

BLOOD AND ATONEMENT IN THE PSEUDO-
CLEMENTINES AND *THE STORY OF THE TEN MARTYRS*:
THE PROBLEM OF SELECTIVITY IN THE STUDY OF
“JUDAISM” AND “CHRISTIANITY”*

RA‘ANAN S. BOUSTAN, *UCLA*
ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED, *University of Pennsylvania*

In modern scholarship on the history of Jewish–Christian relations, Jews and Christians are often credited with fundamentally divergent attitudes towards the belief that the death of *any* human can atone for the sins of others. Christians, of course, did not invent this idea; in Jewish sources from the Second Temple period, we find such power attributed to the suffering and deaths of exemplary figures.¹ Like asceticism, apocalypticism, and allegory, however, the notion of atoning death is typically numbered among those Second Temple Jewish beliefs and practices that Christians embraced and (rabbinic) Jews rejected.² The emphasis on the atoning power of the death of Jesus is attested already in the writings of Paul, and it seems to have marked the Jesus Movement as distinct from other first-century Jewish groups.³ Particularly in light of the

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the University of California, Riverside, on April 19, 2007. Funding and support for this research was provided by the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania.

¹ E.g., 2 Macc 6:29; 7:37-38; 4 Macc 17:21-22; Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 18:5, 35:3; *Testament of Moses* 9:7; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 11.169; 12.255-256. On early Jewish traditions regarding the blood or death of exemplary figures as performing an atoning or purificatory function, see J.W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (JSJSup 57; Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 135-163, and the scholarship cited there.

² For recent correctives to this traditional approach to asceticism, apocalypticism, and allegory, see, e.g., S. Fraade, “Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism,” *Jewish Spirituality I*, ed. A. Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 253-286; E. Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004); P. Schäfer, “From Cosmology to Theology: The Rabbinic Appropriation of Apocalyptic Cosmology,” in *Creation and Re-creation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan*, ed. R. Elier – P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005), pp. 39-58; R.S. Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism* (TSAJ 112; Tübingen: Mohr, 2005), pp.149-198; J.C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Post-rabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: SBL, 2005); A.Y. Reed, “Reading Augustine and/as Midrash,” in *Midrash and Context*, ed. L. Teugels – R. Ulmer (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2007), pp. 75-131.

³ See, e.g., the early (and perhaps even pre-Pauline) formulation at Rom 3:24-26. On this key passage within the developing understanding of Jesus’ death, see especially S. Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Academia Biblica 19; Atlanta: SBL, 2004); J.D.G. Dunn, “Paul’s Understanding of the Death of Jesus as Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. S. Sykes (Cambridge:

Hen 30(2/2008)

prominence granted to martyrdom as an act of *imitatio Christi*, the very notion of atoning death might appear to emblemize a Christian self-definition as distinct from “Judaism.” Likewise, it seems natural to assume that late antique Jews would have quickly abandoned this notion as irredeemably “Christian.”

Accordingly, in modern scholarship, atoning death is frequently dismissed as antithetical to the inner-logic of “Judaism.” Characteristic is David Kraemer’s discussion of rabbinic attitudes toward the redemptive or atoning value of human suffering and death.⁴ When reflecting on approaches to suffering in early rabbinic sources such as *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (Baḥodesh 10) and *Sifre Deuteronomy* (§32), for instance, Kraemer states:

One of the central problems for emergent rabbinic Judaism and for contemporary Jewish movements was what to do with the Torah’s requirement of sacrifices, which, in the absence of the Temple, could apparently no longer be brought. The response of the author of Hebrews (chapters 7 and 9), claiming that Jesus was the perfect, eternal sacrifice, shows the centrality of the dilemma. The present tradition [i.e. in the *Mekhilta* and *Sifre*] comes remarkably close to that position, but with important differences. In this midrash, sacrifice, while perhaps ideally desirable, is not absolutely essential, because suffering brings God’s pardon at least as well as do sacrifices. As it turns out, though, suffering is even more effective than sacrifices, because suffering involves personal, bodily sacrifice, whereas animal sacrifices do not. *We* who suffer, like Jesus who suffered, replace the sacrifices. *Our* suffering, like his for Christians, is redemptive. But this similarity is also the most important difference between the two approaches. In the case of Jesus, the suffering of the perfect individual was understood to atone for the sins of the many. In the view of this midrash, in contrast, it is individuals, all imperfect and sinners, who suffer and thereby effect *their own* atonement.⁵

