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In the wake of Trypho: Jewish-Christian dialogues in the third to the sixth centuries

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Introduction

Beginning in the second century, a series of literary works emerged in the Church Fathers that dealt with the Jewish-Christian disagreement over the Messiahship of Jesus. One can easily follow these writings at intervals throughout the history of the Church. In this article, I will be concerned with describing one type of this so-called *Contra Judaeos* literature as it developed from the third to the sixth century C.E.

In a recent volume on the early history of Jewish believers in Jesus, Lawrence Lahey discusses all of the extant *Contra Judaeos* literature through the sixth century. He offers the following three-fold classification.

Contra Judaeos works argue for the truth of Christianity over Judaism based primarily on Old Testament proof texts. There are approximately three forms of *contra Judaeos* writings: **Testimony Collections**, biblical proof texts grouped by themselves, without additional argumentation, under different headings; **Tractates**, argued presentations based on biblical texts (under this category one could include some sermons and letters by church Fathers); lastly **Dialogues**, back and forth discussion portrayed between a Christian and a Jew or several participants in order to work through Christian proofs and Jewish objections.¹

We are aware of six works from this period in the **Dialogue** format. These are 1) *Justin's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*; and 2) *The Controversy of Jason and Papisclus (JP)*, both from the second century; 3) a fragment of an otherwise unknown dialogue discovered among the Oxyrynchus Papyri, from the third century; and the dialogues of 4) *Athanasius and Zacchaeus (AZ)*, 5) *Simon and Theophilus (ST)*, and 6) *Timothy and Aquila (TA)* from the fourth to the early sixth century. Five of these dialogues survive in Greek while one survives in Latin, i.e., *Simon and Theophilus*.

Other than Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, which has received great attention,

1 Lawrence Lahey, "The Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin)", in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds. (Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), emphases mine. My appreciation is expressed to the author for providing me an advance copy of his chapter.

this dialogue literature has been largely neglected. The remarks of William Horbury, one of the few scholars working in this field, are most appropriate.

A long-standing debate over the significance of polemic, both Jewish and Christian, has been immensely renewed in recent years; on the other hand, the abundant primary sources, both Jewish and Christian, remain in large part under-explored.²

This neglect of which Horbury writes became obvious to me during a recent sabbatical and I realized that it was largely due to two factors. The first reason is the fragmentary character of two of the dialogues, which are known only from patristic citations (*JP*) or from the few fragments of an Oxyrynchus Papyrus.³ The second reason is that until recently only *Trypho* had been translated into any modern language. The last three (*AZ*, *ST*, and *TA*) have been examined by a few dissertation writers and by an occasional article, but no one has published either their work or a translation of their dialogue. Recently, the first translations of the three dialogues from the fourth through the sixth centuries have been published.⁴

Before consideration is given to those three dialogues, two preliminary questions must be faced. The first question is: What earlier sources, if any, did the later dialogues depend on for their material? In other words, was there a source that served as a model for later dialogues? The second related question is: Do these dialogues represent actual discussion between Christians and Jews? In other words, can they be trusted generally to represent any real discussion that took place between the two communities, or are they invented by Christians with some other purpose in mind than to relate an actual event?

In regard to the first question, mention must be made of the well-known *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* by Justin Martyr (ca. AD 150).⁵ This dialogue, however, seems to stand on its own and evidently did not serve as a source for the later dialogues. While our authors may have been aware of its existence, they give no evidence of having used it as a source. In light of the attention given to it in the

2 William Horbury, *Jews and Christians: In Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 1.

3 For a bibliography on these fragmentary dialogues, see Lahey's chapter mentioned in footnote 1. The author of this article has a forthcoming article titled 'Two Fragmentary Jewish-Christian Dialogues from the Ancient Church' that attempts to reconstruct what we can know about the contents of these two dialogues, based on the fragments that we do possess.

4 William Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila: Texts and Translations* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

5 Unlike its successors, much has been written on *Trypho*. A standard work is that by A. Lukyn Williams, *The Dialogue with Trypho: Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1930). For an excellent recent study that includes a thorough bibliography, see Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study of Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

literature, it is surprising that ancient writers did not take notice of it as often as one might expect and the surviving manuscript tradition is surprisingly slight.⁶ The similarities between *Trypho* and later dialogues are along the lines of their citing some of the same OT texts. Some have posited the existence of a list of *Testimonia* that served the needs of those who were debating with Jewish representatives, both real and imagined.⁷ However, one should expect that a common pool of Messianic texts could simply have been recognized since early Christian preachers and writers began to utilize them in the early days of the church. The traditional practice of generations of Christian evangelists probably passed on the use of these common texts since they all shared a common theme – the Messiahship of Jesus. Sometimes in our academic zeal for always finding sources, we forget that there are common sense explanations for phenomena that should not be overlooked.

