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Apologetics and Polemics in Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism

Mohr Siebeck

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations for primary sources generally follow those found in Patrick H. Alexander et al., ed. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AIPHOS	*Annuaire de l'institut de Philologie et d'historie Orientales et Slaves*
AnnRabJud	*Annual of Rabbinic Judaism*
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
Bijdr	*Bijdragen*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
CardozoStLawLit	*Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*
CH	*Church History*
CrossCurr	*Cross Currents*
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBMR	*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JRelS	*Journal of Religious Studies*
JAARSup	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion Supplement*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
Proof	*Prooftexts*
RelSRev	*Religious Studies Review*
RRJ	*Review of Rabbinic Judaism*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
ScrHier	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
StPatr	Studia Patristica

SCH	Studies in Church History
SR	*Studies in Religion*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TGUOS	Transactions, Glasgow University Oriental Society
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Chapter 1

Introduction

A. The Destruction of the Second Temple

The destruction of the Second Jewish Temple and city of Jerusalem in 70 CE was the disastrous climax to the war between Jews and Romans that began in 66 CE. After years of fighting and finally Roman defeat of the Jewish revolt, the great city and cultic center lay in ruins, causing major religious, political, social, and economic disruptions. Large areas of the land of Israel were also devastated by Roman armies, and there was enormous loss of human life. In addition to these immediate results, there were important long-term religious implications. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, traditionally considered the place where God "put his name,"[1] was an event with profound theological significance. In addition to the belief that the building and city possessed a special holiness, post-destruction Jews were heirs to the tradition that the First Jewish Temple was destroyed more than half a millennia earlier because of the people's sinfulness.[2] This conditioned responses to the disaster of their era. For Jews as well as Christians in the centuries after 70 CE, these losses could not be seen as purely military calamities. Members of both groups, laying claim to the biblical heritage, insisted that God is involved in human affairs and especially in the lives of the Jews. They therefore believed the destruction disclosed something about God's relationship with the Jews and about their life in the land and service in the Temple. That relationship therefore needed to be reassessed in light of the destruction.[3]

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[1] E. g., Deut 12:5, 21; 14:23–24; 16:2, 6; 26:2.

[2] Biblical verses that illustrate this include Mic 3:12; Jer 7:3–15; Lam 1:8; 5:16; 2 Chr 36:14–21. Many more could be added.

[3] Among the many studies of the war and destruction, see M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest* (New York: Schocken, 1976); E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 1981); Gedaliah Alon, *The Jews in Their Land in the Talmudic Age (70–640 C.E.)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–135 A.D.)* (ed. Geza Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973). Reactions to the destruction were not the same for all Jews, and our evidence is more limited than we would like; see Martin Goodman, "Diaspora Reactions to the Destruction of the Temple," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (ed. James D.G. Dunn; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 27–38; Martin Goodman, "Religious Reactions to 70: The Limitations of the Evidence," in *Was 70 C.E. a*

This book is a study of these reassessments, and specifically of the quite different explanations for the event offered in selected early Christian and rabbinic writings. Their contrasting interpretations allow us to probe a question of great scholarly interest: did rabbis / rabbinic views and Christians / Christian views impact or influence each other during the formative first few centuries of the Common Era? Rather than range too broadly in considering questions of possible influence, I have chosen to analyze only Christian and Jewish writers who lived in geographical proximity and were roughly contemporaneous with each other. They not only shared a common ethos to some degree but were most likely to be engaged in theological apologetics and polemics.

Therefore, I will consider three early Christian writers who lived in the land of Israel from the second to fourth centuries, Justin, Origen, and Eusebius, and the rabbis whose views are included in the Midrash *Lamentations Rabbah*. All discuss this enormously important subject of the destruction and offer explanations for and implications of the event. Among other goals, they wrote about it in order to buttress the beliefs of and dispel doubts held by members of their own communities. They wrestled with ideas about Israel, chosenness, and the nature of God and addressed issues that were vital to their religious identities and beliefs in an unsettled and contentious period of Late Antiquity. In particular, this was a time when rabbis and Church Fathers defended their religious status and claims to be the rightful heirs of God's promises to Israel, sometimes in the face of directly competing claims by others.[4] Concerns over communal membership and boundaries were characteristic of this period on all sides, especially in light of what came to be mutually exclusive claims made by Jews and Christians to the Hebrew Bible and the biblical promises. The destruction was a flashpoint in these competing claims and a topic around which they defended and developed their fundamental religious beliefs. In their writings, they offer responses to and explanations for the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple that likely reveal awareness of the serious theological challenges posed by the competing claims of others and a need to offer some type of defense (apology) against them.