This quotation illustrates well how *a priori* assumptions concerning Jewish and Christian difference can shape the interpretative practices of contemporary scholars. At certain points in his exposition, Kraemer chooses to speak in the first person plural, apparently in order to forge a link between himself and his (apparently Jewish) reader – and between this

Cambridge University, 1991), pp. 35-56; W. Kraus, *Der Tod Jesu als Heiligtumsweihe: Eine Untersuchung zum Umfeld der Sühnevorstellung in Römer 3, 25-26a* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), esp. pp. 21-32.

⁴ D. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Oxford University, 1995).

⁵ Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, p. 85 (emphasis added).

“we” and the rabbinic sages of the midrashic texts that he here discusses. The contrast Kraemer draws between Jewish and Christian views of vicarious suffering and death serves both literary-historical and normative-theological functions. The dichotomy on which his interpretation rests is not internal to the midrashic tradition he is studying; neither Jesus nor Christianity is ever mentioned in these passages from the *Mekhilta* and *Sifrei Deuteronomy*. Rather, Kraemer assumes that “Judaism” and “Christianity” represent two internally coherent and mutually exclusive religious systems. This assumption serves the rhetorical aim of forging a distinctively “Jewish” ethical and theological position on the problem of suffering – one in large measure defined by what it is not, namely, “Christian.”

Such assessments of the opposing natures of Judaism and Christianity are so often repeated by modern scholars that they have attained an almost self-evident character.⁶ Kraemer, for instance, analyzes only a single set of midrashic traditions; yet, by virtue of the common assumptions on which he builds, he is able to present his findings as a generally valid historical characterization of the differences between “Judaism” and “Christianity” more broadly. We might ask, however, whether such generalizations are indeed borne out by our evidence. Does the common scholarly focus on contrasting positions about atoning death do justice to the full range of attitudes towards sacrifice, martyrdom, and atonement held by late antique Jews and Christians?

Towards exploring this question, this article considers two examples that contravene conventional assumptions about the attitudes towards blood and atonement that mark “Jewish” identities as distinct from “Christian” ones. We begin with the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, a fourth-century Christian source that associates blood with “pagan” worship, demons, and impurity, while making no reference either to the atonement effected by Jesus’ death or to its ritual memorialization. We will then consider late antique Jewish martyrological traditions that construct atoning death, not as

⁶ A similar contrast regarding the fundamental difference between the Christian desire for martyrdom and the rabbis’ reluctant stance is elegantly, if problematically, expressed by J. Neusner in the preface to his *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), pp. 13-14: “To save the world the apostle had to suffer in and for it, appear before magistrates, subvert empires... The vision of the apostle extended to all nations and people. Immediate suffering therefore was the welcome penalty to be paid for eventual, universal dominion. The rabbi’s eye looked upon Israel, and, in his love for the Jews, he sought not to achieve dominion or to risk martyrdom, but rather to labor for social and spiritual transformation... No wonder then that the apostle earned the crown of martyrdom, but prevailed in history; while the rabbi received martyrdom, when it came, only as one of and wholly within the people. He gave up the world and its conversion in favor of the people and their regeneration.” The dichotomy between Jewish and Christian attitudes toward martyrdom has been challenged in recent years; see esp. D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1999); idem, “Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism,” *J ECS* 6 (1998), pp. 577-627.

a cornerstone of Christianity rejected by Jews, but rather as a necessary component of Jewish redemption from Roman-Christian domination – and thus as a practice and ideal with profound significance for Jewish identity and piety.

When characterizing premodern Judaism and Christianity, modern scholars have tended to treat some sources as more “typical” or “representative” than others, although rarely offering detailed justification to support their claims.⁷ The results of such choices are perhaps nowhere more evident than in treatments of Jewish and Christian difference. It is arguable, for instance, that modern studies of late antique Jews and Christians have tended to privilege precisely those sources that fall closest to modern views of “Judaism” and “Christianity” as mutually exclusive religious options.

