

THE EARLY CENTURIES

Jewish Believers  
in **JESUS**

OSKAR SKARSAUNE

*and*

REIDAR HVALVIK, *Editors*

**B**

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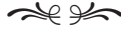
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## Preface

They just don't fit very neatly; they never did. Ever since it became clear that the law-free mission to the [G]entiles would create a church and not a synagogue, Jewish-Christianity has been an uncomfortable reality with which to deal. The "Synagogue" didn't like it. The "Church Catholic" didn't like it. And modern scholarship, far less ready to accept the vagaries of a religion that resembles but cannot be made to fit known varieties of religion, seems to like it even less. . . . Yet it is the very fact that Jewish-Christianity occupies a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity (as though there were such "normative" religions in antiquity or today) that makes it the object of fascination to modern scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

This is as true today as when Burton L. Visotzky wrote it in 1989. The present book is another fruit of this "object of fascination." In 1995 the director of the Caspari Center of Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Torkild Masvie, suggested to me that time was ripe for a full history of Jewish Christianity, or rather, as we soon agreed, a history of the Jewish believers in Jesus—the "they" rather than the "it" in Visotzky's quote.

In a moment of rashness that came with enthusiasm for the idea I agreed to act as chief editor of such a project. Had I known the magnitude and the difficulty of the subject, I would certainly have thought twice about undertaking the task. In any case, it took quite some time before the initial idea had gestated so as to be mature for birth. I soon realized that the organizational part was completely beyond my capacity, and I was happy to be joined by my good and close colleague Reidar Hvalvik, who has carried the main burden of organization, and also, and increasingly as the work went along, acted as co-editor. Without his administrative, organizational, and editorial talents, this project had never been realized.

I realized right from the beginning that this was a subject beyond the competence of one scholar. We would have to be a team in order to handle the different

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<sup>1</sup>Burton L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities," *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47.

aspects of it in a competent way. It is a great pleasure and a pleasant duty to express here my great gratitude to those fellow scholars who so willingly, even enthusiastically, responded to my pleas for contributions. Two seminars were arranged—one in Tantur, Israel, 2000, and one in Cambridge, England, 2001—in which first and second drafts of contributions were discussed and ideas exchanged. This does not make any contributor responsible for anything said in this volume outside the author's own contribution. Most of the contributions were print-ready in 2003. Only to a very limited extent has it been possible for the authors to take account of literature published after that date.

In the early stages of this work, our common perception was that we were concerned with a category of people who by their very existence somehow refused to take in the reality of what was happening around them—the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity. Then, in 1999, Daniel Boyarin published his intriguing book *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, in which he challenged the paradigm of the parting ways in a groundbreaking manner. In 2003 a new book appeared; challenging the traditional paradigm already in its title: *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed), a conference volume based on a joint Princeton-Oxford conference in 2002. These were not the only publications to signal a shift in scholarly attention and a new awareness of the great relevance of studying the groups and individuals who, so to speak, embodied the non-parting of the ways. Two symposia, one in Jerusalem (1998) and one in Brussels (2001), resulted in one volume each: *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6–10 juillet 1998* (ed. S. C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones); and *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry, 2003). Prior to any of these, Simon Claude Mimouni had published his magnificent survey *Le Judéo-Christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (1998). One could add several more titles to these, including Boyarin's own follow-up of his pioneering work mentioned above: *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004).

With regard to the present volume, the process behind which has been quite independent of any of the above projects, this has meant that while we were at work, a paradigm shift was going on around us. From the marginal position described by Visotzky, Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Christian Judaizers moved into the very center of scholarly interest. The present volume, however, is not meant to be a programmatic statement in the scholarly debate about old and new paradigms. There is hardly any one position in regard to this question among the contributors of this volume. What unites us is a common conviction that the phenomenon of Jewish believers in Jesus has its own significance in the history of Christianity, and also for the history of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Neither authors nor editors think of this volume as a definitive history of Jewish believers in Jesus during the early centuries (first to fifth centuries C.E.).

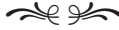
## *Preface*

Nor have the editors made any attempt at unifying and streamlining the points of view expressed in the different contributions. We have regarded it an advantage that the book contains more than one opinion on some of the problems treated. There is, at present, no established scholarly consensus on the different themes treated in this volume. This goes for the many large as well as many of the smaller questions. In this way it is hoped that this volume, rather than summing up current scholarship, may in some measure contribute to it. A continuation of this history through the centuries until our own time is at an early stage of planning. This is a report on plans, not a binding promise.

On behalf of both editors I would like to extend thanks to the many persons who have been involved in the project—first and foremost our fellow authors in the present volume. Torkild Masvie, director of the Caspari Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies, initiated the project and supported it with staff and funds all along. His and the Center's support were ideal from the scholar's point of view: no strings attached. Among the Center's staff, Bodil Skjøtt made invaluable contributions on the organizational side, and Ray A. Pritz provided scholarly and editorial inputs. Our own employer, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, funded part of our own research and writing. Good colleagues at MF provided invaluable assistance during the last hectic stages of editing: Gunnar Haaland, John Wayne Kaufman, Bjørn Helge Sandvei, Andrew Donald Wergeland, and Karl William Weyde. Some gave a hand in assembling the bibliography, some helped in linguistic polishing of English, Greek, and Hebrew. To all of them we extend our deep feeling of gratitude. In the production of this book, Shirley Decker-Lucke and her colleagues at Hendrickson Publishers have made significant contributions towards improving the consistency and the argument of some of the chapters of the book, and, when necessary, polished our English. For this we owe them great gratitude, while taking full responsibility for the end result.

Last but not least, we thank our wives for having put up with absent and absent-minded husbands for all too long.

Oslo, March 2007  
Oskar Skarsaune  
Chief Editor



## *Preface to the Third Printing*

This book received many positive and not a few critical reviews. One critique in particular deserves mention because it is fully justified and gives me an opportunity to explain why one passage in chapter 1 has been rewritten for this printing.

Our book was one of two to which a seminar was devoted at the SBL Annual Meeting in San Diego 2007. Here Daniel Boyarin, to whom I owe many insights of relevance for the so-called “problem of Jewish Christianity,” gave a paper in which he fundamentally questioned my introduction in chapter 1, especially section 1.2: Is the Category “Jewish Believers in Jesus” Theologically Interesting? He commended our move from “Jewish Christianity” to “Jewish Believers in Jesus,” but pointed out that in this passage in particular, and also elsewhere, I used terms that reintroduced an orthodox definition of Christianity and also seemed to imply a corresponding strict definition of normative “Judaism,” which allegedly had been established by an unspecified Jewish “leadership.” This made me speak of Jewish believers in Jesus as being called “apostates” by these Jewish leaders. I also spoke of “ordinary” Christians, thus sneaking Christian orthodoxy in through the back door. (An expanded version of Boyarin’s paper has later been published: “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99, no. 1 (2009): 7–36.)

I accept this criticism as valid. I was not fully satisfied with these paragraphs in the Introduction while writing them, and Boyarin helped me see why. I was in part working against our main purpose with the entire volume when I reintroduced terms that smacked of essentialism and a strong interest in –ities and –isms rather than real people. Apart from that, I have also realized that some of my remarks were simply irrelevant to the question asked in the subtitle of the passage in question. I have therefore rewritten the first half of chapter 1, 1.2, completely and made some pertinent changes in other parts of the chapter. This is not only because I pledged to do so at the SBL seminar, but also because I am convinced that the new version is more in line with what we really wanted to achieve in the main bulk of the book. Whether we actually succeeded in doing so is still for others to evaluate, but I am truly thankful and encouraged by the many positive responses in reviews and mailings to the editors.

Oslo, August 2016  
Oskar Skarsaune  
Chief Editor



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## Contributors

(1994), and *Asterius, Psalmenhomilien: Deutsche Erstübersetzung mit Einleitung und Kommentar* (2002).

