PROJECT MUSE®

Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire in the *Teaching of Jacob, Newly Baptized*

Andrew S. Jacobs

Journal of Early Christian Studies, Volume 29, Number 1, Spring 2021, pp. 93-120 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/784572>

Gender, Conversion, and the End of Empire in the Teaching of Jacob, Newly Baptized

ANDREW S. JACOBS

The seventh-century apocalyptic dialogue text *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* (“Teaching of Jacob, Newly Baptized”) depicts forcibly baptized Jews coming to terms with their new situation in hidden meetings led by Jacob. At a key moment in the text, the last voices of Jewish resistance belong to the wife and mother-in-law of one of the dialogue participants. This essay uses this moment of Jewish women’s resistance to interrogate the gendered nature of conversion and empire in the *Doctrina Jacobi*; the faith of converts and the power of empire are both feminized in such a way as to dislocate orthodoxy from empire and promote a masculinized, non-Jewish, post-Roman *eschaton*. Although the text is often read as a defense of imperially forced baptism, the situation of the baptized Jews remains tenuous and ambiguous, as does the power of the empire that baptized them. The baptized Jews, always incomplete, never quite reaching full Christianity, become the sad mascots of imperial failure, while orthodox Christians imagine their own triumphant future. Nonetheless, I suggest, the ambiguities of this Christian imaginary create a space for future Jews forced into baptism to imagine their own forms of resistance from the margins.

This article has benefited from the astute comments of audiences at Duke University’s Elizabeth A. Clark Center for Late Ancient Studies and Brown University’s Program in Early Cultures. I want to particularly thank Jonathan Conant and Ross Shepard Kraemer for their insights, and the anonymous readers for *JECS* for their careful attention.

INTRODUCTION

The *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, or “Teaching of Jacob, Newly Baptized” (hereafter, the *Doctrina*)¹ may be the only Christian dialogue text from late antiquity to feature only Jewish voices.² Written in the first half of the seventh century,³ the *Doctrina* tells the story of a hapless community of Jews living in Carthage who have been forcibly baptized by order of the emperor Heraclius, fresh from his triumph over the Persian armies.⁴

1. The title in Greek is Διδασκαλία Ἰακώβου νεοβαπτίστου. Greek text and French translation: Vincent Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 47–229, whose chapter and paragraph numbers I cite; see also the “Introduction historique” by Gilbert Dagron (17–46) and the “Commentaire” by Déroche and Dagron (230–73), as well their new prefaces in the republication *Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin*, Bilans de Recherche 5 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2010), 7–16. All translations from the *Doctrina* are my own; my full translation of the text may be found at <http://andrewjacobs.org/translations/doctrina.html>.

2. The only non-Jewish voice, the eparch George’s, appears in the opening chapters, which only survive in Slavonic and Arabic translations.

3. On the date, see Dagron, “Commentaire,” 246–47; Pieter W. van der Horst, “A Short Note on the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*,” *Zutot* 6 (2009): 1–6, at 2; Walter E. Kaegi, “The Islamic Conquest and the Defense of Byzantine Africa: Reconstructions on Campaigns, Conquests, and Contexts,” in *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam*, ed. Susan T. Stevens and Jonathan P. Conant, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2016), 65–86, at 69. The early date, close to the time of the setting of the *Doctrina*, is based at least partially on the mention of Muhammad (ὁ προφήτης ἀνεφάνη ἐρχόμενος μετὰ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν) at *Doctrina* 5.16 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 209) (see below). Sean W. Anthony, “Muhammad, the Keys to Paradise, and the *Doctrina Iacobi*: A Late Antique Puzzle,” *Der Islam* 91 (2014): 243–65, suggests a date closer to the 670s based on earliest Islamic evidence. Stephen J. Shoemaker accepts the earlier date: see *The Death of the Prophet: The End of Muhammad’s Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 20–27, and *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 87. On the larger Byzantine context of the *Doctrina* and Heraclius’s edict, see Carl Laga, “Judaism and Jews in Maximus Confessor’s Works: Theoretical Controversy and Practical Attitude,” *Byzantinoslavica* 51 (1990): 177–88, and Averil Cameron, “Byzantines and the Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20 (1996): 249–74.

4. The *Doctrina* is set in spring and early summer of 634 (*Doctrina* 5.32 [Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 219]). On Heraclius’s window of triumph between the defeat of the Persians (629) and the losses to Muslims (634), see Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192–228, esp. Kaegi’s contextualization of the forced conversion edict as part of Heraclius’s attempts at religious conformity and border control (216–17). On the Byzantine African setting of the text (about which the *Doctrina* betrays very little firsthand knowledge), see for context Jonathan P. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the*

The titular Jacob, a learned merchant from Constantinople, has the bad luck to arrive in Carthage after the decree was issued and baptisms have begun. He successfully passes as Christian at first but then slips up in a comical moment (he trips in a hole in the street in the dark and calls upon “Adonai” for help).⁵ After a long time in jail and under threat of torture, Jacob undergoes forced baptism.⁶ Unlike the Jews of Carthage, however, Jacob—through study of Scriptures and divine intervention—becomes a true believer.⁷ The other baptized Jews, wanting to find a way to make peace with their new religious status (or fearing execution should they become apostate) begin to meet in a “hidden house” to listen to Jacob’s Christian teachings.⁸

When another Levantine Jewish merchant named Justus arrives and (somehow) evades baptism,⁹ he challenges Jacob to a series of dialogic confrontations that manage to continue the community’s covert catecheses. Weeks pass; Justus is wearing down. For the first time since his arrival in

Mediterranean, 439–700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 306–61, and the essays in Stevens and Conant, *North Africa under Byzantium*.

5. Jacob is then identified in the baths by his circumcision (*Doctrina* 5.20 [Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 217]). On the social (in)distinguishability of Jews, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25–68, and Nicholas de Lange, “Reflections on Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra’anan Boustán, Klaus Herrmann, Reimund Leicht, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and Giuseppe Veltri (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:167–82. In the early Byzantine period, Jews clustered together socially (as did other ethnic, professional, and social groups) as, for instance, at the hippodrome: see Pieter van der Horst, “Jews and Blues in Late Antiquity,” in *Jews and Christians in the Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 53–56, and Karen B. Stern, *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 141–68.

6. *Doctrina* 1.3 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 72–75). This section does not survive in Greek. The Slavonic and Arabic versions both have him in jail for one hundred days before being forcibly baptized.

7. Jacob recalls borrowing his Greek Scriptures from “Christian friends from one monastery in Carthage” (*Doctrina* 1.7 [Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 77]).

8. *Doctrina* 1.4–5 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 74–75). The extant Greek begins in the midst of Jacob explaining how the Law and Prophets speak about Jesus. The vast majority of the text, and most of Jacob’s speech, comprises strings of scriptural citations. The lack of explicit resistance of these baptized Jews raises questions about coercion and will: see Mira Balberg and Ellen Muehlberger, “The Will of Others: Coercion, Captivity, and Choice in Late Antiquity,” *Studies in Late Antiquity* 2 (2018): 294–315.

9. *Doctrina* 3.1 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 153): Ἰουδστος Ἰουδαῖος ἀβάπτιστος. It’s unclear why Justus remains free from baptism, even though his circumstance is identical to Jacob’s earlier in *Doctrina* and he does not seem to be feigning Christianity as Jacob did.

Carthage, Justus even deigns to eat with his baptized cousin, Isaac, whereas before “he had been horrified (ἐβδελύσσετο) to dine with the baptized.”¹⁰ Justus is beginning to believe that Christ had come long ago and been denied by the Jews. He remembers when the emperor Maurice had been violently deposed decades earlier by Phocas (Heraclius’s predecessor). At the time the celebrating Jews of his town were chastised by their leader: didn’t they realize that this violent usurpation heralded the end of the Roman Empire and the coming of the messiah? (I return to this moment of recollection below.) Justus and his fellow Jews mocked the old man at the time, but now Justus has begun to reconsider.¹¹ Perhaps the end of the Roman Empire and the apocalypse are near and, if so, that means Christ had really come in the person of Jesus.¹²

At this moment, as Justus, the last unbaptized Jew in Carthage, ponders the coming *eschaton*, the fall of Rome, and the messiahship of Jesus, new, resistant voices pipe up: “Isaac’s wife responded, and his mother-in-law, saying to Justus, ‘Master Justus, now that liar Jacob has bewitched you (ἐφαρμάκευσεν)! We hope that you will show us his error!’ Said Justus, ‘May God’s will be done.’”¹³ So ends the last moment in the *Doctrina* in which we hear Jews resisting their incipient Christianization. That these are the voices of (unnamed) women is notable and the point of departure from which I would like to examine this curious apocalyptic text about Jewish converts.¹⁴

The interruption of these women is brief and, in fact, the only mention of wives (or mothers-in-law) in this very long text. The baptized Jews who gather in secret to hear Jacob’s teaching and, later, Jacob’s and Justus’s debates are all men.¹⁵ It is not even clear that the women were forced to

10. *Doctrina* 3.11 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 171).