What happens, however, when we take seriously those sources that do not fit so neatly with our modern ideas about the differences between Jews and Christians? In our view, attention to such sources may result in significant correctives to traditional views of the early history of Jewish-Christian relations. By taking seriously a broader range of views that might be classed as “Jewish” or “Christian,” it may be possible to neutralize some of the selection biases of modern scholarship, which have too often served to re-inscribe the very assumptions that historical inquiry purports to test. We suggest that it may be particularly promising to focus on late antique writings – such as the Pseudo-Clementine literature and *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* – that have been neglected or marginalized by modern scholars, even despite compelling evidence for their popularity in premodern times.

1. *Blood and Atonement in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*

The Pseudo-Clementine literature is among the most famous examples of premodern writings that resist modern notions of “Christianity” as definitionally distinct from “Judaism.”⁸ This literature consists of two fourth-century novels, the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, which claim to have been penned by Clement of Rome and which recount the conversion of Clement, his travels with the apostle Peter, and the rivalry between Peter

⁷ To readers of this journal, of course, this pattern is perhaps most familiar from the scholarly privileging of those sources that came to be included in the Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic biblical canons – in contrast to sources that were omitted from such canons or included only in the canons of other churches (e.g., Ethiopian Orthodox).

⁸ On this aspect of the Pseudo-Clementines see esp. H.J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949); idem, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church*, trans. D. Hare (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen* (TU 70²; Berlin: Akademie, 1981).

and Simon Magus;⁹ to the *Homilies* are also affixed two pseudepigraphical letters, one from Peter to James and the other from Clement to Peter. The Pseudo-Clementine literature celebrates the teachings of Peter and stresses the authority of James and the first-century Jerusalem church.¹⁰ These writings also voice surprisingly positive views of Jews and Judaism, and they outline dietary restrictions and prescriptions for ritual purity for Gentile followers of Jesus.¹¹

For our present purposes, their possible links with the apostolic age prove less pressing than the fascinating fact that such traditions occur in writings from the fourth century CE. However tempted one might be to read their “Jewish-Christian” features as merely remnants of an earlier era, it is difficult to explain away the place of such features in their present forms, particularly in the case of the *Homilies*. The *Homilies* are even more irenic towards Judaism than earlier strata of the Pseudo-Clementine tradition.¹² In fact, its fourth-century authors/redactors appear to have made efforts to enhance precisely those elements of their received tradition that modern thinkers have tended to associate more with “Judaism” than with “Christianity”; they may have done so, moreover, with reference to rabbinic traditions of their own time.¹³ Far from attesting the increased isolation and differentiation between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, the evidence of the *Homilies* suggests their paths could also converge in new ways. At the very least, this source preserves the literary expression of certain late antique Syrian Christians who seemed to wish this to be so.¹⁴

⁹ On the adoption and adaptation of the Greco-Roman genre of the novel, see esp. M.J. Edwards “The Clementina: A Christian Response to the Pagan Novel,” *CQ* 42 (1992), pp. 459-474.

¹⁰ E.g., *Hom.* 11.35; *Rec.* 4.35. For attempts to use the Pseudo-Clementines to recover early traditions about the Jerusalem church, e.g., Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, pp. 38-58; R.E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (SBLDS 112; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

¹¹ E.g., *Hom.* 7.4, 8; 11.28-30; 13.4, 9, 19; *Rec.* 2.71-72; 6.9-11; 7.29, 34; 8.68.

¹² A.Y. Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementine Literature,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A.H. Becker – A.Y. Reed (TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr, 2003), esp. pp. 228-230.

¹³ For rabbinic parallels to material in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see J. Bergman, “Les éléments juifs dans les pseudo-clementines,” *REJ* 46 (1903), pp. 89-98; A. Marmorstein, “Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century,” *HUCA* 10 (1935), pp. 223-263; A.I. Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), pp. 39-51; A.Y. Reed, “Heresiology and the (Jewish-)Christian Novel: Narrativized Polemics in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *Heresy and Self-Definition in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Iricinschi – H. Zellentin (TSAJ 119; Tübingen: Mohr, 2008), pp. 273-298.