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## Abbreviations

### General

aka	also known as
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
B.C.E.	before the Common Era
ca.	circa
C.E.	Common Era
cent.	century
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
ch(s).	chapter(s)
col(s).	column(s)
cm.	centimeter
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
cod.	codex
diss.	dissertation
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by
e.g.	<i>Exempli gratia</i> , for example
frg.	fragment
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
ibid.	ibidem, in the same place
KJV	King James Version
lit.	literally
LXX	The Septuagint
m.	meter
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
<i>Mt.</i>	mount, mountain
n(n).	note(s)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
n.d.	no date
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version



NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NS	New Series
p(p).	page(s)
<i>prol.</i>	prologue, <i>prologus</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
sq.	square
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta
vol(s).	volume(s)
v(v).	verse(s)
<i>y.</i>	Jerusalem Talmud

## Ancient Sources

### *Hebrew Bible*

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Judg	Judges
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings
1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles
Neh	Nehemiah
Ps/Pss	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Mic	Micah
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

### *New Testament*

Matt	Matthew
Rom	Romans
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians

## Abbreviations

Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
Rev	Revelation

### ***Old Testament Apocrypha***

1 Esd	1 Esdras
Jdt	Judith
1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

### ***Old Testament Pseudepigrapha***

<i>Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Mart. Ascen. Isa. 6–11</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch</i>
<i>4 Bar.</i>	<i>4 Baruch</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Liv. Pro.</i>	<i>Lives of the Prophets</i>
<i>Mart. Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah</i>
<i>Odes Sol.</i>	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>T. Ash.</i>	<i>Testament of Asher</i>
<i>T. Benj.</i>	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
<i>T. Dan</i>	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
<i>T. Iss.</i>	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
<i>T. Jos.</i>	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>T. Mos.</i>	<i>Testament of Moses</i>
<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
<i>T. Reu.</i>	<i>Testament of Reuben</i>

<i>T. Sim.</i>	<i>Testament of Simeon</i>
<i>T. Zeb.</i>	<i>Testament of Zebulun</i>

***New Testament Pseudepigrapha***

<i>Acts Thom.</i>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i>
<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>Gos. Eb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>
<i>Gos. Heb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i>
<i>Gos. Naz.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Nazarenes</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>

***Rabbinic Literature***

<i>ʿAbod. Zar.</i>	<i>ʿAbodah Zarah</i>
<i>B. Bat.</i>	<i>Baba Batra</i>
<i>B. Meṣ.</i>	<i>Baba Meṣiʿa</i>
<i>B. Qam.</i>	<i>Baba Qamma</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakot</i>
<i>Cant. Rab.</i>	<i>Canticles Rabbah</i>
<i>Der. Er. Zuṭ.</i>	<i>Derek Ereṣ Zuṭa</i>
<i>Deut. Rab.</i>	<i>Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>
<i>ʿErub.</i>	<i>ʿErubin</i>
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>Ḥag.</i>	<i>Ḥagigah</i>
<i>Hor.</i>	<i>Horayot</i>
<i>Ḥul.</i>	<i>Ḥullin</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Naz.</i>	<i>Nazir</i>
<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>
<i>Pesaḥ.</i>	<i>Pesaḥim</i>
<i>Qidd.</i>	<i>Qidduṣin</i>
<i>Qoh. Rab.</i>	<i>Qohelet Rabbah</i>
<i>Roš Haš.</i>	<i>Roš Haššanah</i>
<i>Šabb.</i>	<i>Šabbat</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Šeqal.</i>	<i>Šeqalim</i>
<i>Yad.</i>	<i>Yadayim</i>
<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>

***Philo***

<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>
<i>QE 2</i>	<i>Questions and Answers on Exodus 2</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>On the Special Laws</i>

## Abbreviations

### **Josephus**

Ag. Ap.	<i>Against Apion</i>
Ant.	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
J.W.	<i>Jewish War</i>
Vita	<i>Vita</i>

### **Apostolic Fathers**

Barn.	<i>Barnabas</i>
1 Clem.	<i>1 Clement</i>
Did.	<i>Didache</i>
Herm. Mand.	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate(s)</i>
Herm. Sim.	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Similitude(s)</i>
Herm. Vis.	<i>Shepherd of Hermas, Vision(s)</i>
Ign. Eph.	<i>Ignatius, To the Ephesians</i>
Ign. Magn.	<i>Ignatius, To the Magnesians</i>
Ign. Phld.	<i>Ignatius, To the Philadelphians</i>
Ign. Pol.	<i>Ignatius, To Polycarp</i>
Ign. Rom.	<i>Ignatius, To the Romans</i>
Ign. Smyrn.	<i>Ignatius, To the Smyrnaeans</i>
Ign. Trall.	<i>Ignatius, To the Trallians</i>
Mart. Pol.	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
Pol. Phil.	<i>Polycarp, To the Philippians</i>

### **Nag Hammadi Codices**

EpPet	<i>The Letter of Peter</i>
NHC	<i>Nag Hammadi Codex</i>

### **Papyrii**

P.Oxy.	<i>Oxyrhynchus papyri</i>
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### **Greek and Latin Works**

Ambrosiaster	
<i>Comm. Gal.</i>	<i>Commentary on Galatians</i>
Aphrahat	
<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demonstrationes</i>
Augustine	
<i>Bapt.</i>	<i>Baptism</i>
<i>Cresc.</i>	<i>Contra Cresconium Donatistam</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Letters</i>
<i>Faust.</i>	<i>Against Faustus the Manichaeon</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Heresies</i>

Clement of Alexandria

*Strom.*            *Miscellanies*

Codex Theodosianus

*Cod. Theod.*    *Codex theodosianus*

Dio Cassius

*Hist. Rom.*      *Roman History*

Egeria

*Itin.*              *Itinerary*

Ephrem

*Haer.*             *Contra Haereses*

*Virg.*             *On Virginity*

Epiphanius

*Pan.*              *Refutation of All Heresies*

Eusebius

*Comm. Isa.*      *Commentary on Isaiah*

*Dem. ev.*        *Demonstration of the Gospel*

*Hist. eccl.*      *Ecclesiastical History*

*Onom.*           *Onomasticon*

Gennadius of Marseilles

*Vir. ill.*         *(Famous Men) De viris illustribus*

Irenaeus

*Epid.*             *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

*Haer.*             *Against Heresies*

Jerome

*Comm. Am.*      *Commentariorum in Amos libri III*

*Comm. Eph.*     *Commentariorum in Epistulam ad Ephesios libri III*

*Comm. Ezech.*   *Commentariorum in Ezechielem libri XVI*

*Comm. Isa.*      *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri XVIII*

*Comm. Matt.*    *Commentariorum in Matthaicum libri IV*

*Comm. Mich.*   *Commentariorum in Michaeum libri II*

*Comm. Zach.*   *Commentariorum in Zachariam libri II*

*Epist.*            *Epistulae*

*Pelag.*            *Adversus Pelagianos dialogi III*

*Qu. hebr. Gen.* *Quaestionum hebraicarum liber in Genesim*

*Ruf.*              *Against Rufinus*

*Sit.*               *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum (Liber locorum)*

*Tract. Ps.*       *Tractatus in Psalmos*

Justin

*I Apol.*          *First Apology*

*Dial.*             *Dialogue with Trypho*

## Abbreviations

Juvenal	
<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Satirae</i>
Lactantius	
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>The Divine Institutes</i>
Melito of Sardis	
<i>PP</i>	<i>Peri Pascha</i>
Origen	
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Comm. Jo.</i>	<i>Commentarii in evangelium Joannis</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Comm. Rom.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Romanos</i>
<i>Comm. ser.</i>	<i>Commentarium series in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Matt.</i>	
<i>Ep. Afr.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Africanum</i>
<i>Hom. Gen.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>
<i>Hom. Jer.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Jeremiam</i>
<i>Hom. Lev.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Leviticum</i>
<i>Hom. Luc.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Lucam</i>
<i>Philoc.</i>	<i>Philocalia</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	<i>De principiis (Per archôn)</i>
<i>Sel. Num.</i>	<i>Selecta in Numeros</i>
Pliny	
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Plutarch	
<i>Quest. Conviv.</i>	<i>Questionum convivialum</i>
Pseudo-Clementine	
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Ascents of James</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>Contestatio</i>
<i>EpClem</i>	<i>Epistle of Clement</i>
<i>EpPet</i>	<i>Epistle of Peter</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homilies</i>
<i>KP</i>	<i>Kerygmata Petrou</i>
<i>Rec.</i>	<i>Recognitions</i>
Rufinus	
<i>Apol. Hier.</i>	<i>Apologia adversus Hieronymum</i>
Socrates	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
Sozomen	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>

Tacitus

*Ann.*            *Annales*  
*Hist.*            *Historiae*

Tertullian

*Apol.*            *Apology*  
*Carn. Chr.*    *The Flesh of Christ*  
*Marc.*           *Against Marcion*  
*Praescr.*       *Prescription against Heretics*  
*Prax.*            *Against Praxeas*  
*Scorp.*         *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting*