The question has often been raised, however, about whether *Jason and Papiscus* served as a source for one or more of our three dialogues. *JP* has been dated within the period AD 135-178 on the basis of both internal and external factors. In his published Latin text of *Simon and Theophilus* (*ST*), Adolf Harnack suggested that *ST* was basically a Latin reworking of *JP*.⁸ Scholarship after this, however, has been fiercely divided about this issue of *JP* as a possible source for the later dialogues. The most recent defender of Harnack's view has been Lawrence Lahey. Lahey has amassed a large number of parallels between the three dialogues and the meager evidence we do have of the lost *JP*, as it is preserved in various Patristic writers.⁹ On the other hand, many recent writers have been hesitant about, if not firmly opposed, to Harnack's ideas. The most articulate recent opponent to any dependence on *JP* has been Peter Andrist, in his recent dissertation on *Athanasius and Zacchaeus*.¹⁰

The question is complex and cannot be covered adequately here in many of its details. Suffice it to affirm that any dogmatism should be avoided about the conclusions of any source-critical methodology. No dialogue ever clearly cites another dialogue by name. Most of them do share common texts and arguments. While parallel themes certainly do seem to exist, they are not as clear and

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- 6 A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), 31; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 1.
 - 7 Rendel Harris and Vacher Burch, *Testimonies*, 2 volumes (Cambridge: University Press, 1916-20).
 - 8 Adolf Harnack, *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883), 1-15.
 - 9 Lawrence Lahey, 'A Translation of Evagrius' *Altercatio Legis Inter Simonem Iudaeum et Theophilum Christianum* with a Preliminary Study on Its Relationship to Aristo of Pella's *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*' (M.A. Thesis: Loyola University of Chicago, 1994), 74-89.
 - 10 Patrick Andrist, *Le Dialogue d'Athanasie et Zachée, Etude des Sources et du Contexte littéraire* (These de Doctorat, Université de Geneve, 2001), 271-310, esp. 289, 290.

unique as one might hope. It is easy to forget that Jews and Christians talked to each other about these issues for three centuries before the appearance of *AZ*, *ST* and *TA*. One should not be surprised if the use of certain texts and arguments may have developed into an expected form. Since surviving material from *JP* is so scant, and since our authors give no evidence that they are consciously quoting *JP*, a healthy caution should be advised on dogmatic decisions concerning the use of *JP* in later dialogues.¹¹ Furthermore, the material from the papyrus is so fragmentary that it is not wise to be dogmatic about its role as a source for the later dialogues.¹² If it could be established that *JP* was used as a source by the later dialogues, this dependence would certainly work against the idea that these dialogues represented any actual Jewish-Christian discussion that was conducted. And this brings us to that very question.

Do these dialogues reproduce with any accuracy actual discussion between Jews and Christians during this period? To this question, scholarship over the years has generally answered with a resounding 'no'. It is unnecessary to cite all the evidence since it is from so many writers.¹³ Most writers see the function of these dialogues as being apologies to all unbelievers or as catechetical manuals for instruction of (mostly Gentile) converts. On the other hand, one of the most prominent writers on this literature, A. Lukyn Williams, argued effectively that the dialogues did grow out of actual real-life discussion between individuals from the two communities.¹⁴ The language of another scholar, Marcel Simon, is even more eloquent:

An artificial form may well conceal material drawn from life. The Jew in the dialogue often cuts a poor figure: but does Plato in his dialogues represent the interlocutors of Socrates in any better light? There is nothing to compel the conclusion that this Jew is merely a matter of convention; it shows rather that the author puts into his mouth such arguments that will allow the spokesman for Christianity an easy victory. It still also has to be explained why anti-Jewish writing of this kind was produced uninterruptedly to the end of the middle ages. Do men rage so persistently against a corpse? Or are they such slaves of habit that they will go on producing a type of literature that has lost, centuries earlier, its justification and purpose?¹⁵

Agreeing with this minority view also is Lahey, who provides persuasive evidence that such real life situations did take place and could have served as the

11 Skarsaune also affirms the influence of *JP* on Justin's *Trypho* (cf. fn. 5).

12 In a forthcoming article, I do write that the later papyrus dialogue was certainly 'on the trail of *Trypho*'.

13 For example, Andrist has an excellent summary of arguments against *AZ* serving as an accurate report of events, 429-447, 506-518. Much of this could also be applied to the other dialogues.

14 Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, vii-ix, xv-xvii.

15 Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel*, Tr. by H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 140.

Sitz im Leben out of which these discussions were later recorded.¹⁶ It is interesting to notice that in *Trypho* Justin promised to record the events (80.3). The brief prologue of *ST* also mentions that what follows is a report of an actual discussion that took place at a certain time (I.1).

Many of the criticisms by those answering 'no' to this question arise from a belief that there was very little contact between the communities by the fourth through the sixth centuries. Hence, the idea of continuing voluntary 'disputations' should be unexpected, to say the least. This was one of Harnack's main contentions in his criticisms of the dialogues as representing actual situations.

A number of recent writers, however, have disputed the long accepted Harnack hypothesis. Horbury has amassed a large amount of evidence about the extensive mutual contacts between Christian and Jewish scholars regarding exegetical Bible discussion in the post-Constantinian age. After surveying the exegetical methods employed by both Jews and Christians in the period from 325-451, Horbury concludes:

Prima facie, Christian exegesis seems to reflect genuine debate, and hence genuine common ground between Jews and Christians. In summary one can perhaps say that Harnack was right in recognizing the internal importance of exegesis adversus Judaeos for Christian education, but wrong in supposing that significant contact between Jews and Christians ceased.¹⁷

Furthermore, Oskar Skarsaune recently has argued from both Christian and Jewish sources that there continued to be extensive personal contacts between the communities well into the Byzantine period.¹⁸ While this does not absolutely demand a 'yes' to the second question we have posed, it does provide a realistic context within which such debates could take place.