¹⁴ See further A.Y. Reed, “From Judaism and Hellenism to Christianity and Paganism: Cultural Identities and Religious Polemics in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*,” in *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines: Actes du deuxième colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne*, ed. F. Amsler, et al. (Publications de l’Institut romand des sciences bibliques 6; Lausanne: Zèbre, 2008), pp. 425-435; eadem, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as

In their treatment of blood, the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* echo and extend a number of traditions familiar from earlier Christian literature, particularly from the writings of Justin Martyr (fl. ca. 150-170 CE). With Justin, for instance, they share a view of animal sacrifice as degraded and demonic, and they apply this idea of sacrifice *both* to the practices of their “pagan” contemporaries *and* to the past acts of Jewish priests in the Jerusalem Temple. In the *Homilies*, however, efforts are made to extricate such traditions from anti-Jewish polemics and from the assertion of the uniquely atoning power of Jesus’ death.¹⁵

Justin Martyr, for instance, proposed that demons lurk behind “pagan” worship, masquerading as Greek gods; in his view, fallen angels and demons invented idolatry, and demons are fed by the wine and meat offered in sacrifice to idols, thereby enslaving “pagans” and encouraging their impieties.¹⁶ The connection between demons, sacrifice, and idols is developed even further in the *Homilies*. In *Hom.* 8.13-19, we find an extensive account of how the slaughter of animals for food and sacrifice originated as a result of the fallen angels and their demonic sons (cf. *Rec.* 1.29; 4.29).¹⁷ After a retelling of the angelic descent myth that exhibits parallels with the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1-36; third century BCE) and the *Book of Jubilees* (second century BCE) as well as much later rabbinic midrashim,¹⁸ the *Homilies* recount how the Giants desired blood

Counterhistory? The Apostolic Past in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*,” in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. G. Gardner – K. Osterloh (Tübingen: Mohr, forthcoming).

¹⁵ Other parallels are evident right at the outset; both, for instance, begin with the question of the immortality of the soul (*Dial.* 4-5; *Hom.* 1) and the relationship between philosophy, true prophesy, and false prophesy (*Dial.* 6-7; *Hom.* 2-3). Such parallels have led some scholars to suggest that Justin draws from a “Jewish-Christian” source related to the Pseudo-Clementines; e.g., O. Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-text Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 316-320; D. Rokéah, *Justin Martyr and the Jews* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Dinur Center, 1998), pp. 34-39. In our view, it seems just as likely that some stage of the Pseudo-Clementine tradition drew on Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, albeit with the aim of inverting its anti-Judaism. For the integration and subversion of other Christian traditions within the Pseudo-Clementine tradition, see F.S. Jones, “An Ancient Jewish Christian Rejoinder to Luke’s Acts of the Apostles: Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27-71,” in *Semeia* 80: *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles in Intertextual Perspectives*, ed. R. Stoops (Atlanta: SBL, 1990), pp. 223-245; Reed, “Jewish Christianity as Counterhistory”; eadem, “Heresiology.”

¹⁶ See esp. 2 *Apol.* 5, and discussion in A.Y. Reed, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr,” *J ECS* 12 (2004), pp. 141-171.

¹⁷ Porphyry similarly links the origins of meat-eating, blood sacrifice, and bloodshed due to war in *De abstinentia* 2.7, citing Theophrastus. See n. 25 below.

¹⁸ As in *Aggadat Bereshit* (praef. *ad Gen* 6:4), for instance, the fallen angels here come to earth because of their mistaken presumption of angelic superiority to humankind. See also E. Tigchelaar, “The Enochic Watcher Tradition in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *The Pseudo-Clementines I: Homilies*, ed. J.N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).

and began to eat flesh – first of animals, then of humans, and finally of one another (*I En.* 7:4-6; *Jub.* 5:2). After their bodies died in the Flood, the souls of the Giants still sought to be sated, and God laid a law upon them limiting their power only to people who pollute themselves with sacrifice and impurities:

