The Ways That Never Parted

Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity
and the Early Middle Ages

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with the possibility, other things being similar, that the same sorts of things happened in the period or materials we study. Thus we build up probabilities on the basic assumption that individuals and groups operating under similar conditions will operate similarly. To the extent that our impressions about what is similar are accurate, and to some degree persuasive, we fill in some of the missing blanks in the historical records. And we operate on sort of a spiral of exploration, which comes around to the same questions and subject matter every so often but with fresh insights and sometimes even new evidence that has been acquired since the previous time around, thus moving the discussion to a new level. Since we can’t all be expert in everything that is significant or necessary for our investigations, a major factor in this weighing and reweighing process is the identification of trustworthy partners and resources in the process. Whom do you trust in areas outside of your expertise? And why?

What does all this have to do with the “Parting of the Ways” or “The Weighing of the Parts” in exploring the respective developments of those complexities covered by the terms “early Judaism” and “early Christianity” – and what followed them in both the “classical” formulations and also otherwise? Our most basic definitions and assumptions tell us that at a most obvious level (“the big picture”), the ways did part, although perhaps at different times and under different circumstances in different locations in the course of history. But by weighing the parts – that is, by recognizing the immense diversity that existed (and to some extent still exists) within and between the targeted traditions and attempting to understand how the representatives interacted, or perhaps refused to do so – we may be able to begin to understand more fully, if not more clearly, what was involved in the various processes out of which classical Judaism and classical Christianity shaped themselves and gradually became dominant (at least from the perspective of traditional Western history) and definitionally mutually exclusive from the fourth century onward.

The Lion and the Lamb

Reconsidering Jewish–Christian Relations in Antiquity

by

ANDREW S. JACOBS

A lion’s whelp is Judah: from the prey, my son, you rose up.

—Genesis 49.9

Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the world’s sin.

—John 1.29

The Lion and the Lamb have long been potent symbols of Judaism and Christianity. Although Judah is not the only son prophetically compared to an animal in his father Jacob’s prophetic testament,¹ the image of the Lion of Judah has long persisted in the religious imagination of Jews and others.² The lure of Judah’s lion as an icon of Jewishness may simply be

¹ Versions of this essay were presented to the Christianity In Antiquity reading group at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside; the North American Patristics Society annual meeting (2001); and the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting (2001). I would like to thank my diverse audiences for their thoughts and suggestions, especially Paula Fredriksen, who had to hear it twice and offered gracious support both times. Thanks also to Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam H. Becker for inviting me to include my essay in this collection.

² On the image of the lion (particularly the “lion of Judah”) in Jewish art and nomenclature in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and early modernity, see the entry “Lion” in Encyclopaedia Judaica 11 (1972): 262–76 (including many plates of lion imagery), as well as Cecil Roth’s study of Jewish heraldry (“Stemmi di famiglie ebraiche italiane,” in Scritti in memoria di Leone Carpi: Saggi sull'ebraismo italiano, ed. Daniel Carpi, Attilio Milano, and Alexander Rofé (Jerusalem: Sally Mayer/Milan: Scuola Superiore di Studi Ebraici, 1967), 165–84). The verses to Judah in Genesis 49 provided Martin Luther with a bountiful excess in his stunningly vitriolic treatise, On the Jews and their Lies (written in 1543). The lion has reappeared in ancient and Christian interpretation as a Christological symbol (due mainly to the confluence of the lion of Judah and the Lamb of God in Rev 5.5–6) and was used by the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie.
due to the fact that the people who considered themselves Jacob's physical and spiritual descendants came to be named after his son Judah (Yehudim, Ioudaioi, Iudaei, Jews). Or perhaps there has been something more compelling in the image of the fearsome lion slinking down by his prey, and commanding the obedience of many peoples.

The biblical lamb in my epigraph enters into view in the Gospel of John, between the cosmological opening and the account of Jesus' earthly ministry, when John the Baptist is being questioned by the "Jewish authorities." As the unfolding narrative of the gospel makes clear, the "Lamb of God" takes away the world's sin through a gesture of unparalleled self-sacrifice. Although the Son of God in John's gospel possesses ultimate power and authority, he submits to the most excruciating and humiliating death. This image of reversal and submission, like the warlike image of the Lion of Judah, has also persisted in the religious imagination of Christians and others.

It would be rewarding, I think, to explore how these iconic images—the Lion of Judah and the Lamb of God—have served to shape, or at times disrupt, the self-understanding of Jews and Christians throughout their histories. This essay, however, will not take that route. Instead, I invoke these iconic moments of speech in order to begin thinking about how imaginative historical reconstructions have shaped the modern scholarly discourse on Jews and Christians in antiquity, and suggest ways we might shift that discourse. In recent decades scholars have taken to framing their historical reconstructions of contacts between Jews and Christians in the first centuries CE as "relations." The term suggests interplay, interaction, discussion, debate, exchange, as well as the notion of being somehow "related," like brothers, or sisters, or parents and children. In some of the more ironic scholarship, "relations" has come to connote something like religious diversity or interfaith dialogue. By bringing the symbolic weight of the Lion and the Lamb to bear on this scholarly trend, I hope to suggest that the theoretical underpinnings of the study of "Jewish-Christian relations" might be in need of some imaginative rethinking.

I shall first explore the context in which this idea of "relations" has come to predominate in modern scholarship, exploring the double bind of ethical and historiographic concerns within which scholars of Jewish-Christian relations have been operating. An ethnically checkered historiographic tradition has resulted in the decisive, and perhaps problematic, theoretical divide between rhetoric and reality in the study of late antique religious identities. I shall then suggest how other theoretical scholarly positions that seek to reintegrate rhetorical and "realistic" historiographies might productively be brought to bear on the study of Jewish-Christian relations. I shall focus here specifically on postcolonial criticism, the emphases of which I feel can be especially helpful in reimagining religious and cultural contacts in the first several centuries CE. In the third section, I shall present a few readings of scenes of imperial domination and colonial resistance in the Roman Empire, focusing, as many studies of "Jewish-Christian relations" do, on the provinces of Palestine. Applying some of the theoretical insights of new reading practices may provide a historiographically viable reimagining of Jewish-Christian relations.

