christianity asserts its independence from Judaism in the 1st century. This break is said to exhibit the dynamic universalism of Christianity and to demonstrate its accord with the evolutionary progress of human culture.

2.2 Gerd Lüdemann

Gerd Lüdemann plans to write a history of primitive Christianity. He unveils the foundational premises and the preliminary features in his latest treatment of Acts.²⁴ Lüdemann argues that Luke’s work in Acts draws upon reliable historical traditions. When one sees through the problems of Lukan redaction and crucial omissions and when the writings of Paul are used to replace Luke’s chronology, then, says Lüdemann, “Acts remains an important source for the history of early Christianity alongside the letters of Paul.”²⁵

Based on these presumptions, Lüdemann offers “a brief narrative of primitive Christianity from 30 to 70 ce.”²⁶ At the base of this movement lies Jesus, whose program of ethical radicalism in view of the inbreaking Kingdom was expressed through symbolic actions – the choosing of 12, the entry into Jerusalem, his comments on the image on the Roman coins, but especially his demonstration in the Temple.²⁷

Lüdemann believes that the experience of Peter provides the key to continuation of the cause of Jesus. Peter’s vision of the risen Jesus was a personal experience of forgiveness and reconciliation, but it also was the ground for reconstituting the 12 and taking up the work of Jesus in Jerusalem. The experience of Peter began a chain of events and spread to a wider community in Jerusalem, including some of the family of Jesus who had not followed him in his earthly ministry. The community expressed this newfound faith through table fellowship, through recalling the words of Jesus, and through reflection upon the scriptures.²⁸

²³ Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, pp. 295–97.

²⁴ Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2005). That the dominant concern is not the text of Acts, but the history of primitive Christianity is evident in the subtitle, but particularly in the German title: *Frühe Christentum nach den Traditionen der Apostelgeschichte* (Early Christianity according to the Traditions of Acts).

²⁵ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 397. See especially the appendix, found on pp. 385–401.

²⁶ The title of the final chapter in *What Really Happened?*, pp. 365–84.

²⁷ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, pp. 365–66.

²⁸ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, pp. 365–67.

Lüdemann insists the Hellenists played a key role in the transition beyond Jerusalem: "They in turn interpreted the words of Jesus in the context of the experience of the Spirit and an imminent expectation that led them to break through the intense traditional link with Torah and cult."²⁹ Lüdemann also insists it was Hellenists who took the gospel to the Gentiles, and it was they who transferred Christianity from the village to the city. Lüdemann affirms the view that Hellenists changed the new faith "from a basically rural and rustic sect whose founders were Galilean 'backwoodsmen' into an active and successful city religion."³⁰

While he will give brief attention to the tradents of the Sayings Tradition and to the Gospel of Mark,³¹ the rest of the history of primitive Christianity, for Lüdemann, is a Pauline story. Lüdemann gives much focus to the personality of Paul and to his adamant obedience to personal visions and religious insights. This experiential model explains Paul's self-understanding as God's special envoy to the Gentiles, but also his inability to penetrate the rational moralism of classical Greek thought.³²

Among Pauline churches the inclusion of Gentiles was seen as the removal of all barriers represented by the Torah and the Jewish cult. This new experience of salvation, based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, was symbolized in the new rites of baptism and eucharist. Lüdemann understands Paul as the real founder of Christianity: "A movement was born and really called to life by a man who, though he had never known Jesus personally, was all the more in contact with the heavenly Jesus."³³

The consequence, says Lüdemann, was Paul's estrangement from the Jewish mother religion. Although there was a working agreement that affirmed two missions, this broke down.

Then disaster struck. Suddenly delegates from Jerusalem began to invade Paul's communities; they threatened to destroy all that he had laboriously built up and steadfastly defended in Jerusalem. The "false brethren" whom Paul had defeated in Jerusalem now attacked him in his own communities. They put his apostolic authority in question, introduced additional precepts of the law, and thus destroyed any fellowship between Paul and Jerusalem.³⁴

It is clear that Lüdemann understands primitive Christianity to be dominated by the influence of Paul.

²⁹ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 368.

³⁰ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 369. Lüdemann is quoting Martin Hengel.

³¹ The Gospel of Mark is viewed by Lüdemann as influenced by Pauline thought and as already showing the symbolic replacement of Judaism. See especially, *What Really Happened?*, pp. 378–79.

³² Typified in Paul's failure in Athens.

³³ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 375.

³⁴ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 377.

What did Paul’s life yield? First of all, it has become clear that the Christian church owes almost everything to this Jewish man from Tarsus, and Luke rightly devotes more than half of Acts to him whom we may call the real founder of Christianity. Paul was right when he said that he worked harder than all the rest, because he created the foundations for all future developments in the church. He transplanted his misunderstanding of the religion of Jesus to Gentile territory and, without really wanting to, formulated the permanent separation of the church from Israel.³⁵

While Lüdemann accepts the Lukan paradigm that Christianity emerged in a Pauline format, Lüdemann also interprets this as a historical tragedy.

To narrate the story of Primitive Christianity means to make at the same time a critical judgment about Paul and his brothers in Christ. True, the apostle to the Gentiles was certainly a great figure in Primitive Christianity, indeed the real founder of the Church. But the view that his letters and the rest of the New Testament scriptures represented God’s word is a crime against reason and against humanity. Studying them today may make us realize that no real pointer to the future can be expected from his way of thinking.³⁶

Consequently, the history of primitive Christianity projected by Lüdemann portends a rather dramatic retelling of Luke’s paradigm and a truncated view of the parting of the ways. For Lüdemann, Christianity is the tragic product of the separation from Judaism initiated by the Hellenists and completed by Paul.

3. The Parting of the Ways as the Triumph of Christianity

The history and identity of primitive Christianity have been framed mostly from a post-Nicea mindset. With the patronage of Constantine and the uniformity of Nicea (325 ce), the church became a center of temporal power at the heart of the dominant empire. In retrospect the road from Jerusalem, where Jesus died at the hands of Rome, to Nicea, where Jesus was elevated to divine sovereignty over Rome, suggests a degree of inevitability. Nicea appears to witness the triumph of a theology marked by its adamance and its adaptability. Nicea also appears to testify to the survival of the most effective form of socio religious adaptation and institutionalization. From the viewpoint of Nicea, it appears inevitable that Christianity would triumph in this form and in this manner. For many, it seemed obvious that it would do so precisely by distancing itself from Judaism:

Now, let it be admitted at once that in the controversy at stake Paul was profoundly right. If Christianity was to become a world religion, it must shake itself free from the trammels of Judaism. If the full implications of Jesus’ teaching were to be realized, a continuance of

³⁵ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 381.

³⁶ Lüdemann, *What Really Happened?*, p. 382.

the Law was an impossibility. Paul saw this with perfect clarity, and the battle he fought was the turning point of religion for all time.³⁷

A similar retrojection was operative in relation to rabbinic Judaism. Although the imposition of rabbinic authority took several centuries, a degree of hegemony was eventually achieved. In retrospect, it appears to many that only Pharisaic Judaism contained the theology and the social and religious structures necessary to survive the two Jewish wars with Rome. For some, it seems obvious that Judaism would survive only by articulating precepts that would distance it from Christianity:

Had the rabbis relaxed these standards, accepting either the semi-proselytes or the earliest Gentile Christians into the Jewish people, Christians would quickly have become the majority within the expanded community of 'Israel'. Judaism as we know it would have ceased to exist even before reaching codification in the Mishnah and the other great compilations of the tannaitic tradition. Christianity would have been the sole heir of the traditions of biblical antiquity, and observance of the commandments of the Torah would have disappeared within just a few centuries. In short, it was the halakhah and its definition of Jewish identity which saved the Jewish people and its heritage from extinction as a result of the newly emerging Christian ideology.³⁸

Rabbinic Judaism provided an important, if ironic, marker for many Christians at the beginning of the medieval period. Its survival in diminished and landless form was seen by some Christians as a living reminder of the failure of Judaism, but also of the triumph of Christianity. For both sides, the memory of a shared history and landscape was mostly lost or suppressed.

4. Challenges to the Parting Models

Some recent scholarship has begun to question the validity of the "parting of the ways" as a conceptual framework. Among the primary voices of this challenge are Philip Alexander and Judith Lieu.

4.1 Philip Alexander

Philip Alexander raised his challenge at the beginning of the 1989 symposium that produced *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*.³⁹ Alexander notes that the question of the separation of Judaism and Christianity

³⁷ Burton Scott Easton, *Early Christianity: The Purpose of Acts and Other Papers*, ed. Frederick C. Grant (London: SPCK, 1955), pp. 102–103.

³⁸ Lawrence Shiffman, *Who was a Jew?: Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1985), p. 77.