11. Below I note two other times Justus recalls wiser, older Jewish men recognizing the messiahship of Christ: *Doctrina* 4.5, 5.6 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 183, 195).

12. *Doctrina* 3.12 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 171–73).

13. *Doctrina* 3.12 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 173).

14. On the idiosyncrasy of this text, see David Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response and the Literary Construction of the Jew*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 158–79. On its particular contexts and possible uses, see Sarah Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict in the Light of Heraclius’ Forced Conversions and the Beginning of Islam,” in *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to Early Islam*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 201–14.

15. For the most part they are simply referred to collectively as “those from the circumcision” (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς) (see below). The few specific names we hear—Jonas, Jacob, Isaac, Justus, Joseph (the purported narrator upon whose clandestine notes the text is supposedly based), Theodore, Symeon (Joseph’s son)—are all men’s.

undergo baptism, although they certainly seem to include themselves at this one moment as a part of the community that hopes for Justus's successful defense of Judaism.¹⁶ What does it mean that the voices of resistance—to conversion, to Christianization, to apocalypse, and to the fall of Rome—are women's voices? It is my contention that reading for gender in the *Doctrina* can give us new insight into the text's particular take on conversion, empire, and the looming end of the world. Following the classic observation of Joan Wallach Scott that gender is the fundamental language of power relations as they are inscribed in the architecture of society,¹⁷ I contend that this crucial invocation of gender at the center of the *Doctrina* hints at a radically reconfigured power relationship between orthodoxy and empire in the *eschaton*. Gender in the *Doctrina* allows us to map the fault-lines of disrupted imperial power, resulting in a Christian triumph that divests itself of worldly empire. I first outline how gender signals the disruption of religious conversion in the *Doctrina*; then, I explore how gender signals the disruption of imperial force in the *Doctrina*; I conclude with the end of the world.

CONVERSION: GENDERING FAITH

Conversion in the *Doctrina* is confusing as the baptized Jews in the text never achieve full Christianness. As Gilbert Dagron puts it, "they feel no longer Jewish, but not yet Christian."¹⁸ We must imagine that "off-stage"

16. There is no explicit discussion of households being baptized, although our other piece of contemporaneous evidence for Heraclius's order specifies that "all the Jews and Samaritans of Africa . . . have been made Christians with their wives and children and those enslaved to them (σὺν γυναῖξὶ καὶ τέκνοις καὶ οἰκέταις)": Maximus, *Ep.* 8; text in Robert Devreesse, "La fin inédite d'une lettre de saint Maxime: Un baptême forcé de Juifs et Samaritains à Carthage, en 632," *RevSR* 17 (1937): 25–35, at 34; on this letter, see also Dagron, "Introduction historique," 30–31 and below.

17. Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 28–50. On Scott's influence on early Christian studies, see Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and Christian History," *CH* 70 (2001): 395–426, at 416–19, and Anna Rebecca Solevåg, *Birthing Salvation: Gender and Class in Early Christian Child-bearing Discourse*, Biblical Interpretations 121 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 31–36: "when gender becomes a category of analysis, the textual representation of men, as well as of women becomes an object of research" (34).

18. Dagron, "Commentaire," 231: "Les baptisés ont le sentiment de n'être plus juifs et pas encore chrétiens." See also Christian Boudignon, "'Le temps du saint baptême n'est pas encore venu': Nouvelles considérations sur la *Doctrina Jacobi*," in *Les Dialogues "Adversus Iudaeos": Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique*, ed.

these baptized Jews are attending church and even taking communion with their new coreligionists,¹⁹ given their frequently expressed fear of being punished by “the Christians” for apostasy.²⁰ Yet the *Doctrina* suggests they still primarily associate with other Jews. For the first half of the dialogue with Jacob, they speak as “those from the circumcision,”²¹ and are described several times as *apo ioudaiōn* (ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων), translated by Vincent Déroche perhaps a bit prematurely as “ex-Juifs.”²² Their first statement to Jacob when they meet in secret is: “We want both to keep the sabbath and to believe in Christ.”²³ Jacob explains that such Judaizing Christianity is impossible, but the tension between their new *religious* identity as Christians and their persistent *social* identity as Jews runs through the *Doctrina*.

Even after the baptized Jews loudly proclaim their belief in the holy Trinity, following Jacob’s scriptural instruction,²⁴ the division between “the Jews” and “the Christians” remains in place. Joseph (the narrator of the *Doctrina*) asks, upon the Jews’ confession, whether they might not relax their oath to keep these meetings hidden from “the Christians.” Jacob warns that their theological knowledge is still too rudimentary: “We, who

Sébastien Morlet, Olivier Munnich, and Bernard Pouderon (Paris: Institut d’Études Augustiniennes, 2013), 237–56.

19. Near the end there is a passing reference to Jacob (and perhaps other baptized Jews?) having been “taught by the Christians,” possibly indicating formal instruction: *Doctrina* 5.17 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 213).

20. As Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 163, notes: “Fear of gentiles pervades *Doctrina*.” See also Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict,” 208. At multiple points the characters either threaten to turn each other in to or express fear that they will be handed over to “the Christians”: *Doctrina* 1.41, 1.43, 3.2 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 131, 135, 155). Dagron, “Commentaire,” 231, highlights “une peur des Chrétiens que l’auteur souligne assez lourdement” and Déroche, “Commentaire,” 260, notes similarly: “[Les Chrétiens] représentent seulement, en arrière-plan, une menace physique constante pour les Juifs.”

21. *Doctrina* 1.12, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41; 2.2, 4, 6, 8 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 85, 99, 103, 105, 109, 111, 115, 117, 119, 121, 125, 129, 131, 139, 145, 151): οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς. While this shorthand for “Jews” is well-worn in Christian writings by this period, we do well to recall the rise of another people “from the circumcision” during Heraclius’s reign, the Muslims. See Stefan Esders, “The Prophetied Rule of a ‘Circumcised People’: A Travelling Tradition from the Seventh-Century Mediterranean,” in *Barbarians and Jews: Jews and Judaism in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Y. Hen and T. F. X. Noble, *Diaspora* 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 119–54, at 142.

22. *Doctrina* 1.43 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 135): ἀπὸ Ἑβραίων. *Doctrina* 2.5, 3.1 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 145, 153): ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων.

23. *Doctrina* 1.12 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 85).

24. *Doctrina* 2.4 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 145).

are ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων, we have not yet learned the basics of the faith of Christ. For the Christians exile bishops and patriarchs and they anathematize those who err even a little.”²⁵ In addition to highlighting the dangers of seventh-century theological division, Jacob’s advice assumes an ongoing distinction between “the Christians” and those “from the Jews,” even at the very moment they confess the Trinity.

The *Doctrina* is uncommonly rich in detail about Jewish life, especially in Palestine and Syria, creating the sense that we, the readers, are peering into a world of Jews, albeit baptized ones.²⁶ To take one often noted example: the participants in the dialogues occasionally use the untranslated Hebrew/Aramaic term *mamzer* (מַמְזֵר), or “bastard,” as an insult.²⁷ David Olster sees such social detail as evidence for Jewish authorship and intended audience; but perhaps we might do better to heed Pieter van der Horst’s more cautious description of the work as “a patently wishful Christian presentation of an inner-Jewish dialogue.”²⁸ Sarah Gador-Whyte likewise sees the Jewish detail as serving an intra-Christian purpose: to justify and support the conversion of Jews to Christianity against those who oppose such conversion.²⁹ I am less persuaded, however, by Gador-Whyte’s conclusion that, once convinced by Jacob of the truth of Christianity, “interreligious conflict evaporates and Jews and Christians are united under the banner of Christ.”³⁰ We never actually see the baptized Jews of the *Doctrina* “united” with gentile Christians or even in the same room with them.³¹ The world of the Jews remains a conspicuously closed one, and it strikes me that the presence of Jewish realisms in the *Doctrina*

25. *Doctrina* 2.5 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 145).

26. Not only do Justus and Jacob describe life among the Jews of Palestine and Syria, but it also seems to be the origin of much of Carthage’s Jewish community, perhaps as refugees from the Persian takeover earlier in Heraclius’s reign: see Conant, *Staying Roman*, 349–53.

27. *Doctrina* 1.40, 3.3, and 3.4 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 129, 157); see Boudignon, “Nouvelles considerations,” 239; Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 161; Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 88; but see Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict,” 212, and Laga, “Judaism and Jews,” 178–80. An apt comparison might be the use of Aramaic phrases in the gospels, which we could read as evidence for the gospels’ Jewish, Aramaic origins or as bits of “local color” meant to suggest a Jewish ambience for (primarily) non-Jewish readers. See Maia Kotrosits, “Speaking of Grief and the Grief of Speaking: Martyrs’ Speech and the Perils of Translation,” *Culture and Religion* 17 (2016): 431–49, at 434–40.

28. Van der Horst, “Short Note,” 3.

29. Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict,” 205–7.

30. Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict,” 211.

31. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 166–67, goes so far as to claim that “*Doctrina* held that the Jews would preserve their identity even after their conversion.”

serves to underscore the persistently ambivalent Christian status of its Jewish “converts.”³²

Perhaps this ambivalent representation of Jews forced into baptism reflects Christian unease with rather than unequivocal support of Heraclius’s imperial command, what we might call (anachronistically) a fear of *marranism*.³³ “Marrano,” meaning “pig,”³⁴ was used pejoratively to describe the New Christians resulting from coerced baptism in fifteenth-century Iberia.³⁵ The term *marrano*, “freighted with abjection and loathing,”³⁶ denotes, at once, duplicity and illegibility: can these baptized Jews ever become sincere in their Christianity and how could one know (apart from the tools of an Inquisition)?³⁷ Were vestiges of Jewish identity (ritual, custom, belief, language, or blood) innocent remainders of a prior life, or sinister, diabolical seeds of an inevitable “Judaizing” of true Christianity? To what extent is religious identity immutable, or even racialized, creating a permanent roadblock to true transformation?³⁸ The

32. On persistent ambivalence toward the conversion of Jews—both individuals and as a people—in the Byzantine period, see Gilbert Dagron, “Judaïser,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 11 (1991): 359–80, esp. 359–69.

33. Van der Horst, “Short Note,” 1, refers to these Jews as “*Conversos avant la date*.”

34. See Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 123–25.

35. Literature on *conversos*, “marranos,” and crypto-Jews in early modern Iberia is vast. I am primarily using the term as a way to think about external labeling practices and anxieties among Christians, but it is also useful and important to think about “marranism” as an available identity of resistance for converted Jews and their descendants as well: see Natalia Muchnik, “Being Against, Being With: *Marrano* Self-Identification in Inquisitorial Spain (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries),” *Jewish History* 25 (2011): 153–74. For a literary critical use of the term, see Elaine Marks, *Marrano as Metaphor: The Jewish Presence in French Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), esp. 127–42.

36. Bruce Rosenstock, “Messianism, Machismo, and ‘Marranism’: The Case of Abraham Miguel Cardoso,” *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, ed. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 199–227, at 199.

37. See Marc Shell, “Marranos (Pigs), or From Coexistence to Toleration,” *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 306–35, who uses the crisis of Jewish conversion from sixteenth-century Iberia to eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy to trace the development of “toleration” out of the destruction of *convivencia*.

38. Racialized rhetoric not only underlies *marrano*-discourse in its early modern context, as shown in Spanish “blood purity statutes” (*estatutos de limpieza de sangre*: see Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2014], 58–70), but arguably in its late ancient context as well, as Jewish identity, especially male Jewish identity, retains a persistently embodied character: see Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 440–84. I thank Jonathan Conant for pressing me on this point.

fear of marranism is not only a fear of the “other” infiltrating the self, but an acknowledgment that the self may already be infiltrated by an insoluble originary Jewishness always lurking beneath the surface, now brought perilously close at hand by coerced conversions.³⁹

Fifth-century imperial legislation had acknowledged the possibility that Jews might insincerely seek out baptism “to avoid crimes or on account of expenses.”⁴⁰ Such suspicion of the insincerity and danger of new converts appears also in a letter from Maximus the Confessor which is our only other contemporaneous evidence for Heraclius’s decree. Scholars like Christian Boudignon and Gador-Whyte have placed the *Doctrina* and Maximus in clear opposition for their respective attitudes toward Heraclius’s action against the Jews, arguing that the *Doctrina* endorses forced baptism while Maximus opposes it.⁴¹ In the letter, written during Maximus’s displacement from Palestine to North Africa due to the Persian wars, Maximus reports the news about the baptized Jews with “fear and shuddering.”⁴² Maximus fears not only that the unbelieving Jews will apostatize but that before they do so they will manage to sow seeds of doubt among the more susceptible gentile Christians.⁴³ Maximus’s fears (which, we can assume, are not unique to him) effectively *marranize* the baptized Jews, rendering them objects of “abjection and loathing,” unable to be fully digested into the Christian body *as* Christians.⁴⁴

39. Rosenstock, “Messianism, Machismo, and Marranism,” introduces Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s elucidation of the “double bind” of “heterosexual panic” at the early modern regulation of “homosocial desires”: that is, the hidden Judaizing of the *converso/marrano* is a way to articulate and project outward the “similar instability in the Old Christian/New Christian binarism” (204).

40. *C.Th.* 16.8.23 (a law from 416); text in Theodor Mommsen and Jean Rougé, eds., *Les lois religieuses des empereurs romains de Constantine à Théodose II* (312–438), Vol. 1: *Code Théodosien XVI*, SC 497 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005), 404–6. A canon from the Fourth Council of Toledo, which took place in Visigothic Spain roughly contemporaneous with the forced baptisms in Byzantine North Africa, by contrast, dictates that Jews who underwent forced baptism under King Sisebut (see below, note 66) must be “compelled to keep” (*tenere cogantur*) their new faith “lest the name of the Lord be blasphemed”: canon 57 (PL 84:379), cited in Boudignon, “Temps n’est pas encore venu,” 245.

41. Boudignon, “Temps n’est pas encore venu,” 248; Gador-Whyte, “Christian-Jewish Conflict,” 205.

42. Scholars disagree as to the recipient of this news: see Ryan W. Strickler, “The ‘Wolves of Arabia’: A Reconsideration of Maximus the Confessor’s *Epistula* 8,” *Byz* 86 (2016): 419–39, at 424.

43. Maximus, *Ep.* 8 (Devreesse, “Fin inédite,” 35).

44. Maximus elsewhere displays his antipathy toward Jews and Judaism, as in *Ep.* 14 (PG 91:533–44), cited by Dagron, “Introduction historique,” 39–40; Laga, “Judaism and Jews,” 188, goes so far as to suggest that the anti-Judaism of Maximus

The *Doctrina* does not end with Jewish apostasy, but with the (still?) segregated Jews accepting the full, orthodox truth of Christianity. Even Justus declares his belief, although he defers baptism so that his family back home will not reject him and he can have an opportunity to convert them.⁴⁵ Unlike Maximus, the author of the *Doctrina* believes forced baptism can lead to true believers. Yet if the *Doctrina* cannot be said to engage in outright marranzation of its ex-Jewish subjects, it might give voice to a different discomfort: the idea that baptized Jews have become equivalent to “real” gentile Christians. Perhaps in much the same way that the early nineteenth-century London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews encouraged Jewish converts to form their own “Hebrew churches,” the Christian readers of the *Doctrina* enjoy imagining sincere, but safely contained, Jewish converts, ones who keep their distinctive social identity while losing their religious distinction.⁴⁶ Of course, the difference between Maximus’s marranzing panic and a more benign hope for segregated Jewish Christians may be a difference of degree rather than kind: both maintain a belief that to be a Jew in some sense forestalls becoming a Christian. One can only ever, at best, be a *convert*, a status that by its very nature emphasizes that religious status is not fixed.

This fundamental tension continues throughout the text: first in the hopeful, but fraught, questioning from “those of the circumcision” and then in the more direct confrontation by Justus. But the starkest moment in which the discomfort is given voice is that brief instant when Isaac’s wife and mother-in-law speak out. Unlike the other Jews, these women are never portrayed as succumbing to Jacob’s persuasion and proofs. What’s more, the simultaneous outburst of Isaac’s wife *and* mother-in-law might lead a reader to imagine other conversations going on while the men meet in their “hidden house,” conversations among women, perhaps, sharing their collective dismay and anger. These hints of secret, resistant Jews

and others (ironically) created the climate for Heraclius’s decree, but see Strickler, “Wolves of Arabia,” who dates Maximus’s letter on Jewish baptism after the beginning of the Islamic conquests.

45. *Doctrina* 5.17 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 211).

46. Robert Michael Smith, “The London Jews’ Society and Patterns of Jewish Conversion in England, 1801–1859,” *Jewish Social Studies* 43 (1981): 275–90, and Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: “The Jewish Question” and English National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 17–26, 33–34. On the broader context of the London Society see Michael R. Darby, *The Emergence of the Hebrew Christian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Numen 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Similar efforts soon followed in the United States: see George L. Berlin, *Defending the Faith: Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Writing on Christianity and Jesus* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 7–24.

articulate for Christian readers precisely the fear of crypto-Judaizing that the persuadable male characters are supposed to dispel.

That women should be especially resistant to Christian persuasion runs counter to some ancient and modern stereotypes about women and conversion in early Christianity. The second-century pagan critic Celsus lamented the intellectual laxity of Christianity by claiming that "it is only fools and the low-born, senseless people and captives and women and children whom the teachers of the divine word want to persuade."⁴⁷ The "persuadability" of women—that is, as both objects and subjects of persuasion—continues to appear throughout late ancient Christian literature in both positive and negative veins. In the so-called Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles women are the agents by which faith in Christ enters the heart of the Mediterranean polis.⁴⁸ Later hagiography extends this image of women as catalysts of Christianization outside the eastern and northern bounds of the Roman Empire.⁴⁹ Women were also imagined as the carriers of heresy: the "devil's gateway" (in Tertullian's famous phrase),⁵⁰ pairing eagerly with heresiarchs from Simon Magus onward to plague the purity of the church.⁵¹ The opposing images of Eve and Mary, one persuaded by the devil and the other by an angel, capture in miniature the swelling rhetoric in late antiquity of women as susceptible to and transmitters of religious persuasion, for good and for ill.