In conclusion, perhaps a qualified response of 'yes' to the question should also include the fact that dialogues such as *Trypho* and *TA* are sandwiched within a larger narrative framework and include many personal touches in them. These include certain ironic and personal remarks by the Jewish interlocutor, and at times some effective counter-responses by the same, when he is allowed to do more than just ask a question.¹⁹ *AZ* and *ST*, however, do not contain as many of these 'personal' touches, although *ST* does claim to be an eyewitness account in its introduction (I, 1). Could it be possible that the dialogues that have a greater narrative framework like *Trypho* and *TA* likely arose from actual situations, while we cannot be that sure about the more formulaic and straightforward presentations in *AZ* and *ST*?

Final answers have not been provided here about these important questions.

16 Lawrence Lahey, 'Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Genuine Jewish-Christian Debate in *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*,' *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51 (2000): 281-96.

17 Horbury, *Jews*, 201, 202.

18 Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002) esp. 259-274, 436-442.

19 Note some places where these more personal remarks and responses can be seen: *ST* VI.22,25; *TA* 10.7; 37.1-5; 39.1,2; 45.1-4.

Many of these issues can be explored further by those interested by securing the dissertations and out of print volumes in which they are more thoroughly discussed. Hopefully, enough information has been provided in the new translations to enable the reader of these dialogues to more effectively decide about these and other issues which they raise, albeit in their dated, often biased and sometimes unusual manner. We will return to this question of authenticity in the conclusion after we briefly introduce the three newly translated dialogues.

The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus

In 1898 the British scholar F.C. Conybeare published the Greek texts of two ancient 'debates' between Jews and Christians, titled *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and Timothy and Aquila*.²⁰ While scholars have often mentioned Conybeare's work, comparatively little engagement has been made with the content of these dialogues. This omission has been especially true in the case of AZ. In a recent dissertation in French, the Swiss scholar, Patrick Andrist concludes his magisterial analysis of this dialogue with the following sentence – a model example of what is meant by the expression *multum in parvo*.

Thus, after having applied these various analytical methods to the text, we can affirm that, according to all probabilities, AZ is primarily a text of missionary catechism for external usage in the author's community; secondarily (it is) a text of edification for internal use, composed in the midst of moderate Apollinarians of Alexandria, between 381 and 431, perhaps even before 388.²¹

Andrist's summary sentence offers no suggestion of authorship. That is because we simply do not know the identity of the author. There is no indication that the 'Athanasius' of the title wrote down a report of his supposed conversation with the otherwise unknown 'Zacchaeus.' Furthermore, there is no evidence that this is the famous Bishop Athanasius of Nicene orthodoxy fame. That particular Athanasius never held the title of 'archbishop' in any case – a title that was first used in the fifth century of 'patriarchs' and applied often in the literature to Cyril.²² Interestingly Cyril is mentioned (accurately) in the title of the later *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* as the 'Archbishop of Alexandria.'

An Alexandrian provenance of this dialogue is most probable. The only solid internal evidence for a provenance apart from that in the title is the exhortation to Zacchaeus to 'go to Jerusalem' (chapter 63), which certainly implies that the dialogue did not take place in or near the holy city. AZ also has an intense interest in Egypt and the Egyptians as indicated by the many references to that land both in Biblical passages cited and in contemporary references (chapters

20 F. C. Conybeare, *The Dialogues of Athanasius and Zacchaeus and Timothy and Aquila*. Anecdota Oxoniensa, Classical Series, Part 8 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898).

21 Andrist, *Dialogue*, 486, translated from the French.

22 *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1961) 237.

1, 34, 35, 51-56, 78, 89, 93, 94, 97, 122, 125 and 129). Alexandria was the second largest city in the empire and hosted a very large Jewish population. Finally, the city seems to be associated with some of the other dialogues (e.g., the previously mentioned title of *TA*).

The description of Jerusalem also supports the date suggested by Andrist (381-388).

For it is no longer a city of Jews, but a city of Christians, being called by its new name. Go there and you will see that this city belongs to Christ and is a habitation of celibates. You will see the *Anastasis* of the Christ and all the kings bearing their glory there, and the Gentiles with all the peoples proclaiming its righteousness with which it was vindicated (*AZ*, 70).

Such a description would be impossible before AD 325, when the 'Christianization' of Aelia Capitolina began. The *Anastasis* referred to was the Constantinian basilica. Finally, the lack of any technical terminology reflecting the later Christological controversies also supports a fourth-century dating.

Andrist's statement about *AZ* being primarily a 'missionary catechism' and secondarily a 'text of edification' for the believing community is consistent with his view that the dialogue does not embody a report of any actual discussion that took place. The simple and highly structured style of *AZ* – a brief question or problem raised by Zacchaeus with a more elaborate but still concise response from Athanasius – does support these ideas. The dialogue also has no historical context that introduces it, like the brief one in *ST* and the longer one in *TA*.

It is the charge of the author's 'Apollinarianism' that is the most surprising component of Andrist's analysis. Andrist marshals an array of exegetical and contextual support for this claim in chapters XII and XIII of his thesis. The relevant chapters in *AZ* that form the basis of his judgment are 4, 19, 21, 41, 44, 45, 86, and 98 where Andrist believes that Jesus' incarnate deity is so stressed that there is little room for his true rather than just apparent humanity. Consider, for example, Athanasius' statement about Jesus' person: 'And he is the image of man by imitation (μιμητικῶς) and of God by nature (φυσικῶς)' (*AZ*, 19). One misses in this statement anything that would lend support to Jesus also having a human nature.

Andrist's analysis of the structure of *AZ* bears special merit, particularly for the expression of unity that they uncover in the text. He outlines the dialogue thematically as follows in an English translation of the French original.