³⁹ Philip Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in *Jews and Christians*, pp. 1–25.

is posed from a modern standpoint: it asks how and when the present experience of separation came to be.⁴⁰ Alexander argues that the modern perception of Judaism and Christianity as two monadic entities – self-contained, independent circles – can be traced back only to the 4th century ce. From that point back to the mid 1st century ce the two entities overlap in a group who belong to both Judaism and Christianity – Jewish Christians. The area of overlap increases progressively as one moves back to the mid 1st century ce, at which point the circle of Christians is contained entirely within the larger circle of Judaism.⁴¹

Alexander notes that most scholars seek to define a normative form of Judaism, then to show the divergence of Christianity from that norm. The typical way is to read rabbinic Judaism onto the Pharisees of the 1st century or to define some common core that linked all Jewish sects in the 2nd Temple era. Alexander suggests there is a vested interest, for both Christians and Jews, in projecting an early divergence.⁴²

Alexander interprets the relationship between ancient Jews and Christians in the light of three presumptions. First, rabbinic Judaism was not normative until the 3rd century, so its influence in the first two centuries is prospective. Secondly, there was no sudden split between Judaism and Christianity; there was, instead, a widening rift. The aftermath of the 1st Jewish War was the beginning of this process. Thirdly, Jewish Christianity played a key role in the process of separation: “The story of the parting of the ways is in essence the story of the triumph of Rabbinism and of the failure of Jewish Christianity to convince a majority of Palestinian Jews of the claims of the Gospel.”⁴³

Alexander believes that various stages and types of rabbinic literature reflect a lively and enduring engagement with Jewish Christianity. These exchanges bear witness to the fact that Christianity arose at the margins of Judaism. The triumph of Christianity within Palestinian Jewish communities would have been limited by a number of factors: increasing Jewish nationalism, the success of Christianity among the Gentiles, the antinomianism of some Christians, christological developments that suggested the divinity of Jesus. Alexander believes this engagement was intense in nature, that it was extensive in reach, and that it endured into later centuries: “The parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity only takes on an air of finality with the triumph of Rabbinism within the Palestinian Jewish community and the virtual disappearance of Jewish Christianity.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Alexander, “Rabbinic Judaism,” p. 1.

⁴¹ Alexander, “Rabbinic Judaism,” pp. 1–2.

⁴² Alexander, “Rabbinic Judaism,” pp. 2–3.

⁴³ Alexander, “Rabbinic Judaism,” p. 3.

⁴⁴ Alexander, “Rabbinic Judaism,” p. 24.

4.2 The Princeton-Oxford Symposium

While Philip Alexander's critique arose within the context of the 1989 Durham-Tübingen symposium on the "parting of the ways," an extended response arose from the 2002 Princeton-Oxford symposium under the title *The Ways that Never Parted*.⁴⁵ This collection considered various issues and approaches that challenge the "parting of the ways" model. Among the topics treated are: new models (Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam Becker); Jews and Gentiles in ancient Mediterranean cities (Paula Fredriksen); semantics (Daniel Boyarin); evaluation of turning points (Robert Kraft); linguistic representations of the relationship (Andrew Jacobs); different models of parting (Martin Goodman); overlaps in definition of the groups (David Frankfurter); the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Leigh Gibson); Tractate *Avot* and early Christian succession lists (Amram Tropper); the Pseudo-Clementines (Annette Yoshiko Reed); the treatment of Christian scripture by Jerome and Origen (Alison Salvesen); Jewish feasts (Daniel Ben Ezra); exegetical traditions on Moses' celibacy (Naomi Koltun-Fromm); anti-Christian polemic (Ra'anana Abusch); the categorization of Jews and heretics (Averil Cameron); the rise of Islam (John Gager); the validity of the parting model outside the Roman empire (Adam Becker). The purpose of the volume is articulated by the editors:

With the present volume, we hope to aid in opening the way for a fresh approach to our primary sources and to help to create a space in which new models can be forged. Our choice of title is deliberately provocative.... we wish to call attention to the ample evidence that speaks against the notion of a single and simple "Parting of the Ways" in the first or second century CE and, most importantly, against the assumption that no meaningful convergence ever occurred thereafter.⁴⁶

The eclectic nature of the collection means that this challenge is not followed by an emerging alternative:

Even as the "Parting" model still remains regnant, a new understanding of how late antique Jews and Christians related and interrelated with one another is slowly yet steadily developing. It is, however, neither the right time nor the right place to propose a new model to replace the old.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, ed., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁴⁶ Becker and Reed, "Introduction," in *The Ways that Never Parted*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Becker and Reed, "Introduction," in *The Ways that Never Parted*, p. 23.

4.3 Judith Lieu

Another challenge arises in the work of Judith Lieu, who has focused upon identity formation in early Christianity.⁴⁸ Her work raises penetrating questions about the validity of the “parting of the ways” schema.⁴⁹ While she distinguishes the idea of a process of separation from earlier suggestions that Christianity spelled the end for Judaism, Lieu sees similar problems.

The problem with the model of ‘the parting of the ways’ is that, no less than its predecessors on the pages of Harnack or Origen, even while fully acknowledging that variety, it operates essentially with the abstract or universal conception of each religion, Judaism and Christianity, when what we know about is the specific and local.⁵⁰

Lieu also notes the proclivity of this approach to shift from historical reconstruction to theological analysis.

The model also works best with a theological agenda in the sense that particular theological affirmations can be taken, explored within the two systems, and traced back to earlier roots within the first-century variety: for example, the unity of God, ideas of covenant or of eschatology. Both religions are being defined in terms of their beliefs or affirmations.⁵¹

Lieu insists that theological perspectives form only a part of the pattern. Attention must also be given to

the social realia that must have occupied most people most of the time far more than the theological debates, and which suggest that apparently neat theological patterns may hide much messier social experience.⁵²

Lieu also notes the difficulty of defining the relationship as one between the synagogue and the church, since these entities are not clearly defined, and, even when they are, other settings may be more significant for articulation of identity. She further notes that “parting” language is usually limited to the land of Israel, but even here the timetable is difficult to establish.⁵³ Attention to the wider geographical landscape imposes greater levels of complexity. These various problems challenge the validity of the dominant scholarly paradigm:

The ‘parting of the ways’ may continue to be useful to explore theological development or to defend a theological interpretation; in trying to make sense of the uncertainties of the

⁴⁸ While her work has appeared in numerous places, the primary ideas are found in *Neither Jew nor Greek: Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T & T Clark, 2002) and in *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ See “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” in *Neither Jew nor Greek*, pp. 11–29.

⁵⁰ Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways,’” p. 18.

⁵¹ Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways,’” p. 19.

⁵² Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways,’” p. 20.

⁵³ Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways,’” pp. 25–27.

early history of Christianity it may prove to be theologically less satisfying but socio-logically more persuasive to picture a criss-crossing of muddy tracks which only the expert tracker, or poacher, can decipher.⁵⁴

In *Christian Identity in the Graeco-Roman World* Lieu offers a similar appraisal, but she also turns to the positive process of social construction. Here she notes the phenomenon that discontinuities may only be possible within a framework of continuity.⁵⁵ Her focus on Christian identity raises anew the relationship to Judaism:

Recent debate has largely failed to achieve a consensus as to how, when, and why Christianity separated from Judaism. There are two key reasons for this failure: first, because it is never clear whether the objects of that question are ideas, or people, or systems; and secondly, because much depends on whether the respondent is a hypothetical Jew, Christian, or pagan of the time, or is the contemporary scholar, or even the believer, both the latter having the benefits (if such they are) of hindsight and of subsequent history.⁵⁶

Lieu finds the parting model does not contribute greatly to the question of identification.

Thus, while it is possible, it is not particularly productive to debate whether the ways have really parted either when we encounter in supposedly Christian texts ideas that could have been held by Jewish writers, or when we hear of Christians apparently at home in Jewish social contexts, or of Jews, however and by whomsoever defined, in Christian social contexts. That the ways parted at different places, at different times, and in different ways is now obvious, but equally unproductive of greater understanding. The dividing of paths does not determine who will choose to walk along them, nor who will journey without regard to their different destinations.⁵⁷

Lieu ultimately believes the perception of Judaism as the *other* was one component among many in the construction of Christian identity, but this was primarily a literary achievement: it was constructed more on the basis of texts rather than upon any social reality.

4.4 James Dunn: The Partings Revisited

Some seventeen years after the appearance of *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70–135* and some fifteen years after the appearance of the first edition of *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, James Dunn revisited the conclusions and considered various critiques of his positions. In the preface to the second

⁵⁴ Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways,’” p. 29.

⁵⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, pp. 298–316.

⁵⁶ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, p. 305.