The gendering of women's religious conversion in Christian late antiquity—and in other historical and geographic contexts—has occasioned both

47. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.49; text in Marcel Borret, ed., *Origène: Contre Celse*, SC 136 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 116; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 157–84.

48. Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 45–67, on the image of women in the Apocryphal Acts. See also Judith M. Lieu, "The 'Attraction of Women' in/to Early Judaism and Christianity: Gender and the Politics of Conversion," *JSNT* 72 (1998): 5–22.

49. Andrea Sterk, "Mission from Below: Captive Women and Conversion on the East Roman Frontiers," *CH* 79 (2010): 1–39; Caroline T. Schroeder, "Francia as Christendom: The Merovingian *Vita Domnae Bathildis*," *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998): 265–84.

50. Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* 1.1.2; text in E. Bekkers et al., eds. *Tertullianus: Opera Vol. 1*, CCL 1 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), 343. See Elizabeth A. Clark, "Devil's Gateway and the Brides of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 23–60.

51. Virginia Burrus, "The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome," *HTR* 84 (1991): 229–48.

social-historical and rhetorical analysis.⁵² Some historians have sought from even the most fanciful stories of women's conversion possible evidence for women seeking liberation from patriarchal or other social constraints.⁵³ Peter Brown, in the early 1960s, somewhat off-handedly remarked that aristocratic women's piety in fourth-century Rome hastened the Christianization of the ruling classes,⁵⁴ a suggestion studied with some care by Anne Yarborough and Michele Salzman in subsequent decades.⁵⁵ Salzman in particular expresses skepticism at the historical role of aristocratic women in converting their husbands and households, but notes the tenacity of this trope in ancient literature and modern historical studies.⁵⁶

Kate Cooper, in the 1990s, interpreted the presence of women in so many conversionary tales as a rhetorical strategy on the part of male, Christian authors. "Narrative treatment," she wrote in a 1992 essay, "of the actions or intentions of women did not straightforwardly represent flesh-and-blood women themselves, but rather served to symbolize aspects of the tension to be found among men."⁵⁷ That is, gender functions as a way of framing contested power relations, not as a window into women's lives. This rhetorical interpretation of women as converts, taken up in more recent studies,⁵⁸ emphasizes the classical tropes of women as sources of (posi-

52. Eliza F. Kent, "Feminist Approaches to the Study of Religious Conversion," in *Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 297–326.

53. See the summary of Michele Renée Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 138–40.

54. Peter Brown, "Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *JRS* 51 (1961): 1–11, at 6–7.

55. Anne Yarborough, "Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women," *CH* 45 (1976): 149–65; Michele Renée Salzman, "Aristocratic Women: Conductors of Christianity in the Fourth Century?," *Helios* 16 (1989): 207–20 and Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 138–77.

56. Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 169–70.

57. Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *JRS* 82 (1992): 150–64, at 151, followed by *Virgin and the Bride*, and *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 143–238.

58. A trio of studies in the past twenty years attending to the role of Aseneth in *Joseph and Aseneth* represent a range of rhetorical analyses: Ross Shepard Kraemer, *When Joseph Met Aseneth: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); B. Diane Lipsett, *Desiring Conversion: Hermas, Thecla, Aseneth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jill Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth: Access to Israel's Living God in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also Kraemer's discussion of Severus of Minorca, cited below.

tive and negative) influence on their male kinfolk.⁵⁹ A woman converting could be a sign of her husband's piety or of his lack of control over his household, depending on the rhetorical context.

Of course, we are not dealing with converting women in the *Doctrina*, but rather the opposite: women staunchly *refusing* Christian conversion. Yet, as Ross Shepard Kraemer has shown, the rhetorical tools of analysis for women promoting and resisting conversion are remarkably similar. In an essay on Severus of Minorca's fifth-century *Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*,⁶⁰ Kraemer draws our attention to the role of the Jewish women on Minorca, who hold out against the variously coercive tactics of the militant Christians to which their husbands more readily accede.⁶¹ Kraemer acknowledges that her initial interest in these woman was a desire for historical recovery: "Narratives about potentially historical individual Jewish women from this period are virtually non-existent," she writes, "and an historian could easily be forgiven for wishing that some portion of Severus's accounts of women might be true, however distorted."⁶²

Ultimately, however, Kraemer concludes that, despite the historicity of the context of the *Letter*, the resistant women in Severus's account are better read rhetorically than historically: "Jewish women repeatedly serve as representations of Jewish stubbornness in the face of the reasonableness and truth of Christianity."⁶³ The portrayal of (relatively) pliant Jewish men and (dramatically) resistant Jewish women, moreover, serves to map the two religious communities along gendered axes of power: to be a man—masterful and reasonable—is to be a Christian; to be a woman—volatile and irrational—is to be a Jew.⁶⁴ The male converts of the story,

59. Cooper, *Virgin and the Bride*, 5–11.

60. Most manuscripts title the text *Episula Severi de miraculis sancti Stephani*; some add *de conversione Iudaeorum*; see the edition and translation of Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, OECT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 80.

61. Ross Shepard Kraemer, "Jewish Women's Resistance to Christianity in the Early Fifth Century: The Account of Severus, Bishop of Minorca," *J ECS* 17 (2009): 635–65. Kraemer's more recent work introduces a rhetorically inflected skepticism to her earlier attempts at historical recovery: see her *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–28.

62. Kraemer, "Jewish Women's Resistance," 649.

63. Kraemer, "Jewish Women's Resistance," 660.

64. See Cynthia Baker, "When Jews Were Women," *HR* 45 (2005): 114–34. Baker interprets the rare, and often feminine, use of the term *Jew* in rabbinic literature to signal a "dual consciousness by which subject cultures come to name and navigate their experience both in terms defined by the dominant culture and in terms peculiar to their own" (131).

therefore, undergo (in Kraemer's terms) a "remasculination" when their wives finally convert, one that nonetheless leaves them still subordinate to Severus the bishop.⁶⁵

The *Doctrina* lacks the serial resistance of Jewish women in Severus of Minorca's earlier, western account:⁶⁶ here we have no women throwing stones at Christians, hiding fruitlessly in a vineyard, or fleeing on storm-tossed ships.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the single irruption of resistant Jewish women into the text stands in such high relief that I think it can benefit from the example of Kraemer's analysis.⁶⁸ Here too, "Jewish women . . . serve as representations of Jewish stubbornness in the face of the reasonableness and truth of Christianity." The relatively high volume of these women's voices is amplified further by the fact that, unlike in Severus of Minorca's letter, we never see these women successfully converted, brought under the control of their husbands and, by extension, the church. Their (Jewish) volatility and unreasonableness is never brought under (Christian) mastery and control.

The unconverted women are the remainder of a never-quite-accomplished transformation of Jews into Christians.⁶⁹ They represent the stubborn Jewishness of the convert; readers are left to conclude that, no matter how fulsomely their husbands and sons-in-law embrace the truth of Jesus's messiahship, that (literal) nagging Jewish voice will never leave them. Despite assertions that the *Doctrina* staunchly defends the viability of forced baptism against skeptics like Maximus,⁷⁰ on closer inspection it still encour-

65. Kraemer, "Jewish Women's Resistance," 662.

66. Since Scott Bradbury's critical edition and introduction, most scholars have accepted the authenticity of the letter as coming from fifth-century Minorca. Déroche, "Commentaire," 270–71, held out the possibility that "Pseudo-Severus" was writing in the seventh century, closely following the forced conversion of Jews inaugurated by the Visigothic King Sisebut. See Jamie Wood, *The Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville*, Brill Series on the Early Middle Ages (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 196–98, 206–7, and Paula Fredriksen, "Jewish Romans, Christian Romans, and the Post-Roman West: The Social Correlates of the *Contra Iudaeos* Tradition," in *Conflict and Religious Conversation in Latin Christendom: Studies in Honour of Ora Limor*, ed. Israel Jacob Yuval and Ram Ben-Shalom (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 23–53.

67. *Epistula Severi* 13, 24–28 (Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca*, 94, 116–22).

68. This exchange also takes place in the only scene not recounted by the first-person narrator, Joseph.

69. By contrast with an earlier story in Greek, that of Joseph of Tiberias in Epiphanius's *Panarion* 30 as Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 213, notes: "All of the formerly orthodox Jews have now become orthodox Christians, a conversion portrayed as without remainder."

