

Alternate Visions of Judaism and Their Impact on the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism

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As a consequence of the indications that rabbinic Judaism was not the only, or even the dominant, form of Judaism during the first centuries C.E.,¹ a growing number of scholars have begun to recognize the likelihood of a continued diversity in post-70 Judaism and debate the possibility of recovering non-rabbinic forms of Judaism.² The recent insight that Jewish self-identity in antiquity seems to have been fluid enough to have allowed for adherence to Jesus

¹ C. Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement* (Tübingen, 1997); M. Himmelfarb, “The Parting of the Ways Reconsidered: Diversity in Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations in the Roman Empire: ‘A Jewish Perspective,’” in *Interwoven Destinies: Jews and Christians Through the Ages* (ed. E. J. Fisher; New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 47–61.

² M. Goodman, “Sadducees and Essenes After 70 CE,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. S. E. Porter, et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 347–56; A. Y. Reed, “Rabbis, ‘Jewish Christians,’ and Other Late Antique Jews: Reflections on the Fate of Judaism(s) After 70 C.E.,” in *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity, and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity* (ed. I. H. Henderson and G. S. Oegma; München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 323–46. Recently J. Magness has re-examined the idea of ancient Palestinian synagogues as evidence of non-rabbinic forms of Judaism, finding in the temple-oriented nature of the images indications of priestly and mystical oriented forms of Judaism; J. Magness, “Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues,” *Dumbarton Oaks* 59 (2005): 1–52. As noted by Elijor and others, the priestly traditions linking the Qumran texts with apocryphal, pseudepigraphic, and apocalyptic literature resurface in later *hekhhalot* texts (Jewish mystic texts from the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud); R. Elijor, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005), 7–20, 232–67; R. Elijor, “From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly Review* 4 (1997): 217–67. This may be another indication of an uninterrupted presence of a priestly-oriented Judaism.

as an option *within* Judaism³ has opened up new avenues for exploring the existence and nature of non-rabbinic varieties of Judaism by reading texts, previously considered the products of “heretical” Christians (or “Jewish Christians”), or as “Christian” appropriation of Jewish traditions, as *Jewish* texts and as evidence of diversity within Judaism.⁴

For instance, David Frankfurter has suggested that 5 and 6 *Ezra* (=2 *Esdras* 1–2 and 2 *Esdras* 15–16), *Ascension of Isaiah* (*Ascension*), and *the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*Testament*) emerged in communities of halakhically observant prophecy-oriented Jews who at some point had come to embrace Jesus as the Messiah, while retaining a Jewish, or even priestly self-definition.⁵ In addition to their strong interest in prophecy and prophetic traditions, these texts are concerned with Torah observance, Israel’s past and future, the end-time salvation of a remnant of Israel, the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant with Israel’s God, the fate of non-Jesus-oriented Jews, and in the case of the *Ascension*, with heavenly ascent.

While the inclusion of Gentiles and harsh statements about non-Jesus-oriented Jews have been taken as evidence of non-Jewish authorship, both features can be readily understood within a Jewish framework. The inclusion of Gentiles seems to have been an issue of significant concern for Jews in the early centuries C.E.,⁶ and references to the rejection of Israel can be understood as an expression of a classic remnant theology with roots in the Hebrew Bible. As

³ D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), 1–24; D. Frankfurter, “Beyond ‘Jewish Christianity’: Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents,” in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 131–43.

⁴ C. E. Fonrobert, “The Didascalia Apostolorum: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 483–50; Frankfurter, “Beyond ‘Jewish Christianity’: Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents,” in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 131–43; Reed, “Reflections,”; A. Y. Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 189–231.

⁵ Frankfurter, “Beyond Jewish Christianity,” 131–43. See also R. G. Hall, “Isaiah’s Ascent to See the Beloved: An Ancient Jewish Source For the Ascension of Isaiah?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994): 463–84, who also sees the Jesus-orientation of the *Ascension* as an orientation within Judaism.

⁶ A continuation of this universalistic trend within rabbinic Judaism can be seen in the R. Ishmael school in tannaitic literature, see M. Hirshman, “Rabbinic Universalism in the Second and Third Centuries,” *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000): 101–15.

pointed out by Martha Himmelfarb, emphasis on God's anger with his people even to the point of rejection is a commonplace in prophetic literature, and does not preclude Jewish authorship.⁷ *Fifth* and *6 Ezra*, with their strong sense of being a privileged elect, and references in *5 Ezra* to "the people to come" to whom Israel's privileges are being transferred, would seem to represent a continuation of a remnant theology present in the Bible and Qumran literature, and can be understood to reflect intra-Jewish polemics, in which the author is involved in a struggle to define his community against other forms of Judaism.⁸

Even in the fourth century, adherence to Jesus seems to have been an option within Judaism. Charlotte Fonrobert has argued that the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (*DA*) ought to be read as a Jewish text and as evidence of Jewish diversity, and Annette Y. Reed has suggested that the groups behind significant parts of the *Homilies* (*Hom*) and *Recognitions* (*Rec*), the main texts that make up the Pseudo-Clementine writings, represent a Jewish identity that includes adherence to Jesus.⁹ Below, I will argue that the theologies as a whole, not just particular ideas or interpretive practices, developed by the *Homilies*, *Recognitions* and the *Didascalia* represent coherent Jewish, *although non-rabbinic*, visions of the history and mission of biblical Israel, and that these rival visions, precisely because of their Jewish nature, prompted a response from rabbinic Jews. Not only did these non-rabbinic groups self-identity as Jews, their

⁷ Himmelfarb, "The Parting of the Ways," 47–61, esp. 56–57. Bergren's conclusion, T. A. Bergren, *Fifth Ezra: The Text, Origin and Early History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 18–20 that *5 Ezra* is likely an integral composition speaks against the theory of a "Christian" reworking of an original "Jewish" text, and might support the claim that it is a composition by a Jesus-oriented Jewish group.

⁸ Bergren, *Fifth Ezra*, 317–21 discusses this possibility, but in the end opts for "Christian," in the sense of non-Jewish, authorship. However, he acknowledges the problem of applying the terms "Jewish" and "Christian" to texts such as *5 Ezra* when he writes: "[I]t is necessary to remain sensitive to the great diversity that characterized both 'early Christianity' and 'early Judaism,' and to the complex and sometimes subtle nature of the interface between the two. It is possible that *5 Ezra* represents a document, or contains material, that is close to this often elusive interface between Judaism and Christianity. Earliest Christianity was a form of Judaism in which some of the elements that one normally thinks of as typically 'Jewish' were absent, and in which some tendencies usually regarded as typically 'Christian' were embraced. . . . Some of these ideas formed the very basis of 'Christian' doctrine, yet many must also have been characteristic of forms of Judaism in the Hellenistic period. The fact that these ideas may not seem 'Jewish' to a modern observer is more a product of the triumph of rabbinic Judaism, and the loss of much evidence of 'alternative' forms of Judaism, than of historical reality" (p. 330 n. 13).

⁹ Fonrobert, "Didascalia Apostolorum," 483–509; Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 189–231.

theologies very likely made sense to other Jews, including rabbinic ones, and unless we regard adherence to Jesus as constituting a break with Judaism, there is nothing in these theologies that is inherently un-Jewish.¹⁰ In their approaches to prophecy, Torah observance, the inclusion of Gentiles, and the fate of non-Jesus-oriented Jews, they stand in continuity with Jesus-oriented texts from the second and third centuries mentioned above.