B. Methodology and Parameters of This Study

Methodologically, my approach to the question of Jewish and Christian interaction is shaped by an important study of apologetics, which has defined the term as "the defence of a cause or party supposed to be of paramount importance to

Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple (ed. Daniel Schwartz and Zeev Weiss; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 509–16.

[4] See Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 138; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1–19.

the speaker."[5] I will show that the destruction prompted profound, extended engagement with uniquely salient and contested issues about the status of the covenant between God and God's people (whether understood as Jews or as Christians). These are zero-sum issues: claims to the covenant made by one community necessarily excluded those made by the other, for there could not be two peoples of God and there was no notion of a shared covenant. Apologetics thus emerged because these theological issues were "of paramount importance" to both rabbinic and early Christian self-identity, and at a time (during the few centuries after the destruction in 70 CE) and in a place (the land of Israel) where they might plausibly arise.

The authors studied here sought zealously either (in the case of Jews) to offer a defense of their continuing status as the people of God to fellow Jews, or (in the case of Christians) to offer a defense of their replacement of Jews as the new people of God to fellow Christians. (Relatedly, in the case of Christians they also include bitter and direct polemical attacks against Jews.) These overarching defenses include claims of undeniably major significance to Jews and Christians alike: claims to divine election, or to proper understanding of biblical law, or that one's community is holy or good. The study therefore precludes topics of great interest to only one group, such as messianism or Christology for Christians or halakhah for Jews. This is because we will likely find evidence of oppositional theological apologetics when considering topics of interest to *both* Jews and Christians, and for which the stakes for all were extremely high and no compromise was possible.[6]

Evidence for theological apologetics is made more compelling because of certain distinctive geographical and historical features of these authors. Most prominent is the authors' presence in the land of Israel, where there is a high probability that they would have been aware of the views of outsiders. "Palestine is, of course, the country where [Christians'] contacts and confrontation with the living Judaism (and not just with Jewish traditions of an earlier period) are to be

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[5] Mark Edwards et al., "Introduction: Apologetics in the Roman World," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1–13, 1. See also Victor Tcherikover, "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered," *Eos* 48 (1956): 169–93; Ephraim E. Urbach, "Apologetics," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 3:188–201; John Barclay, "Apologetics in the Jewish Diaspora," in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (ed. John R. Bartlett; London: Routledge, 2002), 129–48; Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (New York: Corpus Instrumentorum, 1971); Simon Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (ed. Mark Edwards et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105–29; David Rokeah, "The Church Fathers and the Jews in Writings Designed for Internal and External Use," in *Antisemitism through the Ages* (ed. Shmuel Almog and Nathan H. Reisner; Oxford: Pergamon, 1988), 39–69.

[6] See Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18.

expected."[7] There were throughout the land communities of Jews and Christians, of varying sizes, and some cities (such as Caesarea) were notable for containing large and diverse populations.[8] Thus, many Jews and Gentiles (including Christians but also pagans) lived in close proximity to each other. Furthermore, some and perhaps all may have seen the ruins on the Temple mount (Jews likely from a distance because of the Hadrianic ban on entry), which offered powerful and lasting visual evidence of the dramatic event even centuries later. This makes apologetic responses to strong theological claims likely, for these depend on a general (though not necessarily detailed) awareness of competing, indeed zero-sum views. The texts I have chosen, while written primarily for co-religionists, plausibly reflect an awareness of these rival views that emerged in a similar time and place.

I will argue that this apologetic context explains why, in the Midrash, there are some midrashim that strikingly break with widespread rabbinic explanations in other texts that blamed the destruction on Israel's own sins. This traditional claim, that horrendous Jewish suffering was just punishment by God, was to some rabbis in the Midrash unsettling and ultimately unacceptable, perhaps because they heard precisely such accusations made against them by Christians and needed to rebut them. It also explains why, in the Christian texts, there is such sustained and sophisticated attention to the events of 70 CE. Because of their awareness of both competing Jewish claims and the vivid, continuing evidence of Jewish defeat, the destruction was extremely useful in arguments for the religious legitimacy of the Gentile church, the rejection of the Jewish covenant, and the obsolescence of the Mosaic Law (that is, the Torah and / or the Hebrew Bible generally). I do not claim that these views broadly parallel or resemble Jewish and Christian responses to the destruction in other texts from other times and places. In particular, some midrashim present views that are nearly unprecedented in rabbinic literature. On the contrary, by carefully

[7] Günter Stemberger, "Exegetical Contacts Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)* (ed. M. Saebo; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 569–86, 577. See also Yaron Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place, and Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 163. We do not have precise population figures for this period, of course, and there are a range of views (based on different types of sources: archaeological, textual, etc.) regarding the presence of and interactions between members of different groups. For a review of past scholarship and a plausible argument that members of different communities probably interacted in both villages and cities, see Benjamin Isaac, "Jews, Christians and Others in Palestine: The Evidence from Eusebius," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 65–74. By comparison, see Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 8, 151.