70. See above and Déroche, "Commentaire," 263: "l'auteur se devait justifier complètement le baptême forcé."

ages its readers to view these converts as incomplete Christians. By leaving these baptized Jews as only partially Christian, haunted by the feminine voice of resistance, the *Doctrina* also defers their “remasculination” (in Kraemer’s terms). Passive men with angry wives, these feminized Jews lead disordered households whose axes of power relations are out of whack. The discordant voices of resistant Jewish women remind (Christian) readers that Jews will remain fixed in a subordinate position, even when they have been baptized as Christians. The circumstances of their baptism—“by force,” as the *Doctrina* repeats throughout⁷¹—remain inscribed in their condition as baptized Jews, the object of “force” by other, gentile Christians (thus, their constant fear of reprisal and brutal punishment by “the Christians”). Forced baptism produces Christian men who are never fully Christian and never fully men. The narrative of conversion in the *Doctrina* cannot be read unproblematically as a call for Christianization of others; it is instead a story about power and its surprising gaps and entanglements. We see these tangled lines of power relations rise from the level of these imagined households to a reimagination of the Roman Empire, as well.

EMPIRE: GENDERING POWER

If the totality of conversion is rendered ambiguous and fractured in the *Doctrina* so is the force of empire. On the one hand, imperial strength is the instrument by which the Jews of Carthage are baptized; on the other, acknowledgment of the fall of the empire becomes a central proof of the correctness of this forced baptism. The might of the Roman Empire initiates the entire project of Jewish conversion: the order comes from the emperor Heraclius, and the eparch of North Africa explicitly invokes loyalty to the emperor in his confrontation with the unwilling Jews of Carthage: “Aren’t you the emperor’s servants?” the eparch asks. The Jews concede that they are, but one of their number, Jonas, insists that “the time for holy baptism has not yet come.” The eparch is furious: “He struck the man in the face with his hands, saying, ‘You are his servants

71. *Doctrina* 3.3, 4.5, 5.9 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 157, 181, 199): ἀπὸ βίας. The “force” exerted on the baptized Jews is comically inscribed in the body of Joseph, the narrator, who must explain why he is constantly leaving the “hidden house” to report the proceedings to his son, Symeon, who records them: “I have βιασμούς and I have to go to the bathroom (καταφέρομαι)” (*Doctrina* 3.4; see also 1.43 [Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 157]). Here *biasmos*, which literally means “violence” or “force,” is used in a medical sense to mean diarrhea (Déroche translates as *colique*) (s.v. LSJ A.II); note that it follows immediately Jacob saying in the previous chapter: “I was baptized and I became a Christian by force (ἐγενόμην ἀπὸ βίας χριστιανός)” (*Doctrina* 3.3 [Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 157]).

but you will not obey Our Lord's commandment?"⁷² The forced baptisms follow immediately. The heavy hand of imperial power (literally) sets the *Doctrina* in motion, leading, in the first half of the text, to "those from the circumcision" questioning Jacob on familiar themes from the long tradition of Jewish-Christian dialogues: the obsolescence of the Jewish law, the messiahship of Jesus (including both his suffering and his divinity), the virginity and royal lineage of Mary.⁷³

After Justus's arrival, the *Doctrina* shifts to talk of the imminent collapse of Heraclius's empire. Justus challenges Jacob: "Give me a single week so that I may gather my thoughts and I shall demonstrate that Christ has not yet come and it is not the time for holy baptism."⁷⁴ The "great contest over belief and disbelief"⁷⁵ that follows hinges on a link between the coming of Christ, the decline of Rome, and the necessity for converting the Jews: "the time for holy baptism" for the empire's Jews can only come, everyone agrees, once the empire is in decline.

That Rome is in decline may appear to contradict the political and military situation in which the *Doctrina* is set: the recent and dramatic triumph of Heraclius over the Persians, including the return of the True Cross to a recaptured Jerusalem.⁷⁶ But Jacob's close analysis of Daniel's prophecy of empires convinces Justus to revise his opinion. Jacob and Justus both agree that "the fourth" empire of Daniel's prophecy (Dan 2.40, 7.7), the last empire, is that "of the Romans" and that the decline of the last empire will be heralded by the "end of prophecy" (Dan 9.24–25).⁷⁷ Justus even concedes that, since Christ's advent, "no prophet has come." Even still, Justus resists the idea that the Roman Empire is in decline:

72. *Doctrina* 1.2 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 70–73; this portion of *Doctrina* does not survive in Greek).

73. On the traditional sources of the *Doctrina*, see Déroche, "Commentaire," 252–56. That the focus on messianism in this and other *adversus Iudaeos* texts betrays a particularly Christian point of view, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Messianism between Judaism and Christianity," in *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 171 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 217–53.

74. *Doctrina* 3.4 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 157).

75. *Doctrina* 3.4 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 157).

76. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 212, describes Heraclius's triumph and restoration of the cross to Jerusalem as "the zenith of Heraclius' power." Given the likely time of the *Doctrina*'s composition, some time after its setting, readers would be aware of Heraclius's losses to Muslim armies, even though within the logic of the text Heraclius's power remains at its height.

77. On the development of the "four kingdoms" apocalyptic motif in this period, see Wout Jacques van Bakkum, "Four Kingdoms Will Rule: Echoes of Apocalypticism and Political Reality in Late Antiquity and Medieval Judaism," in *Endzeiten: Escha-*

Jacob said, “How does Rhōmania (Ῥωμανία) seem to you? Does it stand as it was from the beginning, or has it diminished?” Justus answered, “Even if it has diminished a little (ἡλαττώθη μικρόν), we hope it will rise up again (ἐλπίζομεν ὅτι πάλιν ἀνίσταται). Because it’s necessary that Christ come for the first time while the fourth beast, that is Rhōmania, yet stands.”⁷⁸

If Rome is still strong, Justus argues, Christ cannot yet have come, therefore he certainly cannot be poised to come a *second* time, therefore, “it is not yet the time for holy baptism.” We might pause and wonder: who is the “we” of Justus’s “we hope it will rise up again”? Given the structure of the debate at this point, I assume Justus claims to be speaking for the unbaptized Jews who hold out hope that Rome “will rise up again.” The alignment here is notable: Jews hope for Rome’s restoration, while Christians recognize its imminent decline.

Jacob rejects both the hope of Jews and the restoration of empire at once. He notes that the prophets long ago predicted that the cost of disbelief in the messiah would be to be “cast out among all the nations whom they do not know and they will vanish from the land” (Zech 7.14) which, Jacob notes, “has happened to us Jews.”⁷⁹ At the time of Jesus’s arrival, Jacob notes, Rome was at its height:

[F]rom the ocean, that is, from Scotland, Britain, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Thrace, Syria, Persia, the whole East, Egypt, Africa, and beyond Africa, these were the boundaries of Rome until now, and the bronze and marble pillars of their emperors were visible. For all the nations were subject to Rome from a commandment of God; but now we see Rome humbled (ταπεινωθεῖσαν).⁸⁰

At this moment Justus’s cousin Isaac calls for a break from debate: “It’s time for us to withdraw.” Jacob goes back to his constant fasting, vigils, and Scripture study; Justus returns to Isaac’s house where, for the first time, he eats with baptized Jews and, while contemplating the fall of Rome, hears the outcry of Isaac’s wife and mother-in-law.

Just before their outburst, as I noted earlier, Justus was telling Isaac about how Jews celebrating at the death of Emperor Maurice were chided by their leader. Let me cite his recollection in full:

tologie in den monotheistischen Weltreligionen, ed. Felicitas Schmieder and Wolfram Brandes, Millennium-Studien 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 101–18.

78. *Doctrina* 3.8 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 167).

79. *Doctrina* 3.9 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 169).

80. *Doctrina* 3.10 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 169).

Our Jewish leader (πρῶτος) explained, saying, “Why do the Jews rejoice that Maurice the Emperor has died and Phocas has become emperor through blood? Truly, we’re going to see the diminishment of the Roman Empire (μείωσιν τῆς βασιλείας τῶν Ῥωμαίων). And if the fourth beast—that is, Rhōmania—is diminished and split and crushed, just as Daniel said . . . then we made a mistake not receiving Christ when he came . . .” And the Jews residing there in Sykamina mocked the priest as a fool, and even I, Justus—by the name of the most high God—residing there in Sykamina, when I heard these things from the old priest, I also considered him ridiculous.⁸¹

The *Doctrina* does not explain why the Jews of Sykamina should be celebrating Maurice’s violent deposition and Phocas’s ascent.⁸² Seventh-century Christian readers of the *Doctrina* would likely find this casually violent anti-Roman sentiment par for the course of Byzantine *adversus Judaeos* literature, in which Jews were imagined as fifth column traitors on the Romano-Persian borderlands.⁸³ Yet this raucous celebration of imperial defeat is strangely linked to a stubborn insistence on the perdurance of Roman might. In the early 600s, Justus had considered the diminishment of Rome “ridiculous,” even in the face of political upheaval. Thirty years later, as he begins to see the wisdom of the “foolish” priest’s warnings, it is Jewish women who sound the alarm and decry his change of heart.

Just as this irruption of gender into the *Doctrina* highlighted the partial nature of the Jews’ Christian conversion, so I think here its specific placement in the *Doctrina*—right as Justus, the last holdout, sees the truth of empire’s fall—underscores the ambivalent nature of Rome’s imperial force, particularly in contrast with the eternal might of Christianity. Jews whooping and cheering at the bloody demise of one emperor and the rise

81. *Doctrina* 3.12 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 171–73). The word πρῶτος is a fairly common designation for “first citizen” (s.v. “πρότερος,” LSJ B.I.4); here, and at *Doctrina* 4.5 (Déroche, “Doctrina Jacobi,” 181–83), a Jewish community’s πρῶτος is also identified as a “priest” (ἱερεύς).

82. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 99.2, writing toward the end of the seventh century, offers a possible explanation when he notes that Maurice’s public piety inspired his nephew Domitian to order the forced conversion of Jews and Samaritans (Ethiopic text and English translation in Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 92 [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2002], 381–82).

83. See Cameron, “Byzantines and Jews”; Averil Cameron, “Blaming the Jews: The Seventh-Century Invasions of Palestine in Context,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 57–78; Ra’anan Boustán, “Immolating Emperors: Spectacles of Imperial Suffering and the Making of a Jewish Minority Culture in Late Antiquity,” *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 207–38; Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 335.

to power of another cannot see the reality of Rome's *impermanence* until Christian truth reveals it. Or, more confusingly, the unbelieving Jew cannot see the reality of Rome's impermanence until Rome herself forces him to undergo baptism. Justus remarks later, during a break in his "contest" with Jacob: "So I believe that God, the compassionate, not wanting for Jews—always rebellious to God himself—to be destroyed at the end, commanded that, even if by force (*ἀπὸ βίας*), the Jews should be baptized and that they should come to the light."⁸⁴ Rome is, at once, the instrument of that "force" and the impermanent shadow swept away by "the light." It is persuasive, but ultimately powerless, its relationship to Christian truth instrumental but not substantial.

When I describe Rome's portrayal in the *Doctrina* as the ultimately powerless persuader, I am suggesting that empire here is, in many ways, *feminized*. For centuries Rome was literally imagined in feminine form, often in a fashion that highlighted at once its "force" and its fallibility. *Roma*, the personification of the city, was a popular figure in late ancient poetry in the West, where it could invoke at once the majestic past of Rome and its troubled, perhaps disintegrating present.⁸⁵ In the Byzantine East, the power of empire itself was often given a more explicitly feminine face, whether through association with a series of impressive empresses or the growing role of the Virgin Mary as the patron of "New Rome."⁸⁶ Judith Herrin has identified an "imperial feminine" emerging in Byzantium

84. *Doctrina* 4.5 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 181).

85. Joseph Grzywaczewski and Daniel K. Knox, "Glory, Decay and Hope: Goddess *Roma* in Sidonius Apollinaris' Panegyrics," in *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th–8th Centuries)*, ed. Marianne Saghy and Edward Schoolman (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 203–16; Michael Roberts, "Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: Representations of Rome in Poetry in the Early Fifth Century," *AJP* 122 (2001): 533–65.

86. On Mary in Byzantium, see Averil Cameron, "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople," *JTS* n.s. 29 (1978): 79–108; Vasiliki Limberis, *The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London: Routledge, 1994); Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), esp. 11–35, who more cautiously traces the development of the Virgin's "imperial" role; and Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 205–28. Like *Roma*, *Constantinopolis* was also visualized as a female figure in coins and statuary, often in conjunction with *Roma*: see Gudrun Bühl, *Constantinopolis und Roma: Stadtpersonifikationen der Spätantike*, *Akanthus Crescens* 3 (Zurich: Akanthus, 1995), supplementing the older study of Cornelius Vermeule, *The Goddess Roma in the Art of the Roman Empire* (London: Spink, 1959). As Anne McClannan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) points out, visual representations of the "imperial feminine" frequently blurred the lines between individual empresses, the avatars of imperial cities, and divine patrons.

in the fifth through seventh centuries, a concatenation of “traditions, images, and customs that all manifest a relationship of women with authority and power—in a subordinate and supporting role, to be sure, but one that was nonetheless imperial.”⁸⁷ Herrin’s important gloss on the imperial feminine—“subordinate and supporting”—signals the ways in which women’s power was often qualified; the “imperial feminine” could be made exceptional (as through Pulcheria’s vow of virginity) or rendered suspect (as through Theodora’s shady past). Herrin’s important work on Byzantine empresses demonstrates not only the ways in which women could be imperial, that is, exercise power, but the ways in which *empire* could be feminized: possessing “authority and power” but always teetering on “subordinate” status. Herrin’s exceptional empresses were not merely exploiting circumstances to attain unprecedented power beyond their traditional gender roles, they were embodying the gendered slippage always attendant upon the militarized masculinity of Byzantine imperial power.⁸⁸

In the *Doctrina*, Rhōmania (Ρωμανία, the term used when “the empire of the Romans” is understood as the “fourth beast” of Daniel’s prophecy) is, like *Roma* or *Constantinopolis*, a feminine noun; she also becomes, as Jacob explains, a source of “authority and power” who is fast becoming subordinate to the coming messiah. In feminizing Rhōmania, the *Doctrina* disrupts the operations of imperial power through gendered invocations of feminized force and powerlessness.⁸⁹ In the world of the *Doctrina*, to be a Christian is to be a man, but to be a baptized Jew is to be haunted by a feminized remainder of the Jewish self. Likewise, to be a Christian in the

87. Judith Herrin, “The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium,” in *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 161–93, at 163 (reprinted from *Past & Present* 169 [2000]: 3–35).

88. I am willing to accept, on balance, Michael Stewart’s claims that Roman masculinity remained distinctly militarized well into the Byzantine period (see *The Soldier’s Life: Martial Virtues and Romanitas in the Early Byzantine Empire* [Leeds: Kismet, 2016], framed as an argument against, inter alios, Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001]); nonetheless, I think highly militarized masculinity is no less prone to subversions, slippages, and anxieties: see Susanna Elm, “What the Bishop Wore to the Synod: John Chrysostom, Origenism, and the Politics of Fashion at Constantinople,” *Adamantius* 19 (2013): 156–69.

89. The “imperial feminine” is also taken up and subverted in Jewish apocalyptic texts of this period, as in the figure of Hephzibah, the mother of the messiah, in the *Sefer Zerubbabel*: see Martha Himmelfarb, *Jewish Messiahs in a Christian Empire: A History of the Book of Zerubbabel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 35–59, and Alexei Siverstev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 87–124.

Doctrina is to be free from Roman power, which is swiftly passing away; to be a Jew is to be subject to that power still, a captive of Rhōmania's wilting force. Empire is aligned with that feminized, Judaized remainder that keeps the baptized Jews of Carthage from being fully integrated into the gentile, Christian world. To be a man is to be a Christian, free from empire; to be a woman is to be a Jew under empire. The baptized Jews of the *Doctrina* are emblematically caught in between, like the Roman Empire itself, baptized and subservient to Christianity but never fully aligned with it. To make sense of this gendered disalignment of religion and empire, inscribed in the persons of these nebulous baptized Jews, we must turn to the end of the world.

THE END

The final section of the *Doctrina* addresses the imminent end of the world. Just prior to this apocalyptic coda, Jacob had succeeded in persuading Justus "that the messiah had come."⁹⁰ It is clear that Justus has all but accepted Jacob's explanation of Christian truth.⁹¹ When Jacob retires once more to his fasting and study, the other Jews ask Justus what he thinks of Jacob's words. Justus replies, "He speaks the truth and his words are from the Holy Spirit."⁹² Justus then shares another upsetting story from his youth confirming Christ's coming: when the Persians took the city of Ptolemais the Jews "burned Christian churches, plundered their houses, harassed them, and killed them."⁹³ After the apostasy and reconversion of a Christian cleric, the leader of the Jewish community reported a recurring dream of burning synagogues. A Jewish elder interpreted the

90. *Doctrina* 4.1 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 173). The *Doctrina* here, as in other sections, uses the technical term for messiah, "anointed one" (ἡλειμμένος) which might have sounded more Jewish in context: see Déroche, "Commentaire," 264–66.

91. One small bit of pushback from Justus recurs in the last two books of the *Doctrina*, when he chides Jacob for citing ἀπόκρυφα, by which he means what we might call Jewish pseudepigrapha: *Doctrina* 4.4, 5.10, 5.14 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 179, 199, 205). The first two instances are citations of the Wisdom of Solomon; the third purports to be Jeremiah but is a quotation of Matthew 27.9 that the evangelist attributes to Jeremiah. The term ἀπόκρυφα is used earlier of Christian texts about Mary (such as, presumably, the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*) (*Doctrina* 1.42 [Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 133]).

92. *Doctrina* 4.5 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 181).

93. Ptolemais fell in 614 and various Christian texts recall the predations of Palestinian Jews on the occasion of the Persian invasion: see Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity*, Divinations (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 196–99.

dream to mean that “the Christ who has come is the king venerated by the Christians.” A group of “disturbed” Jewish men killed the elder in anger and fear; one of them later told Justus about it. This memory now has distinctly apocalyptic connotations for Justus: “We observe the fourth beast, that is Rhōmania, has fallen, and is chopped up by the nations, and now comes the watch for the tenth horn.”⁹⁴ Justus’s whole life, it seems, he had seen signs pointing to the end of the world, but only now do they come into clear focus.