Prophecy-Oriented Forms of Judaism—The Pseudo-Clementines

Claims to prophetic authority in the Pseudo-Clementines raise the possibility that the groups behind the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* represent a continuation and development of a prophecy-oriented Judaism reflected in texts such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, 5 and 6 *Ezra* and the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.¹¹ Recent studies suggest that the *Ascension* and 5 and 6 *Ezra* emerged in schools of prophets who modeled themselves along the lines of biblical prophets while also embracing Jesus as the Messiah,¹² and a similar setting of circles of prophets has

¹⁰ The fact that these communities included Gentiles does not preclude a general sense of Jewish self-identity. I would assume that the Gentiles who joined these Torah observant Jewish-oriented Jesus-communities adopted a Jewish identity as it was envisioned by these groups. In view of Paul's struggle to keep the Gentile members of the Jesus movement from observing the Torah in the same way as the Jewish members did, the adoption of a Jewish identity on the part of Gentile Jesus-adherents of a later period does not seem implausible. Naturally, their perception of Jewish identity was different than the rabbinic one and possibly also from other prevalent definitions of Jewishness during the third and fourth centuries. The *Homilies'* definition of a Jew as someone who observes the law does not intrinsically privilege a Jew over a Gentile and might well have been appealing to non-Jewish adherents to Jesus. If we take seriously the idea that adherence to Jesus was an orientation within Judaism, we likely have to contend with multiple Jewish identities during the early centuries C.E.

¹¹ On the relationship between text and community see for instance, S. C. Barton, "Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences?" in *The Gospels for All Christians* (ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 173–94. Although one should be cautious in always assuming a distinctive community behind each text, these texts at the very least served the needs of some sort of interpretive community, or set of communities, in which they were written down and transmitted, and some of them, such as the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, reveal quite a lot of information about practices and hermeneutics shared by these interpretive communities.

¹² R. G. Hall, "The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 289–306, esp. 293–96; E. Norelli, *Ascension d'Isaïe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), 87–99; Frankfurter, "Beyond Jewish Christianity," 139. Syria/Palestine or Asia Minor has been proposed as the likely

been proposed for the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Lives of the Prophets* and *4 Baruch*.¹³ Jesus does not occupy a key place in these texts,¹⁴ and appears secondary to the major concerns of heavenly ascent and prophetic authority, leading Frankfurter to posit the existence of a multiform prophetic Judaism, which continued from a Jewish stage into a Jesus-oriented stage that was also Jewish.¹⁵ Thus, adherence to Jesus and the promotion of prophetic authority should not be seen as characteristics of “Christian” communities as opposed to Jewish ones, but rather as a trait distinguishing some Jewish groups.¹⁶

Ascension, whose final redaction is dated to the latter part of the first century or the early decades of the second century C.E.,¹⁷ seems to reflect a community in conflict with other prophetic groups, and its resemblance to the Book of Revelation, the Gospel of John, and the *Odes of Solomon* has led scholars to suggest an origin in a common milieu of rival prophetic schools for all these

provenance of all three works. Hall, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 296, and T. Elgvin, “Jewish Christian Editing of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 278–304, esp. 293, place the *Ascension* in Syria/Palestine while Frankfurter, “Beyond Jewish Christianity,” 139, sees Asia Minor as the most likely place of origin. T. A. Bergren, *Sixth Ezra: The Text and Origin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18–31, places 6 *Ezra* in Asia Minor, and Frankfurter, “Beyond Jewish Christianity,” 139, places both 5 and 6 *Ezra* there.

¹³ Elgvin, “Jewish Christian Editing,” 301.

¹⁴ Hall, for instance, underscores that nothing indicates that *Ascension* was primarily written about Jesus. He is clearly secondary to the concern with heavenly ascent and the beauties and glories of heaven; Hall, “Isaiah’s Ascent,” 476–79. *Fifth* and 6 *Ezra* do not even make explicit mention of Jesus.

¹⁵ Himmelfarb, “Parting of the Ways,” 54–56 has made a similar argument for 3 *Baruch*, suggesting that it may provide evidence for the existence of non-rabbinic Jews whose reaction to the destruction of the temple had much in common with that of the author of the book of Revelation.

¹⁶ Frankfurter, “Beyond Jewish Christianity,” 131–43.

¹⁷ R. Bauckham, “The Ascension of Isaiah: Genre, Unity and Date,” in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 363–90, esp. 381–90; Hall, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 300–306. While the *Ascension* has traditionally been seen as a composite text, there is a tendency in recent scholarship to see the book as a composition of a single author, although drawing on older traditions; Bauckham, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 365–74; Hall, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 289–306.

texts.¹⁸ *Fifth* and *6 Ezra*, dated somewhere between 130 and 250 and the mid-third or early fourth century respectively,¹⁹ also resemble Revelation as well as the Gospel of Matthew, leading Graham Stanton to conclude that *5 Ezra* together with the *Apocalypse of Peter* represent a continuation of the Matthean community, in which prophecy continued.²⁰ This suggests that a Jesus and prophecy-oriented form of Judaism reflected in first-century texts, such as the Gospel of Matthew and Revelation,²¹ continued as an orientation within Judaism well into the third century.

Although the communities of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* do not seem to have included circles of active prophets, they adhered to prophetic modes of authority as the only reliable source of knowledge about God. For both the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, prophecy is the only source of true knowledge about God, and the most prominent figure in the third-century source that they both independently rework is the true Prophet, whom the *Recognitions* identify with Jesus and the *Homilies* with Jesus and Moses, seeing them as two different manifestations of the true Prophet (*Hom* 2.16–17). The *Recognitions* in particular sees the true Prophet, Jesus, as the only conduit for knowledge about God (*Rec* 1.44; 5.5.3; 5.10.3): “The true Prophet . . . alone can enlighten the souls of human beings, so that with their eyes they may plainly perceive the way of salvation. For otherwise it is impossible to understand divine and eternal things, unless one learns from the true Prophet” (*Rec* 1.16.1–2), and similarly, “it is

¹⁸ Hall, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 289–306. The *Ascension* also displays numerous parallels with Jewish apocalyptic texts and later *hekhalot* literature, Bauckham, “Ascension of Isaiah,” 38; Hall, “Isaiah’s Ascent,” 464–65.

¹⁹ Bergren, *Fifth Ezra*, 24–26; Bergren, *Sixth Ezra*, 16–17.

²⁰ G. S. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 264–77.

²¹ Texts, which by an increasing number of scholars, are seen as expressions of Judaism of which Jesus-orientation was a part, rather than “Christian” as opposed to Jewish. For the view of Revelation as a Jewish text, see D. Frankfurter, “Jews or Not? Reconstructing the ‘Other’ in Rev 2:9 and 3:9,” *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (2001): 403–42; J. W. Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John’s Jewish Apocalypse* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2001); for the Gospel of Matthew, A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

impossible, without the true Prophet, to know what is pleasing to God" (*Rec* 1.44.5).²²

Prophetic knowledge is seen as superior to all other forms of knowledge, and those who have not received knowledge about God directly from Jesus cannot obtain it from any other source. By virtue of his personal relationship to Jesus, Peter embodies prophetic knowledge about God, a knowledge that is transmitted to the community through a line of succession from Jesus via Peter to the office of the bishop (*Rec* 19.14.4). As the bearer of prophetic knowledge transmitted from Jesus, Peter has interpretive authority far superior to all others.²³ Thus, the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, like the second- and third-century texts discussed above, maintain a tradition of prophecy and may reflect the continued existence of forms of prophetic Judaism from the Second Temple period,²⁴ preserved and further developed mainly by Jewish adherents to Jesus.

Originally composed in Greek, probably in Syria,²⁵ portions of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* were translated into Syriac in the early fourth century, and in the case of the *Recognitions* also into Latin, indicating a widespread circulation. Citing emphasis on the importance of Moses, the Torah, halakhic observance, and assertions of the continued chosenness of the Jews as indications of a Jewish self-identity, Reed has persuasively argued that the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* in their extant redacted forms represent a Jewish identity that includes adherence to Jesus.²⁶ For instance, *Rec* 1.27–71, a distinct

²² Cf. *Hom* 1.19.1–4; 2.4.3; 2.5.2–3; 2.8.2; 2.12.1–2; 3.11.1 and the end of *Rec* 1.16.8: “. . . thus it is beyond doubt that from none but Himself alone can it be known what is true,” N. Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 140–41. Translations modified upon consultation with the original and Kelley’s translation.