⁵⁷ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, p. 306.

edition of *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, he writes:

In the fifteen years since I wrote *Partings*, however, I have come to recognize that the process was still more complex than I first envisioned. I accept Judith Lieu's critique that the imagery of 'ways' parting is too simple: it can too easily imply two embryonic religions as two homogeneous (or even monolithic) entities each pursuing a single path, with developments in each case marching forward uniformly across the diverse contexts of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, whereas the sociological reality might be better depicted as a 'crisscrossing of muddy tracks'.⁵⁸

It is clear that Dunn has a new appreciation for the problems associated with the paradigm and an openness to more complex models of the relationship.

All that being said, however, I soon realized that in particular the early phase and latter phase of the messy process of 'parting' do need more careful statement. In what sense can we speak of 'Judaism' in the first century of the common era? What was a 'Jew'? And when did 'Christian' and 'Christianity' emerge as clear referents? How pluriform was second Temple Judaism, and how hospitable to the developments which saw the emergence of both rabbinic Judaism and Christianity? And if the beginning of the process makes greater demands on the language we use, if it is adequately to reflect the realities of the first century, the latter phase of the process certainly requires substantial revision in terms of when a final parting can be said to have happened.⁵⁹

Indeed, Dunn's 2nd edition of *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* includes an appendix⁶⁰ that acknowledges and analyzes the continuation of developments into the fourth century. It is noteworthy, however, that Dunn continues to defend the "parting of the ways" terminology and that the remainder of the *Partings* texts appears to be essentially unchanged.

Dunn continues to ponder this issue in his most recent account of the development of Christianity.⁶¹ He asks whether the Christianity described by Ignatius was as distinct from Judaism as Ignatius implies.

That a 'parting of the ways', or, as I prefer, 'several partings of the ways', between Judaism and Christianity took place increasingly in the period following 70 CE is again hardly to be disputed. But what was the situation in the period between 30 and 70 ... ? How far had the ways parted, if at all, by the time the three great leaders of first-generation Christianity had been executed?⁶²

⁵⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. xii. Here Dunn is affirming the language of Judith Lieu.

⁵⁹ Dunn, *Partings*, 2nd edition, p. xiv.

⁶⁰ pp. 339–65.

⁶¹ The series, projected at three-volumes, is entitled *Christianity in the Making*. The first volume appeared as *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). The second volume appeared under the title *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁶² Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1171.

Dunn has clearly made more room for the inclusion of Jewish Christianity, but he retains the larger paradigm of the development of Christianity. The emergence of Christianity is traced primarily along the tracks of the Pauline mission,⁶³ with acknowledgment that the role of Peter and James has been underrepresented. For Dunn, Christianity is a definable entity with strong lines of continuity:

That it was indeed Christianity, properly so called, which emerged in the earliest 30s of the Common Era need not be questioned. Whatever the degree of continuity between Jesus and Paul, there is no question of the direct continuity between the sect of the Nazarenes and the 'Christianity' identified by Ignatius.⁶⁴

Dunn believes the Christianity that emerged from the 60s of the common era was "a very mixed bag."⁶⁵ The three major components of this spectrum are:

- the very conservative Jewish believers (the 'false brothers', 'false apostles') marking one end,
- one or more of the (predominantly Gentile) factions who challenged Paul in places like Corinth at the other end,
- and James, Peter and Paul somewhat spread from right to left in between.⁶⁶

For Dunn, these three leaders represent, in different ways, the Jewish nature of earliest Christianity:

... it should simply be reiterated that the three principal leaders of the first generation can properly be said together to represent the enduring character and range of first-generation Christianity – a Christianity integrally Jewish/OTish in character, with a gospel of salvation for Gentile as well as Jew, embracing both Jew and Gentile on the common ground of faith in Messiah/Christ Jesus, inspired by the mission and teaching, the death and resurrection of Jesus, devoted to the one God through Christ, and motivated and enabled by the same Spirit.⁶⁷

Dunn privileges these three apostolic lines against all others. He believes that "it is likely that the conservative Jewish end fed into what came to be designated as the Jewish Christian (heretical) sects."⁶⁸ He also suggests the other end of the spectrum may have developed into gnosticism.

It is clear that James Dunn is now addressing the parting of the ways in more nuanced terms, and he is emphasizing the Jewishness of three primary apostolic traditions. It should be noted, however, that the basic paradigm (which is largely a Lukian one) has been retained. For Dunn, Christianity is a movement that be-

⁶³ Over half of the 1175 pages treat aspects of Paul's life and mission.

⁶⁴ Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1171.

⁶⁵ Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1174.

⁶⁶ Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1174.

⁶⁷ Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1175.

⁶⁸ Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 1174.

gins in the early 30s ce in Jerusalem in continuity with the historical Jesus. It coalesces around apostolic authority, it grows westward in the tracks of Paul, and it eventually becomes a Gentile church unified around its remembrance of Jesus. This religious mapping continues to privilege apostolic images, pervasive continuity with Jesus, and the westward march toward Gentile Christianity. On this religious map, most other forms of Jewish Christianity are seen as non-existent or as late and eccentric.

5. Fallacies Inherent in the Parting Models

The "parting of the ways" may be challenged on conceptual grounds, but it should also be challenged in terms of its misperception of the ancient landscape. The "parting of the ways" proves to be a deficient *way* of reading the map of antiquity, but it also misreads the *content* of that map. A critical reading of various lines of evidence shows that Jewish Christianity endured in different times, places, and modes on the social and religious map of the ancient world.

It becomes clear, then, that the "parting of the ways" is a type of grand narrative, framed in the name of apostolic authority by Luke, Eusebius, and the patristic heresiologists. Like all grand narratives it reflects some degree of historicity, but its primary purpose is the creation of a new historiography. From a critical perspective, the paradigm of the "parting of the ways" is based upon and contributes to a significant group of fallacies. Among these are:

1. A temporal fallacy:

The temporal fallacy presumes a unidirectional, linear process that can be measured in stages and degrees of separation.

2. An evolutionary fallacy:

The presumption that this linear development is driven by the inertia of inevitability. The consequence of this process is often presumed to be the highest and most well-adapted religious forms.

3. A geographical fallacy:

The presumption that this developmental sequence was limited to local geography (Palestine) or to a linear missionary geography (Jerusalem to Antioch to Rome). Luke frames the story of Jesus around his journey from the Galilee to Jerusalem. He then frames the story of the early church around the journey from Jerusalem to Rome, primarily in the tracks of Paul. In this perception, the gospel flows westward toward Rome. Overlooked are regions such as the Galilee, Alexandria, and the East. Ignored is the missionary activity of persons such as Mark and Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquila, the brothers of Jesus, Apollos, and the founders of the church at Rome.

4. An urban fallacy:

The story of Jesus, which was acted out in villages, is transformed into an urban story.

5. A modal fallacy:

There is one definitive mode for being Christian. In this view there are different gospels and different communities, but there is only one Gospel. At the heart of this Gospel is the kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection and the consequent freedom from the Law. An early, high christology is appropriate to this Gospel. This is the one mode for all of Christianity. Judaism is understood in the single mode of Pharisaic Judaism, which is seen as rabbinic or "proto-rabbinic."

6. A definitional fallacy:

This is the presumption that it is clear what it means to be Christian or to be Jewish; that one is either, but not both; that Jewish Christianity can only be understood as some form of hybridization of the two.

7. A retroactive fallacy:

The practice of reading rabbinic Judaism and orthodox Gentile Christianity onto the formative periods.

8. A synthetic or centripetal fallacy

This is the idea that the wide diversity of practice and thought and organization can be understood in terms of one or two paradigms. Baur saw early Christianity divided into Paul's people and Peter's people. Others see Hellenists and Hebrews, strict and liberal, traditional and innovative.

9. An oppositional fallacy:

The insistence that history is driven forward by the conflict between limited paradigms. Baur suggested the catholic church emerged from the synthesis of the Pauline and Petrine groups. Lüdemann sees opposition to Paul as a driving dynamic. The opposition of Law and grace is often perceived to be a driving force.

10. A theological fallacy:

The presumption that such conflict and development occurs primarily along the line of ideas about God, Christ, salvation, the Law, Israel.

6. Conclusion

The history of scholarship in relation to Jewish Christianity has been framed, for the most part, under the dominant paradigm of an early and decisive separation of church and synagogue and the triumph of Gentile Christianity. Upon closer analysis, the parting of the ways described by several generations of scholars appears to be mostly a literary pronouncement, and it is primarily the work of bishops and rabbis. Some Christians were writing literature that portrayed Judaism as a failed religion, and some Jews were writing literature that ignored or excluded followers of Jesus. Both groups were developing the rhetoric of orthodoxy and uniformity, and both were announcing the grand narrative of their own triumph – one in the name of the apostles and one in the name of the rabbis.