Theophilus

*Autol.*           *Ad Autolyicum*

**Early Jewish-Christian Dialogues**

ADJ              *Anonymous Dialogue with the Jews*  
AS                *Acts of Sylvester*  
AZ                *The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus*  
CS-L             *The Disputation of the Church and the Synagogue, Latin*  
CS-S             *the same title, Syriac*  
CZA              *Consultations of Zacchaeus the Christian and Apollonius the*  
                      *Philosopher*  
EP                *The Explanation of the Events in Persia*  
GH                *The Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban*  
                      *a Jew*  
JP                *The Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*  
PC                *Discussion concerning the Priesthood of Christ*  
Sth                *The Disputation between Simon the Jew and Theophilus the*  
                      *Christian*  
TA                *The Dialogue of Timothy the Christian and Aquila the Jew*

**Modern Journals, Series, and Works of Reference**

AAL              *Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei*  
AB                *Anchor Bible*  
ABD              *Anchor Bible Dictionary*  
ACW              *Ancient Christian Writers. 1946–*  
AGJU             *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und*  
                      *Urchristentums*  
AJA                *American Journal of Archaeology*  
AJSR              *Association for Jewish Studies Review*  
ANF                *Ante-Nicene Fathers*

## Abbreviations

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 2d ed. Chicago, 1979
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Iovaniensium
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAnt	Christianisme Antique
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio mediaevalis. Turnhout, 1969–
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum: Series graeca. Turnhout, 1977–
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina. Turnhout, 1969–
CHJ	<i>Cambridge History of Judaism.</i> Ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein. Cambridge, 1984–
CIJ	<i>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
CPJ	<i>Corpus papyrorum judaicorum.</i> Edited by V. Tcherikover. 3 vols. Cambridge, 1957–1964
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Edited by I. B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903–
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
DBSup	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément.</i> Edited by L. Pirot and A. Robert. Paris, 1928–
DCB	<i>Dictionary of Christian Biography.</i> Edited by W. Smith and H. Wace. 4 vols. London, 1877–1887
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.</i> Edited by J. B. Green and S. McKnight. Downers Grove, 1992
DJSS	Duke Judaic Studies Series



DLNT	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments.</i> Edited by R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids. Downers Grove, 1997
EBib	<i>Études bibliques</i>
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EEC	<i>Encyclopedia of Early Christianity.</i> Edited by E. Ferguson. 2d ed. New York, 1990
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
EWNT	<i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church. Washington, D.C., 1947–
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSSSup	Journal of Semitic Studies: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
KAV	Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern
KIT	Kleine Texte
LCL	Loeb Classical Library

## Abbreviations

<i>MScRel</i>	<i>Mélanges de science religieuse</i>
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . Edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N.S.W., 1981–
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NPNF<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
<i>NPNF<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 2
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts. Edited by H. Chadwick. Oxford, 1970–
<i>OrChr</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbusch-Kommentar
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca [= <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca</i> ]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
<i>PJ</i>	<i>Palästina-Jahrbuch</i>
PL	Patrologia latina [= <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina</i> ]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
PO	Patrologia orientalis
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> . Edited by T. Klauser et al. Stuttgart, 1950–
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RBén	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
RGG <sup>4</sup>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> . Edited by Hans Dieter Betz et al. 8 vols. 4th ed. Tübingen, 1998–2005
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
<i>SecCent</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra pagina
SPB	Studia post-biblica
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
StPatr	Studia patristica
StPB	Studia post-biblica
Str-B	Strack, H.L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922–1961
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
ThWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin, 1977–
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TZTh	<i>Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie</i>
VC	<i>Vigilae christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigilae christianae: Supplement Series
VL	<i>Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel</i> . Beuron, 1949–
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZKT	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

PART ONE

*Introduction*



# *Jewish Believers in Jesus in Antiquity— Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources*

Oskar Skarsaune

## 1. The Question of Definition

It goes without saying that defining the term “Jewish believers in Jesus” is basic to this project. By defining this concept we determine the very subject matter of this book. In this book, by the term “Jewish believers in Jesus” we mean “Jews by birth or conversion who in one way or another believed Jesus was their savior.” We have chosen to focus on the criterion of *ethnicity* rather than the criterion of *ideology*. Many, perhaps most, histories of “Jewish Christianity” or the like, have done the opposite. The basic definition of who is a Jewish Christian is derived from the definition of which theology and praxis the person in question embraces.<sup>1</sup> One can then either disregard the question of ethnic origin completely,

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<sup>1</sup> See the review by James Carleton Paget in this volume (ch. 2), and also the following studies: Johannes Munck, “Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times,” *NTS* 6 (1959/1960): 103–16; Gilles Quispel, “The Discussion of Judaic Christianity,” *VC* 22 (1968): 81–93; Robert Alan Kraft, “In Search of ‘Jewish Christianity’ and its ‘Theology’: Problems of Definition and Methodology,” *RSR* 60 (1972): 81–92; A. F. J. Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 419–31; Robert Murray, “Defining Judaeo-Christianity,” *HeyJ* 15 (1974): 303–10; Marcel Simon, “Réflexions sur le Judéo-Christianisme,” in *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Festschrift Morton Smith* (ed. J. Neusner; 4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 2:53–76; repr. in Simon, *Le Christianisme antique et son contexte religieux: Scripta Varia* (WUNT 23; 2 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981) 2:598–621; Bruce J. Malina, “Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism: Toward an Hypothetical Definition,” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 46–57; S. K. Riegel, “Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 410–15; Raymond E. Brown, “Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74–79; James F. Strange, “Diversity in Early Palestinian Christianity,” *Australian Theological Review* 65

or restrict the term “Jewish Christian” to those Jews who believed in Jesus, *and at the same time continued a wholly Jewish way of life*.<sup>2</sup> Jews who believed in Jesus, and at the same time abandoned their Jewish way of life and were assimilated among the Gentile Christians, would by this definition not be reckoned as Jewish Christians.

In this book we have taken the opposite path. We believe those Jewish believers in Jesus who chose to become more or less “orthodox” Christians within mixed communities, often with a Gentile majority, deserve the scholar’s respect and interest on a line with the other Jewish believers in Jesus. Some scholars may find them less theologically interesting, but we think that would be a premature judgment. In this book we are out to trace the history of a certain category of people, not the history of a certain brand of Christianity.

In so doing, we are in agreement with the ancient sources. Those sources never speak about “Jewish Christians” in an ideological sense.<sup>3</sup> They do, however, divide Christians into two categories by an ethnic criterion. There are Christians (or believers in Jesus) from the Jews and from the Gentiles (see further below).

In the preceding passages, we have used the term “Christian” in the same sense as it was probably used in Acts 11:26: someone who holds Jesus to be Χριστός, the Messiah. In that sense, it is no contradiction in terms to speak of a Jewish Christian. We have to take account, however, of the later development of the connotations attached to the term Christian to Jewish ears. It has become a term denoting something by nature *Gentile*, and by implication, *non-Jewish*. Many modern Jewish believers resent the term “Jewish Christian” for this and other reasons.

Thus, on the one hand traditional definitions of the term “Jewish Christian” exclude some of the people we want to include in this history. On the other hand, the term is offensive to many present day representatives of the same category of believers. This has led us to avoid the traditional term, and instead call the category of people we are discussing “Jewish believers in Jesus” (for brevity’s sake, this category will often be called “Jewish believers”). We have found it very difficult, however, to completely avoid the traditional term. We therefore sometimes use the noun “Jewish Christian” as a term of differentiation *within* the category of

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(1983): 14–24; Joan E. Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?” *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34.

<sup>2</sup>This is basically the definition of *judéo-chrétien* proposed by Simon Claude Mimouni, “Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien,” *NTS* 38 (1991), 161–86; Mimouni, “La question de la définition du judéo-christianisme ancien,” in Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (Patrimoines; Paris: Cerf, 1998), 39–72. Mimouni’s definition reads: “ancient Jewish Christianity is a modern term designating those Jews who recognized *Jesus as messiah*, who recognized or did not recognize the *divinity of Christ*, but who, all of them, continued to *observe the Torah*” (italics are Mimouni’s, translation mine).

<sup>3</sup>They do speak about “Judaizing” Christians, but these are most often Gentile believers.

Jewish believers in Jesus. A “Jewish Christian” is a Jewish believer in Jesus who, as a believer, still maintains a Jewish way of life.<sup>4</sup> Since there is no adjective corresponding to Jewish believer in Jesus, we will use the adjective “Jewish Christian” as applying to all categories of Jewish believers. What has been said very briefly so far raises many questions of a theoretical and practical nature. Some of these are addressed in the following.