²³ Kelley, *Knowledge*, 138–46.

²⁴ Some Jews may never have ceased to believe in prophecy in spite of the rabbinic insistence that prophecy ceased with the last biblical prophets (*t. Sot.* 13:3; *y. Sot.* 9:13; *b. Sot.* 48b; *b. B. Batra* 14b; *S. Olam Rab* 30; cf. 1 Macc 9:27), or perhaps a revival of prophetic activity occurred during the first century due to the widespread belief that the end time was near, as suggested by B. Sommer, “Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 31–47.

²⁵ Edessa and Antioch are considered the most likely candidates; Kelley, *Knowledge*, 16 and n. 54. For a survey of scholarship on the Pseudo-Clementines, see S. F. Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *Second Century* 2 (1982): 1–33, 63–96. A brief overview is provided by Kelley, *Knowledge*, 17–27.

²⁶ Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 197–204.

source within the *Recognitions*,²⁷ seems to regard orientation toward Jesus as a strictly inner-Jewish affair. The author sees Jesus' teachings as a fulfillment and completion of those of Moses and depicts the Jesus community as one of a number of competing Jewish groups and the followers of Jesus as a group *within* Judaism. The distinction is not between "Christians" and "Jews" but between true Judaism and other Jewish groups.²⁸ As observed by Stanley Jones, the author considers his interpretation of Judaism as the religion originally intended by Moses and that "[f]or him, Christianity (a term he does not use) is true Judaism (another term he does not employ)."²⁹

The focus is on the Jews—Jesus is depicted as the Jewish Messiah, and the idea that Gentiles who have embraced Jesus are included into the covenant only after a majority of Jews refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah, is reminiscent of the view of the *Testament* that salvation is extended to the Gentiles through Israel's temporary unbelief. According to the *Testament*, Israel has failed in its mission and is dispersed because of its rejection of Jesus, but this is only temporary and serves the purpose of bringing the Gentiles into the promises of Israel through Jesus. Eventually, Israel will return to God, who will save both Jews and Gentiles: "The twelve tribes shall be gathered there and all the nations, until such time as the Most High shall send forth his salvation through the ministration of the unique prophet" (*T. Benj.* 9.3).³⁰ Jesus-oriented Gentiles do not replace Israel but are added to it.³¹

Recognitions 1.27–71 blames the failure of many Jews to embrace Jesus on Paul, who just when James had succeeded in persuading "all the people

²⁷ S. F. Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 159–63 argues that this source was written by a "Jewish Christian" living in Judaea ca 200 C. E.

²⁸ Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 204–205.

²⁹ Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 160.

³⁰ Cf. ". . . and all Israel will be gathered to the Lord" (*T. Benj.* 10.11), and "For the Lord will raise up from Levi someone as a high priest and someone as a king, God and man. He will save all the Gentiles and the tribe of Israel" (*T. Sim.* 7.2), translation from S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C. E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 107.

³¹ Cf. Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 106–107; Frankfurter, "Beyond Jewish Christianity," 140–42; Elgvin, "Jewish Christian Editing," 286–92. The salvation of Israel sometimes comes through obedience to God's commandments and sometimes through Jesus. Perhaps the author believed that adherents to Jesus—Jews and Gentiles—would be saved through Jesus and the rest of the Jews through God's original promise; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 106–107.

together with the high priest” that Jesus was the Messiah (*Rec* 1.69.8), is said to have burst into the temple, accused James of being a magician, and incited the priests into joining him in killing James and many of his followers (1.70). This necessitated the mission to the Gentiles in order that the number of descendants promised to Abraham might be filled, but is referred to in the Syriac as “confusion,” indicating that the author viewed it as necessary but not ideal.³² This is somewhat similar to *5 Ezra*, in which Ezra at God’s command goes to the Gentile nations to offer them the Torah only after Israel has rejected him and refused God’s commandments (2.33).³³

The *Homilies* and other parts of the *Recognitions* are more concerned with the inclusion of Gentiles into the covenant with Israel’s God, but from a no less Jewish perspective: “What was therefore a special gift from God toward the nation of the Hebrews [*Hebraeorum gentium*], we see now to be given also to those who are called from among the nations/peoples to the faith [*ex gentibus convocantur ad fidem*].³⁴ Israel’s covenant with God is now extended to include Jesus-oriented non-Jews, granting them the privileges that Jews had long enjoyed. As in the *Testament*, Gentiles do not replace Jews but are added into the people of God. Non-Jesus-oriented Jews remain in the covenant, as is evident from the assertion that the Torah and the teachings of Jesus are two equal paths to salvation.

Moses and Jesus are presented as two teachers of the same truth to two different peoples, Moses for Jews and Jesus for non-Jews (*Rec* 4.5; *Hom* 8.5),³⁵

³² Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 160; Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 207.

³³ This appears to be a reversal of the widespread tannaitic midrash according to which God gave the Torah to Israel only after the “nations of the world” had refused it, see *Mekh. R. Ishmael*, Bahodesh 5; *Sifre* to Deuteronomy §343.

³⁴ *Rec* 4.5. *Hom* 8.5 has: “both for the Hebrews and for those who are called from the nations” (Ἑβραίοις τε καὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ ἐθνῶν κεκλημένοις), see Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 213–14. Translations of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* follow *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325* (ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), although sometimes modified upon consultation with the original in B. Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen, vol. 1: Homilien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969); B. Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen, vol. 2, Rekognitionen in Rufinus Übersetzung* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969). The division of the world into two groups of people, Jews and Gentiles, is an additional indication of the Jewish self-identity of the authors/redactors.

³⁵ “It is therefore the special gift bestowed by God upon the Hebrews, that they believe Moses, and the special gift bestowed upon the nations/peoples [*gentibus*] that they treasure Jesus” (*Rec* 4.5).

and although the ideal is to embrace both Jesus and Moses (*Rec* 4.5), “God accepts him who has believed either of these” (*Hom* 8.6). Thus, acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, although desirable, is not a necessary precondition for salvation. While *Rec* 1.27–71 blames Paul for the failure of the mission to Jews, the *Homilies* explains that the reason why all Jews do not embrace Jesus is that God has chosen to conceal him from them in order to include the Gentiles in the covenant (*Hom* 8.6–7),³⁶ a view that is very similar to the one embraced by the *Testament*.

Observing the commandments of the law is expected of Jews and Jesus-oriented Gentiles alike and Torah observance is even made the criterion of Jewishness:

For he is a worshipper of God, of whom I speak, who is truly pious, not one who is such only in name, but who really performs the deeds of the law that has been given him. If any one acts impiously, he is not pious; in like manners, if he who is of another tribe keeps the law, he is a Jew; but he who does not keep it is a Greek. For the Jew believes God and keeps the law. . . . But he who keeps not the law is manifestly a deserter through not believing God; and thus is no Jew, but a sinner.³⁷

Here, the definition of a Jew is someone who is Torah observant, and the *Homilies* includes in the category of “Jews” Torah-observant Gentile “God-fearers” and condemns as sinners non-observant Jews along with non-observant Gentiles. By way of similar reasoning, the *Recognitions* dissolve the categories of “Jew” and “Gentile,” declaring that observance of the law is what distinguishes a “true worshipper of God” irrespective of ethnicity:

For in God’s estimation he is not a Jew who is called a Jew among men (nor is he a Gentile [*gentilis*] who is called a Gentile), but he who, believing in God, fulfils his law and does his will, though he be not circumcised, he is the true

³⁶ Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 216. In contrast to the *Homilies*, some parts of the *Recognitions* assert the superiority of Jesus over Moses, an inconsistency which Reed attributes to a redaction of R towards consonance with proto-Orthodox Christian traditions. However, both positions are consistent with a Jewish self-identity.