The final book of the *Doctrina* turns to explicate the *eschaton*:

The next morning, Monday, we congregated in the hidden place. And Justus said, “Master Jacob, Rhōmania is crushed and divided by the nations and has become ten toparchies. Is it necessary for the deceiving devil to come?” And Jacob said, “Yes, truly Hermolaos the Deceiver is going to come, now that Rhōmania has been divided, and woe to the one who receives him!”⁹⁵

Justus and Jacob are referring to a specific eschatological narrative, derived from the book of Daniel (the “ten toparchies” are an interpretation of the “ten horns” of Daniel 7).⁹⁶ Hermolaos “the Deceiver,”⁹⁷ an anti-Christ figure, will appear to be “peaceful and well-established” but will lure unbelievers, particularly Jews, into following him instead of Christ. “Woe to those,” agrees Justus before they break again, “who don’t believe that Christ has come but wait for him while still Judaizing (καὶ ἰουδαίζοντες)! ”⁹⁸ After a tearful dinner with Joseph, during which Justus reveals that for

94. *Doctrina* 4.5 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 181–83). We later learn that Jacob was among the Jews who burned the churches of Ptolemais and took the occasion to read books of the church fathers kept by the ex-apostate priest Leontius (although he neither understood nor believed them at the time): *Doctrina* 5.12 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 203).

95. *Doctrina* 5.1 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 183).

96. Déroche, “*Commentaire*,” 251, posits the influence of Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* on the *Doctrina*. Hippolytus, *De Antichristo* 27–28, also identifies the “ten horns” as “ten kingdoms” (text in Enrico Norelli, ed., *Ippolito: L’anticristo [De antichristo]*, Biblioteca Patristica [Florence: Nardini, Centro internazionale del libro, 1987], 96–98).

97. Justus had already confessed a similar apocalyptic scenario, including the advent of “Hermolaos, the deceiving devil” (*Doctrina* 3.8 [Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 165]). In other Christian apocalyptic texts Hermolaos (or Armalaos) is positively identified with the triumphant Roman Empire. Notably in the roughly contemporary *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* 9.5–6 “Armelaus” is the son of Romulus and the “King of the Romans” whose descendant will defeat the “Ishmaelites” (*Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* 13.11–16; text in *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and an Alexandrian World Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Benjamin Garstad, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012], 30, 56–58).

98. *Doctrina* 5.2 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 187).

more than two weeks he has been dreaming of Moses and the prophets praising Jacob, Justus declares that he wants to question Jacob once more "on the end of the world and the second coming of Christ."⁹⁹ Eleven days later, the baptized Jews and Justus convene one last time.

The eschatological narrative that Jacob lays out is not particularly original or specific: Christ will return in glory (but, he notes, in the same body in which he appeared the first time, since "creation cannot bear to look upon the bare divinity of the Word of God"¹⁰⁰) with crowds of angels and flashes of lightning. He will "destroy" Hermolaos the Deceiver, and Christ's enemies will burn in an eternal fire "forever and ever."¹⁰¹ Along with the terrifying return of Christ and the immolation of his enemies will come the resurrection and eternal life of his followers.¹⁰² Justus then adds his own piece of evidence that Rome's decline has come and Hermolaos may be on the way: his brother has written him of a "deceiving prophet" (πλάνος . . . προφήτης) who appeared and with his "Saracens" killed a Roman official.¹⁰³ While the local Jews (once more) rejoiced ("We Jews rejoiced greatly," Justus's brother reports), a "very scriptural" old man objects instead that it's more likely that the earlier Christ, "whom Christians venerate," was the one sent by God "while we shall receive Hermolaos in his place."¹⁰⁴ Justus, upon finishing his brother's letter, abruptly confesses, "I, Justus, believe in Christ who was born from holy Mary, who was sent by God on high to earth, the savior and King of Israel."¹⁰⁵ With shadows of false prophets rumbling in the east, with the Empire approaching its final hours, "crushed" by barbarian nations, Justus cannot hold out any longer.

99. *Doctrina* 5.3 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 187).

100. *Doctrina* 5.5 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 191).

101. *Doctrina* 5.4–5 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 191–93).

102. *Doctrina* 5.8–11 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 195–201). Just before Jacob begins to preach on the resurrection, he presses Justus to recall a moment when Justus's father Samuel, who was also Jacob's teacher, decades earlier spontaneously announced that "there is no other Christ than the one who came when he was born from Mary" (*Doctrina* 5.6 [Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 195]). This constitutes the third recollection Justus provides that Jewish elders decades earlier had recognized Christ as the messiah (see above), a kind of inversion of Peter's threefold denial in the gospels.

103. It is clear from the description and context that the *Doctrina* is referring to Muhammad; if we accept Dagron and Déroche's early dating for the text, it may be the earliest extant reference to Muhammad outside of the Qur'an: see above at note 3 and the discussion of Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 55–61.

104. *Doctrina* 5.16 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 209).

105. *Doctrina* 5.16 (Déroche, "Doctrina Jacobi," 211).

The end of the world was very much in the air in the seventh century, across the Mediterranean and west Asia.¹⁰⁶ But uniquely among Christian apocalyptic texts of the sixth and seventh centuries, the *Doctrina* envisions and even celebrates the end of the Roman Empire, rather than making Roman triumph a precondition for the coming *eschaton*.¹⁰⁷ More commonly, Christian apocalyptic texts yoked Christ's second coming to imperial success.¹⁰⁸ It is possible that Heraclius's edict on forced baptism itself had apocalyptic motives, as Paul Magdalino has argued: in the wake of his triumph over the Persians and recovery and restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem, Heraclius may have been persuaded that the *eschaton* was imminent, and therefore sought to hasten its arrival (and his own eternal triumph) by bringing the "remnant of Israel" into the church.¹⁰⁹

David Olster explained what he saw as the *Doctrina*'s anti-Roman viewpoint as fundamentally a Jewish one: it was meant for a Jewish audience, already prone to resisting Roman power, and probably even composed by a convert from Judaism. (Olster even goes so far as to proclaim, with not a little anachronism, that the *Doctrina* "might well be the only anti-Jewish work since Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* written by a converted Jew."¹¹⁰) It is true that, in addition to its occasional verisimilitudinous glimpses into Jewish life in the seventh century, the *Doctrina* also shares apocalyptic concepts with contemporaneous Jewish texts, like the *Sefer Zerubbabel*.¹¹¹

106. Stephen J. Shoemaker has written about the apocalyptic atmosphere pervading (and, at times, uniting) Christians, Jews, and Muslims in this period: *Death of a Prophet*; "The Tiburtine Sibyl, the Last Emperor, and the Early Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Forbidden Texts on the Western Frontier: The Christian Apocrypha in North American Perspectives*, ed. Tony Burke (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 218–44; and now *Apocalypse of Empire*.

107. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 168.

108. Stephen J. Shoemaker, "The Afterlife of the Apocalypse of John in Byzantium," in *The New Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Derek Krueger and Robert S. Nelson, Dumbarton Oaks Symposia and Colloquia (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2016), 301–16, at 305–6, speculates that the Apocalypse of John itself lost cachet in the Byzantine period because of its stark anti-Rome stance.

109. Paul Magdalino, "All Israel Will Be Saved? The Forced Baptism of the Jews and Imperial Eschatology," in *Jews in Early Christian Law: Byzantium and the Latin West, 6th–11th Centuries*, ed. John Tolan, Nicholas de Lange, Laurence Foschia, and Capucine Nemo-Pekelman, Religion and Law in Medieval Christian and Muslim Societies 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 231–42 at 235–42. Stricker, "Wolves of Arabia," 426–27, expresses some skepticism at Magdalino's argument, preferring to see in Heraclius's decision "a strategy to eliminate . . . a perceived political threat" (427). The two are not, of course, mutually exclusive.

110. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 160.

111. Outlined by Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 172–74.

Most notably the anti-Christ figure Hermolaos in the *Doctrina* recalls the *Sefer Zerubbabel's* evil Armilos.¹¹²

Olster notes, "This apocalypticism could only have been meant for a Jewish audience, its later appeal to Christians notwithstanding."¹¹³ That last clause provides an important hedge on Olster's argument about the fundamental Jewishness of this apocalyptic text on conversion. While populated almost entirely by Jews in various states of becoming sincere Christians, the *Doctrina* can only be understood as a Christian text, that is, a text that takes the ideological tenets of Christianity as true and central to understanding the world. That the converting Jews in the text are made to embrace the fall of Rome as part of their coming to Christ, I think, *may* tell us something about Jews and Rome; it is certainly telling us something about *Christianity* and Rome.