*1.1. Are the Terms “Jewish Believer in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” Only Modern Terms?*

It is sometimes maintained that the terms “Jewish believer in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” are modern constructions. This is partly true, especially when one defines the terms mainly by ideological criteria. Carsten Colpe has called attention to this by characterizing terms like *Judenchrist* as belonging to what he calls *Metasprache* or *Wissenschaftsprache*, the language constructed by modern scholars to signify realities of the past which they find interesting.<sup>5</sup> But it should be pointed out that terms like “Jewish believer (in Jesus)” and even “Jewish Christian” are not without close analogies in the ancient sources. There is no set and fixed terminology in patristic sources, but “Jewish believer (in Jesus)” can be said to encapsulate the terms most often used.

A selection of relevant passages will substantiate this.

- (1) “Jesus said to those Ἰουδαῖοι<sup>6</sup> who believed in him . . .” (John 8:31).
- (2) “. . . those of the Jewish people who have believed in Jesus [οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν πιστεύσαντες]” (Origen, *Cels.* 2.1).<sup>7</sup>
- (3) “Why . . . did he not represent the Jew as addressing Gentile instead of Jewish believers? [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων . . . πιστεύοντες]” (*Cels.* 2.1).
- (4) “Notice, then, what Celsus says to Jewish believers [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων πιστεύοντες]” (*Cels.* 2.1).
- (5) “. . . He failed to notice that Jewish believers in Jesus [οἱ ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν πιστεύοντες] have not left the law of their fathers . . .” (*Cels.* 2.1).

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<sup>4</sup>We thus agree with Mimouni in our definition of this term.

<sup>5</sup>Carsten Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten: Historische Beziehungen zwischen Judentum, Judenchristentum, Heidentum und frühem Islam* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte 3; Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1989), 38–42.

<sup>6</sup>It is disputed whether Ἰουδαῖοι here should be translated “Judeans” or “Jews.”

<sup>7</sup>This and the following quotes from *Cels.* 2.1: Greek text according to SC 132: 276; translation according to Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 66.

- (6) “[Matthew published his gospel first] for those who from Judaism came to believe [τοῖς ἀπὸ Ἰουδαισμοῦ πιστεύουσιν]” (Origen, *Comm. Matt.*, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.25.4).<sup>8</sup>
- (7) “It is said that their whole church at that time consisted of believing Jews [ἐξ Ἑβραίων πιστῶν]”<sup>9</sup> (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.5.2).<sup>10</sup>
- (8) “[Hegesippus] was a believer from among the Jews [ἐξ Ἑβραίων]” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8).<sup>11</sup>

Even the term “Jewish Christian” may be found in antique Christian sources: “[Jason was] a Jewish Christian [*hebraeus Christianus*].”<sup>12</sup> In the apocryphal *Martyrdom of Peter and Paul* there is a report on a discussion between two groups of Christians: the one is called οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι Χριστιανοί / *Ioudaei Christiani*; the other [οἱ] ἔθνικοι [Χριστιανοί] / *gentiles*.<sup>13</sup> It is obvious in the context that these two groups are Christians of Jewish and of Gentile origin respectively; there is no doctrinal difference involved. Later in the story, the Jewish Christians are simply called “the Jews” or “the believing Jews” [οἱ πιστεύσαντες Ἰουδαῖοι].<sup>14</sup> According to the narrative in the *Martyrdom* Paul mediates between the two groups by saying what he says in Rom 2:11–15: God

<sup>8</sup>Greek text according to Eduard Schwartz, *Eusebius: Kirchengeschichte, kleine Ausgabe* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 246; translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, eds., *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1954) 1: 197–98.

<sup>9</sup>Ἰουδαῖοι and Ἑβραῖοι are mostly used interchangeably in the ancient sources, both meaning “Jews.”

<sup>10</sup>Greek text according to Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*, 127; translation according to Lawlor and Oulton, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1: 127, slightly altered.

<sup>11</sup>Greek text according to Schwartz, *Kirchengeschichte*, 158; my own translation. The same terminology recurs, e.g., in Jerome, *Epist.* 112 (Alfons Fürst, *Augustinus-Hieronymus: Epistulae mutuae, Briefwechsel* [Fontes Christiani 41.1–2; 2 vols.; Turnhout: Brepols, 2002], 1:168–230): “eos . . . qui ex Iudaeis crederent . . .” (3.5; Fürst 1:178); “fidelis ex numero Iudaeorum” (3.8; Fürst 1:186); “qui ex Iudaeis crediderant” (3.10; Fürst 1:192); “his qui ex Iudaeis crediderant” (4.12; Fürst 1:196); “credentes Iudaei” (4.13; Fürst 1:198); “his qui credunt ex Iudaeis” (4.16; Fürst 1:210); “fidelii Iudaei” (4.17; Fürst 1:212).

<sup>12</sup>In the Latin prologue to the (now lost) Latin translation of Aristo of Pella’s *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*, = Ps. Cyprian, *Ad Vigilium Episcopum de Iudaica Incredulitate* (3d cent.). I owe this reference to Lawrence Lahey. I suppose it would also be possible to translate *hebraeus Christianus* as “Christian Jew.”

<sup>13</sup>*Martyrium Petri et Pauli* (Greek) / *Passio sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli* (Latin), 5; Richard Adalbert Lipsius, ed., *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha Pars prior: Acta Petri, Acta Pavli, Acta Petri et Pavli, Acta Pavli et Theclae, Acta Thaddaei* (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1891), 122–23.

<sup>14</sup>*Mart. Petri et Pavli*, 6; Lipsius 122–23; also in the close narrative parallel in *Acta Petri et Pavli* 26; Lipsius 189–90. I owe the references in this and the preceding note to Lawrence Lahey. Once again, parallels to this terminology are to be found in Jerome’s *Epist.* 112: “Christianis . . . sive ex Iudaeis sive ex gentibus” (4.14; FC 41.1:202); “aliquis Iudaeorum qui factus Christianus” (4.15; *ibid* 206).



will judge everyone according to his or her deeds, not according to whether one knew the Law or not.

Two conclusions follow from this: (1) the modern terms “Jewish believers in Jesus” and “Jewish Christian” are not without precedent in the ancient sources; and (2) in the ancient sources, ethnicity is the sole criterion for the adjective “Jewish” as it is used in the combined terms “Jewish believer” and “Jewish Christian.”

### *1.2. Is the Category “Jewish Believers in Jesus” Theologically Interesting?*

In much traditional scholarship, Jewish believers in Jesus were seen as interesting “hybrids” between “Judaism” and “Christianity.” This is not the approach of the present volume. We are not thinking of Jewish believers in antiquity as being “hybrids” between two essentially different “religions,” as was famously done by Jerome (see below). We have tried not to apply traditional essentialist notions of “Christianity” and “Judaism” as two irreconcilable faith systems or “religions.” It has rightly been argued that neither early Christianity nor early Judaism were perceived as organized “faiths” during the first two or three centuries, and that defining groups according to their theological convictions *only* is an anachronistic way of describing the realities of those times (and perhaps of any time).<sup>15</sup>

The only distinction made in the ancient sources concerning the ethnicity of believers in Jesus was that some of them came from the Jews (or Hebrews), whereas others came from the Gentiles. There is no doubt that the numerical ratio between the two types of Christians changed during the first centuries C.E., from Jewish majority among the believers in Jesus to Jewish minority. This process had deep impact on the development of the theology of more or less all Christian groups.

I would like to suggest that the true theological significance of the Jewish believers in Jesus is best seen in this *process* perspective. A large-scale theological transmission process took place, from Jewish believers in Jesus to Gentile ones. Speaking of “Jewish influences on Early Christianity” is somewhat misleading here, since it evokes the image of “Christianity” being something other than Jewish right from its beginning.<sup>16</sup> Let me add that by saying “theological” transmission process, I use “theological” in its widest possible sense, not in a narrow doctrinal one.

When seen in the light of this process perspective, the Jewish believers in Jesus are transferred from the theological and social margins of the emerging Christian church right into its center. One could say, perhaps, that the Jewish believers in Jesus naturally became the theological mentors of Gentile believers and this not

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<sup>15</sup>See, e.g., Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99, no. 1 (2009): 7–36.