³⁷ *Hom* 11.16.

worshipper of God (*verus dei cultor*), who not only is himself free from passions but also sets others free from them.³⁸

Thus, the covenant now includes Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles along with non-Jesus-oriented Jews. They are all expected to be Torah-observant and through this common practice they become one entity, as reflected in the redefinition of Jewish identity. Like the Jesus-believing Pharisees in Acts 15:5, the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* insist on Torah observance, but unlike them they do not require turning Gentiles into Jews by circumcision (Acts 15:1), with the possible exception of *Rec* 1.27–71, which may agree with the Pharisees of Acts on this point also, although this is not altogether clear.³⁹

Homilies and major parts of *Recognitions* focus on the Gentiles, but they do so from a profoundly Jewish perspective. As observed by Reed, *Homilies* even participate in a Jewish discourse about halakhah that reveals familiarity and respect for rabbinic purity practices (*Hom* 11.28, 30).⁴⁰ Furthermore, the *Homilies*, like *Rec* 1.27–71, have a favorable view of the Pharisees and repeatedly cite Jesus' assertion that they "sit in the seat of Moses" (cf. Matt 23:2) and affirm that the Pharisees, as Moses' heirs, are entrusted with the keys to the kingdom of heaven (*Hom* 3.18).⁴¹ This favorable view of the Pharisees is extended to the members the rabbinic movement in a statement that reveals familiarity with the rabbinic chain of Torah transmission (*m. Avot* 1–2) and indicates acceptance of contemporary rabbinic authority claims: "The Law of God was given by Moses, without writing, to seventy wise men to be handed down, so that the

³⁸ *Rec* 5.34. See Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 221.

³⁹ See the discussion in Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 212, n. 83.

⁴⁰ Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 222–23.

⁴¹ Cf. *Hom* 3.18–19; 3.70; 11.29, where the Pharisees are also said to possess the key to the kingdom of heaven, A. I. Baumgarten, "Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 39–50, esp. 41–42. This raises the intriguing possibility that *Homilies* and/or *Rec* 1.27–71 in particular are in some way related to the Jesus-oriented Pharisees of Acts 15:5, perhaps representing a development of their position. Cf. Baumgarten, "Literary Evidence," 49, who speculates that those behind the Pseudo-Clementine writings claimed to be the "true" Pharisees. See also A. Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008): 95–132, who argues that the original community behind the Gospel of Matthew were made up of Pharisees who believed that Jesus was Israel's Messiah. Paul also self-identified as a Pharisee, according to Acts 23:6.

government might be carried on by succession” (*Hom* 3.47). In *Hom* 2.38, Peter asserts that the prophet Moses “delivered the Law, with the explanations, to certain chosen men, some seventy in number,” and *Homilies* seems to maintain that proper teaching and leadership were preserved among rabbinic Jews due to their faithful transmission of traditions from Moses.⁴²

The idea that Moses is the teacher for Jews and Jesus the teacher of the same truth for Gentiles may reflect a Jewish way of coming to terms with the fact that not all Jews embraced Jesus, and it makes perfect sense from a Jewish perspective, in particular for a Jewish group focused on the inclusion of Gentiles. The unreserved inclusion of non-Jesus-oriented Jews and attempts to accommodate rabbinic authority claims may indicate that the community behind the *Homilies* had a close relationship with rabbinic Jews,⁴³ and is consistent with the recent insight that adherence to Jesus was an option within Judaism and not the demarcation line that distinguished “Christians” from Jews. The groups behind some of the layers of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* seem to have shared views and practices with rabbinic Jews that may have drawn them closer to them than to other Jesus-oriented Jews.⁴⁴

An Alternate Vision of Judaism—the *Didascalia Apostolorum*

Another text, which one might argue represents a kind of non-rabbinic Judaism, is the third century *Didascalia Apostolorum* (*DA*), also composed and redacted in Syria. Originally written in Greek, it was apparently popular enough to be translated, first into Syriac in the early fourth century, and subsequently into Latin, Ethiopian, and Arabic, indicating a wide circulation.⁴⁵ Although commonly considered a “Christian” text, the author claims to be a Jew, calling

⁴² A. Y. Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter-history? The Apostolic Past in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*,” in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. G. Gardner and K. L. Osterloh; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 172–216, esp. 191–93. A further indication of an outlook shared with rabbinic Jews is the negative view of the Sadducees in *Rec* 1.27–71 (1.54.7) that is strikingly similar to that of the rabbinic one (ARN (A) 5), as observed by Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 42–43.

⁴³ *Rec* 1.27–71 even presents Rabban Gamliel as a secret adherent to Jesus (1.65.2–68.2).

⁴⁴ Cf. Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 21–24 and Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” 41–47.

⁴⁵ A. Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum: An English Version with Introduction and Annotation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009); A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* (Louvain: 1979), 23–33.

himself a disciple “from among the Jews,”⁴⁶ and based on the author’s/redactor’s detailed knowledge of Jewish customs and hermeneutics, Fonrobert has argued that the *Didascalia* ought to be read as a Jewish text and as evidence of a diversity within Judaism.⁴⁷

Although a composite text that appears to have undergone several redactions,⁴⁸ making it difficult to make claims about the work as a whole, seeing the *Didascalia* as a basically Jewish, although non-rabbinic composition seems convincing. The author/redactor is steeped in Jewish tradition, interpreting the Bible like a Jew, thinking like a Jew, and arguing like a Jew, and his ideas make sense within a Jewish world-view provided we allow for expressions of Judaism other than the rabbinic one. To the arguments adduced by Fonrobert, one could add that the author/redactor betrays a Jewish outlook in the distinction he makes between Jews and non-Jews, the two groups making up his community, whom he addresses as: “us who were called from the people” and “you, who were called from the peoples.”⁴⁹ At the level of the audience, the *Didascalia* constitutes clear evidence of the existence of Jesus-oriented Jews with various degrees of attachment to rabbinic Judaism.⁵⁰ Fonrobert concludes that while sharing

⁴⁶ “Now we know, however, that our Savior did not say [this] to the gentiles [לעממא], but he said it to us, his disciples from among the Jews [לן לתלמידו דמן בית יהודיא],” *DA* 26 CSCO 407:248 (Syriac) and 408:230 (English). Text citations from *DA* are taken from Vööbus’ edition in CSCO 401 and 407 (Syriac) and CSCO 402 and 408 (English). Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 24 n. 45 dismisses this self-identification as merely being the voice of the implied author, but even if it were, there are good reasons to define the text as Jewish. I believe that the idea that he is not Jewish, prevalent in earlier scholarship, derives from the assumption that adherence to Jesus is irreconcilable with a Jewish identity.

⁴⁷ Fonrobert, “*Didascalia Apostolorum*,” 485–86. A. Marmorstein, “Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935): 223–63, suggested that the author may have been born a Jew with a past as a disciple of the rabbis (p. 233).

⁴⁸ Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 22–55.

⁴⁹ *DA* 26 CSCO 407:249 (Syriac), 408:231 (English). In other places he addresses them as “dear brothers who have come to faith from among the people,” *DA* 26 CSCO 407:251 (Syriac), 408:233 (English), or “you, those who have turned [אחפניו] from the people to trust in God our Savior Jesus the Messiah” (*DA* 26 CSCO 407:241 (Syriac). My translation.

⁵⁰ These members of the community argue that the Sabbath has priority over Sunday and are obviously concerned with food regulations and impurity issues and he pleads with them not to “remain in your former way of life, brethren, that you should keep vain bonds, purifications and sprinklings and baptisms and distinction of meats” *DA* 26 CSCO

interpretive techniques and a way of thinking with rabbinic Jews, the author/redactor of the *Didascalia* attempts to build a community for Jesus-adherents—Jews and Gentiles—in distinction from the rabbinic movement.⁵¹ In what follows, I will argue that his entire theology can be understood as a Jewish, although non-rabbinic, vision of the purpose of Israelite history and God’s election of Israel.