It is extremely difficult, however, to show that the *literary image* of a parting of the ways represents in any comprehensive or final form the *social reality* experi-

enced by ordinary individuals and by the scattered communities. Such official pronouncements, typically given with a sense of dramatic finality, seldom represent a decisive parting of the ways; indeed, they usually constitute an integral part of identity formation in the face of continuing controversy.

The hegemony claimed by rabbinic Judaism faced a continuing challenge.⁶⁹ In addition to Jewish Christians and other *minim*, the early (Tannaic) period shows tension between rabbis and the '*ammei ha-*' *ares*, the common, working class Jews. Through various ages, the rabbis proved to be a class of scholarly elites within the larger world of Judaism. Some tension is also found between rabbis and the ruling exilarchs. The Jews of Spain may come under rabbinic control only in the 8th century, and those in the Rhineland only in the 9th. By the 9th century there is an active Karaite movement that emphasizes the centrality of scripture over against rabbinic law. Rabbinic hegemony was never simple and was rarely comprehensive.

Christianity also found hegemony to be elusive. Not all bishops agreed with the findings of Nicea. A series of councils followed, each attempting to suppress differences in thought and practice. Heresiology and inquisition continued to play a key role in the construction and maintenance of Christian identity. Among these concerns were statements against Jewish Christians and continued warnings against "Judaizing."

The definition of Christianity and Judaism also had a political dimension. Christianity received legal status and official patronage from the Roman emperor Constantine in 313 ce., and Christian doctrine received legal codification in the council of Nicea (325 ce) called by Constantine. Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi' (c. 135–219 ce), in his role as Jewish Patriarch, was authorized by the Roman emperor to collect taxes for Rome, but also to collect taxes in support of the Sanhedrin and Jewish administration of the synagogues. Rabbi Judah also played a primary role in the codification of Jewish Law in the Mishnah. In the final analysis, the distinguishing of Judaism and Christianity as separate, normative traditions was not simply the result of a divide over theology, practice, structure, or leadership. It was accomplished only partially, and it was accomplished in large measure through the patronage of Roman emperors.

Consequently, the "parting of the ways" articulated through much of New Testament scholarship proves to be a construct that is wholly inadequate to describe the shaping of primitive Christianity and its ongoing relationships with Judaism. This inadequacy is compounded by the deceptions and dangers inherent in this model. In most versions of this paradigm the separation between church and synagogue led to the triumph of Gentile Christianity and to the superseding of Judaism. Among the Judaisms presumed to be trumped by the emerging orthodoxy of Gentile Christianity are the various expressions of Jew-

⁶⁹ Some of these are discussed by Alexander, "Rabbinic Judaism," p. 21.

ish Christianity – including that of the first communities of Jesus' followers. Critical analysis of the historical data suggests otherwise, and these insights require significant revisions to the religious map of antiquity.

CHAPTER 16

Conclusions

This study has analysed various types of materials in search of historical markers for Jewish Christianity, that is, for persons or groups in antiquity who seek to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. The impact of Jesus upon his followers was traced through the earliest communities and through the earliest literary productions. The patristic and rabbinic representations of Jewish Christianity were shown to provide an indirect witness to its vitality, diversity, and endurance. This portrait was affirmed in the remnants of Jewish Christian texts. Archeological confirmation proved more elusive.

The need to gather the scattered historical data about Jewish Christianity and to confirm its existence is sufficient reason for such an analysis, but it need not provide the only consequence. A careful reconsideration of Jewish Christianity may make a number of contributions to critical scholarship. Among these possibilities are:

- 1) the collection of the relevant data from various fields;
- 2) the refinement of critical tools for such collection, recovery, and reconstruction;
- 3) such a critical analysis may provide the basis for further synthesis – that is, for exploration of connections and continuity implied by the data;
- 4) on this basis more useful definitions and categories may be articulated;
- 5) an accurate account of Jewish Christianity has important implications for the question of when – or if – there was a "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity and how this occurred;
- 6) a careful account of Jewish Christianity can offer both a critique and a new direction for efforts to write a history of primitive Christianity;
- 7) a critical understanding of Jewish Christianity may shed light on the process by which rabbinic Judaism sought to become the normative expression of Judaism;
- 8) a renewed understanding of the history of primitive Christianity and of the development of rabbinic Judaism may play an important role in contemporary dialogue between Christians and Jews.

1. Historical Markers for Jewish Christianity

Any effort to recover and to reconstruct the profile of Jewish Christianity in the first four centuries requires an extraordinary range of critical tools. These must be employed across an array of disciplines, including the search for the historical Jesus, Jewish studies, New Testament studies, rabbinic and patristic literature, sociology, and archeology. Since most evidence of Jewish Christianity was lost or intentionally suppressed, any critical analysis must be prepared to read against the grain and between the lines, it must know how to recognize and make use of indirect evidence, and it must strive to interpret the gaps and the silence of the reports. Such analysis must also learn to work in areas where certainty is not available. It must learn to draw upon all of the evidence and its implications, but not overreach or overbuild. The quest for Jewish Christianity must learn to recognize the convergence of data from diverse fields. Moreover, it must learn to recognize authentic multiple attestation that imminates from diverse sources and to distinguish this from simple duplication and repetition. The valuation of possibility, plausibility and probability must be established. Such a critical process of collection and reconstruction provides the only reasonable hope for recovering Jewish Christianity and for locating it on the map of antiquity.

This approach has led to identification of a collection of historical markers for Jewish Christianity. These markers are found in various types of evidence, they emerge in different locations and time periods, and they carry varying degrees of plausibility. This collection of markers is summarized in the following section, then potential connections are explored.

1.1 *The Earliest Communities*

Jesus was a Galilean Jew who was distinguished by his association with John the Baptist, by his eschatological vision of the approaching Kingdom of God, and by the prophetic words and deeds in which he articulated that vision. The ideas and actions expressed by Jesus place him wholly within the variegated Judaism of 1st century Palestine.

Jesus' earliest followers took up his movement in a diversity of forms and in a variety of locations. A Galilean movement that continued the itinerant ministry of Jesus and expected the imminent arrival of the Kingdom would provide the logical extension of Jesus' own work. Such a movement is expected within the Gospel of Mark and in the Gospel of Matthew, and the book of Acts gives passing reference to followers of Jesus in the Galilee (9.31). The Galilean movement seems to be realized by the prophets of the Sayings Tradition, at least in its early stages. The relatives of Jesus may provide leadership in the Galilee for some period, and Joseph of Tiberias seems to know of Jewish Christians in the Galilee. Moreover, rabbinic concern for Jewish heretics exhibits a special interest in followers of Je-

sus in the Galilee. While literary and archeological evidence does not testify to a dominant, coherent entity, some form of the Jesus movement likely survived in the Galilee. Whatever its parameters, this movement would be wholly Jewish Christian in orientation.

The center of early Christianity was the Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem. Luke imagines an idealized form of Judaism in the Jerusalem community of Jesus' followers. He portrays this community as the first stage in the journey to Rome and in the transition to a Gentile church. Paul claims that his ministry did not originate under the Jerusalem leaders and that he is their apostolic equal, yet he exhibits continuing concern for the blessings of the Jerusalem community. Hegesippus and others trace the development of the Jerusalem community under the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus, and under other Jewish Christian leaders. Both Hegesippus and Eusebius suggest the Jerusalem church was thoroughly Jewish Christian through the 2nd Jewish War (135 ce). From a historical standpoint, it is clear that the Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem provided the center of gravity for all forms of Christianity at least until 70 ce, but perhaps until 135 ce. In addition, the impact of the Jerusalem community can be seen in other locations.

The emergence of Christianity at Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome seems to reflect two formative lines of influence. In these locales, followers of Jesus emerge in the same regions and in the same sociological contexts as the existing Jewish synagogues. The influence of the synagogues endures in the form of interpretive traditions and organizational patterns. This suggests that all three communities emerge within the Jewish synagogues and continue various forms of engagement.

The second line of influence seems to come from the Jewish Christianity of Palestine. Itinerant Jewish Christians such as the relatives of Jesus, Priscilla and Aquila, Mark and Barnabas seem to play a formative role in these four early communities. While Peter may have been influential in and around Antioch, the stories of apostolic influence in Rome and Alexandria are probably later constructs.

Thus, the analysis of each of the four major sees of what would become orthodox Christianity (Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Rome) suggests a formative era under the influence of the Jewish synagogues and of Palestinian Jewish Christianity. This influence echoes through these churches long after the emergence of Gentile Christianity.¹

¹ Can this influence be quantified, particularly in relation to the Gentile Christianity that emerges under Pauline influence? If limited to the witness of the New Testament, a tally of Pauline Christianity would be rather meager. Michael Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions*, (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 181, estimates that in 48 ce Pauline Christians numbered about 300 members in six or seven churches. Jewish Christians, on the other hand, would represent a much larger sum. Luke says that 3,000 Jews convert on Pentecost, then 5,000

1.2 The Earliest Texts

The formative role of Jewish Christianity in some of the earliest communities is echoed in the development of their literary traditions. With the exception of the authentic Pauline letters, most New Testament materials reflect the turbulent period after the fall of the Temple (70 ce) and a movement toward Gentile Christianity. The formative stages of this process, however, are dominated by Jewish Christian texts.