[8] Interestingly, despite all the attention given to Jerusalem in both Jewish and Christian writings (of course, many looked back in time), the actual city was largely "dilapidated" and had a "reduced [political] stature" under Roman rule in the few centuries after the Jewish revolts in 66–70 CE and 132–135 CE, until Constantine's building project began in the early fourth century. See Eliav, *God's Mountain*, 84, 162.

choosing texts that emerged in a discrete and identifiable context, it becomes possible to reconstruct their apologetic functions in a specific social situation.[9] These views challenge some assumptions about responses to the destruction generally. These include, for example, scholarly claims that rabbis reaffirmed traditional explanations for suffering and that Christians only superficially engaged with the destruction. I also offer a method of undertaking carefully-drawn comparative studies of late antique texts that avoid some of the weaknesses of earlier studies.

My focus on clashing interpretations should not obscure shared if unstated and unacknowledged beliefs about other theological claims with which both rabbis and these Church Fathers would agree. In fact, it is these agreements that generate their intense disagreements, whether expressed in theological apologetics or in direct polemics. Without common points of reference, no engagement – indirect or direct – would even be possible. These include shared beliefs in God's involvement in history, affirmations of the continuing relevance of the Hebrew Bible to contemporary life, and reliance on overlapping theological categories (e. g., covenant, promise, redemption / salvation, reward and punishment). Of course, there are different understandings of these beliefs and concepts, due among other things to different canons and versions of Scripture, and specifically to different explanations for and implications drawn from the destruction. However, these Christians and Jews alike grappled with the destruction with many shared assumptions, and in particular with nearly identical explanations in mind (even if they disagreed with them, as I will argue some rabbis did).

For example, on the one hand, many Jews said it was "because of *our* [i. e., Jews'] sins" that the Temple was destroyed and *our* people exiled from the land. On the other hand, many Christians said it was "because of *your* [i. e., Jews'] sins" that the Temple was destroyed and *your* people exiled from the land.[10] This mix of unstated agreement and disagreement, and of shared and divergent assumptions, makes possible a fascinating range of theological apologetics. This is a well-known sociological pattern in religious life. As has been illustrated by

[9] On the significance of religious claims that are "conspicuous or unnatural" when compared to other texts from the same group, school, or community and that may offer evidence of conflict with other groups, see Reuven Kimelman, "Polemics and Rabbinic Liturgy," in *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context, and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism* (ed. Rivkah Ulmer; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 59–98, 59.

[10] Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 32. Emphasis added. The sins they have in mind, of course, are very different; see discussions in the chapter on each text. It is not true historically that (all) Jews were exiled from the land of Israel following the conflicts with Rome, though this historical-theological idea was ultimately enshrined in Jewish liturgy in the additional prayer for festivals ("Because of our sins we were exiled from our land").

studies of religious conflict, efforts to reinforce a community's identity and convictions and to strengthen its boundaries often emerge in the presence of other groups with both some similar beliefs and practices and also sharp differences.[11] This mix can prompt the types of claims we find in the texts examined in this book. It allows us to plausibly discern the influence of competing claims and to propose a possible motivation (or motivations) for the authors' views.

My methodological approach differs from that found in some other studies of late antique Jewish-Christian relations, and especially of apologetics and polemics. For example, some scholars have assembled seemingly contrasting or contradictory interpretations of biblical texts and used these as evidence of direct polemics. Prominent examples of this can be found in studies by R. Kimelman, E. Urbach, I. Yuval, and E. Kessler.[12] They posit an "exegetical encounter," to use Kessler's phrase. These scholars typically choose as the unit of analysis biblical verses (or small parts of verses or even individual words) about which Jews and Christians seem to disagree. This approach presumes that ancient Jews and Christians had specific, detailed, and reliable knowledge of the others' texts. However, the portraits that emerge are largely speculative and often unpersuasive. Among other things, they suffer from a focus on minor and sometimes technical exegetical details,[13] chronological or geographical disparities (e. g., no plausible means by which competing interpretations might have been learned by outsiders),[14]

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[11] A relevant, helpful discussion appears in Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 23–25.