The law (Syriac: נְמוּסָא/*namosa*) is central to the author/redactor of the *Didascalia*, and he emphasizes that his community of Jesus-adherents—Jews and non-Jews—is based on law, the law that was given to “the first people” (the Jews) and now also to “the present congregation of God” (Jewish and non-Jewish adherents to Jesus):

The Law is said to be a yoke because, like a yoke used for ploughing, it is laid on the first people [עמא קדמא] and also upon the present congregation of God [עדתא דאלוא]. And now it is upon us, upon those who were called from the people [עממא] and upon you and on those who are from the peoples [בית עממא (pl.)], who have received mercy. So it governs and unites us in a single accord.⁵²

The law that was first given to the Jews (“the people”) now applies also to the Gentiles (“the peoples”), signifying the latter’s inclusion in the covenant.

407:241 (Syriac), 408:223 (English). “Way of life” seems to be a better translation of דוברינות than Vööbus’ “conversation.” See J. P. Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary Founded Upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith* (Eugene, 1999 [1902]), 84, “custom, way, manner of life, manners”; and Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 238, “conduct.” The women seem to observe rules of menstrual purity reminiscent of rabbinic practices (*DA* 26, 408:238–39), see C. E. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, 2000), 172–74. Since adherence to Jesus was not a demarcation line between “Christians” and Jews but rather an orientation within Judaism, one may expect a variety of different Jewish practices to be combined with Jesus-adherence.

⁵¹ Fonrobert, “*Didascalia Apostolorum*,” 502.

⁵² *DA* 26 CSCO 407:249 (Syriac), 408:231 (English). Translation modified upon consultation with the original and with Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 245. To translate עמא קדמא as “the former people” as do both Vööbus and Stewart-Sykes seems to reflect the assumption that the author embraces a replacement theology, and the rendering of עדתא דאלוא as “church” imposes associations of a later reality on the text. Cf. נְמוּסָא קדמא/*namosa kadmaya*, which is not translated as “the former law.”

However, he makes a distinction within the different parts of the Torah and claims that only the “first law” (גְּמוּסָא קַדְמִיָּא/*namosa kadmaya*), also called the “simple law” (גְּמוּסָא פְּשִׁיטָא/*namosa peshitta*),⁵³ defined as the Decalogue and the Judgments, needs to be observed whereas the “second legislation” (תִּינְיָן גְּמוּסָא/*tinyan namosa*), defined as the laws given after the Israelites worshipped the golden calf as related in Exod 32, should not be kept.⁵⁴

The lack of trust in God that the Israelites demonstrate by declaring the golden calf to be their god and worshipping it after all that God had done for them is seen by the author/redactor as Israel’s sin par excellence and the watershed between the “first law,” which is eternal, and a set of secondary laws which were meant to be temporary and imposed in order to prevent the Israelites from falling into idolatry again.⁵⁵ These laws, which include regulations for sacrifices, “distinction of meats,” impurity regulations and purifications were imposed “in the heat of [God’s] anger—yet with the mercy of his goodness,”⁵⁶ which seems to indicate that they were not so much a punishment as a necessary means to make the Israelites focus their attention on Israel’s God and prevent them from worshipping foreign gods.

Seeing the worship of the golden calf as Israel’s cardinal sin is a view that the author/redactor shares with the rabbis,⁵⁷ although he sees the consequences differently. Even the idea that the institution of sacrifices was a concession from God, introduced as a means to prevent the Israelites from sacrificing to foreign gods, seems to have been part of a common Jewish tradition, as it appears in rabbinic literature (*Lev. Rab.* 22.8) as well as in *Rec* 1.35.1. By making a distinction between laws given before the golden calf episode and those given after it, and by presenting the latter as given because of Israel’s inclination towards idolatry, the Ten Commandments—a short hand for the law originally received by Moses—are given a special position in both the

⁵³ Perhaps better translated as the “common law.” Cf. *Versio Vulgata*, the commonly or universally used Latin Bible translation, and the Peshitta, the standard version of the Syriac Bible.

⁵⁴ The Judgments likely refer to the section starting at Exod 21, titled *mishpatim* in the Hebrew Bible, which like the Decalogue appears before the sin of the golden calf in Exod 32; R. Kimelman, “Polemics and Rabbinic Liturgy,” in *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism* (ed. R. Ulmer; Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 59–97, esp. 84.

⁵⁵ *DA* 26 CSCO 408:226–27.

⁵⁶ *DA* 26 CSCO 408:226.

⁵⁷ *T. Shabb.* 1.16; *t. Meg.* 3.36–36, Fonrobert, “Didascalia Apostolorum,” 502.

Didascalia and *Rec* 1.27–71.⁵⁸ Although the conclusions that these authors draw from the golden calf episode are different from those of the rabbis, there is nothing inherently un-Jewish about their understanding of the consequences for Israel's history.⁵⁹

The reason why all Jews have not embraced Jesus, according to the *Didascalia*, is that God caused a blindness to fall upon them and “hardened their hearts like that of Pharaoh,” so that they did not understand that Jesus marked a new era in their history. This blindness was imposed on them because of their failure to keep the laws of the second legislation: “However, in not one of them did they abide, but they again provoked the Lord to anger. On this account he yet added to them by the second legislation a blindness worthy of their works.”⁶⁰ Although harsher, it bears some resemblance to the theory of concealment in the *Homilies* and is completely in line with what the biblical prophets accuse Israel of—indeed the *Didascalia*'s author appeals to Isaiah to prove his point about Israel's blindness.⁶¹

Because of their failure to recognize Jesus as Israel's Messiah, “all the activity of the Lord our God has passed from the people to the congregation through us the apostles” (שליוס),⁶² a statement that appears to be in line with a

⁵⁸ Cf. Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, 16; Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 208–209. Assigning special status to the Decalogue over the rest of Scripture is known from rabbinic literature also where it is attributed to the *minim* (*y. Ber.* 1:5; *b. Ber.* 12a). P. S. Alexander, “Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th Centuries),” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 659–709, esp. 675, suggests that behind the sharp distinction between the Decalogue and the rest of Scripture lies a very literal understanding of Deut 5:19, which would seem to imply that only the Decalogue was directly spoken by God.

⁵⁹ The rabbis instead focus on God's forgiveness of his people directly after the golden calf episode and emphasize that an abundance of laws, rather than being a necessary evil, is an expression of God's love (*m. Mak.* 3:16; *Sifre Deut* §36; *b. Men.* 43b). In a comment on Exod 34:1 that seems to confirm the view of the *minim* that only the Decalogue was inscribed on the first stone tablets, it is declared that the second set of stone tablets given as a sign of God's forgiveness are actually superior to the first set because they include more laws. God says to Moses: “Do not grieve about the first tablets. They only contained the Ten Commandments, but in the two tablets I am about to give you now, there will also be laws (*halakhot*), interpretation (*midrash*) and stories (*aggadot*),” *Exod. Rab.* 46.1; see M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 191.

⁶⁰ *DA* 26 CSCO 408:227.

⁶¹ Isa 6:9f quoted in *DA* 26 CSCO 408:228.

⁶² *DA* 23 CSCO 408:209. Translation modified upon consultation with the original.

classic remnant theology. Even the continuation of the passage, according to which God has “abandoned the people of the Jews and the temple, and has come to the congregation of the peoples” is consistent with the idea of a righteous remnant to whom God’s blessings have been transferred. Thus, along with 5 *Ezra*, the response of the *Didascalia* to the fact that not all Jews embraced Jesus falls in the “remnant theology” category, while the position of the *Testament* and the *Homilies* are better described as “addition theology.” Whereas the remnant theology position emphasizes that God’s promises and blessings have been transferred to a righteous remnant of Israel (Jesus-oriented Jews) to which Jesus-oriented Gentiles have been joined, the “addition theology” position maintains that Jesus-oriented Gentiles have been included in the covenant but non-Jesus-oriented Jews still retain their position as God’s chosen people.