A certain angel was sent to them by God, declaring to them His will, and saying: “These things seem good to the all-seeing God: that you [i.e., the demons] lord it over no person, that you do not harass anyone, unless that someone of his own accord subjects himself to you by worshipping you (προσκυνῶν ὑμᾶς), by sacrificing (θύων), by pouring libations (σπένδων), and by partaking of your table – or by doing anything else that they should not: shedding blood, tasting dead flesh, filling themselves with that which is torn of beasts or that which is cut or that which is strangled or any else that is unclean. But those who betake themselves to My Law (νόμῳ ἐμῷ), you not only shall not touch, but you shall also give honor and flee from their presence... If any of those who worship Me go astray – whether by committing adultery, by practicing magic, by living impurely, or by doing any other of the things that are not well-pleasing to Me – then they will have to suffer something at your hands or those of others, according to My order.” (*Hom.* 8.19)¹⁹

As in *Jubilees* (esp. 10:1-11), demonic power is here placed firmly under the aegis of divine justice and control, and those who live by God’s laws are exempted from demonic oppression. To act impiously, to offer sacrifices, or to eat impure foods, however, is to enslave oneself to demons.²⁰

Whereas Justin appeals to the fallen angels and Giants to expose the grave error of Greek myth and religion, the *Homilies* use these demonic figures to emphasize the dangers of consuming sacrificial meat and other impure foods. In *Hom.* 7.8, it is stated explicitly that one dines at the “table of demons” (cf. 1 Cor 10:21), not only when one consumes food offered to idols, but also when one eats blood and the flesh of improperly slaughtered animals. Whereas Justin dismisses *kashrut* regulations as part of the Torah that God gave only to the Jews, due to their exceptional hard-heartedness (*Dial.* 20), the *Homilies* present the observance of such laws as a necessary precondition for Gentiles to gain freedom from demonic oppression and to follow the will of the one true God as revealed by Jesus and taught by Peter

¹⁹ See also *Hom.* 8.20; 9.14; *Rec.* 2.71; 5.32. Translations of the *Homilies* here and below have been modified from the translation by T. Smith in volume 8 of A. Roberts – J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (repr.ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²⁰ So also *Hom.* 9.9; 11.15.

(cf. Acts 15:19-20, 28-29; 21:25). The error of “pagan” worship is here contrasted, not with faith in Christ, but rather with the piety of Torah-observance.

The *Homilies*, however, also voice fierce polemics against the cult and priesthood of the Jerusalem Temple.²¹ Justin explains away scriptural statements about God’s institution of Jewish Temple worship by suggesting that these precepts were meant both as a punishment for Jewish disobedience and as a means of keeping Jews away from the “pagan” idolatry by which they were inimitably tempted (e.g., *Dial.* 19; 22; 92). Likewise, in an earlier stratum of the Pseudo-Clementine tradition, preserved in the first book of the *Recognitions*,²² Jewish sacrifice is presented as an innovation by Moses, aimed at weaning his people from the idolatry to which they had become addicted in Egypt (esp. *Rec.* 1.36-39). In condemning the Jerusalem Temple and its priesthood, the *Homilies* go even further. For instance, its authors/redactors condemn Aaron outright, revealing him to be a false prophet who stood in opposition to Moses.²³ When they seek to account for scriptural prescriptions concerning animal sacrifice in the Temple, their solution is similarly extreme: they propose that these statements are later and false additions to the original and true text of the Torah.²⁴

In *Hom.* 3.45-46, Peter is described as countering the belief that the one true God ever required or requested animal sacrifice (cf. Justin, *Dial.* 22). Against the prescriptions for sacrifice in the Torah, he cites God’s punishments of those Israelites in the Wilderness who begged Moses for meat (Num 11:13-34), and he alludes to the lack of animal sacrifice and meat-eating prior to Noah (Gen 8:20-9:4; cf. Gen 4:4):²⁵

²¹ For an analysis of how the *Homilies*’ polemics against sacrifice relate to the treatment of the same theme in the *Recognitions* and for a summary of scholarly interpretations of anti-sacrificial statements in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see N. Kelley, “Pseudo-Clementine Polemics against Sacrifice: A Window onto Religious Life in the Fourth Century?” in *Christian Apocryphal Texts for the New Millennium: Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges*, ed. P. Piovanelli (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). Kelley notes, for instance, that “[t]he *Recognitions* likewise contains much of the same negative attitude toward sacrifice, which demonstrates that the Pseudo-Clementines’ anti-sacrificial stance goes at least as far back as the third-century *Grundschrift* (the hypothetical common ancestor of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*).” Much of the treatment about sacrifice in the *Recognitions*, however, occurs in the material in the first book that is unparalleled in the *Homilies* (esp. *Rec.* 1.30, 36-39, 64). Compare, however, *Rec.* 2.71; 4:19; 5.30-32.