[12] Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbi Yohanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A Third-Century Jewish-Christian Disputation," *HTR* 73 (1980): 567–95; Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Ephraim E. Urbach, "Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and Jewish-Christian Disputation," *ScrHier* 22 (1971): 247–75; Yuval, *Two Nations*; Israel Jacob Yuval, "Christianity in Talmud and Midrash: Parallelomania or Parallelophobia?," in *Transforming Relations: Essays on Jews and Christians throughout History in Honor of Michael A. Signer* (ed. Franklin T. Harkins; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 50–74; Edward Kessler, "The Exegetical Encounter between the Greek Church Fathers and the Palestinian Rabbis," *StPatr* 34 (2001): 395–412.

[13] Among the many examples one might give, Yuval builds a complex but mostly fanciful portrait of a direct Jewish challenge to Christology emerging out of a dispute over proper interpretation of Ps 22, which is very briefly quoted in a rabbinic midrash; see Yuval, *Two Nations*, 37. Urbach posits a clash regarding the proper referent of two Hebrew words in Song 2:1; see Urbach, "Homiletical Interpretations," 265–68. For evidence of a challenge to Christian claims about the christological significance of the phrase "three days" in Gen 22:4, Kessler notes a midrash on Gen 22 that contains a list of other important events that occurred on the third day; see Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 84–86.

[14] E. g., Kessler is largely indifferent to questions of date or setting and argues for an exegetical encounter even in texts from very different times and places; see Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 22–24. Likewise, Yuval contrasts rabbinic and Christian texts from different times and places without considering how one or both sides might have learned the views of the other; see Yuval, *Two Nations*, 53–55; Yuval, "Christianity in Talmud and Midrash," 64.

simplistic judgments,[15] or unlikely assumptions of deep knowledge of outsiders' theology.[16]

It is doubtful that outsiders (and for that matter even most co-religionists) were both knowledgeable and capable enough to seriously engage in exegetical disputes at this level. Clashing interpretations over the meaning of a biblical text presume substantive face-to-face interaction and / or a more than superficial familiarity with the written texts of the other, for neither of which is there evidence.[17] Arguments that Jews and Christians "were aware of each other's exegesis"[18] – and not just each other's broader views – founder when based on such questionable claims. These studies better illustrate scholarly creativity at reconstructing clash rather than offer plausible evidence of substantive engagement between Jews and Christians over biblical texts.[19]

Studies of interaction based on the supposed presence of detailed, often minute parallels (exegetical or otherwise) in rabbinic and early Christian texts represent another scholarly approach to surmounting serious limitations in the evidence, above all the striking paucity of explicit references to Christianity in rabbinic literature. While sometimes touching on disputed issues where there appear to be overlapping interests or methods, scholars also seek examples of similarities or parallels regarding generic topics in ancient sources. They then presume that these illustrate some type of interaction between religious communities. However, these attempts are also often speculative and unpersuasive. Such claims have long been popular in scholarly studies of contact between late antique Jews and Christians, but assumptions about actual influence are often

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[15] E. g., Yuval argues that as a rule topics and texts treated by both Jews and Christians reflect Jewish responses to (and borrowings from) Christianity; see Yuval, *Two Nations*, 21–22; Yuval, "Christianity in Talmud and Midrash," 52.

[16] E. g., Both Kimelman and Urbach argue that Rabbi Yohanan responded to Paul's claims in Galatians as transmitted through Origen; see Kimelman, "Rabbi Yohanan and Origen," 575–77; Urbach, "Homiletical Interpretations," 262–63. Yuval argues that the image of Judas the Jew, who with a kiss became the Christian model for betrayal, was inverted in numerous midrashim. Rabbis highlight the perfidy of Esau (a symbol of Rome and Christianity) when he supposedly bit rather than kissed Jacob at their reunion (Gen 33:4); see Yuval, "Christianity in Talmud and Midrash," 64–66. See also Yuval, *Two Nations*, 30.

[17] See Stemberger, "Exegetical Contacts."

[18] Kimelman, "Rabbi Yohanan and Origen," 573.