Jewish documents with no Christian orientation may underlie the *Two Ways Tradition* and, less plausibly, the canonical letter of James. The *Two Ways Tradition* has been appropriated as a Jewish Christian text in a variety of situations. In the *Didache* the *Two Ways* material is presented as a Jesus tradition. This is followed by instruction on the life of the church: its liturgy, its order, and its deportment in view of the end times. The *Didache* is Jewish Christian, both in its content and in its orientation.

The literary history of the epistle of James locates it near the beginning of the 2nd century under the influence of a relatively sophisticated Greek culture. Its tradition history, however, places it in the realm of Jewish parnesis and ethical admonition that is carried out under the confession of Jesus. Its Jewish Christian profile is enhanced by its attribution to the brother of Jesus. A later stage of this development may be seen in the canonical works of 2 Peter and Jude.

The Sayings Tradition reflects an early community of Jesus' followers. They describe Jesus as the herald of Wisdom and as the Son of Man who is soon to appear. Their mission to the villages of Israel is carried out with the expectation of imminent judgment. The primary pole of opposition is found in some group of Pharisees. Itinerant prophets in the earliest stages, the community may become more settled in later years. The Sayings Tradition is the work of Jewish prophets who understand Jesus as the key to Israel's salvation.

The Gospel of Matthew reflects a conflict with some synagogues and with some group of Pharisees, and the larger flow of the gospel is toward the Gentile mission. This larger narrative is built from the strategic use of a range of early sources and traditions, each of which implies tradents who sponsor and live by such traditions. In addition to the Gospel of Mark, the Matthean gospel draws upon the Sayings Tradition and upon a special collection of materials. At the heart of this special material is a collection (M) that gives particular focus to the teaching of Jesus, to the mission to Israel, and to conflict with a group of Phari-

more shortly afterwards. Acts 21.20 says there are thousands of Jewish Christians. The sum of all followers of Jesus, of course, would pale in comparison with estimates of the entire Jewish population and with the population of the Roman empire. While such tallies are arbitrary and partial, they do raise serious warnings about presuming the dominance of Gentile Christianity.

sees. These Jewish Christian traditions have been incorporated into the larger framework of the gospel.

The Sermon on the Mount also represents a pre-Matthean tradition that may be a distinct form of the Sayings Tradition. This material is to be located within a Jewish milieu. The Lord's Prayer provides the most dramatic example of this material. The high number of citations and allusions drawn from the Old Testament suggest that a collection of proof texts was known in Matthean circles. A Petrine tradition may be used to provide an apostolic framework for the gospel.

Consequently, the Matthean community constructs a gospel oriented toward the Gentiles by drawing upon a host of Jewish Christian traditions. These traditions are not bypassed or ignored, but their full impact has been redirected; they have been reformulated to serve the purposes of a different understanding of Christianity. This process not only affirms the existence of Jewish Christian literary traditions; it also shows they held a cherished and authoritative position in primitive Christianity.

1.3 Patristic Representations of Jewish Christianity

The patristic representation of Jewish Christianity extends along three centuries and across diverse locations. This representation is shaped by the hermeneutics of heresiology and of reproof. This means that any meaningful evidence for Jewish Christianity will emerge only indirectly; it can be recovered only through critical analysis and reconstruction.

Major streams of tradition flow through the patristic representation. Among these are: 1) the *de-christening* of the sects – locating them outside the bounds of the church; 2) explanation of heresy in terms of foundational myths; 3) the creation of overarching categories of heresy, such as Ebionites; 4) the description of the inevitable consequences of such heresy; 5) description of the history of rejection experienced by such groups.

The patristic representation of Jewish Christianity suggests various aspects of general plausibility. 1) The extent, diversity, and intensity of the patristic attention suggest that Jewish Christianity represents some form of historical entity. 2) The diversity of groups and practices described suggests that patristic writers magnify and confuse an existing diversity. 3) The interconnected nature assigned to various groups carries a limited degree of plausibility. 4) The perception of threat associated with Jewish Christianity likely has a historical core. 5) The persistence and intensity of the patristic response suggests the continued historical presence of Jewish Christian groups.

Some aspects of the patristic representation of Jewish Christianity suggest specific historical plausibility. Among these are: 1) the distinct portrait of the Nazarenes; 2) some elements of the portrait of Ebionites; 3) the patristic attempt (and failure) to refute references to Mt. 10.24–25; 4) attempts to refute the use of

Mt. 10.5–6; 5) the references to and citations from Jewish Christian gospels; 6) the enduring need to reprove “Judaizers.”

1.4 Writings Ascribed to Jewish Christians

Testimony to a Jewish Christian gospel tradition is found in patristic references and in scribal notes found in the margins of various manuscripts. The three major lines of tradition – the Gospel of the Nazoreans, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews – suggest separate lines of development. These traditions survive primarily because of the bias against them, and they can only be reconstructed in limited form. Nonetheless, these texts contribute in various ways to the reconstruction of Jewish Christianity. 1) They suggest a much larger tradition of the construction, interpretation, translation, and transmission of biblical materials among Jewish Christians. 2) They give grounding to the existence of sects such as the Nazarenes. 3) These texts give some insight into the literary and hermeneutical competence of some Jewish Christian groups. 4) Some of them suggest Christian literary production in Egypt that is not dominated by gnosticism. 5) They show the continued interest of patristic and orthodox writers in Jewish Christianity. 6) They suggest a distinct, deeply reflective theological tradition. 7) They reinforce the image that Jewish Christianity is a vital, variegated, enduring movement.

1.5 Rabbinic Materials

Some rabbinic traditions seem to reflect an ongoing engagement with Jewish Christians. A few rabbinic materials demonstrate a concern to locate Jesus and his followers on the religious map. The prohibitions against *minim* and the formulation of the *birhkat ha-minim* likely include in their focus the Jewish followers of Jesus. The vehement insistence on the apostate status of Jewish Christians suggests they were of some concern in the formative stages of rabbinic Judaism.

1.6 Archeology

Archeological evidence for Jewish Christianity before the 4th century is sparse, as is that for Christianity in general. While the house of Peter, the Capernaum synagogue, and the Church of the Apostles on Mount Zion may have 1st century foundations and may suggest the presence of Jewish Christians, the evidence is subsumed in a circular argument. The most plausible evidence of Jewish Christianity is found in four villages in the Transjordan, and these 4th and 5th century finds are confirmed from a number of lines of evidence. An earlier presence of Jewish Christianity in the Transjordan is possible, but not confirmed. At the

present there appears to be no extant archeological data that contributes intrinsically to our understanding of the formative era of Jewish Christianity.

2. Plausible Coherence and Continuities within Jewish Christianity

Are there genetic relationships between these various historical markers? If so, to what degree is a synthesis possible? Is it reasonable to speak of Jewish Christianity as a coherent religious and social movement?

This study has consistently resisted the idea that Judaism and Christianity are definable, monadic entities in the first three centuries of the common era. This means that it is difficult to speak of a "parting of the ways," but it also makes it implausible to speak of Jewish Christianity as one recognizable entity. Jewish Christianity was no more a singular, definable, coherent entity than was Judaism or Christianity – and perhaps no less.

At a minimum, this study shows that it is no longer plausible to argue that Jewish Christianity did not exist, that it did not play a continuing role in the formation of Jewish and Christian identity, or that there was a simple parting of the ways. Even if no level of synthesis were possible, this confirmation of Jewish Christianity recasts the religious and social map of antiquity.

The evidence for Jewish Christianity is limited, scattered, obscured and suppressed. It is difficult to provide a comprehensive description of any one group, and no synthesis of the larger movement is possible. One may speak, however, of some apparent connections in terms of influence, theology, and location. Consequently, a plausible description of a few clusters or lines of influence may be offered. The concept of a *matrix* will be used to describe a cluster of traditions in a particular locale; the concept of a *trajectory* will be used to describe the extension of a tradition into other locations.

2.1 A Galilean Matrix

The Jewish Christianity of the Galilee proves difficult to confirm or to reconstruct. Jesus is himself Galilean, as are the core of his first followers. The expectation for a continued movement in the Galilee is apparent in the synoptic gospels, but evidence for this movement proves elusive. If there was a Galilean movement, it likely clustered around three poles. The tradents of the Sayings Tradition appear to operate initially in the villages of the Galilee, and they also appear to experience hostility from some Galilean villages. Segments of this movement likely moved into Syria, and some seem to pursue a more settled existence. The Gospel of Matthew and the *Didache* suggest some parts of this tradition are being absorbed into the wider flow of Christianity.