²² On this source, see F.S. Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian Source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27-71* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995).

²³ See esp. *Hom.* 2.16, 34; 20.9. Note also the polemics against Sadducees in *Hom.* 3.50, 54.

²⁴ *Hom.* 3.45-46, 51-52, 56. See n. 26 below on the *Homilies*’ “doctrine of false pericopes.”

²⁵ Justin, by contrast, cites Gen 9:3 as evidence for the lack of any dietary restrictions prior to the Flood (*Dial.* 19-20). The interpretation of Gen 9:3 as implying primordial vegetarianism is found in Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 1.17 as well as *Genesis Rabbah* 34.13 (cf. *b.*

That He does desire sacrifices (θυσιαῶν) is shown by this: that those who lusted after flesh were slain immediately upon tasting it and were consigned to a tomb, so that it was called the “hill of lusts” (βουνόν ἐπιθύμιων; cf. Num 11:34). He then who at the first was displeased with the sacrifice of animals (ἐπὶ θύσει ζώων χαλεπαίνων), not wishing them to be slain, did not ordain sacrifices as desiring them. Nor from the beginning did He require them. For without the sacrifice of animals, neither can sacrifices be accomplished, nor can the first-fruits be presented. (*Hom.* 3.45)

This leads Peter to expose the prescriptions for sacrifice in the Torah as textual corruptions:

Thus the slanderous sayings (διάβολοι φωναὶ) against the God who made the heavens are both rendered void by the opposite sayings that are alongside of them and are refuted by the Creation; for they were not written by a prophetic hand (ὑπὸ χειρὸς προφητικῆς). Therefore also they appear opposite to the hand of God, who made all things. (*Hom.* 3.46)

Commandments related to Temple sacrifice are thus dismissed – together with passages which imply a plurality of gods and which ascribe imperfections to God and the patriarchs – as among the “false pericopes” contained in the Written Torah.²⁶

This approach allows the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* to distance both Moses and the Torah from the sacrificial system of ancient Israel and pre-70 Judaism.²⁷ Moreover, as a result, they are able to affirm the continuance of God’s covenant with the Jews, even as they reject the role of animal sacrifice in proper interactions with the divine. In effect, the

Sanhedrin 59b). We also find images of an ancient “golden age” prior to meat-eating in “pagan” sources; see e.g., Plato, *Politicus* 271d-272b; Porphyry, *De abstinentia* 2.5-7 (citing Theophrastus); and discussion in A.B. MacGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999), pp. 69-79, esp. 71.

²⁶ The same point is made in *Hom.* 18.19. On the doctrine of the false pericopes more broadly, see *Hom.* 2.38-52; 3.4-6, 9-11, 17-21, 37-51; 16.9-14; 18.12-13, 18-22; cf. *Sifre Deuteronomy* §26; *Leviticus Rabbah* 31.4; *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2.6. See also discussion in Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 166-186; Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, pp. 176-179.

²⁷ This approach also allows the *Homilies* to stress that the True Prophet “hates sacrifice, bloodshed, and libations” (θυσίας, αἱματὰ, σπονδάς μισεῖ; 3.26), while also emphasizing that Jesus “did not come to destroy the Law” (3.51; cf. Matt 5:17). For this, the following argument is made in *Hom.* 3.52: “And his saying, *The heaven and the earth shall pass away* (Matt 24:25) *but one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the Law* (Matt 5:18) intimated that the things that pass away before the heaven and the earth do not really belong to the Law! Since, then, while the heaven and the earth still stand, sacrifices have passed away... as not being ordinances of God, therefore he says: *Every plant which the heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up* (Matt 15:13).”

authors/redactors of the *Homilies* define true Judaism – past and present – as a religion without blood.²⁸ Just as the priestly Aaron is demonized as an enemy of truth, so sacrifice is identified with demons, idolatry, “heresy,” and divination.²⁹ According to the *Homilies*, these practices run counter to the will of God, and sacrifice only appears in the Written Torah because of the corrupting influence of Aaron and other false prophets who, in every generation, are inspired by demons to counter the True Prophet.³⁰