Shifting Historiographies: From Supersession to "Relations"

There is presently a sort of academic stalemate among scholars of ancient Judaism and Christianity, a contest about power and powerlessness, about uplifting truths and demeaning fictions, about rhetoric and reality. The sides of this contest can be rehearsed fairly quickly. We begin with the view that scholars held roughly a century ago about the "relations" between Jews and Christians—or, as they were more apt to consider it, between Judaism and Christianity. The professional historians of that time, meticulously trained in the study of ancient languages and texts (as well as in Christian theology), framed their historical studies of Judaism and Christianity in thinly veiled supersessionist terms. They imagined Judaism as progressively fading in significance through antiquity, until the first century when it was poised to be superseded and replaced wholesale by Christianity. These scholars juxtaposed the moral and spiritual exhaustion of Judaism with the fresh and revitalizing movement.

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5 The term "Jewish-Christian relations" in its various forms (including "Beziehungen" or "Rapports") was certainly used in earlier scholarship, but I would suggest it has become a recognizable "subfield" only in the postwar period.

6 Probably the most fruitful use of the "familial" ties of early Christianity and (especially rabbinic) Judaism recently is Alan Segal's Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986). See also the discussion in Daniel Boyarin, Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 1–16 and 133–44 (notes).
inaugurated by Jesus. They the Jewish Lion of Judah, they imagined, was rather mangy and toothless, not to mention ritualized and legalistic, by the first century CE. They called this Spätjudentum, “late Judaism,” a religion on the decline. By contrast, the Christian “Lamb of God” was quite spry and frisky, youthful and regenerative, breathing new life into the spiritually moribund Mediterranean world.

A major proponent of this view was Adolf von Harnack, whose works in the decades before and after the First World War are still considered foundational for the study of early Christianity. Harnack could not imagine any vital contact between Jews and Christians once the lively Lamb of God arrived on the scene. Whatever “real” religious vigor the Jews had possessed, he thought, did not survive the destruction of their Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, or their refusal of the call to universalism embraced by Christianity:

The Jewish people (das jüdische Volk), by their rejection of Jesus, disowned their calling and administered the death-blow to themselves; in their place came


Julius Wellhausen’s pioneering work in redaction criticism of the Hebrew Bible (following W. De Wette) enshrined a historical trajectory from livery and moral prophetic wisdom to a calcified and uninspiring ritualism (coincidentally ripe for invigoration by Jesus); see discussion in Pasto, “Islam’s ‘Strange Secret Sharer,’” 442–47.

5 According to Martin Jaffee, Early Judaism (Princeton: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 22, the term Spätjudentum was likely coined by German historian Wilhelm Bousset in his Die Religion des Judentums in neusterzeitlichen Zeitabläufen (Berlin: Rüther and Reichard, 1906 [originally 1903]); see pp. 1–2 where Bousset defines “late Judaism” as the period from the Maccabean revolt (ca. 160 BCE) to the Bar Kokhba revolt (or, as he calls it, the “Hadriatic War,” ca. 130 CE). Bousset is also credited with this ideologically laden neologism by Anders Runesson, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity: Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology,” Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism 1 (2000): 120–44, at 130.

6 See the rather chill representation of this viewpoint (presented for critique) by Shaye J. D. Cohen in his textbook of ancient Judaism: “Late Judaism” was a sterile, lifeless organism, waiting in vain for the infusion of spirituality that only Christianity could provide. After the birth of Christianity ‘late Judaism’ lost all importance and could be ignored by scholars and Christians alike (From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, Library of Early Christianity [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987], 19).


7 The new people of the Christians (das neue Volk der Christen), who took over the entire tradition of Judaism. What was unserviceable in it was either reinterpreted, or allowed to drop away…. Yet gentle Christianity only brought to a conclusion a process which had begun long before in part of Judaism: the unbinding (Einschränkung) of the Jewish religion, and its transformation into a World Religion (Weltreligion).

Such leftover drags of Judaism could not “relate” to Christianity, nor did Christianity have any need to “relate” to the Jews. The Jewish Lion was toothless, and the Christian Lamb had found more satisfying pasture on which to graze.

Harnack brought this vision of a listless Judaism withering on the vine to his study of early Christian literature, particularly those Christian texts that recounted “debates” between Jews and Christians. These “debates,” as well as most Christian writings about Jews, were usually, according to Harnack, thinly veiled fictions: these Jews were “imaginary (gedachter) opponents,” devil’s advocates, stereotypes bearing absolutely no relation to real Jews or real Judaism. Christians writing about Jews, Harnack
concluded, engaged in a "specious polemic," making Christians look smart and triumphant to themselves and their pagan neighbors. Any vital interaction that was taking place in Christianity's first centuries was with the intellectuals of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, not the increasingly spiritless Jews.

Some of Harnack's contemporaries challenged the view of an ancient Judaism sapped of all vitality, but his supersessionist historical vision remained quite strong until World War II. As in so many areas of historical inquiry, the racialized and religious violence of World War II must be viewed as a watershed in religious historiography, as John Gager thoughtfully noted in the 1980s:

The study of relations between Judaism and early Christianity, perhaps more than any other area of modern scholarship, has felt the impact of World War II and its aftermath. The experience of the Holocaust reintroduced with unprecedented urgency the question of Christianity's responsibility for anti-Semitism: not simply whether individual Christians had added fuel to modern European anti-Semitism, but whether Christianity itself was, in its essence and from its beginnings, the primary source of anti-Semitism in Western culture.