1. First Part : God (*AZ* 1-45)

Section 1 : God is not monadic (3-20)

Section 2 : the Incarnation was prophesied (21-45)

2. Second part : Jesus Christ (*AZ* 46-121)

Section 3 : Jesus reigns even in Egypt (47-57)

Section 4 : all Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, who is the Christ; the Gospels are trustworthy (58-78)

Section 5 : Jesus is shepherd, priest, and God (79-98)

Section 6 : the victory of Jesus Christ and his disciples; the defeat of the Jews; Jesus accomplished all the prophecies (98-121)

3. Third part : the end of the Jewish practices (AZ 122-129.2)

Section 7 : the end of the Jewish practices (122-129) <Lacuna>

4. Epilogue : conversion of Zacchaeus (130)²³

As was mentioned, since the publication of its Greek text by Conybeare in 1898, AZ has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. Very few articles have been written on it and only an occasional reference to it appears in the main anthologies of Jewish-Christian controversy.²⁴ Hopefully, the new translation will stimulate further study of it among those who do not have ready access to Andrist's dissertation.

The Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus

The *Altercatio Simonis et Theophilus* (ST) is the oldest surviving Jewish-Christian dialogue preserved in Latin. The only independent ancient reference to the *Altercatio* is by Gennadius in chapter 51 of his appendix to Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*. Gennadius attributes its authorship to an Evagrius.

Another Evagrius wrote the Disputation of Simon the Jew and Theophilus the Christian, which is known to almost all.

Gennadius calls him 'another' (*alius*) Evagrius, thus distinguishing him from 'Evagrius of Pontus,' whom he had mentioned earlier in chapter 11. The only other subsequent references to this Evagrius in ancient times seem to depend on Gennadius' passage. Adolf Harnack, the editor of the first published text of ST, wrote that in 1747 Remi Cellier proposed that Evagrius was a monk and disciple of the well known Martin of Tours.²⁵

In keeping with this authorship, a suggested date for the dialogue is probably around AD 400, or perhaps a little later. This would be consistent with its being 'known to almost all' by Gennadius' time, which is late fifth century. This is also in keeping with its internal style and theology. Its provenance is in the West, probably Gaul, which is consistent with its Latin text and also with its attribution to Evagrius, if indeed his province was Gaul.

Mention has already been made of Harnack's suggestion that ST is a Latin reworking of the lost second century Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus.²⁶ Harnack's

23 Andrist, *Dialogue*, 163.

24 Samuel Krauss and William Horbury, *The Jewish-Christian Controversy I: History* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, Paul Siebeck, 1996), 36, 39; and H. Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1-11. Jh.)*. 2nd revised ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 285,86; 367,68; 391,92. These works should be consulted for their references to ST and TA as well.

25 Harnack, *Die Altercatio*, 13, n.25.

26 See footnote 7.

view was refined by Corssen, Zahn and Marmorstein.²⁷ In his unpublished thesis, Lahey has a thorough discussion of this issue and those authors' contributions to the question. While not agreeing with Harnack in all of his details, Lahey does conclude that 'divergent lines point to the *Altercatio* as a source for the recovery of Aristo's dialogue.'²⁸

In the brief introductory lines of *ST*, Evagrius claims that his work is a report of an actual *altercatio* which had recently taken place and which he had personally witnessed. He addresses it to an otherwise unknown Valerius (I, 1). He believes that hearing of it will be met with rejoicing on Valerius' part, because the confrontation had led to the conversion and baptism of Zacchaeus described at the end of the *altercatio* (VIII, 30). The Christian interlocutor, Theophilus, is not identified further by any other title except as a "Christian."

Like *AZ*, *ST* has a simple, straightforward style. The Jewish, interlocutor, Simon, is not allowed to say much beyond the standard Jewish response and objections. Horbury, however, has taken note of some interesting ironical comments by Simon.

Christian sources of the fifth century also depict Jews as speaking freely on Christ and the church. An instance is offered by the remarks of the Jew Simon in *Altercatio Simonis*, for example at vi, 22: *Erubescere poteris, Theophile, si hoc dictum (sc. potuisse Christum tam maledictam et ludibriosam sustinere passionem) minime comprobaveris. Nam scriptum est in Deuteronomio, Maledictus omnis qui pendet in ligno; or at vi, 25, in the innocent query Ergo ecclesia fornicaria est?*

Horbury's translation of the passage is:

You will surely blush, Theophilus, if you have acknowledged this saying, (namely, that Christ was able to endure suffering so cursed and ridiculed), for it is written in Deuteronomy: Cursed is everyone who hangs from a tree' (VI,22). 'Therefore, is the church a harlot?' (VI, 25).²⁹

Horbury's description of the 'bite of these passages' injects a strong note of reality in the discourse that moves Simon beyond the role of being a simple foil for Evagrius to present the Christian side of the discussion.

The contents of the thirty chapters in *ST* are fairly simple and unadorned and may be outlined thematically following the eight large chapter divisions of Harnack's text.

- Prologue (1)
- Monotheism (2-6)
- Messiah's Deity (7-10)
- Messiah's Sonship (11-14)
- Messiah's Davidic Ancestry (15-17)
- Circumcision (18-21)

27 Varner, 7.

28 Lahey, 'A Translation', 87.

29 Horbury, *Jews*, 205.

Messiah's Suffering (22-27)
 Sabbath and Dietary Laws (28)
 Epilogue (29-30)³⁰

There are three characteristics of *ST* that set it apart from its 'sister' dialogues, *AZ* and *TA*. First is the regular appearance of extended catenae of OT quotations, with very little exposition of exactly how the references are to be understood. This can be seen by the inclusion of eleven quotations in chapter 11, of eighteen quotations in chapter 22, and of twenty-six quotations in chapter 25! The impression given from the dialogue is that Simon was simply overcome by the cumulative power of these catenae. A modern reader, however, may be forgiven if he or she responds with less than enthusiasm at what are ancient examples of a decidedly extreme 'proof-texting' method. The second distinguishing characteristic is a large number of examples of 'extreme allegorizing'. Consider Theophilus' explanation of the spies' returning from their search of the land in Numbers 13:23.