That the *Homilies* integrate a number of tropes from the anti-Jewish literature of early and late antique Christianity makes it all the more striking that its authors/redactors have succeeded in disentangling the denunciation of the Temple and Jewish sacrifice from any potentially anti-Jewish assertions or implications. Although the fourth-century authors/redactors of the *Homilies* seem to be conversant with Christian historiographical traditions about Jews and Judaism,³¹ they reinterpret these tropes so as to subvert or invert any supersessionist claims. Thus, the *Homilies* follow Justin in dismissing the sacrificial worship of “pagans” as the product of the demonic trickery and enslavement of gullible Gentiles, and they trace this tragic situation back to the fall of the angels before the Flood. Whereas Justin accuses “the Jews” of knowingly serving these same demons, even despite God’s special efforts to curb their impieties (e.g., *Dial.* 19; 27; 73; 133), the *Homilies* depict them as standing in radical opposition both to demons and to the error of “paganism.” Jews, in fact, are here celebrated as those who are free from demonic enslavement and as those whom Gentiles should thus seek to emulate as their models for monotheistic piety.³²

In the teachings of false prophets and in the corrupted passages in the Torah, misleading comments may be made about the necessity of animal sacrifice for proper Jewish worship; the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* reassure their readers, however, that the authentic teachings of the prophet Moses have been handed down by a reliable chain of oral transmission, from the seventy elders of Numbers 11 to the Pharisees of Jesus’ time and beyond.³³ Even as they critique the priestly Jewish past, they seem to embrace an ideal of post-Temple Judaism that recalls the authority claims being made by rabbinic sages of their own time. Moreover, they affirm that true Judaism is a religion of monotheism and piety, which can be practiced

²⁸ Interestingly, the *Homilies* also lack reference to circumcision; cf. *Rec.* 1.33.

²⁹ E.g., *Hom.* 3.11; 7.3; 8.10; 9.7, 13-14; 10.24; 11.13.

³⁰ On the True Prophet, see Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 145-153; L. Cerfaux, “Le vrai prophète des Clémentines,” *RSR* 18 (1928), pp. 143-163; H.J.W. Drijvers, “Adam and the True Prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines,” in *Loyalitätskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte*, ed. C. Elsas and H. Kippenberg (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990), pp. 314-323; C.A. Gieschen, “The Seven Pillars of the World: Ideal Figure Lists in the True Prophet Christology of the Pseudo-Clementines,” *JSP* 12 (1994), pp. 47-82; Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, pp. 135-178.

³¹ For other examples, see Reed, “Jewish Christianity as Counterhistory.”

³² E.g., *Hom.* 2.33; 4.14-17; 7.4; 9.16; 11.7-16, 23-30; 16.14.

³³ *Hom.* 2.38; 3.18-19; 11.29; cf. *m. Avot* 1-5.

apart from the sacrificial system and which is transmitted through the oral explications of those who are heirs to Moses' teaching authority.³⁴

It is this (Mosaic, Pharisaic, and perhaps rabbinic) Judaism that is presented, in the *Homilies*, as a religion in radical continuity with Jesus' teachings and the authentic apostolic religion preached by Peter. Just as the *Homilies* integrate and subvert tropes from the Christian *Contra Iudaeos* tradition, so too do its authors/redactors re-interpret New Testament passages about the Pharisees, transforming the denunciations of this group in the New Testament Gospels into prooftexts for Jesus' acceptance of their claims to stand in succession from Moses (*Hom.* 3.18-19; 11.28-30; cf. *Rec.* 6.10-11). In addition, the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* stress that Moses and Jesus taught the same message:

...Jesus is concealed from the Hebrews who have taken Moses as their teacher and Moses is hidden from those who have believed Jesus. For, since there is a single teaching by both (μιᾶς γὰρ δι' ἀμφοτέρων διδασκαλίας), God accepts one who has believed either of these... Neither, therefore, are the Hebrews condemned on account of their ignorance of Jesus, by reason of Him [i.e. God] who has concealed him – provided that they, doing the things commanded by Moses, do not hate him whom they do not know. Nor are those from among the Gentiles condemned, who do not know Moses on account of Him who has concealed him – provided that these also, doing the things spoken by Jesus, do not hate him whom they do not know. (*Hom.* 8.6-7; cf. *Rec.* 4.5-6)