[19] More cautious and sophisticated reconstructions of possible examples of Jewish-Christian polemics appear in some recent studies; see Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Naftali S. Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 111–22. However, even these sometimes focus on seemingly small and sometimes questionable details or apparent parallels, such as phrases found in Christian texts; see for example Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 186, 223. See also the helpful critique in Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Narratives in Dialogue: A Folk Literary Perspective on Interreligious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land, First-Fifteenth Centuries C. E.* (ed. Arieh Kofsky and Guy G. Stroumsa; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1998), 109–29, 127–28.

questionable, especially without evidence for means of transmission or a suitable context. Sometimes the parallels are largely superficial or more plausibly illustrate reliance on shared, earlier biblical or post-biblical sources (e. g., Josephus, Philo, Apocrypha, or Pseudepigrapha).[20]

Another, more helpful approach, with a focus on rabbinic literature, is to assemble and analyze the very few texts that do make probable references to Jesus. P. Schäfer, for example, studies texts in which rabbis (especially in Babylonia) present parodic "counternarratives to stories about Jesus' life and death in the Gospels."[21] While noting that some of the issues underlying rabbinic attacks on Jesus rest on serious issues such as rabbinic authority[22] and indicate some hostility to Christianity,[23] such texts are often mostly offensive and colorful mockeries. They are also rare. Rabbis primarily critique or lampoon specific Christian claims made about Jesus and his family, casting him as a blasphemer and magician. This explicit approach yields useful insights. However, it necessarily limits what can be said to some rather narrowly defined and often absurd topics. The rabbinic agenda is largely responsive and sometimes superficial, shaped by their concerns to ridicule specific Christian claims.

I offer a comparative model not based on topics found on either a Jewish or a Christian agenda. Likewise, my model does not depend on purported parallels or on uncovering detailed (and often elusive) evidence for actual and explicit engagement, especially over biblical texts. Rather, theological apologetics over the destruction of the Temple revolve around a major historical event with profound implications for all and that prompts extensive and at times unprecedented claims in the writings I analyze. Without substantial evidence for direct clash (which I believe is largely lacking), I focus on the defensive functions of the texts.[24]

My argument and conclusions are therefore more modest than those of some other scholars, but I hope also more reasonable. In my analysis, it is not necessary to presume that rabbis knew much in detail about Christians and Christianity or vice-versa, or even that either side was aware of and grappled with some

[20] A famous critique was offered in Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13. A more recent discussion, with specifics, appears in Stemberger, "Exegetical Contacts," 570–72, 585. Earlier critiques appear in A. Marmorstein, "Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century," *HUCA* 10 (1935): 223–63; H. J. Schoeps, "Die Tempelzerstörung des Jahres 70 in der jüdischen Religionsgeschichte," in *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950), 144–83, 150.

[21] Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 7–8.

[22] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 106.

[23] Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 114.

[24] I do not presume a simple, stark divide between apologetics and polemics. However, I more often emphasize the apologetic and defensive functions of these writings (which I argue were primarily or exclusively intended for insiders / co-religionists), rather than the polemical and offensive features (which are present, especially in the Christian writings, but typically in service of a defense of Christian claims vis-à-vis Jews and Judaism).

sort of essentialist religious entity we now call "[Gentile] Christianity" or "[rabbinic] Judaism."[25] More likely, they had an awareness of some of the claims of (Gentile) Christians or (rabbinic) Jews, understandably viewed these as threatening, and therefore chose to shore up their own communities' counterclaims.

C. The Primary Sources Analyzed in This Study[26]

Decisions about which primary sources to use in a comparative study are complicated because of the significant differences in texts from Late Antiquity. Compared to one another, the rabbinic and Christian texts I have chosen have few formal similarities and represent very different genres, though all are exegetical and apologetic, as I will demonstrate.[27] Generally, rabbinic texts are anthological, seldom limited to one place or time, and often reveal little explicit interest among the rabbis in contemporary political or social developments outside their own milieu.[28] By contrast, the Christian texts are works of single authors and can be situated (sometimes roughly) in a specific place and time. Nonetheless, all of the texts I have chosen, regardless of origin, contain thoughtful and sophisticated treatments of the topic under consideration. In their own distinctive ways, the Jews and Christians alike grapple extensively with the implications of this important event.

Despite some difficulties with precise dating (this is especially the case with the rabbinic midrashim), these selected texts generally overlap in time, with *Lamentations Rabbah* (abbreviated *Lam. Rab.*) containing the words of rabbis who lived roughly at the same time as the Christian authors, during the second to fourth centuries CE. Some of the texts are long, and my goal is not a comprehensive review of every possible reference to the destruction but a survey of selected passages on it. When necessary, I will touch on general attitudes toward Jerusalem and the Temple[29] and religious responses to its

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[25] Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 233–34.

[26] Translations of biblical passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (with minor alterations), except for Septuagint passages, which are taken from L. Breton's translation, revised by L. Nelson (again, with minor alterations).

[27] On apology as a genre, see Edwards et al., "Apologetics in the Roman World," 2.

[28] See H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 45–55.