A new note of historical responsibility was henceforth sounded among historians of religion. In the light of the Holocaust, scholars realized the ethical impact of their work outside the academy. To vacate the spiritual vitality of ancient Jews might be to justify the violence perpetrated against them - then as well as now. The sympathetic study of "Jewish-

Christian relations" may be said to have emerged, in part, from the shadow of Nazi death camps. Possibly the most significant scholar of this new, postwar view of "relations" was Marcel Simon; his work Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425) was originally published in French in 1948 and has appeared in various versions up to the most recent English edition in the mid-1980s. It is worth noting not only the ways in which Simon sought to revise previous scholarly supersessionism, but also the assumptions and presuppositions central to that ideology that he let stand. Like Harnack, Simon accepted that the vitality (or feebleness) of ancient Jews related directly to the historicity (or falsity) of Christian texts depicting Jewish-Christian interaction. Simon read the situation quite differently, however, and asked Harnack (posthumously): "Do men rage so persistently against a corpse?" Simon's answer was "no": there could not be so much rhetorical smoke without a real fire somewhere. He demonstrated in painstaking detail as Harnack - both men were thoroughly meticulous in their scholarly - the ways and degrees in which "relations" among Jews and Christians determined the levels of debate and conflict between them. He relied heavily on the early Christian writings about Jews that Harnack had dismissed as "imaginary." Simon concluded:

The problem of Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity was not a fictive problem. The two religions confronted each other, in a conflict the principal aspects of which I have attempted to determine. Judaism, from one end to another of the period under consideration, did not cease to bother the Church.

15 That is, "seinbare Polemik": Harnack, Alterkato, 64.
16 See Harnack, Alterkato, 64: "Es ist oben bemerkt worden, dass er gegen den Juden gerichtet ist, wie ihn der Christ sich dachte. Der Jude aber, wie der Christ ihn sich dachte, ist der Heide" (author's emphasis).
17 In the pre-war period we can point to Jean Juster, Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain: Leur condition juridique, économique et sociale (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1914); Wilhelm Boussert, Religion des Judenmens (see above, n. 9); and A. Lukyn Williams, Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologies until the Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1935). It is significant that each of these scholars (in the French, German, and British spheres, respectively) evince entirely different motives for his infusion of ancient Judaism with such liveliness: Juster is polemological (see pp. vii-viii); Boussert presses the "syncretistic" agenda of the Religionsgeschichliche Schule (see esp. pp. 540-94); and Lukyn Williams is overtly missionizing (see pp. x-xvii). Kim Haines-Eitzen has also directed my attention to the particular work and influence of formative English Quaker text critic James Rendel Harris: Kim Haines-Eitzen, "Ancient Judaism Imagined Through the Lens of Early Christianity: The Work of James Rendel Harris, 1852–1941" (manuscript). I thank Dr. Haines-Eitzen for sharing her initial work with me.
19 Equally significant in the decades following World War II was the issuing of the papal decretum Nostra aetate in 1965 (out of the second Vatican Council), which condemned anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish language in the Church and called for "fraternal dialogues" (fraternis colloquibus) between Catholics and Jews (as well as Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims) (Latin text of the decree found in Acta Apostolicae Sedis 59 [1966]: 140–45; 740–44).
20 See Albert I. Baumgarten, "Marcel Simon's Verus Israel as a Contribution to Jewish History," HTR 92 (1999): 465–78; he points out that the original French version included a preface that directly acknowledged the postwar, post-Holocaust context of this study (in which Simon is rather equivocal on the relation between history and theology). The preface was not included in the English translation.
22 My translation from the French; Simon, Verus Israel, 433. McKeating's English translation reads: "the problem of Jewish-Christian relations in the ancient world is a
In Simon’s historiography, the Jewish Lion has regained his claws, and the Christian Lamb does not frolic so carefree across the meadows of the ancient Mediterranean.

Simon’s revision of ancient Jewish–Christian “conflict” responded to a perceived need for a more fair and judicious evaluation of post-Temple Judaism, and it has remained highly influential. The decades following the appearance of Verus Israel witnessed a renewed interest in the Christian literature Harnack had deemed historically worthless, and a renewed appreciation for its utility in recovering the vital relations of Jews and Christians. Often the spoken or tacit understanding was that a more fair and ethical treatment of ancient Judaism would result from such efforts. Archaeological evidence from the ancient Mediterranean added another boost, insofar as scholars could identify with more certainty those places in which Jews and Christians both lived and most likely interacted. But scholars’ understanding of the nature of these interactions (“relations”) still relied (and continues to rely) heavily on Christian literature. There has remained a certain consensus that, without the willingness to read Christian literature as a type of historical evidence, a reflection or record of real interactions, there would be little or no way to judge how and on what terms Jews and Christians “related” it at all. Were such texts nothing but “specious” rhetoric, they would perform as historically invalid, resulting in an ethically harmful Jewish

real one [n’est pas un faux problème]. The two religions did confront each other, in a conflict whose principal aspects I have attempted to delineate. From beginning to end of the period we have been considering, Judaism did not cease to trouble the Church” (English Verus Israel, 369).

Simon himself remarked on the durability of his thesis in a postscript written in 1964: Verus Israel, 385, 390, 395, and 406 (references to the English translation) all note the validation or confirmation of various major theses of the original work. This postscript also broadly treats six issues: the vitality of Judaism, Jewish proselytism, the question of “anti-Semitism” in the early church, Jews in the Roman Empire, the identity of the minin (Jewish “heretics”), and the problem of “Jewish Christianity.” All of these, incidentally, remain centrally debated subjects in the history of ancient Judaism and early Jewish–Christian relations, as any recent bibliography on the subject will demonstrate.