The family of Jesus may provide a second center for Galilean Christianity. Julius Africanus says that relatives of Jesus used Nazareth and Kochaba as bases for their missionary activity, which apparently involved a salvation history based on a theological interpretation of the Davidic genealogy. When the grandsons of Jude are arrested under Domitian, they claim to own and work a farm, presumably in the Galilee.

The third focal point of Galilean Christianity may be found in the figure of Peter. He is recognized in Jerusalem as a Galilean (Mk. 14.70; Mt. 26.69–75; Lk. 22.59), and the shadow of Peter seems to fall across several lines of tradition. Peter alone is named in the command to go to the Galilee to see the risen Jesus (Mk. 16.7), and Luke makes him the first male disciple at the tomb of Jesus (24.12). For Luke, Peter the Galilean is the leader of the Jerusalem community.² Most significantly for Luke, the first clear mission to the Gentiles begins with the work of Peter (Acts 10.1–48): it is Peter who explains the basis for inclusion of the Gentiles (Acts 11.1–18) and convinces the Jerusalem leaders of the propriety of the Gentile mission (Acts 15.1–29). For Luke, the formative profile for Jewish Christianity is to be found in the figure of Peter, a Galilean. While he knows of an early Galilean church (Acts 9. 31), Luke appears to have incorporated Galilean Christianity into the figure of Peter.

Thus, one plausible cluster of Jewish Christianity is Galilean. The tradents of the Sayings Tradition, the reports on the family of Jesus, and the profile of Peter all contribute to this perception. The Jewishness of Galilean Christianity is probably confirmed by a few rabbinical stories where followers of Jesus are treated as *minim* and where the rabbis show particular concern for heresy in the Galilee.

2.2 A Jerusalem Matrix

Few scholars now doubt that the Jerusalem community was composed of Jewish Christians and that it provided the center for most forms of Christianity up to the 1st Jewish War (66–74 ce). Luke treats the Jerusalem community as an idealized form of Judaism and understands it as the first stage of the mission to the Gentiles. Even when his focus turns to Paul, the story continues to pass through Jerusalem. Central to this phase is the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus.

² Peter preaches the first sermon and interprets the meaning of the events at Pentecost (Acts 2.14–47); he is the first to heal in the name of Jesus (Acts 3.1–10); he, along with John, is the first arrested (Acts 4.1–31); he holds court against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1–11); his shadow is believed to heal (Acts 5.12–16); he seems to be among those released from prison by the angel and teaching in the Temple (Acts 5.17–26); he answers the Temple authorities (Acts 5.27–32); he is among those flogged by the council (Acts 5.40–42). Peter is sent to the Samaritans so that they may receive the Spirit (Acts 8. 14–25); he heals the sick and raises the dead (Acts 9.32–43).

A plausible case can be made that the Jerusalem community continued after the war under Jewish Christian leaders, primarily from the family of Jesus, and that it continued to play a central role in the larger world of Christianity. This appears to change with the failure of the 2nd Jewish revolt (132–135 ce), when Jews are forbidden to enter Jerusalem. Thus, the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem likely served as the center for almost every form of Christianity in the first one hundred years of its existence.

2.3 *Trajectories from Jerusalem or Palestine*

The Jerusalem community exerted its impact as a cluster of Jewish Christianity, but it also spread its influence along several trajectories. Luke records the expansion of Christianity in the tracks of a variety of Jerusalem missionaries. In addition to the devout Jews from the nations who were gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2.5–13), Luke says the entire community, except for the apostles, was scattered by the first persecution (Acts 8.1–4; 11.19–21). Among those who are described as missionaries are Philip (Acts 8.4–13, 26–40); Peter and John (Acts 8. 14–25); Peter (Acts 9.32–10.48); and Barnabas (Acts 11.22–24). From Jerusalem a letter is sent to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to publicize the decision made in Jerusalem on the Gentile mission (Acts 15.22–29). Luke thus describes the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to various Jewish communities, but he also locates the origins and the authorization of the Gentile mission in the Jerusalem community.

Three specific trajectories are suggested by the development of Jewish Christian communities at Antioch, at Alexandria, and at Rome. Luke shows Antioch as a development from the Jerusalem community, and he traces the continued correspondence and visits between the two communities (Acts 11.27–30).

Paul says that the “brothers of the Lord” (1 Cor. 9.5) are traveling missionaries, and some missionaries of this type likely create a Palestinian trajectory to Rome. Archeological and sociological analysis suggest that Jewish Christians, like earlier Jews, came to Rome along the trade routes from the east. The Christian community that arises in Rome demonstrates a deep heritage in Judaism and an extraordinary process for preservation and transmission of Jewish traditions. Some have suggested the earliest theology at Rome echoes the tradition of James. These traditions and influences almost certainly come from Palestine, likely from Jerusalem.

A similar development seems to be at work in Alexandria. The figure of Barnabas is associated with Alexandria, as is the name of the evangelist Mark. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John are known there by the 2nd century. The first Christian known from Alexandria is Apollos, a Jewish follower of Jesus who combines rhetorical eloquence with exegetical skill. Thus, Alexandria also appears to lie along a trajectory that leads back to Palestine and Jerusalem.

A fifth trajectory connects Jerusalem to the Transjordan. Eusebius reports that the Jerusalem community fled in the face of the 1st Jewish revolt to Pella in the Transjordan (*HE* 3.5.3), a tradition echoed by Epiphanius (*De mens. et pond.* 15). Both suggest the community returned to Jerusalem in the years following the revolt (*HE* 4.5.1; *De mens. et pond.* 15). Epiphanius subsequently locates both Nazarenes and Ebionites in this area (*Pan.* 29.7.7; 30.2.7). Archeological evidence supports the existence of Jewish Christians in the Transjordan in the 4th century, though the material may be earlier.

Another trajectory from Jerusalem or Palestine to the communities of the East is plausible, but this cannot be demonstrated.

2.4 An Antiochene Matrix

The second major center for Jewish Christianity was Antioch. Because Luke says that followers of Jesus were first called by the Greek term *Christians* at Antioch, this community is often understood to be dominated by Gentiles. Several factors speak against this. First, the use of the term *Christians* probably says more about the context than the community: followers of Jesus are described by outsiders in this terminology. Secondly, Luke does not portray a community at Antioch dominated by Gentile believers. The first conversions at Antioch are recorded when the Jerusalem community flees after the death of Stephen (Acts 11.19). In Antioch, these Jewish believers “spoke the word to no one except Jews” (Acts 11.19). Luke then notes that some of the Jerusalem community who came from Cyprus and Cyrene spoke also to “the Hellenists” (Acts 11.20). Luke previously used the term Hellenists to refer to Greek-speaking Jews, among whom is Nicolaus of Antioch, a proselyte – a convert to Judaism (Acts 6.1–6). The actual mission to the Gentiles begins in the midst of Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13.46–49). Only in Acts 14.24–28 is the report brought to Antioch that God “had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.” The issue of how to receive Gentiles arises shortly after this (Acts 15.1–5).

Luke thus presents Antioch as a center for Jewish Christianity. The primary distinction from the Jerusalem community is to be found in the larger number of Hellenistic Jews who have become Christians and in the suitability of Antioch as a base for a mission to the Gentiles. Luke says that the decision about how to receive Gentiles is made in Jerusalem (Acts 15.6–29). For Luke, Antioch is the location of a strong Jewish Christian community that is linked to both Palestine and Syria and that provides an effective witness in a Hellenistic context.

While Luke shows Antioch as a gathering of Jewish Christians from the first generations, other documents suggest this profile endured through subsequent generations. The Gospel of Matthew is probably Syrian in origin, and it shows signs of an urban context. The presence of a Pharisaic synagogue and proximity to Palestine may also be presumed. For these reasons the city of Antioch has

strong support among scholars as the place of origin for this gospel. The earlier analysis showed that the Gospel of Matthew incorporates important Jewish Christian traditions into a gospel aimed at the Gentile mission. These traditions imply tradents who live within the context of the Mathean community. Their traditions are respected and embraced, but they have been incorporated into a larger plan. It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that Jewish Christian tradents of the Sayings Traditions and tradents of the Jewish Christian materials found in the special traditions of M reside in or around Antioch. It is also plausible that the density of scriptural allusions and citations in the Gospel of Matthew reflects a Jewish Christian collection of proof texts. The evidence of a Jewish Christian cluster is enhanced by the message of the *Didache*, which likely originates in Syria and may know the Gospel of Matthew. In the *Didache*, instructions are given for dealing with itinerant prophets, and some of these prophets appear to have settled in the community. Thus, Antioch and the surrounding region appear to host a cluster of Jewish Christianity in the period between the Jewish Wars (from 70 to 135 ce).