Come now, recall that cluster of grapes in Numbers, which two men carried back on a pole from the promised land. Surely this was the figure of Christ suspended on the cross, and when the cluster of grapes arrives from the promised land, this is Mary, who was from an earthly race. Moreover, those who were carrying the pole reveal a figure of two peoples: the former is certainly understood as your people turning their backs to Christ, and surely the latter one, looking upon the cluster, is understood as our people (*ST*, 22).

While not exactly 'unique', another characteristic of *ST* serves as an additional reason for dating the dialogue no later than the early fifth century. That is the use in the dialogue of a Latin Biblical text in existence prior to that of Jerome's Vulgate. This becomes evident when there is a difference between the LXX³¹ rendering and that in the Hebrew MT, the Latin citations in *ST* agree with the LXX rather than the MT. Jerome argued strongly for following the *Hebraica veritas* and utilized the Hebrew as the basis for his translation of the Jewish scriptures. While it is possible that Jerome's Vulgate was in existence at the time of *ST*'s composition, it had not attained the level of acceptability that came in later centuries. This is evident from *ST*'s use of Old Latin renderings rather than Vulgate renderings in the dialogue.

A fascinating example of this agreement with the LXX over against the MT is seen in Theophilus' first words recorded in chapter one of the dialogue. Simon's confident opening challenge was that in this exchange he hopes to make

30 Harnack, *Die Altercatio*, 15.

31 The writer recognizes the lack of nuancing in calling the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures simply the 'LXX'. It is recognized that many prefer to limit that term to the Pentateuch. Later Greek versions and subsequent rescensions of those versions complicate the issue of terminology. Some scholars prefer the alternative expression 'Old Greek'. In this article 'LXX' is used simply as matter of convenience.

'a Nazarene into a Jew.' Theophilus simply responds:

Theophilus: *Non gloriatur gibberosus ut rectus.*

[Theophilus: Let not the humpback boast himself as erect.]

This response will prove totally unrecognizable to the reader of either the Hebrew MT or a modern English Bible translation of 1Kings 20:11 based on the MT. The LXX text of 1Kings 20:11, however, does contain a reading that corresponds to the Latin of the above quotation:

(μὴ καυχᾶσθω ὁ κυρτὸς ὡς ὁ ὀρθός).

The MT and an English translation of 1Kings 20:11, however, is as follows:

al yithhallēl hōgēr kimpattēah

'Let not him who straps on his armor boast himself like he who takes it off.'

The reading of the verse in the later Vulgate basically agrees with the MT:

Ne gloriatur accinctus aequae ut discinctus.

This rather odd example points up the fact that Christians used the LXX translation exclusively in the early church. When they did use a Latin text, it was an Old Latin one that agreed with the Old Greek rather than with the Hebrew that survived as the MT. At least this was the case until well into the fifth century when Jerome's version became dominant.

However, one of *ST*'s OT "citations" cannot be accounted for through any of the standard linguistic/textual explanations. Theophilus mentions the reading of Psalm 95:10 (96:10 in the MT), "*He reigned from the wood*" – *Dominus regnavit a ligno* (*STVI*, 25). Justin Martyr had also mentioned this verse in his *First Apology* 41:4 (Greek: ἐβασίλευσε ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου) and later told Trypho in the *Dialogue* that the Jewish "rulers" had erased it from their Bibles (73). The simple fact, however, is that no ancient Hebrew or Greek manuscript ever contained this additional phrase "from the wood." Justin must have learned it from some renegade Greek text done by an overly zealous Christian scribe. Later Evagrius/Theophilus simply cited what is now acknowledged by all as an early Christian interpolation.³²

The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila

The last in chronological order of our three dialogues and the largest in length, the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* has also received the greatest attention in recent years. Four doctoral dissertations were written on Timothy and Aquila from 1986-2000.³³ However, this greater amount of attention devoted to *TA* has not always been the case. As mentioned earlier, at the end of the nineteenth century *ST* was receiving greater scholarly attention. In Conybeare's publication

32 Tertullian also referred to this reading (*Adversus Iudaeos* III,19,1) and other Old Latin texts contain it, probably depending on either Tertullian or Justin. Only two medieval LXX manuscripts contain the reading, each of which have an accompanying Latin text on facing pages. For a thorough discussion, see Skarsaune, *Proof*, 35-42.