See, for instance, the recent overview of Thomas Braun, “The Jews in the Late Roman Empire,” Scripta Classica Israelica 27 (1998): 142–71, who surveys literary and archaeological evidence. The assumption remains, however, that Jewish “vitality” leads inexorably to “relations.”

history. Issues of historical ethics became intertwined with the needs of historical reconstruction, and in this context “Jewish–Christian relations” came alive: suddenly we saw the Lion wrestling with the Lamb.

The new discourse of “Jewish–Christian relations” has not been without its own critique. The most incisive criticism in recent years has been Miriam Taylor’s 1995 monograph, Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus. Through her own particular post-World War II lens, Taylor returned to the idea that much of Christian anti-Jewish literature was not real but rhetorical. For Harnack, the rhetorical nature of these texts had indicated the emptiness of ancient Judaism and the spiritual triumph of Christianity. For Taylor, reading these texts as rhetorical signaled the deeply symbolic and abiding nature of Christian anti-Judaism. Historians such as Simon (whom she singles out in her work as representative, if not the inaugurator, of the “scholarly consensus”) in fact replayed this anti-Jewish tendency by giving the Jewish Lion claws with which to fight against and provoke the Christian Lamb. As Taylor characterized their approach:

The focus on Judaism as stimulator of antagonism effectively succeeds in shifting the focus away from internal soul-searching in the Christian camp, in order to distribute the blame and divide the responsibility in accounting for the generation of prejudice. For if anti-Judaism is described as emerging out of a social conflict, then it can be characterized as the by-product of an historical rivalry in which both parties might be said to be equally involved, and equally responsible.

Despite noble intentions, Taylor claims, the result of this reading is a sort of “they-asked-for-it” theory of anti-Semitism that places a significant portion of the blame for anti-Jewish language (and, implicitly, behavior) on the Jews themselves.

Taylor’s “critique” has repolarized the debate about Jewish–Christian relations. Articles and conference papers have been dedicated to

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26 An additional shift in scholarly discourse has been the “Third Quest” of Historical Jesus scholarship, which has sought (among other things) to emphasize the thorough Jewishness of Jesus’ context, prompting more nuanced and theologically sympathetic studies of Jews in the first centuries CE and their “relations” to Christians. This seems to be the context in which the Society of Biblical Literature produced its first “consultation on Early Jewish/Christian Relations” in 1988 (later a “group” and now a “section”); see Jeffrey S. Siker, “A Brief Social History of Jewish/Christian Relations in the Society of Biblical Literature,” paper delivered at the 2001 SBL/AAAR Southeastern Regional Meeting (I thank Dr. Siker, one of the founders of the Early Jewish/Christian Relations Group, for sharing this paper and his recollections with me).

responding to her criticism.\textsuperscript{28} In addition to criticizing her reading of primary and secondary texts, respondents have also decried Taylor’s “either-or” stance: why must all of the literature be rhetorical? Can’t careful scholarship be the answer, distilling fact from fiction, debate from polemic, reality from rhetoric?\textsuperscript{29} Taylor’s view, some warn, risks a return to a harmful Harnackian historiography, stripping ancient Jews of their vitality and agency.\textsuperscript{30} The orientation of these scholars is ultimately clear: they still prefer to dig “beneath” the rhetoric for evidence of Jewish–Christian relations, while attending to the rhetorical nature of the writings separately.\textsuperscript{31} Rhetoric and reality remain ethically and historiographically opposed perspectives.

This aspect of the debate, from Harnack onward, has remained constant: the implicit division between “rhetoric” and “reality.”\textsuperscript{32} Even in the most recent scholarship since Taylor, there remains the sense that real evidence must be distilled from false rhetorical “images.” Furthermore, this choice between rhetoric and reality carries implicit ethical obligations on the historian: “real” readings of this literature will create a Jewish Lion with some teeth – the lion of Genesis 49 – even if that means in the process that the Christian Lamb must become a little bloodied – like the lamb of John 1. “Rhetorical” readings, on the other hand, risk conceding “truth” to supersessionist Christian images of Jewish decline, essentially plucking the Lion’s mane and leaving him weak and defenseless while the Lamb trots in a now somewhat sinister manner through fields unchallenged. Rhetoric or reality seems to be the choice: the Jewish Lion’s strength and the Christian Lamb’s innocence are made to depend on it.

A New Historiography: Past the Reality–Rhetoric Divide

This confrontation of ethics and history, of rhetoric and reality, resonates with other spheres of academic inquiry that originated in politically self-conscious attempts to change how we understand the past and in the present. Women’s studies, black studies, Hispanic studies, subaltern studies, gay and lesbian studies, and other similarly constituted fields have all grappled with what one historian has called the “text–context conundrum.”\textsuperscript{33} That is, how can we write responsible history from biased literary documents? How can we ethically and fairly derive the social from the rhetorical? How can we recover the history of an oppressed or minority group from literature that sets out to distort, demean, or even erase that group?

To take an example familiar to historians of religion: in the political climate of the 1970s and 1980s, feminist historians enjoyed an initial heyday of “discovering” and celebrating female personalities in early Christian or Jewish history.\textsuperscript{34} In the 1990s, however, many of these same historians became acutely aware of the fact that they were often attempting to extract historical information about women from highly rhetorical, male-authored texts. These same texts that gave


\textsuperscript{30} See Shoemaker, “‘Let Us Go’,” 786–88; and Timothy Horner, “The Adversus Judaicos Tradition: Window or Mirror? A Discussion of Some of the Methodological Issues in Determining Early Christian/Jewish Relations,” paper presented at the 1996 SBL Annual Meeting (I thank Dr. Horner for sharing some of this paper with me).