Jewish Christianity also appears to cluster around Antioch in the later centuries. Jerome says that he knows of Nazarenes from the Syrian city of Beroea (*de vir. ill.* 2). Jerome says that they use a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew and that their version quotes from the Hebrew Bible rather than the Septuagint (*de vir. ill.* 3). Jerome claims they have a different version of the book of Jeremiah, and he quotes from their commentary on Isaiah. Writing to Augustine around 404 ce, Jerome's description of this group is rather sympathetic:

They believe in Christ, the Son of God born of Mary the virgin, and they say about him that he suffered and rose again under Pontius Pilate, in whom we also believe, but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians. (*ep.* 112.13)

Epiphanius, writing in 374 ce, locates Nazarenes at various places, including Syria:

This heresy of the Nazoreans exists in Beroea in the neighborhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba, Chochabe in Hebrew. (*Pan.* 29.7.7)

Epiphanius also refers to their literary tradition:

They have the entire Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. It is carefully preserved by them in Hebrew letters, as I wrote in the beginning. But I do not know whether they also have omitted the genealogies from Abraham to Christ. (*Pan.* 29.9.4)

This evidence for Jewish Christianity in and around Syrian Antioch suggests a degree of connection and continuity. Luke presents Antioch as a vital center of Jewish Christianity in the period between the death of Jesus and the mid 60s ce. The Gospel of Matthew, likely written in the 80s or 90s, engages Jewish Christian

tradents and their traditions in its debate with the local synagogues. Early in the 2nd century, Ignatius is using the Gospel of Matthew at Antioch, and he warns against the dangers of “Judaizing”. In the mid 3rd century, Syrian followers of Jesus who speak Aramaic are known in Persia as Nazarenes. In the late 4th century, Jerome and Epiphanius know of Jewish Christians from Syria who practice a Hebraic tradition of scriptural interpretation, including a Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew. Consequently, Antioch and its surrounding areas provide a primary location for Jewish Christianity on the religious map of antiquity.

2.5 Trajectories from Antioch

Luke presents the Antioch community as the base for a number of itinerant missions. Barnabbas and Saul are sent to preach in the synagogues of Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphilia, Iconium, and other locations (Acts 13.1–5). Judas and Silas are sent from Antioch back to their own communities (Acts 15.32–35). Paul and Silas go from Antioch on a tour of Syria and Cilicia, while Barnabbas and John Mark go to Cyprus (Acts 15.36–41). Paul’s third missionary journey begins from Antioch (Acts 18.22–23). All of these missions are directed first to the synagogues. The turn to the Gentiles is shown by Luke as a move caused by rejection and exasperation (Acts 13.46–47; 18.6; 28.25–28).

When the Persians conquer Antioch and Aleppo (Syrian Beroea) in the period from 255–260 ce, they deport large numbers to various cities in Persia. These deportees maintain among themselves a distinction already present in Syria: Greek-speaking followers of Jesus are called Christians, while followers of Jesus who speak Aramaic are called Nazarenes. While this may be only a linguistic description, it does cohere with patristic information.

While the *composition* of the Gospel of Matthew likely reveals a Jewish Christian cluster at Antioch, its *transmission* may be understood as a trajectory from Antioch. The Gospel of Matthew is taken up into the larger canon and becomes the favored gospel in most Christian communities. The primacy of Peter seems to be transmitted along this trajectory. The Gospel of Matthew will prove to be influential in Egypt and in Rome, and it will be taken into the orthodoxy of the church. Even in the Gentile churches, this gospel is understood to have been written for Jewish followers of Jesus. Thus, a gospel that draws uniquely upon Jewish Christian traditions and uses them in debate with Pharisees from the local synagogue follows a unique trajectory into the center of Gentile Christianity.

But the Gospel of Matthew may be traced along another trajectory. Papias suggests a Hebrew original for this gospel tradition. The modern analysis that canonical Matthew is a Greek composition has led to the conclusion that Papias was wrong. This is not, however, a necessary conclusion; it is equally plausible that there are two traditions of the Gospel of Matthew – Greek and Hebraic – and that both are original productions.

Whether Hebrew Matthew is an original production or a translation, it is transmitted along its own trajectory into the center of Jewish Christianity. Jerome says that it is known, read, and preserved among the Nazarenes at Syrian Beroea. A copy is said to be housed in the library at Caesarea, and Jerome says he has copied it (*de vir. ill. 3*). Epiphanius says the Nazarenes in the Transjordan have a Hebrew Matthew (*Pan.* 29.9.4). Jerome claims the Ebionites also use Hebrew Matthew (*in Matt.* 12.13). Epiphanius says the Ebionites accept the Gospel of Matthew, but call it “according to the Hebrews” (*Pan.* 30.3.7). He claims this gospel is different in its lack of a genealogy, in its description of Jesus’ birth, in its description of John the Baptist, in the words spoken to Jesus at his baptism, and in Jesus’ rejection of meat (*Pan.* 30.13.6–7; 30.14.3–4; 30.22.4). Epiphanius also says the Cerinthians use the Gospel of Matthew, believing the genealogy demonstrates the natural birth of Jesus (*Pan.* 28.5.1).³ Cerinthians are said to quote Mt. 10.24–25 in support of circumcision (*Pan.* 28.5.1–2). Symmachus appears to anger patristic writers by his commentary, which interprets the Gospel of Matthew in light of the Hebrew Bible.

This tradition may also be related to the Gospel of the Nazoreans. Modern scholarship has partially reconstructed the Gospel of the Nazoreans on the basis of patristic citations and marginal notes in New Testament manuscripts. The length and general content approximate that of canonical Matthew. Its impact extends from Eusebius in the 3rd century to marginal reference as late as the 13th century. This reconstructed text is likely the one mentioned by Jerome and Epiphanius in association with Syrian Beroea.

The concept of a Hebrew Matthew has an extraordinary history that continues in the medieval period.⁴ The idea of a Hebrew Matthew is articulated by Papias (in Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.16), by Irenaeus (*adv. haer.* 3.1.1), by Origen (in Eusebius, *HE* 6.25.4); by Eusebius (*HE* 3.24.6); by Jerome; and by Epiphanius. In later centuries Hebrew Matthew begins to play a role in Jewish and anti-Christian writings. Excerpts from the Gospel of Matthew are quoted in Hebrew in the Book of Nestor (c. 6th to 9th century); in the Milhamot HaShem of Jacob Reuben (1170 ce); in Sepher Joseph Hamekane by rabbi Joseph ben Nathan Official (from the 13th century ce); and by the Nizzahon Vetus (latter 13th century).⁵ The earliest known complete Hebrew text of the Gospel of Matthew is preserved in a 14th century treatise entitled *Even Bohan*.⁶ Hebrew versions of Matthew were published by Sebastian Münster in 1537 and by Jean du Tillet in 1555, both claiming to be based on texts received from contemporary Jews.

³ The use of Matthew is echoed in Filaster, *div. her. liber* 36.

⁴ For an overview see George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1995).

⁵ These passages are discussed by Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 160–61.

⁶ Howard disputes the usual interpretation that this represents a translation of the Vulgate version of Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew takes a unique course in the East. In its Syriac form, it plays a key role in the churches associated with Edessa and with India. These communities also speak of their connections to Antioch.

There are no known genetic relationships that link these various testimonies to a Hebrew Matthew into a single line of tradition. What is noteworthy, however, is that the *idea* of a Hebraic gospel has such vitality and endurance and that such a tradition develops around no other gospel.

This makes it quite plausible from a historical perspective that the Gospel of Matthew emerged from Antioch along two trajectories. Greek Matthew circulated in a variety of Christian communities and was taken into the canon and the theology of the Greater Church. It is possible, though certainly not proven, that Hebrew Matthew was also an original production. Whatever its origins, the tradition of a Hebrew Matthew may be traced through various Jewish Christian communities and into the communities of the East. Continuity with the versions of Matthew used in some medieval synagogues would not be impossible, but this is difficult to demonstrate.

These clusters and trajectories show that Antioch was the crossroad for much of primitive Christianity. The text of the Gospel of Matthew and the leadership of Ignatius play a key role in the Great Church tradition. On the other hand, Antioch is central to the story of Jewish Christianity. The Jerusalem traditions played a formative role in the Antioch community, Jewish Christian traditions are gathered into the Gospel of Matthew, and the figure of Peter provides a type of patronage. This trajectory may be traced from Antioch to various other appearances of Jewish Christianity.

2.6 *A Transjordan Matrix*

Eusebius suggests that the Jerusalem community fled to Pella in the Transjordan, but he also says they returned to Jerusalem. Epiphanius suggests that the Pella tradition was transformed into various heretical groups. He believes the Transjordan is the matrix for an interconnected family of heresies: Cerinthians, Nazarenes, Ebionites, Elkasaites, and others. Epiphanius is clearly expanding upon a very limited amount of historical data.