<sup>16</sup>I am myself one of those criticized here, cf. the subtitle of my book *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

only during the early decades.<sup>17</sup> If any early believers in Jesus could be characterized as hybrids, they were not the Jewish believers, rather the Gentile believers in Jesus. They must have been perceived as being neither Jews nor one of the (many other) ἔθνη. They, not the Jewish believers in Jesus, were at one point in this process called “the third γένος.” They were the newcomers, the great novelty of Early Christianity. This only serves to emphasize the significance, theologically and otherwise, of the Jewish believers in Jesus right from the beginning—and, it should be added, for a much longer period than has often been thought.

It should be added here that attempts at defining clear-cut borders between those living according to *Christianismos* versus *Ioudaismos* began early. The first beginnings can be observed in Ignatius (ca. 110 C.E.). But in him, these concepts do not yet signify “faiths,” or “religions” in the modern sense of this term. Ignatius speaks about non-Jews who practice “Judaism,” (i.e., follow Jewish customs) while, on the other hand, he knows Jews who practice “Christianity,” (i.e., a Christian way of life). The first category would correspond to our “Judaizers,” while the latter could well be referring to our Jewish believers in Jesus. In Justin (ca. 150–160 C.E.), however, the idea of Christian faith being the superior philosophy implies a new conception of Christianity as a *system of religious truths*. As such, it is opposed to a competing and comparable system, that of the Jews. One has to choose between these two systems. In Justin, this dichotomy has a clear ethnic aspect: even the prophets predicted that “the Gentiles rather [than the Jews]” would receive and believe the Messiah when he came (*1. Apol.* 31.7). Later, such border-drawing was firmer and stricter, but one should not make the mistake of thinking that realities on the ground always corresponded to normative statements.

The very fact that religious leadership, on both sides, found it necessary to enjoin sharp borders again and again is itself eloquent testimony that the border was far from sharp in real life. There were people who crossed the border all the time, apparently in both directions. The border-crossers themselves, however, would hardly have conceived of themselves in these terms. They had no consciousness of crossing a border or being border-dwellers. For example, some Jewish believers in Jesus who maintained a Jewish lifestyle and conceived of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel in very Jewish terms would probably think of themselves as fully Jewish and members of the Jewish people, and would, at least sometimes, have felt greater fellowship in destiny with their fellow (non-Christian) Jewish compatriots than with the majority Gentile Christian church. On the other hand, some Gentile Christian “Judaizers” may not have been conscious of crossing any border other than becoming fully Christian when they adopted Jewish customs and had Jewish friends. In fact, many of them may have been Judaizers before they became Christians, and would see no reason to quit their “Judaizing” now that they had embraced the Messiah of

<sup>17</sup> For this point of view, see the still valuable survey of sources in Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, vol. 1 in *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*; trans. J. A. Baker, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964.

the Jews. By speaking of these peoples as “border-dwellers” or as “border-crossers,” we very much adopt the perspectives of those who wanted to enjoin this border; we adopt, to a certain extent, the perspective of the religious leadership.

At the same time, it is also a historical fact that in the long run the religious leadership were the “winners,” in that their conception of an intrinsic incompatibility between “Judaism” and “Christianity” heavily influenced realities “on the ground” and was destined to form them to a great extent. Those who crossed the border or who settled on it, could hardly be unaware that the emerging and gradually dominant leadership of their respective religious communities defined them as people trying to combine incompatible identities.<sup>18</sup> The effects “on the ground” of such normative definitions should not be underestimated.

But they should not be overestimated either. One could think that by the fourth century the mutually exclusive self-definitions of Jews and Christians had become so clear to everyone that there no longer were any border-crossers or border-dwellers, or at least only very few. But there is eloquent evidence to the contrary through the fourth into the fifth century and even beyond.

### 1.3. *Other Closely Related Terms (1): “Jewish Christian,” “Christian Jew”*

There is nowadays an emerging consensus among scholars to use “Jewish Christian” (*Judenchrist, judéo-chrétien*) as a designation of ethnic Jews who, as believers in Jesus, *still practiced a Jewish way of life*. A recent statement of this definition by Simon Claude Mimouni runs: “ancient Jewish Christianity is a modern term designating those Jews who recognized Jesus as messiah, who recognized or did not recognize the divinity of Christ, but who, all of them, continued to observe the Torah.”<sup>19</sup> This term can be used as an overarching term to comprise the two categories called Ebionites and Nazoraeans by the patristic writers, and also those unnamed Jewish believers, spoken of by Justin Martyr, who believe Jesus to be the Messiah and practice a Jewish way of life. These Jewish believers are so distinctly characterized in the ancient sources that we need a term for them. It could lead to misunderstandings to coin an entirely new term when a long established term exists. We therefore use “Jewish Christian” (noun) in this book in the meaning defined by Mimouni; while our term “Jewish believer in Jesus” also includes those Jewish believers who did not keep a Jewish lifestyle. The latter are sometimes called “Christian Jews,” as distinct from the Jewish Christians. In this case, however, there is no established usage to support such a definition of “Christian Jew,” and we will therefore normally avoid this term. The context will make plain when we speak of Jewish believers in a comprehensive sense, and when we call

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<sup>18</sup>The classic formulation of this from the Christian side is Jerome’s saying about the Ebionites, aka Nazoreans: “Since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians” (*Epist.* 112.13, here quoted after A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* [NovTSup 36; Leiden: Brill, 1973], 201.)

<sup>19</sup>Cf. note 2.

someone a Jewish believer because we are not sure s/he was also a Jewish Christian (i.e., practiced a Jewish life-style).<sup>20</sup>

#### 1.4. Other Closely Related Terms (2): “Judaizer”

The problems with the terms “Judaizer” and “Judaizing” are somewhat different. This term is rarely attested in pre- and non-Christian texts, but occurs frequently in Christian writers. The verb “to Judaize” was coined in analogy to other verbs of the same type, e.g., the verb “to Hellenize.” When a non-Greek (a non-Hellene) began to behave as if s/he were a Greek, the person was said to “Hellenize.”<sup>21</sup> This means that only non-Greeks could Hellenize, not the Greeks themselves. The element of *imitating somebody else* is integral to the meaning of the verbs of this group, hence the natural members of a group or nation cannot be said to imitate themselves. Accordingly, when a non-Jew began to behave as if s/he were Jewish, s/he would be said to “Judaize.” Gentiles could Judaize, not Jews. This understanding of the term implies that when Christians are said to Judaize, these Christians are of Gentile, not Jewish origin.<sup>22</sup> Christian Judaizers are therefore not included in our definition of Jewish believers.

But there are three provisos to be made. *Firstly*, in periods and in areas where it was commonly taken for granted by Christians that Jews who believed in Jesus ought to abandon their Jewish way of life, Jewish believers in Jesus who did not do so could sometimes be included in the term “Judaizers.” Applied to Jewish believers, the term would acquire a somewhat extended meaning: that of Christians behaving as if they were still Jews. We shall have to keep this possibility in mind, especially when we encounter the term in fourth and fifth century writers. *Secondly*, Gentile Judaizers who took their “Judaizing” to the point of actual conversion to Judaism are sometimes included among the Judaizers in early Christian texts. If these Gentiles also believed in Jesus, they would probably not be recognized as legitimate converts to Judaism by the local Jewish community, but might well consider themselves to have become members of the Jewish people. In our study of Jewish believers, this group remains a border case, reminding us that no clear-cut definition is able to correspond to the rather fuzzy realities “on the ground.” *Thirdly*, Gentile Christian Judaizers are not included in our term “Jew-

<sup>20</sup> As was said above, since there is no adjective corresponding to Jewish believers in Jesus, we will use “Jewish Christian” as an adjective applying to all Jewish believers.

<sup>21</sup> There were also other examples of this type of verb, e.g., κιλκίξειν, “to adopt the manners of the Cilicians” [to be cruel and treacherous or to cheat someone]; φοινικίξειν, “to adopt the manners and customs of the Phoenicians,” etc. For a full review, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Ἰουδαίξειν,” ‘to Judaize,’ in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 31; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 175–97. Here and in the following I am very much indebted to this fine study.

<sup>22</sup> See now also Michele Murray, *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 13; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004), esp. 3–4.

ish believers,” but they are not irrelevant to the history of the Jewish believers. By their very existence the Christian Judaizers tell something significant about the conditions prevailing at the “border” between Jews and Christians. One could ask, for example, what role models Gentile Christian Judaizers would have had for their Judaizing? One obvious suggestion would be that these role models were Jewish Christians. There is also evidence that some Jewish believers tried to persuade Gentile believers to get circumcised (if male) and to adopt a Jewish life-style. In many cases the existence of Gentile Christians who “Judaized” should be taken as indirect evidence of Jewish believers who, actively or passively, encouraged them to this practice.