\textsuperscript{31} Certainly the most vivid example of this historiographic strategy in Patristics is Robert Wilken, John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century. Transformation of the Classical Heritage 4 (Berkeley: U. of California, 1983).


biographical data on ancient Christian and Jewish women were also grounded in the religious misogyny feminist historians were seeking to overturn. The irony attendant upon this "linguistic turn" of poststructuralist history was acute: it seemed that, even centuries later, the biases of male authors were serving to silence women and their histories. I suggest that the history of "Jewish-Christian relations" has reached a similar conundrum: if we rely on one-sided and highly rhetorical Christian texts about Jews for our understanding of how Jews and Christians "related," how do we acknowledge the literary nature of the evidence? Do we not risk internalizing and replicating the very biases of Christian rhetoric? Can real Jews emerge from the rhetoric of early Christians?

The problem seems particularly acute when we try to engage Jews and Christians in their social and political context of the Roman Empire, especially in the post-Constantinian period. From about 325-550 CE, some of the most rhetorical and strident literature imaginable about Jews came from the styluses of ancient Christian authors. At the same time, however, Jews were notably quiet on the subject of Christian "triumph" and imperial rule. What scholars have been able to deduce from the Jewish literature of this era about Romans and Christians is veiled in symbolic, often coded language, couched in biblical metaphors that are patently disinterested in historical reportage. The Jewish Lion seemed to be remarkably lamblike, while the Christian Lamb, once cloaked in Roman imperial power, was on a leonine rampage.

One avenue worth pursuing out of the "text-context conundrum" might be presented by postcolonial criticism (a route that feminist historians, among others, have also taken). Broadly defined, postcolonial criticism


38 See the essays on gender and feminism in Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia UP, 1994). For the sake of convenience I choose the label "postcolonial criticism," although

is a distinct set of reading practices that seeks to uncover the cultural processes of domination and appropriation that are intimately interwoven with the politics of empire. Empires are built not only on economic and military might and exploitation, but also on more widespread forms of social and material domination at home and "in the colonies." Postcolonial critics engage the subtle processes of cultural construction to illuminate how imperial identities come into existence through the multifaceted subordination and appropriation of colonized subjects. Additionally, these critics explore how the colonized devise methods of exploiting and resisting the instabilities of imperial practice. There is a distinct political edge to postcolonial criticism; critics analyze these colonist practices in order to show how they might be unmasked and, potentially, resisted by the objects of this power: the colonized subjects themselves. The material of such analyses is often imperial literature, or, more rarely, literature produced by colonial subjects under the constraints of imperial regimes. The approach of postcolonial criticism towards this "evidence" can, I think, be instructive and elucidating to historians of religion. At the risk of overly schematizing a diverse and rich theoretical enterprise, I want to give a rapid overview of the foundational assumptions of postcolonial criticism, before moving on to some specific readings of the ancient literature that might suggest how this new perspective might help us reconsider Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity.

A central premise of many postcolonial analyses is that discourse – by which I mean not just words but also authoritative structures of meaning and action – does not reflect the "real world" of its participants, but rather constructs that world. When the empire speaks, it speaks from a position of authority and determination. In writing "the subaltern," the figure of colonial appropriation, the imperial writer institutes an ideological world in which things can only be a certain way. When imperial subjects speak authoritatively, we cannot dismiss it as "mere rhetoric." Nor, however, can we benignly condone imperial language as "merely reflective" of

a variety of other theoretical labels might suit as well: postcolonial theory, postcolonial studies, colonial discourse analysis, colonial criticism, and so forth.

39 In this sense it is not a metanarrative theory, like Marxism or Freudianism, but rather a loosely affiliated array of critical stances with regard to colonialism, politics, literature, and history.

40 See also Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Context, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), 12: "a distinct set of reading practices ... preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge, and reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination – economic, cultural and political – between (and often within) nations, races or cultures."

conflict between imperial and colonial subjects, thereby flattening the imbalance of power that defines colonial existence. As one colonial historian has noted: “Domination is a relationship.” The rhetoric of empire should not then be kept distinct from reality; such rhetoric produces reality, determines in what manner reality can come to be. The discursive analysis of empire demonstrates how the rhetoric-reality divide begins to evaporate.

Like many aspects of imperial administration, the forceful construction of colonial identity is a sobering idea, invoking Orwellian images of totalitarian thought-control. What saves this notion of “rhetoric producing reality” from seeming to be yet another form of political domination, intractable and irresistible, is a second useful idea prominent in postcolonial criticism: the idea of imperial ambivalence. Postcolonial theorists have traced the ways in which imperialist language, while authoritative and dominating, is also unstable and fluid and so always vulnerable to colonial resistance. At the moment in which the imperial subject “creates” the colonial object, he has also conjured up his own inerasable “other,” constantly present and potentially threatening. As he fantasizes about her, he fears her; as he controls her, he reminds himself that she constantly necessitates control, that only his imperial authority prevents her from overturning his dominion. At the moment she is conjured into his imperial world, the colonial object resists her place in that world by exploiting this lack of imperial coherence. In the discursive analysis of empire, imperial identities themselves constantly shift, and authority, power, and control rest on no stable ground.

A further assumption of postcolonial theory that historiaas should find useful is the focus on the material consequences of colonialist discourses. Empires are not metaphors; they are real sites of physical domination and political resistance. Colonial subjects are not ideas; they are people. The material foundation and effects of colonialism provide an salutary response to those who perceive “literary” criticism to be too ephemeral or evanescent to be rhetorical. Discourses of control and resistance materialize. Even when colonial existence has been arbitrarily and, at times, brutally directed by imperial control, the economic and administrative machinery of imperialism ensures that colonial subjects cannot be “thought” out of existence. The reality produced by ambivalent imperial rhetoric is fixed in the material world in which people eat, sleep, and live.

42 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, The New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 1998), 37: “no human utterance could be seen as innocent .... The place of language, culture and the individual in political and economic processes could no longer be seen as simply derivative or secondary.”