Both positions make sense from a Jewish perspective and from within a Jewish worldview, and our instinct to see in the remnant theology position an expression of Christian supersessionism is the consequence of the projection of a later reality onto these texts. At the time the *Didascalia* was composed it may have been perceived as anti-rabbinic, but hardly un-Jewish or anti-Jewish. It is true that the author/redactor refers to the members of his community as “Christians”—not as opposed to “Jews” but in the sense of “Jesus-oriented,” that is, as a subgroup *within* Judaism, a certain kind of Judaism as opposed to “rabbinic” and other forms of Judaism. To avoid imposing the modern connotations of Judaism and Christianity as two mutually exclusive categories onto the early centuries C.E., it would be better not to use the term “Christianity” at all when discussing these texts and instead refer to them as “Jesus-oriented,” and the communities as representing forms of “Jesus-Judaism” or “non-rabbinic Judaism.”⁶³ Although this has been pointed out many times before, the term still persists. We must also be careful not to let the rabbinic view define who and what was Jewish and instead widen the term to enable us to see Jesus-centeredness and prophecy-orientation as subgroups under the larger umbrella of Judaism.

The only difference between the remnant theology of the *Didascalia* and that of the Hebrew Bible and the Qumran literature is that the remnant here also includes Gentiles. The inclusion of Gentiles, however, is also a Jewish idea with roots in the Hebrew Bible. In Exod 19:5, for instance, God’s choice of Israel

⁶³ The confusion caused by the use of the term “Christian” becomes particularly evident when textual parallels between 5 *Ezra* and the Gospel of Matthew are taken as evidence of “Christian,” in the sense of non-Jewish, authorship of 5 *Ezra*; see for instance Bergren, *Fifth Ezra*, 320–21.

as his special people is motivated by his concern for the whole world (“because all the earth is mine”), an idea that is present also in God’s promises to Abraham, which also concern the nations who will receive their share in God’s blessings through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 17:4–5; 18:18; 22:18). It is evident, then, that whoever authored these passages believed that Israel’s God was also the God of the non-Jews and would eventually have a relation also to them.

The idea of the inclusion of Gentiles in the covenant with Israel’s God seems to have been a concern of significant importance for first-century Jews, and common to the early Jesus-oriented communities with a Jewish self-identity and their heirs was their belief that Jesus had ushered in a new era in the history of Israel and that Gentiles could now share in God’s covenant with Israel through Jesus. Thus, the issues of the status of Gentiles and their relationship to the Torah and to the Jews within the movement were at the heart of the Jesus movement from its very beginning, and the debate continued for several centuries.

One faction within first-century Judaism (the Jesus-believing Pharisees of Acts 15:1, 5)—of which the *Homilies* and *Rec* 1.27–71 possibly represent a development—seems to have argued that Jesus-oriented Gentiles must become Torah-observant Jews, while others held that only a certain level of Torah observance was required of Gentiles (abstention from things polluted by idols, fornication and from strangled animals and from blood), a view attributed to Peter (Acts 15:6–12) and likely shared by Paul. The latter position meant that the Gentiles would remain Gentiles and not engage in all the practices of the Jews in the same Jesus-oriented community. This is exactly the kind of community with diverse practices the *Didascalia* seems to reflect and which the author/redactor is so unhappy about. In contrast to Paul, for whom upholding the distinction between (Jesus-oriented) Jews and Gentiles within the covenant was a necessary condition for the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham and therefore one of the foundations on which his whole theology seems to rest,⁶⁴ the author/redactor of the *Didascalia* envisions a community of Jesus-adherents in which this distinction is dissolved and both groups keep the “simple law” and engage in the

⁶⁴ See M. D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 175–87 and K. H. Zetterholm, “A Jewish Theology on Jesus,” in *Jesus the Jew* (The Jewish Museum: Stockholm, 2013), 102–14. See also J. B. Tucker, “*Remain in Your Calling*: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in I Corinthians” (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 115–35. A growing number of scholars now consider Paul to have remained within Judaism throughout his life. For a survey of new perspectives on Paul see M. Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 127–63.

same practices. In his view, Jews and Gentiles should both be Torah-observant and be so in the same way, but he rejects the idea that Gentiles must become Jews, favoring instead a common identity (“a third race”), the “congregation of God” in his words. This congregation of God consists of Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles who together represent the present-day extension of biblical Israel.

Jesus has released Israel from the second legislation, he argues, and since it is to this released community that Gentile Jesus-adherents are merged, they need not observe the laws of the second legislation either. Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles are one entity, those called from “the people” and those from “the peoples.” Those Jews who continue to observe laws based on the second legislation deny Jesus’ power to release them from them and by this lack of trust they are guilty of the same lack of trust in God as the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf. Gentiles who observe the second legislation are likewise guilty of lack of trust in God and undermine the unity of the community as well as the author’s theology. As a result of this aspiration to create an identity common to Jews and Gentiles, the Gentiles who are included in the covenant are merged with Israel—a development to which Paul, for whom the distinction between Jews and Gentiles within the same covenant was not to be dissolved and according to whom the Gentiles never became part of Israel but were to be included in the covenant *as Gentiles*, would likely have been very strongly opposed.

The insistence by the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* on Torah observance for both Jews and Gentiles also results in the construction of a common identity, perceived by the *Homilies* as Jewish in nature while by the *Recognitions* rather understood as the dissolution of Jewish and Gentile identities in favor of a common identity of the “true worshipper.” Interestingly, the efforts by the *Didascalia*, *Homilies*, and *Recognitions* to construct a common identity for Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles seems to indicate that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles still persisted in their communities.

Sadly and paradoxically, the idea of the inclusion of Gentiles carried within it the seed of later Gentile Christian persecution of Jews. Most Jesus-oriented communities in antiquity seem to have been made up of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles and in those communities that embraced and developed the “remnant theology” position, emphasizing the continuity between biblical Israel and their own communities, the Gentile Jesus-adherents likely adopted this view from the Jews. As many of these communities became more and more dominated by Gentiles, and Jews increasingly identified with non-Jesus-oriented rabbinic Judaism, a formerly intra-Jewish debate turned into a conflict between Jews and non-Jews and an originally biblical/Jewish theology directed against the

Jewish people. This must have happened gradually, and over time the distinction between Jews and Gentiles in mixed Jesus-oriented communities likely became somewhat blurred, a circumstance that may account for the difficulties that modern scholars have in deciding whether a given text is Jewish or a product of “Christian” appropriation of a Jewish text.

Redefining ‘Israel’—A Rabbinic Response

As a consequence of their conviction that Jesus marked the beginning of a new era of Jewish history, characterized by the inclusion of Gentiles, these Jesus-oriented communities developed their respective visions of Israel’s history and destiny. Precisely because of the Jewish character of these rival visions, the rabbis perceived them as a challenge to their version of biblically based Judaism, prompting them to respond.

In a future study I hope to make the case that the *Didascalia*’s rejection of rabbinic tradition and the appeals by the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* to prophetic authority were perceived by the rabbis as a challenge to their interpretive authority, leading them to claim that rabbinic tradition down to its smallest detail was revealed to Moses at Sinai. Below, I will suggest that tractate *Sanh.* 10:1 of the Mishnah, introduced by the famous statement, “all Israel have a portion in the world to come,” represents a rabbinic redefinition of “Israel,” limiting the category “Israel” to include only those Jews who embraced the rabbinic version of Judaism, in response to Jesus-oriented Jews who claimed a Jewish self-identity but maintained that Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles together constituted the continuation and present-day embodiment of biblical Israel.