Jewish Christians and Gentile Judaizers would have one important thing in common: neither group respected a border which the leadership on both sides vehemently tried to enforce. They found themselves in the same officially declared no-man’s land, although they came to it from opposite directions.

#### *1.5. What do We Mean by “Jewish”? Whom do We Consider a “Jew”?*

This question is not easily answered in very precise terms. It would be anachronistic, at least for the first half of our period, to give the current halakic answer, namely, that a Jew is a person born by a Jewish mother or a person converted to Judaism according to rabbinic halakic procedure. The matrilineal principle of Jewish descent was established sometime during our period, but was probably not regarded as valid at the period’s beginning.<sup>23</sup> In any case, whether matrilineal or patrilineal, the genealogical principle in a sense begs the question, since it presupposes that at least some ancestors are simply *known* to have been Jews—otherwise, the principle implies a *regressus ad infinitum*. And the question of the status of the offspring of mixed unions has remained more difficult in reality than halakic theory would allow.<sup>24</sup>

The question of legitimate conversion of Gentiles to Judaism is also difficult to handle, especially during the period before the fully developed conversion procedures were established. But even after their establishment there is every reason to think that perceptions “on the ground” were at variance with officially sanctioned halakah. What seems to have been a basic criterion for males was having oneself circumcised. From at least the Maccabean period this seems to have been considered a necessary, but not in itself sufficient, condition for male converts to be recognized as true proselytes and full members of the polity of Israel. With circumcision followed the obligation to observe all the Mosaic commandments, not only the optional selection observed by sympathizers and so-called Godfearers. It

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<sup>23</sup>On this, see Cohen, *Beginnings*, 263–307. It is uncertain at what date the matrilineal principle was introduced by leading rabbis. It is certain that it was only gradually accepted, and that opposition against it among the rabbis remained for a long time.

<sup>24</sup>See on this whole problem Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

is therefore misleading to regard circumcision as just one among several Jewish customs to be observed or not observed at choice by people with a leaning towards Judaism. Paul makes this point in no uncertain terms: “I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the whole Torah” (Gal 5:3). Getting circumcised changes one’s basic status with regard to all the other commandments of the law. One is no longer outside the people of Israel; one is inside, and therefore has to relate to the entire law, not just Noahide or other commandments considered valid for all people. Jews were not alone in being circumcised in antiquity, but they were unique in making this their most distinctive and indispensable marker of national identity. Therefore “the circumcision” (ἡ περιτομή) is often used as a short and sufficient reference to the Jewish people,<sup>25</sup> while the Gentiles are referred to as “the foreskin” (ἡ ἀκροβυστία).<sup>26</sup> When Ignatius wants to say that it is better to hear Christianity from a Jew than Judaism from a Gentile, he phrases it: “It is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the foreskinned” (Ign. *Phld.* 6.1).

But how were female converts to Judaism recognized as such? The lack of a clear answer to this question may have prompted the development of a new element in the conversion rites; the proselyte’s immersion. The date at which this rite was “instituted” as obligatory for women as well as men is disputed. Perhaps this question is formulated on a wrong premise, that proselyte immersion was “instituted” at a specific point in time. In the life of a proselyte there always had to be a first immersion by which the proselyte for the first time in his/her life was made ritually clean. One could well imagine that this first immersion was gradually invested with more significance, and thus became an integral part of the conversion ritual through an extended process rather than by a sudden halakic decision. In any case, female converts to Judaism are well attested in the ancient sources even if the exact procedure by which they were recognized as such is not. There may have been local as well as temporal variations, and there may have been doubtful borderline cases.

While the question of how one *became* a Jew, if one were not born Jewish, had its complications, the question of how one *ceased* to be a Jew was also difficult. Through intentional or unintended *assimilation*, offspring of Jews with impeccable Jewish ancestry would sometimes no longer consider themselves Jews and would no longer be so perceived by others.<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon is of special relevance when we consider Jewish believers, since assimilation into mainly Gentile Christian communities and consequent loss of Jewish identity would be a likely prospect, at least for the children and grandchildren of such Jewish believers.

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<sup>25</sup> Acts 10:45; Rom 2:26–27; 3:30; 15:8; Gal 2:7–9, 12; Eph 2:11; Phil 3:3; Col 3:11; 4:11, etc.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 11:3; Rom 2:26–27; 3:30; Gal 2:7; Eph 2:11; Col 3:11.

<sup>27</sup> That this was not a rare phenomenon in the Jewish Diaspora, is emphasized by Gideon Bohak, “Ethnic Continuity in the Jewish Diaspora in Antiquity,” in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. J. R. Bartlett; New York: Routledge, 2002), 175–92.

While we want to take full account of these difficulties with the term “Jew” and “Jewish,” none of them destroy the basic fact that “Jew” remains a meaningful term. Since the latter part of the Second Temple period, Jews in general have had little doubt about who were Jews and who were not. The doubtful cases referred to above may have made the borderline somewhat blurred at times, but did not eliminate it. And there were times when Jewish or Roman authorities had to decide with great precision who was Jewish and who was not, e.g., when the *fiscus iudaicus* was imposed under Vespasian, or when the Jewish patriarch levied taxes from the Jews of the Diaspora. There was thus a certain juridical “pressure” on communities as well as individuals, to define who was “in” and who was “out.”

A special case that was recognized as a difficult border case already in antiquity was that of the Samaritans. As descendants of the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom—although perhaps of mixed ancestry—Samaritans were, biblically speaking, descendants of the House of Jacob. In the New Testament, Matthew and John clearly exclude Samaritans from Israel; Luke, on the other hand, and Justin after him, include them in the wider concept of Israel or the House of Jacob, and explicitly treat them as not Gentile. This probably reflects similar uncertainty about their exact status among contemporary Jews. In this volume we follow the lead of Luke in commenting briefly upon Samaritan believers in Jesus as part of our topic, though a very marginal one.

The bottom line regarding Jewish identity, then, is that people who considered themselves Jewish and were considered to be Jewish by the Jewish community were Jewish. It seems fitting and right that the final “power of definition” should lie with the (different) Jewish communities themselves. According to this principle, we consider Gentile believers who, as part of their conversion to faith in Jesus, accepted circumcision and a Jewish way of life as representing a border case, not as being “Jewish believers” in the strict sense, since they would probably not have been recognized as legitimate Jewish proselytes by the local Jewish community.<sup>28</sup>

#### *1.6. What do We Mean by “a Believer in Jesus”?*

(1) On the level of doctrine we want to include any type of Christology that accords a unique role to Jesus as the Messiah or the end-time, final Prophet, or any other role that makes him decisive as a saving figure. We will refrain from

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<sup>28</sup>It was clearly otherwise with proselytes whose conversion to Judaism was recognized prior to their coming to faith in Jesus. The book of Acts is quite clear on this point. When Peter addresses “Jews and converts to Judaism” (Ἰουδαῖοι τε καὶ προσήλυτοι) from Rome on the day of Pentecost, he is not addressing Jews and Gentiles, but two categories of Jews (2:10–11). One of the “Hellenistic” Jewish believers chosen to be one of the seven leaders according to Acts 6:5 was “Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism” (προσήλυτον). By including such people in our definition of Jewish believers, we are thus following the precedent of our sources.

using heavily loaded normative terms like “orthodox” and “heterodox” when we characterize the faith and praxis of Jewish believers.

(2) On the social level, we have to relate in one way or another to the phenomenon of religiously deviant persons. Ancient societies were to a large extent tradition-bound, also with regard to religious traditions (in a wide sense), as are most societies to this day. People were expected to abide by the religious traditions of their ancestors. Jewish as well as Gentile believers in Jesus presented a problem in this regard. “Christians are made, not born.”<sup>15</sup> In the entire pre-Constantinian period, there was a strong consciousness among believers in Jesus, especially Gentile, that their status as believers in him was not something they had been born into. It was the result of their own free choice. The “typical” Gentile Christian was a convert, someone who had changed his/her religious affiliation. For Jewish believers in Jesus things were not that clear-cut, but they came to be regarded as sectarians (*minim*). In both cases, belief in Jesus made one a deviant person, someone who opposed the current religious norms.