From the vantage point of postcolonial criticism, I want to reexamine some of the literary materials of “Jewish-Christian relations.” These are all moments of contact found in Christian writings about Jews from the holy land. Such a geographic restriction can allow us both to narrow the scope of inquiry and to ground it in a particularly rich and meaningful site. Taking my cue from the discursive and material analyses of postcolonial theory, I shall read this material not as the raw data of historical reconstruction – as transparent reality – nor as the discardable fantasy of the Christian psyche – as mere rhetoric. Instead, from within these episodes I want to trace the utility of four common “themes” of postcolonial criticism: colonial mimicry, imperial hybridity, the inscription of domination, and the ultimate instability of imperialist discourses. My hope is that these familiar scenes and new thematic frameworks can provide at least one new theoretical perspective from which we might imagine how Jewish reality and Christian rhetoric were simultaneously produced, contested, and reformulated in the late antique world.

**Origen and Colonial Mimicry**

I begin in the third century, a period when Christianity was a minority sect in the wide-ranging Roman Empire. The fantasy of the sacrificial Christian lamb was widespread during this period: Christians in the second and third centuries imagined themselves as paradigmatic “sufferers,” the martyred elect facing off against an antagonistic empire. In this context Origen is credited by ancients and moderns alike with infusing the early Christian movement with a new strain of erudite intellectualism. Origen spent much of his life as a preacher in Palestinian Caesarea Maritima, where he became notable for his attempts to learn Hebrew in order to understand better the Christian Old Testament, as well as for his supposed interactions with the learned Jews of his day. Origen’s biblical commentaries and sermons are peppered with references to “what a Jew taught me” and “what the Jews say.” Modern scholars interested in “Jewish-Christian relations” have made prolific use of this material in


order to reconstruct Jewish intellectual life and its relation to Christianity. For my part, I do not think that Origen is lying or maliciously planting red herrings for scholars to chase. I do, however, propose that this straight reading of Origen's accounts of his conversations and debates with contemporary Jews should be examined in a more critical light. If we read Origen's notices of debates and interaction neither as evidence of rhetorical fancy nor as objective reportage, we might instead perceive how the religious politics of empire are being at once reified and contested. In Origen's day, Jews enjoyed a cultural and political legitimacy (as tenuous as it may have been) that Christians did not. Their odd and sometimes unsettling beliefs and practices (such as monotheism and circumcision) had legal protection, and Jews had the benefit of a long and rich ethnic history to grant them some cultural legitimacy. Origen relates his Christian identity to this Jewish legitimacy in the interests of cultural and religious resistance against the Roman Empire.

Origen's framing of Roman, Jewish, and Christian political power becomes particularly clear in his correspondence with Julius Africanus. Africanus had been present at a public debate between Origen and some "ignoramus" (as Africanus calls him) during which Origen made reference to the story of Susanna from the book of Daniel. As Africanus points out to Origen, this story is not found in Hebrew versions of the book of Daniel, only in Greek versions (which most Christians used); what's more, it seems likely (to Africanus as well as modern scholars) that the story of Susanna was a later addition, composed in Greek and added to Daniel at a later date. Africanus is writing to ask how Origen, who knows Hebrew and knows real Jews, could make reference to this apocryphal biblical story.


47 See, for instance, the discussion of Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1987), 54-86.


51 Origen describes the interaction of Christians and Jews as "dialoguing" (dialegomenon) and "debate" (zhēstis): *Epistula ad Africanum* 9 (de Lange, *Origène*, 534).


53 On colonial "mimicry" see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
subversively (like racial "passing"). Jews, in this period, had a recognizable voice in the Roman Empire; Christians did not. By correlating his illegitimate Christianess to their legitimate Jewishness, Origen creates a space in which to assert Christian resistance. This does not mean Origen and Jews did not have contact of the type that Origen implies; it also doesn't confirm that they did. It is rather the way Origen positions himself and the Jews within the intellectual climate of the Roman Empire that tells us something about how a minority group might achieve a measure of cultural legitimacy despite political disenfranchisement; it informs us about the political and intellectual situation of Jews and Christians in the Empire.

Jerome and Imperial Hybrirdity

Jerome, living in Palestine 150 years after Origen, is often compared to Origen for his "zealous" learning of Hebrew and his interactions and debates with local Jews. Much, of course, had changed in 150 years: Christianity had inverted its position in the Roman Empire, from marginal and illicit to central and powerful. In this religious and cultural climate, Jerome moved to Bethlehem in the 300s, and there for close to thirty years produced biblical translations, commentaries, and sermons in which he explicitly relied on Jewish informants and teachers. Yet if we might read Origen's rhetoric of Jewish knowledge from the standpoint of colonial mimicry, we might configure Jerome instead as the imperial hybrid: the agile arbiter of knowledge and power, negotiating between disgust of and desire for the "other," the imperial subject produced from within the colonial margins.  

When Jerome describes his interactions with Jews, he does not, like Origen, allow them any upper hand, any baseleia. Instead, he fashions them into Christian "tools," living dictionaries or reference manuals that he can adeptly handle. He has paid good money, he tells one friend, to get the best Jewish teacher of Hebrew available to come to his monastic cell to help him with translations. Jerome appears to unite his Christian superiority with the dominating privilege of empire: he can interact with, and even read and speak like a Jew by nature of his imperial superiority. In Jerome's dominating language, however, we begin to see how assertions of power summon the threat of cultural contamination: the perilous slide from imperial knowing to colonial becoming. Unease surrounds his casual handling of Jewish knowledge from real Jews. His friends (and even more so his enemies) ask him whether this is such a good idea, consorting with Jews, reading and speaking Jewishly. Jerome must write to some friends in Rome to assure them that he's "going native":

Back in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with what trouble and at what cost I acquired Bar Haninah as my night-time teacher! He so feared the other Jews that he showed himself as a second version of Nicodemus ... If it is expedient to hate any man and to detest any nation, I have a notable hatred for the circumcised [i.e., Jews]. Even into the present day they persecute our Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogues of Satan. Yet can anyone object to me for having had a Jew as a teacher?  