There is, however, a noteworthy sequence of Jewish Christian associations with the Transjordan. These include the flight to Pella tradition from the 1st century, the patristic description of Nazarenes and Ebionites from the 4th century, and the archeological data from the 4th or 5th century.

2.7 *The Synagogues as a Matrix for Jewish Christianity*

A different type of cluster may be found in the relation of Jewish Christianity to the synagogues in various locales. Luke suggests that the early Christian missionary work, including that of Paul, was carried on primarily in connection with Jewish synagogues. A part of the Mathean community seems to emerge from the local synagogue. Archeological and sociological studies suggest that Christianity emerged in Rome and Alexandria in the same places and ways and forms as the Jewish synagogues. In Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, the imprint of the synagogue on Christian worship and interpretation is evident. In light of these connections, it is probably no longer accurate to say that Christianity grew up alongside the synagogue or in the shadow of the synagogue or in dialogue and controversy with the synagogue. It appears more likely that in a number of important sites Jesus movements grew up within the synagogues and continued for some time to express traits of Jewish identity.

3. Parting with “The Parting of the Ways”

The collected historical markers suggest that the Galilee, Jerusalem, Antioch, the Transjordan, and some Jewish synagogues each provided a matrix for Jewish Christianity. In addition, the growth of Jewish Christianity may be plausibly traced along trajectories leading from Palestine and from Syrian Antioch. In light of this analysis, any reference to a parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity must further specify who parted, when they parted, and where this separation occurred. The suggestion, for example, that somewhere in the late 1st century there was a recognizable break between Pharisees and followers of Jesus in Palestine may indeed be true. However, if it is true, this sequence cannot be generalized: it says nothing of other times and other places and other groups. Closer analysis shows that the “parting of the ways” is a grand narrative built largely on official pronouncements and imperial decrees; it may have little relationship to the experience of individual believers in local communities.

The process of ebb and flow observed in the first four centuries of the common era is more accurately described as a *forming of the ways*. Judaism expressed itself in a variety of modes until it slowly shaped itself into an entity that was predominantly, but not exclusively, rabbinic in form. From the rich variety of ways of following Jesus was eventually formed a Christianity that was predominantly, but not exclusively, Gentile and orthodox. Jewish Christianity did not emerge as a hybrid of the two; it participated in the formative stages of both rabbinic Judaism and of Christian orthodoxy. By the close of the 4th century, Jewish Christianity has been officially excluded from both groups, but some evidence may testify to its continued presence and influence.

4. Considerations for a History of Primitive Christianity

These findings require a rethinking of how Christianity developed, both in its sociological and its theological dimensions. The story of primitive Christianity is usually traced as a series of transitions and triumphs: from Jerusalem to Rome; from James to Paul; from Hebrews to Hellenists; from law to grace; from nationalism to universalism; from Judaism to Christianity. The analysis of various lines of evidence for Jewish Christianity in the first four centuries and the reconstruction based on that analysis suggest a very different understanding of the landscape and of the dynamics at work within the religious environment of antiquity.

The ancient map of Jewishness was fragmented by two periods of exile and by the destruction of the first Temple (587 bce), but also by the engagement between an independent Israel and the forces of Hellenization (143–63 bce). This transformation may be traced in terms of ideas, but also in terms of religious practice, social organization, textual production, and, most importantly, in terms of identity formation. The transformative process at work in Judaism from the 6th century bce forward continued in the period of the 2nd Temple and in the formation of rabbinic Judaism. Thus, the formative period for Judaism may be traced from the 6th century bce to the 5th century ce.

In the first centuries of the common era, a part of this changing landscape is occupied by Jews who follow Jesus. For a significant stretch of time and in different geographical locales, most of Christianity was a subset: it was wholly contained within the larger framework of Judaism. At some times and in some places, some followers of Jesus located themselves outside the circle of Judaism, but still in proximate and essential relationship. Moreover, the eventual emergence of Gentile Christianity does not depend upon or presume the suppression of Jewish Christianity; it was Jewish followers of Jesus who first turned to the Gentiles. While there will emerge some Gentile Christian communities that have no Jewish identity, none will emerge in antiquity that have no Jewish heritage or influence.

Indeed, Christianity probably could not define itself in isolation from Judaism; the discontinuity is meaningful only in relation to some framework of continuity. This process of the *forming of the ways* is more like a dialogue in which there is no terminal point. It is a process marked by starts and stops, highs and lows, parallel trails and diverging tracks. There is ugliness and beauty, nobleness and meanness, truth and misrepresentation. Lengthy periods of the relationship may have a rather static appearance – though this appearance may be challenged when one looks at particular times and places and communities – and there are also periods of fluidity. This religious and social transformation observed throughout the first four centuries of the common era is indicative of the process of social identification and social location: it is an ongoing part of the forming and reforming of the ways.

This formative process is central to any historical understanding of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity, but also to their identity. The history of primitive Christianity can no longer be written as if Jewishness was one short phase, an initial launching point, or the background of ideas for Christianity. Nor can the history of Judaism be written as an easy transition from the variety of the 2nd Temple era to the conformity of rabbinic Judaism. The grand narratives constructed by Christian and rabbinic leaders can no longer withstand the scrutiny of critical historical analysis. A different religious map of antiquity is required.

For the earliest forms of Christianity, Jewishness was the matrix within which the way of Jesus was formed. Moreover, the religious trajectories that cross the landscape of antiquity suggest the continuing impact of Jewish Christianity in various texts and communities. The complexity of these trajectories is no different, however, than the complexity presented by groups such as gnostics, baptists, Marcionites, Manicheans, Montanists, Arians, Nestorians, ascetics. Consequently, primitive Christianity is less a product than a formative process; it involved dialogue, engagement, conflict, adaptation, and transformation, and its local particularities qualify any global descriptions. Among its dialogue partners are those with varied understandings of what it means to follow Jesus as well as those with varied understandings of what it means to be faithful to God's covenant with Israel.

A similar diversity is evidenced in the groups scattered across the religious landscape of antiquity who seek salvation in the covenant initiated between Yahweh and Israel. This particular segment of the landscape is marked by extraordinary variety: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Samaritans, baptists, literalists and allegorists, Hellenists and Hebraists, gnostics, legalists, ascetics, apocalypticists, cultists, mystics, healers, rabbis, teachers, prophets, priests, messiahs, and people of the land. It is clear that Christianity originates as a subset of this larger movement and that it first does so in the form of Jewish Christianity. When read critically, the historical data suggests that Jewish Christianity also played a role in subsequent developments of the Christian movement.

As a consequence, it is now necessary to engage the very real possibility that the whole of primitive Christianity – both in its identity and in its history of development – bears the deep and continuing imprint of Jewish Christianity.

Epilogue

The occupation of the continent of Australia in the late 1700s was justified under the legal principle of *terra nullius* (the land of no one). Later rulings in the British court system used this concept in an effort to extinguish all claims to native title. For almost two centuries the colonialists lived by the legal fantasy that the landscape was ownerless until they occupied it.

This ethos was changed by the simple request of one individual. The case of *Mabo and Others v. Queensland* rested on the premise that Aboriginal people were present from ancient times and that they had never relinquished their claims. In 1992, five months after his death, Eddie Mabo and his people were granted native title to the land that was always theirs. This ruling not only restored their land rights; it also acknowledged the identity and the heritage of Aboriginal peoples, and it set a precedent for future judgments. The effect of the ruling, however, was not limited to Aboriginal peoples; the recognition of native title also helped to change the self-perception and the worldview of many who had come later to the landscape of Australia. These changes are acknowledged in a note added to the settler's memorial in the Victoria Market in Melbourne.

This study seeks to locate on the landscape of antiquity persons and groups who sought to continue God's covenant with Israel by both following Jesus and maintaining Jewishness. Critical analysis of the evidence points to markers that suggest Jewish Christianity existed as a historical entity and that it did so in a variety of places, in different times, and in diverse modes. As a consequence, it is no longer possible to argue that Jewish Christianity did not exist, and it is no longer reasonable to suggest that it did not matter. Furthermore, the history of primitive Christianity can no longer be described along a singular line of progress, and the conception of an early and decisive parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity appears wholly inadequate. In the light of this evidence, a new religious map emerges: the development of primitive Christianity proves to be a complex and elusive process, and Jewish Christianity appears to play an important and enduring role in that development.

Consequently, the attempt to recover and to reconstruct the profile of Jewish Christianity holds profound implications for the history and identity of ancient Judaism and of primitive Christianity, but also for the question of their relationship. The implications for those who came later may be no less dramatic.

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