I suggest we see this "post-Roman" apocalypse as leveraging a split Jewish identity to dislodge *orthodoxy* from *Romanness*. We often think of the union of orthodoxy and empire as inaugurated by Constantine and completed by, say, Justinian, but this narrative assumes a particular "orthodox" vantage point, one emanating from Chalcedon in the fifth century and variously affirmed and compounded by imperial patronage. The reality is that, from the moment the first emperor endorsed a particular cadre of Christians in the fourth century, significant numbers of other Christians found themselves alienated from the affiliation of *empire* and *orthodoxy*. This orthodox imperial alienation was as alive in the time of Heraclius as it was in the time of Constantine.¹¹⁴ Phil Booth describes post-Constantinian late antiquity as "a Christian culture cut through with political ambiguity, one that held forth the possibility . . . of a political identity distinct from,

112. See Déroche, "Commentaire," 264–68. On Armilos in Byzantine Jewish apocalypse, see Himmelfarb, *Jewish Messiahs*, 37–38, 128–36, 152–57. It should be noted that Paul J. Alexander argued that even texts like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* that venerated the "last Roman emperor" in the eschatological hour may also have deep ties to Jewish traditions: "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and Its Messianic Origins," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 1–15. Siverstev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 154–58, points out that Armilos does not only merely position itself against Rome (Armilos = Romulus), but "explores and exploits the profound ambivalence inherent within the [Christian] tradition itself . . . [and] fully engages Byzantine cultural and religious anxieties of the day" (157).

113. Olster, *Roman Defeat*, 171. Déroche, "Commentaire," 268–273, agrees that Jews are the target readers of the text, but unlike Olster does not see credible evidence that the author ("assez peu renseigné sur les gens qu'il veut convertir" [272]) was himself a Jew or former Jew.

114. On Heraclius's theological conflicts, see Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 52 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), esp. 186–224.

and even apathetic to, that of Rome.”¹¹⁵ The compounding of imperial dissatisfaction with the decades-long loss of imperial territory to non-Christian outsiders—Persians at the beginning of Heraclius’s reign, Muslims at the end—provided further grist for the post-Roman apocalyptic world-view that distinguishes the *Doctrina*. Maximus the Confessor, who argued strenuously against the imperially forced baptisms of Jews, lived his life in various states of imperial alienation:¹¹⁶ his presence in Carthage, where he witnessed the execution of Heraclius’s edict, was as a refugee from the Persian wars in the East; later in his life, he was serially tried and eventually tortured and exiled for his rejection of Monotheletism, the orthodoxy promulgated by Heraclius from Constantinople.¹¹⁷

The *Doctrina* is located in precisely the nexus of “imperial eschatology” about which Stephen Shoemaker has recently written.¹¹⁸ In contradistinction to the predominantly “anti-Empire” apocalypticism of Hellenistic Judaism, Shoemaker traces an apocalypticism that grafted itself onto the logic of empire, emerging in the fourth century, swelling in the sixth century, and reaching a “peak” in the seventh century, “on the eve of Islam.”¹¹⁹ Of this imperial eschatology, present in Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and, Shoemaker argues, earliest Islam, Shoemaker writes, “the late ancient Near East pulsed with apocalyptic anticipations that were linked to ideas of empire and conquest.”¹²⁰ Byzantine Christian texts of this period “portend eschatological fulfillment and deliverance through the Roman Empire’s victory and sovereignty.”¹²¹ I think we need to read the *Doctrina Jacobi* as a dissident Christian voice over against this “imperial eschatology,” a *post*-imperial eschatology that imagines the relationship between empire and *eschaton* quite differently.

115. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 2.

116. Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1998), 4–17, provides a useful summary of Maximus’s life. On the context of religious dissent in seventh-century Africa, see Conant, *Staying Roman*, 354–59.

117. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 170–71, 318–26. In 638, Heraclius issued the *Ekthesis*, an official endorsement of the “single will” of Christ. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 268–70: “The issuance of the *Ekthesis* did not settle matters, it only inflamed them” (269). See also Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 240–41. For text and English translation of the *Ekthesis*, see Pauline Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy: The Synodical Letter and Other Documents*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 209–17. On 14, Allen notes that the *Ekthesis* was “drafted by the [Constantinopolitan] patriarch Sergius”; it is signed, however, by Heraclius.

118. Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*; Shoemaker also uses the phrase “imperial apocalypticism” (38, 74, 84, 117, 149, 150, 151, 179).

119. Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 74–75.

120. Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 65.

121. Shoemaker, *Apocalypse of Empire*, 87.

In reading the Jews of the *Doctrina* through the lens of a post-Roman Christian orthodoxy, the ambiguity of Jewish conversion—embodied, at one crucial moment, by the pro-Roman, anti-Christian voices of resistant Jewish women—makes a different kind of sense. Representing the stalwart defenders of Roman sovereignty as the persistent remainder of Jewishness following the forced baptisms allows the *Doctrina*'s author to reclaim a fractured orthodoxy from the imperial center. It was a way, somewhat ironically, to claim orthodox triumph from the jaws of imperial defeat. Olster read the *Doctrina* as one of a series of Jewish-Christian dialogues attempting to ameliorate seventh- and eighth-century Roman losses by imagining the dialogic defeat and conversion of Jews; he could only explain the anomalous *Doctrina* by imagining it came from Jewish hands. Who else but Jews, he argued, could embrace a Christianity without Rome? I argue that at least some Christians embraced a post-Roman *eschaton*, and in the *Doctrina* deployed the image of fractured, partially Christianized baptized Jews to think through its implications.

The imperially forced conversion of Jews provides an opportunity to ponder the relationship between salvation and empire, between Roman force and orthodox truth. As in so many Christian texts, Jews represent a superseded past: here, a past in which Christians could imagine the power of empire perfectly aligned with the truth of orthodoxy. The Jewish converts, always incomplete, never quite reaching full Christianity, are the sad mascots of imperial failure. Gender analysis allows us to attend more closely to the complex and slippery language of power in which this imperial failure is phrased. When the Jewish women cry out they both disrupt the force of empire—ensuring that readers can never fully see their male relatives as the “true Christians” Heraclius's order envisioned—and mimic that failed force, as they themselves do not succeed in pushing Justus to defend and maintain his Judaism. Gender, to cite Scott's dictum, “is the primary way of signifying power,” but its significations are rarely straightforward or simple.¹²² To borrow the language of light and shadow found throughout the *Doctrina*,¹²³ the baptized Jews and the disintegrating Empire oscillate in a weird synchronicity, the feminized penumbra that

122. Scott, “Gender,” 42; see Liz James, “Men, Women, Eunuchs: Gender, Sex, and Power,” in *The Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 31–50.

123. Before setting sail, Justus proclaims to Jacob: “Teacher of Light! For Christ is the Light and your teaching leads to the Light, to Christ” (*Doctrina* 5.19 [Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 213]). For repeated light/shadow imagery see *Doctrina* 1.13, 24, 28, 38; 3.6, 7; 4.5; 5.4, 8 (Déroche, “*Doctrina Jacobi*,” 87–89, 105, 111, 127, 159, 163, 181, 189, 197).

allows the masculine triumph of a post-Roman, eschatological Christianity to shine more brightly.

It may seem that, in deploying gender analysis to locate the eschatological logic of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, I have evacuated the historical reality of two groups routinely marginalized and erased in the history and historiography of Christian late antiquity: Jews and women (categories which are not, of course, mutually exclusive). Yet, following the lead of recent research in Jewish-Christian relations, I believe such rhetorical analysis opens us up to the possibilities of imagining the marginalizing effects of difference in new ways.¹²⁴ Twenty years ago, Elizabeth Clark wrote about the after-effects and echoes of male rhetoric about early Christian women: “she leaves her traces, through whose exploration, as they are embedded in a larger social-linguistic framework, she lives on.”¹²⁵ So too I think the Jews and women—not to mention the Jewish women—“live on” in the wake of the rhetorical work that the *Doctrina* undertakes, now able to inhabit new socio-linguistic positions in light of the *Doctrina*. Heraclius was not the last emperor to order the baptism of Jews; the seventh and eighth centuries saw repeated attempts to force Jewish conversion in the Byzantine Empire and in the western Christian kingdoms of Europe.¹²⁶ As these baptized Jews woke to a new life—of the church, but never fully in it; *Christianized* but never fully *Christian*¹²⁷—the social logic of the *Doctrina* created the space to imagine a Jewish-Christian life poised perilously at the end of empire, seeking comfort and solace in “hidden spaces” known only to fellow former Jews, allowing—on occasion—the clear, bright voice of resistance to sound out from women and men.

Andrew S. Jacobs is a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School

124. For recent, theoretically inflected work on the historiographic possibilities of rethinking “Jewish-Christian relations,” see Reed, *Jewish-Christianity*, and, with particular attention to the implications of gender theory, Eric C. Smith, *Jewish Glass and Christian Stone: A Materialist Mapping of the “Parting of the Ways,”* Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World (London: Routledge, 2018).

125. Elizabeth A. Clark, “The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the ‘Linguistic Turn,’” *CH* 69 (1998): 1–31, at 31.

126. Dagron, “Introduction historique,” 28–38 and 43–45 on forced baptism of Jews during and after Heraclius’s reign. The eighth canon of the second council of Nicaea in 787 addresses the problem of false converts from Judaism in terms that seem little changed from the fifth or seventh centuries.

127. See Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *The Location of Culture*, revd. ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 121–31.