Jerome's assertions of imperial control ironically invoke the threat of colonial contamination: Bar Haninah, the local Jewish teacher smuggled in at night to Jerome's monastery, carries the implicit threat of "the synagogues of Satan." The reader is asked to believe that Jerome's particular mastery can allow him to appropriate the knowledge while avoiding the peril. This swaggering attitude is typical of colonialist discourses of cultural conquest; we might imagine Sir Richard Burton successfully "passing" as a Muslim in order to view the sacred stone at the shrine of Mecca. But the swagger also covers over the cultural danger of contamination, of crossing that line between imperial and colonial

55 My understanding of hybridity also relies on Bhabha, especially "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," in Location of Culture, 102-22; see also Robert Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race (London: Routledge, 1995).
58 Jerome, Epistula 84.3.2. Text in Sancti Hieronymi Eusebii Epistulæ, ed. J. Hilberg and M. Kampner, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 54-56 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), here vol. 55, p. 123. The cautious tipodiation of Jerome's friends in Rome (to whom he writes here) is potenically amplified by his Origenist opponent and erstwhile friend, Rufinus of Aquileia, who calls Bar Hanina "Barabba" (Apologia contra Hieronymum 2.15).
subject. The dominance in fact emerges precisely from the danger of that tight-rope walk: to claim the mastery of empire is to risk closeness to the colonial other. For Jerome, to be an imperial Christian means to risk Jewishness. If Origen’s representation of “Jewish–Christian relations” articulated Christian resistance by mimicking Jewish privilege, Jerome’s representation constructs the simultaneously perilous and triumphant posture of imperial Christianity over the resistant Jews. Deriving knowledge from the frontier of colonial existence elicits both the desire of cultural conquest and the fear of cultural contamination, what theorists have called the double-faced, hybrid quality of imperial identity. We might imagine Jerome, then, as the Christian Lamb parading around in the freshly skinned Lion’s pelt.

The Piacenza Pilgrim and the Inscription of Power

Another example of a “Jewish–Christian interaction” that has fueled the imagination of modern scholars comes from a lively pilgrimage text of the mid-sixth century (about 150 years after Jerome). From the author known as “the Piacenza Pilgrim” (about whom we know little except for his departure point in northern Italy) we can discern some of the ways in which Christian domination could be viewed on and inscribed into an expressly “other” landscape. Sometime between 560 and 570 CE, our pilgrim traveled throughout the holy land and down to Egypt to visit the sites associated with Jesus and the Christian saints. In his account we see Palestine becoming fully and truly the holy land: a fantasy land of religious sights, sounds, wonders, and experiences that are produced by the locals and consumed by his pious gaze.

His tour group’s first stops are the cities of Galilee, where Jesus and his mother Mary supposedly grew up. In one city he sees the “breadbasket” Mary used as a little girl; in the village of Cana he sees the jugs in which Jesus turned water into wine. In the village of Nazareth, the first place he visits is the Jewish synagogue:

In the synagogue there is kept the book in which the Lord wrote his ABCs, and in this synagogue there is a bench on which he sat with other children. Christians can lift the bench and move it about, but the Jews are completely unable to move it, and cannot drag it outside. The house of Saint Mary is now a basilica, and her clothes are the cause of frequent miracles. The Jewsesses of this city are better looking than any other Jewesses in the whole country. They declare that this is

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63 Itinerarium Antonini Placentini 5 (Geyer, Itineraria, 131).
65 Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (London: Penguin, 1954), 44–45: “[Barak the relic-seller] had a Jew or two always within call to prove the truth of one-half of this assertion, the pilgrims themselves could prove the other half, if they paid for the privilege.”
Christian Lamb has become something of a flamboyant Lion-tamer, whip and chair in hand.

Stratēgios and the Instability of Empire

My final example comes from the seventh century, perhaps sixty years after the Piacenza Pilgrim visited Palestine, and gives us keen and, perhaps, disquieting insight into the ultimate instability of these colonialist and imperialist discourses. A Christian monk named Stratēgios was living near the city of Jerusalem when that city was attacked and stormed by soldiers from the neighboring Persian Empire in the year 614. Stratēgios wrote an account of the sack of the holy city, focusing on the tyranny of the barbarians and the cruelty of the local Jews. Stratēgios narrates how Jews opened the gates of the city to the Persian enemies of the Roman Christians. The Christians who were not deemed economically valuable by the Persian generals were confined to a nearby lake, where they slowly starved and drowned. When the Jews heard of this, according to Stratēgios, they were delighted and went to see:

The Jews approached the edge of the lake and proclaimed to God’s children, the Christians, as they were in Lake Mamila: “Whoever among you wants to be made a Jew, come up to us, and we will buy you from the Persians.” But their evil scheme was not accomplished by them, and their work was in vain. Moreover, the children of the Christians chose for their bodies to perish and for their souls not to die, and that no part of their lives should be with the Jews. When the Jews saw the true faith they burned with a fierce anger, and their barking was like that of dogs. They devised another plan: as if buying Christ with Judas’ coins, they wanted to buy the Christians from the lake with coins. And like lambs to be slaughtered, the Christians were purchased by the Jews from the Persians, and they were slaughtered. But the Christians rejoiced greatly when they were slaughtered for Christ’s faith.