The reason we mention this rather obvious fact is in order to highlight the role that is still played by such categories as “conversion” and “apostasy” in scholarly literature. For scholars rooted in the Christian tradition, conversion to Christianity is normally seen as an interesting and positive phenomenon, and is often approached from the angle that normative Christian doctrine establishes for such events: a convert is someone who has become convinced of the truth of the faith to which he or she converts. Conversions away from Christianity, e.g., to Judaism, are more often seen as anomalies that require other types of explanations. Scholars rooted in the Jewish tradition tend, in a similar way, to take the normative viewpoints of their own tradition more or less for granted. A Jew becoming a believer in Jesus after “the parting of the ways” is seen by definition as a deviant person, and often also an apostate. This means that, from a Jewish point of view, the reasons for conversion to faith in Jesus are sought in the non-rational and often pathological dysfunctions of the human psyche. Converts to Christianity are regarded as divided or haunted souls, as obsessed with Jewish self-hate, as simple traitors or plain opportunists, and almost universally as having ulterior motives.

There are two remarks to be made with respect to this problem. (1) There is no reason why the historian should simply accept the normative definitions of clear-cut religious boundaries established by religious leaders among Jews and Christians. According to these definitions, and only according to these definitions, was it an intrinsic impossibility to combine Jewish and Christian identity. By their very existence, Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Judaizers call these definitions into question. It is only when these definitions are taken for granted that Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Judaizers stand out as anomalous, as

<sup>29</sup> *Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani*. Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.4.



trying to combine the incompatible, or as psychologically odd. (2) The “sincerity” of conversion is often assessed by comparison with an “ideal” model, according to which the only sincere conversion is taken to be the one in which an *intellectual conviction* of the *truth* of the new faith or way of life—and this alone—has been the driving force in the conversion process. But several sociologists of religion remind us that this type of conversion is rather the exception than the rule when it comes to “ordinary” conversions. In most cases, factors other than the contents of the new faith or way of life are the primary motivators. Rodney Stark claims that in most cases integration into new social networks is primary, and schooling in and assent to the new faith are secondary.<sup>30</sup> If this is taken to mean that the convert’s faith in such cases is insincere, it would mean that most existing religious faith is insincere. In this book we would rather like to “normalize” the phenomenon of conversion and not disqualify most normal conversions as insincere.

(3) With regard to the question of sincerity of faith, historians, like other human beings, have no direct access to the hearts and minds of people. We ought not pass value judgments on whose faith was sincere and whose was not. Instead, we have to stick to what can be observed. In this case, there are two main observable actions: verbal profession of faith, and participation in the external identity markers of believers in Jesus (baptism, common worship, the Eucharist, and the like). There is one phenomenon, however, in regard to which this cautious agnosticism breaks down, even among modern historians: “conversions” resulting from the use of coercion. Much historical experience and plain common sense go together in regarding such conversions as something “outward” only, which is rarely if ever accompanied by any corresponding inner conviction. To a great extent, this was how the ancient observers themselves regarded the matter. Even Augustine, with his *coge intrare*, clearly stated on more than one occasion that one can never produce genuine faith in somebody by the use of coercion alone. At best, moderate use of coercion can create outward conditions for the long-term and difficult task of instructing and persuading people into true and sincere faith. This was the view of the late Augustine; other Christians, among them some of his friends from his young days, were shocked that he could endorse any use of coercion at all.<sup>31</sup> The best documented case of mass conversion of Jews in our period, brought about by Christian mob violence, occurred in Augustine’s old days. In February 418 on the island of Minorca, the entire Jewish community of some 540 persons accepted baptism and were made Christians. The local bishop of the island, Severus, was clearly apologetic in his report on the incident because he knew that use of force to produce such results was illegal according to

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<sup>30</sup>Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 13–21.

<sup>31</sup>See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969, repr. 1975), 233–43; and Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; repr., 1988), 133–53.

imperial law, as well as being frowned upon by many of his fellow bishops.<sup>32</sup> We shall return to this incident during the course of this volume. But at this point, our question is simple: Are these 540 converts on Minorca to be included in our concept “Jewish believers in Jesus”? We feel that to do so would be to strain the meaning of “believer” beyond its natural meaning. We rather prefer to call these converts by a term which describes their situation, “converts by coercion.” It is important to note, however, that within such groups it often happens that some of the converts, after some time, embrace the new faith or way of life and make it their own. With Jewish converts this means that after some time they may become “believers” in the “normal” meaning of that term. But this at the same time often implies a measure of assimilation into Christian surroundings which makes their status as “Jewish” problematic. In many cases, such “Jewish believers” will be a one—or maximum two—generation phenomenon. In general, the use of different forms of “power” by Christians in the post-Constantinian period, as far as conversion attempts are concerned (directed towards pagans and Jews), will have to be addressed at the appropriate place (cf. chapter 23, section 7).

(4) Finally, there is another interesting border case. It often happens that members of one religious community in times of deep need seek assistance outside the limits of “legitimate” (as defined by their leaders) religious sources for help. In our case, the sources contain stories of officially non-Christian Jews who in time of need sought help by invoking the name and power of Jesus. Are they to be included as believers in Jesus? In the ancient Christian sources they are often regarded as some kind of secret believers, who did not profess their faith publicly because of “fear of the Jews.” In some cases this may be a pertinent characterization of their situation, in others not. People who in times of need sought help wherever they thought it might be found—e.g., with Jesus—cannot reasonably be called believers in Jesus. But again, a certain amount of agnosticism on the scholar’s part seems advisable. In most cases, we simply cannot evaluate the subjective depth or shallowness of this type of faith. We have to take it for what it is; a not at all uncommon phenomenon on the level of popular religion.

## 2. Questions of Method and Sources

The ancient sources speak of two kinds of Christians: those of Jewish and those of Gentile origin. In this book we are concerned with the believers in Jesus who were of Jewish origin. We call them Jewish believers in Jesus, or more briefly Jewish believers. The task we have set us in this book is two-fold. Partly, we are out to find as much information as we can *about* Jewish believers in the ancient sources. This is the easiest part, since the sources are usually quite explicit in tell-

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<sup>32</sup> See the excellent edition of Severus, and study of the document and the incident, in Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

ing when they speak about Jewish—not Gentile—believers. But in addition, we are out to identify some sources, fragments of sources, pieces of exegetical expositions, and the like, that *came from* Jewish believers, were *authored* by them. This part is more difficult. I shall briefly discuss some of the problems involved in recognizing Jewish believers in the ancient sources.

Shaye Cohen asks, “How do you know a Jew in Antiquity when you see one?”<sup>33</sup> His answer is that you can never be absolutely sure.

Jews [in the Diaspora] looked like everyone else, dressed like everyone else, spoke like everyone else, had names and occupations like everyone else, and, in general, closely resembled their gentile neighbors. Even circumcision did not always make male Jews distinctive, and as long as they kept their pants on, it certainly did not make them recognizable.<sup>34</sup>

In general, people would have known Jews as Jews by some characteristics of their behavior:

If you saw someone associating with Jews, living in a (or the) Jewish part of town, married to a Jew, and, in general, integrated socially with other Jews, you might reasonably conclude that that someone was a Jew. Second, if you saw someone performing Jewish rituals and practices, you might reasonably conclude that that someone was a Jew. Each of these conclusions would have been reasonable, but neither would have been certain, because Gentiles often mingled with Jews and some Gentiles even observed Jewish rituals and practices.<sup>35</sup>

This would indicate that in our case, the most difficult task of differentiation, with regard to the evidence in the ancient sources, is distinguishing between Jewish believers and Gentile believers who “Judaized” to a lesser or greater degree. It would seem that distinguishing between Jews who believed in Jesus and those who did not should be easier. But even this is difficult enough in some cases, especially in the realm of literature commonly called the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. To say for sure whether a certain document was originally penned by a non-Christian Jew and then later edited or interpolated by a Jewish (or even Gentile!) believer, or that it was penned in its entirety by a Christian very familiar with Jewish traditions, is often very difficult. Recognizing a Jewish believer in the ancient sources when you meet one may therefore be even more difficult than recognizing a Jew in general.

These difficulties do not necessitate complete agnosticism, however. There is no reasonable doubt that the named and un-named Jewish believers of the New Testament writings in fact were Jewish believers. As a rule, when patristic sources say about some believers in Jesus that they were Jewish, there is no compelling reason to distrust that information. In single cases, like when Eusebius calls

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<sup>33</sup>The subtitle of chapter 2, pages 25–68 in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*.

<sup>34</sup>Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 67.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 67–68.

Hegesippus “Jewish,” this information is clearly inferential, and we may think the basis for the inference is insufficient. There are other similar cases. But in general, there is no reason to systematically distrust information on ethnic background given in the ancient sources. When Gentile believers acted the part of Jews, they were usually taken to task for Judaizing, and the fact that they were not born Jews was often seen as aggravating the sin of Judaizing. In other words: they were known not to be Jewish.