This argument is based on Israel Yuval’s observation that *m. Sanh.* 10:1 seems to contain at least two different layers, of which the later one consists of polemics against Jesus-oriented Jews.⁶⁵ Below is Yuval’s translation of the *mishnah* with the later additions marked in italics:

*All Israel have a portion in the world to come, for it is written:
And your people, all of the righteous, shall possess the land for
all time; they are the shoot that I planted, my handiwork in
which I glory [Isa 60:21].* The following have no portion in the
world to come: He who denies resurrection *as a biblical*

⁶⁵ I. J. Yuval, “All Israel Have a Portion in the World to Come,” in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities* (ed. F. E. Udoh, et al.; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 114–38.

doctrine,⁶⁶ he who maintains that the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an *apiqoros*. *Rabbi Aqiva added: One who reads external books. Also one who whispers [a charm] over a wound and says, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer (Exod 15:26). Abba Shaul said: Also one who pronounces the Divine Name as it is spelled.*⁶⁷

The opening phrase, “All Israel have a portion in the world to come,” is missing in some manuscripts, as well as in the Mishnah used by Maimonides, and is absent from the parallel passage in the Tosefta (*t. Sanh.* 13), indicating that it is a later addition.⁶⁸ If removed along with the second list of relatively minor sins added by R. Akiva and Abba Shaul, which do not seem to belong with the first list of serious offenses, we are left with a version of the *mishnah* that is more coherent and better fits the literary context with regard to both content and style.⁶⁹

The second list of offenses contains rather clear allusions to Jesus-oriented Jews. Reading “external books” seems to refer to books other than those of the Hebrew Bible, and likely alludes to the New Testament, and “one who whispers a charm over a wound” almost certainly refers to Jesus-oriented Jews, since this is a characteristic commonly attributed to Jesus-followers in rabbinic

⁶⁶ Absent in some manuscripts, Yuval, “All Israel,” 120–25.

⁶⁷ Yuval, “All Israel,” 114.

⁶⁸ This was noted also by E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987 [1975]), 991. The promise of salvation to all Israel also contradicts the basic premise of the rabbinic concept of reward and punishment that assigns critical significance to the observance of God’s commandments; Yuval, “All Israel,” 116–17, 131 n. 8.

⁶⁹ Yuval, “All Israel,” 114–17. Without these additions, the *mishnah* reads: “The following have no portion in the world to come: He who denies resurrection, he who maintains that the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an *apiqoros*.” As pointed out by Yuval, the second list of sins makes one wonder why all Israel, including the worst sinners, will enjoy the world to come, while mere browsers of external books, charm whisperers, and magicians are doomed. The polemical character of the statements excluding people from the world to come is also evident from a comment on *m. Sanh.* 10:1 in the Babylonian Talmud, where scriptural interpretations that deviate from the halakhah are condemned: “He who gives an interpretation of the Torah not according to the halakhah . . . even if he has learning and good deeds to his credit has no portion in the world to come” (*b. Sanh.* 99a. Cf. *m. Avot* 3:11, 5:8).

literature.⁷⁰ A story in the *Tosefta* with numerous parallels in other rabbinic sources tells about a certain Jacob of Kefar Sama, who came to heal R. Eleazar ben Dama “in the name of Jesus son of Pantera,”⁷¹ and in a similar story in the Palestinian Talmud and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah*, R. Joshua ben Levi’s grandson is healed by someone who “whispered to him in the name of Jesus son of Pandera.”⁷² That Jesus and his followers were associated with healing and magic is evident also from Christian and pagan sources,⁷³ and belief in the magical power of his name goes back to the New Testament.⁷⁴

Yuval suggests that the “one who pronounces the Divine Name as it is spelled”⁷⁵ is also a reference to Jesus-oriented Jews, citing a tradition according to which Jesus performed miracles through the use of the divine name, which he stole from the Rock of Foundation in the temple.⁷⁶ While this is a possibility, it may also simply be a more general reference to the circles inclined towards mysticism whose adherents engaged in the magical use of the divine name, known from the *hekhalot* literature.⁷⁷ As many Jesus-oriented Jews were part of a mystically oriented tradition within Judaism, as evident from pseudepigraphic texts, they are likely included in the larger group of those who “pronounce the Divine Name as it is spelled.”

Since the polemic in this section is clearly aimed at Jesus-oriented Jews, Yuval concludes that the opening phrase, “All Israel have a portion in the world to come,” was likely also added in response to adherents of Jesus.⁷⁸ By declaring

⁷⁰ Yuval, “All Israel,” 118; R. Kimelman, “Identifying Jews and Christians in Roman Syria-Palestine,” in *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. E. M. Meyers; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 301–33, esp. 326; D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 34.

⁷¹ *t. Hull.* 2:22; *y. Avod. Zar.* 2:2; *y. Shabb.* 14:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 1:24; *b. Avod. Zar.* 27b. On Jesus son of Pantera/Pandera as a reference to the Jesus of the New Testament, see P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 56–57.

⁷² *y. Avod. Zar.* 2:2; *y. Shabb.* 14:4; *Eccl. Rab.* 10:5; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 59–60.

⁷³ See Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 159 n. 57; Kimelman, “Identifying Jews,” 32; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 102–106 and the references cited there.

⁷⁴ Acts 3:6, 16; 4:7–10, 30; Mark 9:38–40; Luke 9:49–50.

⁷⁵ Lit. “according to its letters” = one who pronounces the tetragrammaton; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 162 n. 7.

⁷⁶ In *Toldot Yeshu*; Yuval, “All Israel,” 119.

⁷⁷ See H. J. Becker, “The Magic of the Name and Palestinian Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture* (ed. P. Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 391–407.

⁷⁸ Yuval, “All Israel,” 119–20.

“all Israel” to have a portion in the world to come while excluding Jesus-oriented Jews, this *mishnah* declares that they do not belong to Israel. “All Israel” means rabbinic Jews only, obviating any contradiction, since those listed as having no portion in the world to come are not part of Israel. As noted by Yuval, the phrase “All Israel have a portion in the world to come” seems to echo Paul’s statement in Rom 11:26, “and so all Israel will be saved,” but while “all Israel” for Paul seems to mean ethnic or carnal Israel, that is, the biological descendants of the Israelites present at Sinai,⁷⁹ the rabbinic statement limits “Israel” to a particular group of Jews who embrace a specific version of Judaism, namely rabbinic Jews. Thus, whereas Yuval suggests that the Mishnah promises salvation to carnal Israel in response to Paul’s spiritual Israel, it rather appears to be the Mishnah that is limiting salvation to a particular group of Jews.

We know from rabbinic sources also that the rabbis were involved in a struggle with Jesus-oriented Jews over who were the legitimate custodians and interpreters of the biblical promises concerning Israel. As argued by several scholars, rabbinic stories about encounters between rabbis and followers of Jesus, in which the latter engage in rabbinic-style biblical exegesis that pleases the rabbinic protagonists or heal rabbis by invoking the name of Jesus, ultimately concern authority.⁸⁰ The issue in the healing stories is not the whispering of secret names over a wound per se—this is permitted according to

⁷⁹ Contrary to Yuval, who following traditional Pauline scholarship understands the phrase to refer to “spiritual Israel,” that is to Jesus-believers. Such an understanding is problematic, however, considering the fact that Paul contrasts “Israel” with “Gentiles” in the immediate context (chapters 10–11). He further argues that the people of Israel indeed have an advantage over non-Jewish disciples of Jesus, since it was with them that God first made a covenant. The fact that all Jews have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah does not repeal God’s promises to them: “As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:28–29). It seems evident that Paul is speaking here of Jews who are not disciples of Jesus, promising salvation to “all Israel” in the sense of “carnal Israel,” as part of the divine plan, “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew . . .” (Rom 11:1–2). See K. Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); M. D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 239–88.

⁸⁰ Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*; Boyarin, *Dying for God*; Kimelman, “Identifying Jews,”; Alexander, “Jewish Believers.”

the Tosefta and repeated in both Talmuds⁸¹—or the healing power of Jesus’ name, which is taken for granted, but the claim of power and authority that come with it. Healing by magic is perfectly all right if performed by a rabbinic Jew, but a serious offense when carried out by someone who does not belong to the community (or rather someone who *ought* not belong in the view of the rabbis), since the magical power of such a person threatens the authority of the rabbis and their claim to be the leaders of Israel.⁸² These stories reflect an intra-Jewish struggle between Jesus-oriented Jews and rabbis over whose version of Judaism is the authentic continuation of biblical tradition, and represent an attempt by the rabbis to establish boundaries by excluding Jesus-oriented Jews and shape Judaism in accordance with a *rabbinic* definition.⁸³ It does not mean that the rabbis did not consider Jesus-oriented Jews to be Jews. Rather, they were making a deliberate effort to ostracize them precisely because they self-identified as Jews and were seen by others as Jews.⁸⁴

The proximity and similarity of Jesus-oriented Jews to rabbinic Jews indicated in the *Didascalia* is implied in these rabbinic stories also and it should not surprise us. If for Jesus-oriented Jews, Jesus was not the singular focus of ideology but rather one concern among many others, and if Jesus-adherence was

⁸¹ “[It is permitted to] whisper over an eye, [and over a bite inflicted by] a serpent, and a scorpion and to pass [a remedy] over the eye on the Sabbath”; *t. Shabb.* 7:23 (translation from Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 52); *y. Shabb.* 14:3; *b. Sanh.* 101a (as a *baraita*).