[29] Among the many studies, see William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary, and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (ed. John Barclay and John Sweet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 207–24; John T. Townsend, "The Jerusalem Temple in the First Century," in *God and his Temple: Reflections on Professor Samuel Terrien's The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (ed. Lawrence E. Frizzell; South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University Press, 1979), 48–65; Frances M. Young, "Temple Cult and Law in Early Christianity," *NTS* 19 (1973): 325–38; Bertil Gartner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); E. P. Sanders, "Jerusalem

absence.[30] However, the study primarily focuses on the explanations for the destruction as these occur in each text. Occasionally, I also consider generic themes of loss and devastation when they are related to this event. Again, this is especially true in the rabbinic midrashim, because they may be relevant even when they omit any explicit mention of the destruction.[31]

I. The Christian Texts[32]

The Christian texts that are analyzed in the following chapters are Justin's mid-second-century *Dialogue with Trypho* (abbreviated *Dial.*), Origen's mid-third-century *Contra Celsum* [*Against Celsus*] (*Cels.*), and Eusebius' early fourth-century *Proof of the Gospel* (*Dem. ev.*[33]). These writers are all Gentile Christians who staunchly oppose Jews' claims to still be God's chosen people after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE. All three lived in the land of Israel; Justin was from Samaria, and Origen and Eusebius both spent decades living in Caesarea. Unlike some early Christian writers for whom not only Jerusalem but even Jews were known only abstractly, these writers refer to their interactions with Jews and reveal an awareness of conditions in the land of

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and its Temple in the Beginnings of the Christian Movement," *Judaism* 46 (1997): 189–96; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); John T. Townsend, "The Jerusalem Temple in New Testament Thought" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1958); Eliav, *God's Mountain*; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985), 89–184; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B. C. E. – 66 C. E.* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992), 47–145.

[30] Again, among the many studies, see Baruch M. Bokser, "The Wall Separating God and Israel," *JQR* 73 (1983): 349–73; Baruch M. Bokser, "Rabbinic Responses to Catastrophe: From Continuity to Discontinuity," *PAAJR* 50 (1983): 37–61; Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 112–16; Cohn, *Memory of the Temple*; Schoeps, "Die Tempelzerstörung des Jahres 70," 167–73; Jacob Neusner, *How Important was the Destruction of the Second Temple in the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006); Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Temple and the Synagogue," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Early Roman Period* (ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies and John Sturdy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 298–325, 313–19.

[31] It is not always clear if a rabbinic text refers to the first revolt against Rome that culminated with the destruction in 66–70 CE, or the second revolt under Bar Kokhba in 132–135 CE. The latter event was in some ways more disastrous than the first. It raises similar theological issues, and texts that mention it will sometimes also be discussed below. Not surprisingly, in a Midrash on Lamentations, rabbinic references to the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE can be used to comment on more recent events; see Jonathan Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 195. The practice of referring to contemporary events using earlier personages and settings goes back to the Bible, such as Daniel's description of the war with Antiochus IV in the second century BCE in terms of Nebuchadnezzar's attack four centuries earlier.

[32] The introductions to each text in this section are complemented by additional discussions in the chapters on the individual Christian and rabbinic texts.

[33] This abbreviation is taken from the Latin title *Demonstratio Evangelica*.

Israel, including in post-70 CE Jerusalem.[34] N. de Lange writes, "It may not be coincidental that the relationship between Christianity and Judaism is most fully explored by authors who lived in Palestine – Justin, Origen, and Eusebius."[35] They are deeply concerned with the relationship between Christians and Jews, and this influences their views of the destruction.

Some scholars have doubted that the destruction received much attention from early Christians, perhaps because they noticed only the most explicit and substantive discussions of the topic. This is a lacuna I intend to remedy, as I will demonstrate that it is integral to the arguments of these Christian writers.[36] Their treatments of the destruction are not peripheral but central to their defenses of one type of Christianity, Gentile Christianity. All three authors defend the existence of churches composed of Gentiles, in which the Bible is retained as a sacred text but without the requirement of literal (meaning Jewish) observance of the Mosaic Law. They were aware of the Jewishness of the first Christians, shared their reverence for the Bible, and appreciated the antiquity of Judaism as a prestigious forerunner to Christianity. Establishing continuity with pre-Christian Judaism was important to all of them. Nonetheless, most Jews remained unpersuaded by Christian claims, and already in the first few generations after Jesus Christian hostility to Jews grew, along with (and probably because of) the growing number of Gentile, non-Law observant believers. We therefore find that these authors' arguments from the destruction are largely directed against non-Christian Jews, even if primarily for the benefit of Christian readers. This polemic reflects the complicated attempts in largely to exclusively Gentile

[34] For general discussions of Christian anti-Jewish polemic and the extent of Christian knowledge of actual Jews, see Andrew S. Jacobs, "The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 95–118; Lieu, *Image and Reality*; Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[35] N. R. M. De Lange, "Review of 'Chiesa e Sinagoga nelle Opere di Origene'," *JTS* 35 (1984): 228–30, 228.