Scholars enmeshed in the historical debates of “Jewish-Christian relations” still wrangle over the historical facts of this narrative. Did Jews really hand over the city of Jerusalem to the Persians (like vicious dogs)? Did they really Violently mistreat the Christians, forcing them to choose between conversion and death or slavery (like submissive lambs)? Those scholars who favor a “rhetorical” reading of Christian literature, disregarding Christian bias in favor of ethical representation of Jews, say “no.” Those scholars who seek the reality behind the rhetoric are often forced, in this instance, to affirm Christian bias and Jewish savagery and say “yes.” In terms of colonial and religious domination and resistance, replicated throughout the period of Late Antiquity, we might respond that this brutal narrative makes a sort of sense. From the intellectual resistance of Origen to the cultural appropriation of Jerome and the casual privilege of the Piacenza Pilgrim, we can trace the asymmetrical relations of culture and politics, of religious domination in the Empire. This episode, perhaps more than any other, encapsulates the challenges and benefits of historiographic readings that refuse to separate rhetoric from reality. We see here how the colonizer and the colonized reproduce and contest each other, embody and resist their constructed positions. Jewish and Christian “relate,” in a manner we may not have previously imagined, as subjects and objects of endlessly shifting and reorienting power relations firmly embedded in their material worlds. Out of these shifting relations emerges the possibility of fear, of desire, of control, of resistance and, in the end, of extraordinary violence, which may or may not be real with historical certainty, but remains chillingly real in its potential.

I am not reconstructing historical data for use in some great tribunal of accountability; I am tracing discourses that never ceased to produce new truths. At this moment of imperial decline and catastrophe, it makes a sort of cultural sense for the colonized Jewish Lion of Judah to burst from its cage and rise up against the weakened Christian Lamb of God; by acknowledging that cultural sense, we can start to comprehend the manner of religious life, culture, and contact in the ancient world, even if its actual twists and turns are lost to us.

67 The account survives in Georgian and Arabic recensions of a Greek original: G. Garrio, La prise de Jerusalem par les Perses en 614, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 202–3 (Louvain: CSSO, 1960); idem, Expugnationis Hierosolymae a D. 614 Recensiones Arabicae, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 340–41, 347–48 (Louvain: CSSO, 1973–74); the Georgian versions are probably an earlier witness of the Greek original. Stratēgios is sometimes confused with another contemporary monk, Eutychius, who refers to the Jews of this period as “friends of the Persians” in his deplorable poem, Anachoretica (Barnes, ed. M. Gigante (Rome-Gitomondi, 1957), 105).

68 Another contemporary witness of these events was Sophronius, later patriarch of Jerusalem, who refers to the Jews of this period as “friends of the Persians” in one of his epigrams of the Anachoretica (Barnes, ed. M. Gigante (Rome-Gitomondi, 1957), 105).

69 Stratēgios, Expugnation Hierosolymae 11 (cited here from the Latin rendering of one of the Arabic recensions).


73 See Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, 240: “we can abandon the grand narratives which once dominated the writing of history without also abandoning all analysis of the relationships between different forces in society.”
Conclusions and Suggestions

My foray into "Jewish-Christian relations" in the holy land is meant to be more suggestive than definitive. My goal has not been to dismiss the critical scholarship of students of Jewish-Christian relations, nor to suggest that the theoretical patch of postcolonial criticism can be used to iron over the ethical and historiographic dilemmas facing scholars in this field. I do think, however, that we gain some insight by viewing some familiar stories from a new theoretical lens:

It will be clear by now that such questions are not unique to the study of colonialism but are also crucial for any scholarship concerned with recovering the histories and perspectives of marginalised peoples - be they women, non-whites, non-Europeans, the lower classes and oppressed castes - and for any consideration of how ideologies work and are transformed. 74

Taken together, these somewhat imaginative permutations of the Jewish Lion and Christian Lamb do not allow us to peer through the literature on Jews by Christians into a stable and "real world," but they do, perhaps, give us useful intellectual grist to mull questions of precisely the sort of "ideological work" that Jewish-Christian relations have had difficulty facing.

I am not arguing for the reality of representations but rather am attempting to disclose how that reality was produced, scripted, and resisted through linguistic representations. We witness, in these "relations" between Christians and Jews, the way in which Christians and Jews constructed their world, reacted to their world, engineered their world through resistant or authoritative discourse. Like Gayatri Spivak,

what I find useful is the sustained and developing work on the mechanics of the constitution of the Other; we can use it to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than the invocations of the authenticity of the Other. 75

Scholars historically and ethically enmeshed in the debate over rhetoric versus reality may find the abandonement of "the Other's authenticity" a difficult pill to swallow. But we do not lose any political or scholarly traction when we turn to the "mechanics" of that Other's construction; instead we attend more astutely to the ways in which we might comprehend the significant and all-too-real interplays and consequences of politics and culture, of religion and identity.

74 Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, 231.
75 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Williams and Chrisman, Colonial Discourse, 90.

Modeling the "Parting of the Ways"

by

MARTIN GOODMAN

Much of the disagreement in modern scholarship about when, how, why, and indeed whether, the ways of Judaism and Christianity parted in antiquity derives from confusion about differences of perspective. The relationship of one group to another may be seen quite differently by members of the two groups, and differently again by the modern observer. Thus, for instance, someone considered Jewish by a Christian might not consider himself or herself Jewish, and might or might not be considered as a Jew by non-Christian Jews. It is unreasonable to expect ancient authors always to have made the clear distinctions which historians now seek to discover: the relationship between Jews and Christians may generally have been important for Christians as part of their self-definition, but it was much less crucial for Jews, who could ignore for much of Late Antiquity what Christians thought and did. 1 At the same time, occasional contact and conflict between members of distinct groups, and their sharing of theological notions or liturgical practices, need not imply any lack of clarity for the ancient participants of each group about the differences between them: if modern scholars find it hard to decide whether the author or intended readers of a particular text were Jews or Christians, it does not follow that those who produced and used the text in antiquity were similarly in doubt.

In illustrations of these varieties of perspective I drew up, for the last of the seminars held in Oxford before the Princeton colloquium, a series of schematic diagrams for the seminar participants to refine. Crude copies of the revised diagrams were distributed at the start of the Princeton meeting, where they were subjected to further alteration. They were amended yet again in the light of comments by a group in Cambridge and in reaction to the alternative models proposed by the student leaders of