What has just been said is no doubt the easiest part of this matter. But if we were to limit the ancient evidence on Jewish believers in Jesus to those passages in the ancient sources that explicitly speak about them, the story of Jewish believers would be rather slim, and we would no doubt miss out on much relevant evidence. This evidence is of necessity indirect, and therefore it is much more difficult to evaluate and use.

As I have explained, in this book we include among the Jewish believers those Jews who became more or less fully assimilated in their predominately Gentile Christian surroundings. These believers are, almost by definition, not easily distinguishable by their theology or praxis. And if no one happens to tell us that this or that person is Jewish by birth, how do we know?

It seems reasonable to assume that Jewish believers would have had a *greater competence in things Jewish* than their Gentile fellow believers. This, of course, is neither an infallible nor a very precise criterion, but it is not without value. In any case, we are not here seeking to establish the identity of specific individuals, but rather to trace the existence of a largely unnamed and anonymous category or group. As it happens, ecclesiastical writers used precisely this criterion in assuming Jewish identity of Christian authors whose theology they found entirely orthodox. We see this in Eusebius when he comments on Hegesippus:

He sets down certain things from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Syriac [Gospel] and, in particular, from [writings in] *the Hebrew tongue*, thus showing that he was himself *a believer of Hebrew origin*. And he relates other matters as well, on the strength of *unwritten Jewish tradition* (*Hist. eccl.* 4.22.8).<sup>36</sup>

The criteria followed by Eusebius here—good knowledge of Hebrew and of oral or post-biblical Jewish traditions—appear to be well-founded and probably based on firsthand experience with the situation in the late third and early fourth century. There is no reason to discard these criteria in our own work with the sources. Among the Gentile Christian authors that we know of in the Greek and Latin church, only Origen, Jerome, and a few others knew sufficient Hebrew or Aramaic to be able to make any use of these languages in terms of “etymological” explanations and the like. When this occurs in writers like Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, one has to expect that they rely on sources that ulti-

<sup>36</sup>Translation according to Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, *Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea: The Ecclesiastical History and The Martyrs of Palestine* (2 vols.; London: SPCK, 1928; repr., 1954), 1:128.

mately go back to Jewish believers. There might, of course, in the first two or three generations have been some Gentile believers with this kind of linguistic competence and this kind of Jewish scholarship. But given the rarity of such persons in the later period when we can control it, one should not make too much out of this possibility. I suggest that there is a strong a priori probability of Jewish Christian origin for Christian texts and traditions that are based on the Hebrew text of the Bible, or that in other ways presuppose a working knowledge of Hebrew/Aramaic. For Jewish but clearly non-Christian traditions, one should always consider the possibility that they were transmitted to Gentile Christians via Jewish believers (see further on this below).

Apart from this cultural-linguistic criterion, some Jewish Christian material in Gentile Christian authors stands out from its context by other fairly objective criteria:

(1) The most simple cases occur when the Fathers explicitly say that some quotation or theologoumenon derives from Jewish believers.

(2) Quite often pieces of evidence delimited by the above criteria seem to be deeply embedded in a wider context. This strongly suggests that they form one piece with this wider context, and that this context as a whole is of Jewish Christian origin.

In some cases a whole writing may be seen to be penned by a Jewish believer according to some or all of the above criteria, often supported by other, more specific criteria relevant to that particular writing.

In saying this, I have consciously tried to pinpoint criteria more specific than the general “Jewish” characteristics that are typical of very much of early Christian literature. In his classic monograph *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* Jean Daniélou demonstrated with great erudition that Jewish concepts, Jewish symbols and images, Jewish thought-forms, and Jewish genres and ways of speaking all permeate most of the earliest Christian writings and many of the later second century writings as well.<sup>37</sup> The least successful part of his book was its title, suggesting, as the book itself does, that these Jewish materials could be synthesized into one connected and coherent “theology of Jewish Christianity.” As many critics have pointed out, this theology is destined to remain a modern construct. Daniélou might have blunted this criticism if he had given his book a title more in line with its convincing argument—something like “the Jewishness of early Christianity.” What his book brilliantly demonstrates is the near ubiquity of the Jewish heritage in early Christian literature, also in strongly anti-Jewish authors.

This has considerable significance with regard to the history of Jewish believers. But this significance is of a rather general nature. Jewish elements may have entered into the literary productions of Gentile Christian writers by two channels, either (1) directly from non-Christian Jews, or (2) via Jewish believers. In

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<sup>37</sup>Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (vol. 1 of *The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*; trans. J. A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

both cases there may be one or more Gentile Christian middlemen, but at the back end of the line we are bound to find a Jewish source, a Jewish believer or non-believer in Jesus. In a few cases we can document that Gentile Christian authors took Jewish material from non-believing and/or believing Jews. In other cases this cannot be directly documented, but there remains a great a priori probability that such was the case. In the case of great scholarly luminaries like Origen and Jerome, direct exchanges with non-Christian Jewish scholars were no doubt natural. With less brilliant, less self-secure Gentile authors, it was probably more natural to prefer Jewish believers in Jesus as their informants on things Jewish. It seems reasonable to take as an a priori assumption that much, probably most, of the Jewish heritage in early Christian literature was transmitted to the early church via Jewish believers. Otherwise not easily recognized, they have left this unmistakable trace in the major part of early Christian literature.

In terms of the history of Jewish believers, not much more than the above can be said, based on this general Jewishness of the Christian sources. In this volume, therefore, we will not repeat or augment what Daniélou and others have been able to dig out of the early Christian sources, as far as Jewish traditions are concerned. Instead, we will focus more specifically on those instances in which Jewish Christian authorship of quoted or used sources can be shown to be certain or probable.

What has been said so far applies to literary sources written by believers in Jesus. Concerning sources written by non-believers, pagan writers like Celsus may contain valuable information. The methodological problems raised by the corpus of rabbinic writings are of an altogether different nature. I will here content myself with referring to Philip Alexander's discussion of these problems in his chapter on the rabbinical sources.<sup>38</sup>

Imperial legislation from Constantine onwards and rulings by church synods may often shed considerable light on the relationships between Jews and Christians in general and the plight of Jewish believers in particular. One simple rule in interpreting such material is that prohibitions of a practice can normally be taken as proof that the practice occurred, and that repetitions of such prohibitions testify to the continued existence of this practice in spite of laws enacted against it.

Because the literary sources taken together present us with a very fragmented picture, it is of great interest to seek, as far as it is possible, to fill in some general traits in the picture by careful use of analogies from better documented periods and areas. Sociologists of religion like Rodney Stark have made interesting proposals concerning the social mechanisms of the growth of the pre-Constantinian Christian movement, based both on the growth rate itself and on analogies of modern movements with comparable growth rates. As it turns out, this method has interesting implications for the question of the extent to which Jews continued to be an important recruitment base for early Christian missions.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See chapter 21 of this book.

<sup>39</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 49–71.

If it is often difficult to recognize a Jewish believer in Jesus in the written sources when you meet one, it is even more difficult to recognize one in the archaeological sources. At present, archaeologists are hard put to establish any hard and fast rules by which archaeological remains may be attributed to Jewish believers rather than Gentile believers or Jewish non-believers in Jesus.<sup>40</sup> This does not mean, however, that the results of archaeology are of no consequence. Archaeology contains much valuable information on the general relationships that existed between Jews and Christians, especially during the Byzantine period. The general picture supported by such archaeological studies is of consequence for our interpretation of the literary sources, very much along the same lines as the generalizations of the sociologists.

There is a kind of temptation attached to a project like this that attempts to write the history of a group often neglected and marginalized. The temptation is to “make the most out of it,” to compensate for earlier neglect by magnifying the dimensions of the phenomenon in question. In this volume we have tried to avoid this temptation and to remain sober with regard to the extent of the phenomenon we are treating.

Finally there is the question of the best way to present our findings. Historians like to present history as good narrative story. In our case, we think the sources are too fragmentary and too difficult to interpret with certainty for that to be possible at the present state of knowledge. We have therefore chosen to present only lesser parts of this history as narrative history, and have treated other parts in a non-narrative, more analytic way, taking single sources or groups of sources by turn.

The final “Conclusion and Outlook” is, accordingly, of a very tentative and necessarily subjective nature, and is not meant to be anything like a definitive synopsis of the history of Jewish believers in our period. Any pretension in that direction would clearly be premature.

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<sup>40</sup>See chapter 22 of this book.