[36] Previous scholarship on individual books is discussed at the start of each chapter, where I will note a pattern in scholarly studies of ignoring or undervaluing the importance of the destruction. In general, see J. Julius Scott, "The Effects of the Fall of Jerusalem on Christianity," *Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society Proceedings* 3 (1983): 149–60; Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 35–37; G. W. H. Lampe, "A. D. 70 in Christian Reflection," in *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 153–71. For a range of views on the importance of the destruction, see Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 65; Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 122; Cohn, *Memory of the Temple*, 107–11; Stephen Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jewish-Christian Relations 70–170 C. E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 287; Schoeps, "Die Tempelzerstörung des Jahres 70."

churches to establish continuity with Judaism and discontinuity with the Jewish people.[37]

In these texts, the authors say comparatively little about alternate, and in their eyes illegitimate, forms of Christianity.[38] However, we should recognize that discussions about the destruction may contain such criticisms as well. So-called Gnostic and Jewish Christian churches, for example, were around for centuries after Jesus, perhaps in the same locales as the so-called "orthodox" churches. There are occasional attacks on Gnostics,[39] and criticisms of non-Christian Jews may also be meant as criticisms of Jewish Christians. Early Christianity was not at all "homogeneous" despite some early Christian writers' attempts to suggest otherwise.[40] Therefore, the authors may have multiple groups in mind. Their insistence on the legitimacy of Gentile Christianity alone probably reflects not a reality in which all other forms of Christianity, especially Jewish Christianity, have dwindled – the opposite is true in places – but idealized constructions of one, perhaps increasingly dominant, type of Christian identity.[41]

The authors, through both biblical exegesis (what I call the "proof from prophecy," for they often rely on prophetic passages from the Hebrew Bible interpreted christologically) and theological interpretations of history (what I call the "proof from history"), appeal to the destruction to show that Christians have taken the place of the Jews in the covenant with God.[42] Proofs from prophecy

[37] See W. S. Campbell, "Christianity and Judaism: Continuity and Discontinuity," *IBMR* 8 (1984): 54–58; Morna D. Hooker, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Early Christianity in its Jewish Setting* (London: Epworth, 1986).

[38] These authors criticize divergent Christian beliefs mostly in other works, as in Justin's lost anti-heretical writings and in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (*Hist. eccl.*), for example.

[39] E. g. Justin, *Dial.* 92.

[40] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 284. A seminal study of the diversity of early Christianity is Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Gerhard Krodel and Robert Kraft; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

[41] Study of the history and fate of Jewish Christianity is complex because of (among other things) uncertainty over the identification and origins of different groups. Those Christians who sought to observe all or part of the Law might have been Jewish before becoming followers of Christ (the term "Jewish Christian" applies to them more directly) or Gentile Judaizers (meaning those who, while not Jewish before converting to Christianity, nonetheless sought to observe Jewish Law); see Joan E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?," *VC* 44 (1990): 313–34, 326–27; Burton Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish Christianity in Rabbinic Literature," *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47–70, 53–55. An important survey of the complex relationships between (different kinds of) Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity is Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). I thank Prof. C. Deutsch for helpfully noting the possibility of a less-than-overt polemic against Jewish-Christians in attacks on Law observance and non-Christian Judaism.

[42] See Henry Chadwick, "The Evidences of Christianity in the Apologetic of Origen," *StPatr* 2 (1957): 331–39; John Barton, *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 12–23; Robert J. Hauck, *The More Divine Proof: Prophecy and Inspiration in Celsus and Origen* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989); Arieh Kofsky, "Prophecy in the Service of Polemics in Eusebius of Caesarea," *Cristianesimo nella Storia*

are of course prominent in early Christian writings, including those studied here, much as ancient Jews extensively drew on biblical passages as a way of supporting their religious claims. Often, when treating the destruction, these Christians express a preference for the proof from history, emphasizing the simple fact of its historical occurrence. In theory this makes the lessons they derive from the event accessible to all people, not just to those who share their religious beliefs. However, as even they recognize, their explanations of the event and the distinctly Christian implications that follow from it are likely to be most persuasive to those who share, for example, their beliefs about Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus and the actions of God in history.