33 See Varner, *Dialogues*, 4 and 5, for a discussion of these dissertations.

of the Greek texts of *Athanasius and Zacchaeus* (AZ) and *Timothy and Aquila* (TA), the editor included a commentary on AZ but actually relegated TA to an appendix. His comments in that regard are very interesting:

Because of its extreme prolixity, which deterred Angelo Mai from printing it, I have relegated TA to the obscurity of an Appendix. Yet it is more interesting than AZ in respect of its citations of the New Testament, of the new information it contains about Aquila, and of the light it throws on the sources of Epiphanius' treatise *De Mensuris et Ponderibus*.³⁴

A few decades later, Williams compared AZ in to its 'sister' dialogue in this way. 'This is much less interesting than the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, with which it is associated in both ancient and modern times, but it is more thoughtful."³⁵ It may be difficult to see how the rather straightforward AZ could be described as 'more thoughtful' than TA, but one must agree entirely that TA is certainly the more 'interesting' of the two. While it does not deserve the fate of an 'appendix,' Conybeare's description of the 'prolixity' of TA is quite appropriate. It is longer than the combined texts of AZ and ST, being approximately the length of the Gospel of Luke, the longest book in the New Testament. TA contains a more elaborate narrative framework than the other two, with a longer description of the events that led up to the 'disputation' along with the regulations for its conduct (1.1- 3.23). There is also a more detailed description of its aftermath, including the ordination of Timothy as both deacon and presbyter plus a description of the ensuing baptismal service for the new convert, Aquila (57.1-20).

Additional matters that are exclusive to TA vis-à-vis AZ and ST, include such passages as a discussion of the 'canon' (3.8-23 – OT includes Judith and Baruch); a fascinating analogy of the virgin birth to the emerging of a pearl from an oyster in 'India' (26.5); and an informative passage containing a charge of scriptural corruption by the proselyte Aquila in his second century Greek version of the OT (40.1-24).

The 'prolixity' of which Conybeare remarked is also exemplified by the repetition of passages and themes beyond what would be expected even for pedagogical purposes. This can be illustrated, to cite only two examples, by the repeated quotations of the passage in Baruch 3:36-38 for its 'prophecy' of Jesus' incarnation (6.5; 10.5-10; 32.8-11; 47.3-5) and the citing of the Isaiah 7 passage in various forms for its 'prophecy' of Jesus' miraculous conception (8.5,6,13; 18.6-10; 26.6; 34.14-16). TA is also given to citations of long Biblical passages and genealogies (17.5-17 and 35.9-27/Mat. 1:2-16; 27.7-28.24/Gen. 18:1-33; 28.25-44/Gen. 19:1-24; 49.15-29/Ezek. 16:1-39; 50.5-13/Isa. 60:1-10; 56.5-20/Dan. 7:1-14 – as a small sample!).

Unlike the introduction to ST, where the author claims to have witnessed the 'debate' (1.1), TA simply records the debate between a Christian 'Timothy' and a Jewish 'Aquila.' Their personal names actually drop out after 3.2 and they are re-

34 Conybeare, xii.

35 Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 117.

ferred to only as 'the Christian' and 'the Jew' until 57.16 and 19 where the newly ordained 'Timothy' is mentioned and in 57.17 where the newly baptized Jew is renamed 'Theognotos.' The title situates the events during the time of Cyril of Alexandria, who was well known and has been called 'the main architect of patristic Christology and bishop (412-444).'³⁶

While Lahey thinks that both the 'Long Recension' (LR) and the 'Short Recension' (SR) of *TA* were written in the sixth century, he acknowledges that the work probably describes an actual event that took place during Cyril's archbishopric.³⁷ But who was the author of the dialogue as written? In a lengthy chapter in his dissertation, Robertson proposed that the author of *TA* was a certain Cosmas, a scholar, lawyer, and virtual recluse with strong ties to the Alexandrian monastic communities, who wrote various works of the *contra Judaeos* genre and also fostered debate with the Alexandrian Jewish community.³⁸ Not all have been convinced by Robertson's suggestion. Lahey, however, advanced further arguments supporting Robertson's suggestion and refined them to advocate Cosmas as the author of his Long Recension, while remaining non-committal on the authorship of the original *TA* and its Short Recension.³⁹

Whatever are the legitimate criticisms of its obvious Christian-oriented context and outcome, *TA* may actually still represent the essence of real Jewish-Christian discussion and debate as it could have been conducted after the firm establishment of Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries. More issues will be addressed about the wisdom (or lack thereof) of its presentation of the Christian argument in the 'Conclusion' of this article.

Unlike its predecessors *AZ* and *ST*, it is difficult to isolate a clear progression of themes presented in *TA*. This is due to its many repetitions and digressions, some of which form the most interesting sections of the dialogue. The issues of God's unity, the person of the Messiah including his deity and suffering, plus the spiritual obstinacy of the Jews weave in and out of the thrust and parry of the arguments. This lack of distinct progression, however, may be evidence of the dialogue as it originally took place, rather than exemplify a planned treatise on the Messiahship of Jesus *contra Judaeos*.

Instead of a detailed outline of the Dialogue, I offer a set of 'problems' raised by Aquila and answered by Timothy in the body of the dialogue proper as they appear between the opening (1-4) and the closing chapters (57):

1. Problem: How could the Jesus of the Gospels be God? 5-29

36 *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Second edition. Everett Ferguson, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 310.

37 Lawrence Lanzi Lahey, 'The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: Critical Greek Text and English Translation of the Short Recension with an Introduction including a Source-critical Study' (Ph.D. Diss., University of Cambridge, 2000), 98.

38 Robert G. Robertson, 'The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila: A Critical Text, Introduction to the Manuscript Evidence, and an Inquiry into the Sources and Literary Relationships' (Th.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1986), 329-385.