⁸² Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 52–53, 105–106. See also Alexander, “Jewish Believers,” 696 and the story from *y. Sanh.* 7:13 about a competition of magical powers between a rabbi and a *min*, presumably a Jesus-oriented Jew. The severity of the challenge as perceived by the rabbis is clear from healing stories involving rabbis and Jesus-oriented Jews. In one incident R. Ishmael prevents the healing of his nephew, R. Eleazar ben Dama, and expresses his satisfaction that R. Eleazar died before he could “break down the fence,” that is, transgress the boundary of rabbinic authority (*t. Hull.* 2.22 and parallels); Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 54–57; Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 34–35, 159–60 n. 62. In another story R. Joshua ben Levi deplores his grandson’s cure by a Jesus-oriented Jew, wishing that he had instead died (*y. Avod. Zar.* 2:2 and parallels); Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 60–61. Cf. what Chrysostom writes about the Jews: “If they truly heal, it is better to die than to run to the enemies of God and be healed in this way” (*Homilies against the Jews* 8), cited by Kimelman, “Identifying Jews,” 325–26.

⁸³ Cf. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 60.

⁸⁴ A modern equivalent might be the polemic attempts to delegitimize some Jewish groups, such as R. Eleazar Shach’s declaration that Chabad is the religion theologically closest to Judaism, and the recent statement by R. Shalom Cohen, an influential member of the Israeli political party Shas, that national religious (non-haredi) Israelis are not Jews, but Amalek (*The Times of Israel*, July 14, 2013).

not the primary factor in determining which community one joined, this is to be expected. It is likely that initially Jews from a variety of different subgroups were drawn to Jesus, and only after some time were separate Jesus-oriented communities formed. Even after such communities were established, close contacts with rival groups obviously continued and, as pointed out by several scholars, precisely in this proximity lay the danger from the point of view of rabbis and church fathers. In the same way that the members of the *Didascalía* community who engaged in rabbinic practices threatened the authority and understanding of Judaism of the author of the *Didascalía*, Jesus-oriented Jews challenged the rabbis' leadership and version of Judaism. Eventually, attempts by both sides converged to erect boundaries, but these boundaries were not yet there in the third and fourth centuries.⁸⁵

Thus, the problem with Jesus-oriented Jews from a rabbinic perspective was not their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, or differences in practice or scriptural interpretation, but rather their adherence to an interpretive authority other than the rabbinic collectivity. Appeals to prophetic authority (*Homilies* and *Recognitions*) or promotion of an interpretive authority with Jesus as the hermeneutic key (*Didascalía*) undermine rabbinic authority, since they deny the rabbis' claim to be the rightful interpreters and custodians of the divine word and the right to interpret and legislate given to them by God at Sinai, as articulated in tannaitic sources: "Rabbi says: This is to proclaim the excellence of the Israelites, for when they all stood before Mount Sinai to receive the Torah they interpreted the divine word as soon as they heard it."⁸⁶

The rabbis viewed themselves as part of an unbroken, living chain of Torah interpretation extending back to and deriving from Sinai. As the present-day extension of the biblical elders who accompanied Moses onto Mount Sinai (Exod 24:1, 9) and were appointed leaders and judges by him (Exod 18:23–26; Num 11:16–25; Deut 1:9–18), and as the successors of the prophets and the men of the Great Assembly (*m. Avot* 1:1–2:8), the rabbis claimed to be the legitimate leaders of Israel and entrusted with the authority to both transmit and interpret the Torah.⁸⁷ Having been empowered with the authority to interpret and

⁸⁵ See D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); C. E. Fonrobert, "Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Late Ancient Christianity* (ed. V. Burrus; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 234–25; Kimelman, "Identifying Jews," 301–33.

⁸⁶ *Mekh. R. Ishmael* Bahodesh 9 (Lauterbach 2:267). Cf. *Sifre* Deut §313.

⁸⁷ S. D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 69–79. Although the common dating of *Avot*, ranging from the early or mid-third to the early

legislate at the very moment of revelation, they saw their understanding of the Torah as part of divine revelation itself.

Adherence to an interpretive authority other than the collectivity of the rabbis, whether or not it led to a different halakhic ruling, would be seen to pose a threat, since such an authority could not be assumed to embrace rabbinic authority claims, and thus potential threatened the legitimacy of the rabbinic version of Judaism. To follow rabbinic practice while at the same time being involved with a Jesus-oriented community would be problematic from a rabbinic perspective, not because of the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, but because of the rejection of rabbinic authority that such an involvement implied.

By excluding Jesus-oriented Jews from the category of Israel, the rabbis deprived them of any legitimacy, since they were no longer considered as belonging to the descendants of the Israelites who received the Torah at Sinai and to whom the exclusive right to interpret the Torah was given. The need to exclude them may have become particularly pressing given the redefinition by some Jesus-oriented Jews (*Homilies* and *Recognitions*) of a Jew as someone who observes the commandments of the Torah, whether Jew or Gentile by birth.

All this suggests that the inner-Jewish struggle over the correct interpretation of Judaism and what it meant to be God's special people between rabbis and Jesus-oriented Jews contributed to the shaping of a rabbinic Jewish identity to a much larger extent than has hitherto been recognized. It is sometimes claimed that while the "Christians" had to define themselves over and against Judaism, the rabbis had no such need and largely ignored the

fourth century, has recently been challenged by G. Stemberger, "Mischna Avot: Frühe Weisheitsschrift, pharisäisches Erbe oder spätrabbinische Bildung?," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 96 (2005): 243–58, who sees it primarily as an anti-Karaite response, the fact that the third-century *Homilies*, redacted in the early fourth century, is familiar with the main claims of the chain of Torah transmission (*Hom* 2.38, 3.47) speaks against the claim that this idea became widespread only in the sixth and seventh centuries (pp. 250, 255). On the contrary, the chain of Torah transmission fits well into the polemical climate that saw the production of apostolic succession lists by various Christian groups in order to prove the authenticity of their teachings; see A. Tropper, "Tractate *Avot* and Early Christian Succession Lists," in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 159–88. This trend reached its peak in the late third and the early fourth century when various Jesus-oriented Jewish texts like the *Didascalia*, *Homilies*, and *Recognitions* were likewise preoccupied with apostolic succession; see *DA* CSCO 401:9–10; 408:7–8; Reed, "Counter-history," 173–216; Kelley, *Knowledge*, 208–12. In this context the chain of Torah transmission in *Avot* could be seen as a rabbinic polemic claim to authenticity.

“Christians,” who were not a significant factor in the early centuries C.E. anyway.⁸⁸ But if these Jesus-oriented communities were not separate social entities representing a different religion, “Christianity,” but Torah-observant (although not necessarily in a rabbinic way) individuals and groups with a Jewish self-identity, their claims to represent the present-day extension of biblical Israel and thus authentic Judaism is much more likely to have been perceived by the rabbis as a challenge. The fact that these Jesus-oriented communities were made up of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles would not have made any difference. The inclusion of Gentiles in the covenant with Israel’s God was a Jewish concern in antiquity, and a vision of Judaism that made them part of the people of God would have been seen as legitimate and profoundly Jewish.

⁸⁸ For instance, A. Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).