Outsiders, while unable to deny the occurrence of the destruction itself, probably would not easily accept the broader claims these Christians derived from this event. The Christians may take as their starting point historical evidence available to all, but any claim beyond "The event occurred" is strengthened by (and probably requires) agreement on non-historical, pre-existing beliefs, many of them based on interpretations of Scripture. For example, acceptance of even the basic claim, common in these early Christian texts, that the destruction was divine punishment of the Jews for the killing of Jesus requires one to affirm the authors' interpretations of the New Testament regarding culpability for the crucifixion. It also requires one to somehow account for potentially problematic historical details, such as the four intervening decades that separate the crucifixion around 30 CE from the destruction in 70 CE, or the fact that the victims of the war against Rome were likely not Jesus' actual persecutors nearly half a century earlier. We therefore find a mixture of proofs from prophecy and proofs from history.

The authors may have hoped their texts would be read by non-Christians, though much that they wrote, such as their exegetical discussions, would undoubtedly be abstruse or simply impenetrable to them. Much more likely, they sought to buttress the beliefs of other Christians, for at the core of all these works is a defense of a fundamental shift in divine favor from Jews to Gentile Christians despite the continuing presence (and in some settings likely vitality) of Jews and Judaism after Jesus. It is on this shift that "orthodox" Gentile Christian religious legitimacy depends. In much early Christian literature, such legitimacy is consistently supported by means of a contrast with the Jewish "other" against

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19 (1998): 1–29; R. M. Grant, "The Uses of History in the Church before Nicaea," *StPatr* 11 (1972): 166–78; Ruth A. Clements, "Epilogue: 70 C. E. after 135 C. E. – The Making of a Watershed?," in *Was 70 C. E. a Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple* (ed. Daniel Schwartz and Zeev Weiss; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 517–36, 535–36. The term "proof from prophecy" reflects the frequent use of prophetic texts, but of course Christian authors use non-prophetic texts for similar purposes. See also Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy* (Leiden: Brill, 1987). Skarsaune's work is discussed further in the chapter on Justin.

whom many Christians – and especially these Christians – defined themselves.[43] As I will argue, this contrast is especially prominent in their treatments of the destruction. Specifically, it is consistently linked by all three authors to accusations that the Jews killed Jesus, and therefore it has a clear punitive function. Furthermore, the destruction is also joined to a complex and wide-ranging supersessionist argument designed to undermine foundational Jewish claims. The authors' link the destruction to Christian critiques of Jewish Law, worship, and attitudes toward the Gentiles, and thereby to the authors' strong support for a mission to all the nations. My investigation of their explanations for and implications of the destruction will demonstrate the importance of the event to a range of fundamental Christian beliefs, above all, the belief that they have replaced the Jews in God's covenant.

II. *Lamentations Rabbah*

Lamentations Rabbah is an exegetical Midrash on the book of Lamentations.[44] It comes from the land of Israel and was redacted around the fourth or fifth century, though it likely contains the views of earlier rabbis.[45] It is the first sustained presentation of rabbinic thought on the destruction.[46] C. Kroloff summarizes its importance: "the Midrash Rabba on Lamentations is unique in that it is almost wholly devoted to an expostulation and homiletical interpretation" of the loss.[47]

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[43] See Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 105; Graham N. Stanton, "Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho: Group Boundaries, 'Proselytes,' and 'God-fearers'," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 263–78; Charles H. Cosgrove, "Justin Martyr and the Emerging Christian Canon: Observations on the Purpose and the Destination of the Dialogue with Trypho," *VC* 36 (1982): 209–32, 218; Tessa Rajak, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (ed. Mark Edwards et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–80, 71; James Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 1 (1997): 195–225.

[44] When it refers to an entire collection of texts, such as the (book) Midrash *Lamentations Rabbah*, the word "Midrash" is capitalized. When it refers to shorter texts in this larger text (or book), it is not capitalized ("midrash" [singular] / "midrashim" [plural]).

[45] Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 283–87.

[46] Some earlier non-rabbinic texts deal with the destruction, such as 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, as do the writings of Josephus, all of which date from a few decades after the destruction. See Robert Kirschner, "Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Responses to the Destruction of 70," *HTR* 78 (1985): 27–46; Cohn, *Memory of the Temple*, 92–101; Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976), 78–92; Michael E. Stone, "Reactions to the Destruction of the Second Temple," *JSJ* 12 (1981): 195–204; Jacob Neusner, "Judaism in a Time of Crisis: Four Responses to the Destruction of the Second Temple," *Judaism* 21 (1972): 313–27; Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, 180–209.

[47] Charles A. Kroloff, "The Effect of Suffering on the Concept of God in Lamentations Rabba" (M.A. Thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1960), 1–2.