39 Lahey, 'The Dialogue', 97-99.

2. Problem: Is Christ proclaimed in the Law and Prophets? 30-34
3. Problem: Why is he called "son of David"? 35-36
4. Problem: Is the Lord abolishing his covenant with Israel? 37-38
Digression on the LXX and the translator Aquila. 39-40
5. Problem: Has not God promised to restore Jerusalem? 41-46
6. Problem: In what sense did God become man? 47-56

The following additional features of *TA* should also be noted: 1. The repeated requests by Aquila to Timothy for him to actually present the evidence for his claims, which requests were not always met (7.2,4; 12.1; 19.1; 30.5-7; 21.5; 35.3; 56.1); 2. The extended section on Mary's perpetual virginity, an emphasis lacking in the earlier dialogues (18.1-20.21); 3. The accusations of 'insult' from Aquila, which were acknowledged by Timothy as unintentional (24.9; 54.15,16,25); and 4. The sometimes strained attempts by both Timothy and Aquila to demonstrate their knowledge of Hebrew (3.13; 8.6,7; 20.14; 22.8; 23.4,5; 32.1,2).⁴⁰

Conclusion

What concluding observations can be drawn from a reading of these dialogues? The following are more the personal reactions that I have experienced in reading these works, although some of them have been shared by other writers.

The first aspect of the dialogues that strikes me is the absolute importance of the Biblical witness for both the participants in this debate. These discussions were not to be decided by who could demonstrate the most effective proofs and rational arguments. They were not 'won' by the most effective way of humiliating one's opponent or compelling them into submission by forcing them to make contradictory statements. We can certainly detect at times rhetorical devices that were also used in the wider ancient world, but rhetorical effectiveness was not the main issue here. The main question was whether or not the Christian or the Jewish position on Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah was in accordance with the ancient Scriptures revered by both Jews and Christians.

In that regard, it is striking to take careful notice of the sheer mass of OT scriptures that are cited to serve as 'proofs' and 'evidences' of one's position. There are well over three hundred references to OT passages in *TA* alone. There are nearly eighty OT references in the shorter *AZ* and over one hundred OT references in the shortest dialogue, *ST*. It is fully acknowledged that these passages are often cited in a manner that is illustrative of the modern charge of 'proof-texting.' Also, the interpretation of these texts is sometimes characterized by allegorizing and occasional disregard of the original context. While moderns may justifiably make such accusations, they also need to recognize that these texts are not odd in this

40 See Lahey's helpful discussion of these passages in his chapter 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila' in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben Yehuda*, ed. by William Horbury (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 106-21.

regard, but share such a methodology with a wider context of both Christian and Jewish readings of Biblical texts in ancient times. It should also not be forgotten that some interpretations in these dialogues are consistent with the NT use of the same texts. It is the sheer volume of citations in these dialogues that should strike the reader, and should give pause as to why such is the case.⁴¹

The favorite OT books of the dialogues, measured by the total number of citations from them, are clearly Isaiah and the Psalms. For example, well over half of TA's three hundred citations of the OT are from these two books. A similar ratio prevails in *AZ* and *ST*. One should not be surprised at this since Psalms and Isaiah are quoted, cited, or alluded to in the New Testament more than any other OT books, a treatment reflected also in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴²

A related issue to this significant use of the OT in the dialogues is the form of the OT text which they utilize. While there may be a few exceptions (probably due to later editors), the overwhelming use of the LXX by the writers is obvious to all. Timothy's high regard for the LXX as expressed in the following passage was undoubtedly shared by 'Athanasius' and 'Theophilus' as well (in its Latin translation, of course):

The Jew said: Therefore, are you saying that one should receive the 'Seventy Two' translators as speaking from the Holy Spirit?

The Christian said: I do receive them that way with all my heart
(*TA* 40.23, 24).

In modern times, Protestant (and many Roman Catholic) Biblical scholars have accepted Jerome's position on the *Hebraica veritas* and base their translations on the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible.⁴³ Due notice is usually taken of a LXX alternative reading, but it is clear that *Hebraica veritas* is the preferred criterion for deciding the text of the OT, with the MT viewed as best representing that text. No one argues that the original manuscripts of the OT were in Greek rather than Hebrew. It appears to this writer, however, that most Catholic and Protestant scholarship has not completely dealt with the implications of the fact that the LXX was the primary Bible of the NT writers and the exclusive Bible of the early church for at least the first four hundred years of its existence! In recent years, two European Protestant scholars, Mogens Muller and Martin Hengel,

41 For excellent treatments of ancient and modern interpretation of OT texts, see Greg Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994); Craig Evans, ed., *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004); William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 31-92.

42 Deuteronomy is a close third in the number of its citations. Bruce Metzger, ed. *The Greek New Testament Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994) 'Index of Quotations', 887-901. For the use of the Hebrew Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see the still valuable F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Eerdmans, 1959)

43 The Eastern Orthodox churches continue to utilize the LXX as their primary OT text.

have produced significant studies that address these Septuagintal issues and the implications they raise for canon and textual decisions.⁴⁴ Of special concern is their discussion of the limits of the OT canon among early Christians. These dialogues cite in an authoritative way the following books not recognized in the Protestant canon: Baruch, Bel and Dragon, Judith, Sirach, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon and 1 Maccabees. How do we respond to Hengel's suggestion that the NT describes the closing of Israel's 'prophetic' period in the following way, 'The Law and the Prophets are until John...' (Luke 16:16)? He concludes that 'the Law and the prophets were not simply closed with Ezra or Esther, but only find their goal and fulfillment in the messianic work of Jesus of Nazareth.'⁴⁵

The second aspect of the dialogues that strikes me is their vital role in helping us to better understand the history of Jewish-Christian discussion in the early church. Not many would disagree with my statement as it stands. What I mean to convey, however, is that greater attention should be directed to these dialogues for their value as examples of the real discussion that was taking place between the two communities from the second through the sixth centuries. It is in this proposed role that my suggestion runs against the grain of much of the modern attitude toward them. Mention has been made earlier of the critical evaluations of many writers about the misrepresentations of Judaism in these dialogues. A few statements from a standard work in the field illustrate this attitude. In discussing the *adversus Judaeos* literature in general and the dialogic literature in particular, Rosemary Ruether writes, 'These dialogues are almost useless as sources for what Jews might actually have said about Christianity. The Christians' opponents are the Jews of Christian imagination.'⁴⁶

Ruether and other modern writers do make some very valid critical observations about this literature. It is true that the dialogues were written from a Christian perspective; they always result in a Christian 'victory'; and some less than civil, even cruel, language is used at times. There are other points, however, that need to be kept in mind. Even Ruether, after providing an abundance of opinion that these dialogues do not represent authentic dialogue, admits: 'Nevertheless, this should not lead us to suppose that the disputes would were not real and that Christians were not in fact replying to a real polemic that was taking place between the faiths.'⁴⁷

Even with acknowledging these valid observations, it is still probable that these dialogues represent an authentic discussion that was being carried on between the faiths. For example, the very existence of these dialogues plus the abundance of them should argue for their basic authenticity. If they were no

44 Mogens Muller, *The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the LXX* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1996); Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*, translated by Mark Biddle (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002).

45 Hengel, *Septuagint*, 126.

46 Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (NY: Seabury Press, 1974), 120.

47 Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 166.

longer needed because of the triumphalist victory of the post-Constantinian Church, why did they continue to be produced? Did the Christian community simply perpetrate an enormous fraud in continuing to produce falsified literature when it was no longer needed?

I recall the previously cited comments by both Skarsaune and Horbury who have traced the evidence that contacts between the communities in the area of Biblical discussion continued at a surprising level throughout this period. Neither one of these writers would justify any of the intemperate language that may have passed, but they have provided many evidences of the reality that can be discerned in them and in the broader literature of the age that have often been overlooked.

It is easy to view this and other ancient literature from the modern perspective of Jewish-Christian dialogue, rather than to look at this literature on its own and from the perspective of its own age. The modern term 'anti-Semitism' comes loaded with a distinctive meaning, especially since the horrors of the Nazi period. Such terminology should not be uncritically read back into ancient literature without serious consideration given to the tremendous differences between those times and the modern period. More serious reflection that is not driven by Christian post-Holocaust guilt is needed. No one should want to justify past mistakes, but neither should we associate past writers with crimes of which they were simply not guilty. They need to be studied on their own.

When we do study them on their own, we come up with a mixed response of criticism and appreciation. This is in part due to the Christian proponent's viewing the Holy Scriptures in a different way altogether from his Jewish antagonist in the debate. Some balanced observations in this regard are made by Williams at the conclusion of his masterful overview of the *Adversus Judaeos* literature.

The treatises we have considered show a sincere desire on the part of the writers to use the evidence of the Old Testament as well as they knew how, according to the light of their time. Their weakness lies in estimating the Jewish use of the Scripture wrongly. They never understood the mind of the Jews. Christian writers... blamed the obstinate Jews for not accepting the evidence which seemed to them so strong. But, in reality, this was only because they themselves misconceived the case. A passage in the Old Testament may be a very valuable illustration, and may even bring out the principle underlying some important Christian truth, and yet be quite worthless if it is used as definite proof in the usual and strict meaning of the term.⁴⁸

It is obvious even from these brief personal comments that more study is vitally needed in many of these areas such as the difference between Jewish and Christian hermeneutical methods during this period. What led to the two 'debaters' being so far removed from each other on the subject of the identity of the Messiah? If the two did share a common ground – the books of the Christian Old

48 Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, 417.

Testament/Jewish *Tenach* – why were they so far apart on the correct way to read those same scriptures? And what role does theological/spiritual predisposition play?

The Jewish-Christian 'dialogue' has not ended; it has continued into the twenty first century, although with a different tone and setting. May the current participants in this debate about the Messiahship of Jesus learn from these ancient efforts some important lessons on how (and how not) to continue that dialogue.⁴⁹

Abstract

The early church was marked by a vigorous debate between Jewish scholars and the followers of Jesus about the true identity of the Messiah. The most celebrated patristic example of this discussion is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* from the second century. Three similar dialogues have survived intact which document this discussion from the third to the sixth centuries. Until recently, however, they have not been translated from their original Greek and Latin texts into any modern language. This article, based on the author's published translations into English of these three dialogues, summarizes their contents and places them within the context of the Jewish-Christian debate that has continued down until today.

49 For an example of the new context of this discussion, see Paul Copan and Craig Evans, *Who Was Jesus: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

The Bonds of Freedom

Vows, Sacraments and the Formation of the Christian Self

Garry J. Deverell

This book proposes that Christian worship is a key source for any theology seeking to understand the covenant between God and human beings in the Christian tradition. Through a detailed examination of phenomenological,

biblical and theological sources, the author seeks to write a theology in which the selfhood of God and human beings is seen as essentially 'vowed' or 'covenantal'. This claim is then explored through a detailed examination of eucharistic and baptismal practices within the worship life of the church.

Eucharistic worship is understood as a 'non-identical performance' of the covenant established between God and human beings in baptism. Here, then, is a theology that understands Christian worship not simply as 'form' or 'event' but, more radically, as a mutual act of promising and commitment between God and human beings.

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