This argument for the essential identity of “Judaism” and “Christianity” is perhaps facilitated by the lack of any appeal to Jesus' death as a sacrifice that ends the need for sacrifice, as blood that annuls God's covenant with Israel and/or as an act of deicide divinely punished by the destruction of the Temple.³⁵ In early Christian literature, such claims often accompany critiques of the Jerusalem Temple; Justin, for instance, pairs his denunciation of Jewish sacrifice with the assertion that Jesus' death is the only sacrifice that truly cleanses sin (*Dial.* 13; 40-43), and he stresses that it is the Eucharistic rite of the Christians, practiced “in remembrance of the suffering which he endured for those who are purified in soul from all iniquity,” that truly replaced the priestly service after the Temple's destruction (*Dial.* 41). For the *Homilies*, by contrast, sacrifice is demonic, blood is polluting, and no exception is made for the death of Jesus.

³⁴ *Hom.* 2.38; 3.18-19, 47, 51-52, 70; 11.29; Baumgarten, “Literary Evidence,” esp. pp. 42-43. Cf. *Sifre Deuteronomy* §351; *y. Megillah* 4:1; *y. Pe'ah* 2:6; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 14b; *b. Shabbat* 13a; and discussion in M.S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE-400 CE* (New York: Oxford University, 2001).

³⁵ Contrast, e.g., Hebrews 9-10; Melito, *Peri Pascha* 44-45; 72-99; Justin, *Dial.* 40-43.

The sole reference in the *Homilies* to the blood of Jesus reads as follows:

...Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will declare to you (Deut 32:7). This father, these elders, should be inquired of. Yet you have not inquired about whose is the time of the kingdom and whose is the seat of prophecy (ἡ τῆς προφητείας καθέδρα) – though he himself [i.e. Jesus] points it out himself, saying: *The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat (καθέδρα) of Moses. All things that they say to you, hear them* (Matt 23:2). Hear them, he said, as entrusted with the key of the kingdom (cf. Matt 23:13), which is knowledge, which alone can open the gate of life, through which alone is the entrance to eternal life. Truly, he says, *they possess the key, but those wishing to enter they do not suffer to do so* (cf. Matt 23:13; Luke 11:52). On this account, I say, he himself – rising from his seat (καθέδρα) as a father for his children, proclaiming the things which from the beginning were delivered in secret to the worthy, extending mercy even to the Gentiles, and having compassion for the souls of all – was neglectful of his own blood (ἰδίου αἵματος ἤμελει). (*Hom.* 3.18-19)

From the context, it is clear that the term “blood” (αἷμα) is here used in a genealogical sense – not to symbolize Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, but rather to denote his place within the Jewish people. The only reference in the *Homilies* to Jesus’ blood is, in other words, an affirmation of his Jewishness, offered in the course of an explanation of why a Jewish prophet was sent by God to save the Gentiles.³⁶

Within the *Homilies*, it is further suggested that Jesus is the last in a long line of prophetic succession stretching back to Adam and Moses (e.g., *Hom.* 2.16-17). Little is said, however, of his death. Throughout the text, the focus falls, instead, on his descent into the world for the purpose of teaching: Jesus is the one sent to free Gentiles from enslavement to the demons who are disguised as the gods of their nations. It is his teaching, rather than his death, that holds the power to save – by exposing the demonic depravity of polytheism, by prescribing practices to purify Gentiles of their ritual and moral defilements, by encouraging pious deeds, and by guiding the proper interpretation of the Torah whereby the singularity of God is affirmed as an absolute truth.

We do find, in the *Homilies*, one passing mention of Jesus’ death. But, significantly, this reference is couched in the context of a moralizing exhortation to kindness and forgiveness (cf. *Hom.* 3.19):

³⁶ I.e., the reason being because this knowledge was already current among Jews, by virtue of the Pharisaic preservation of Mosaic teachings and transmission “in secret to the worthy,” but it had been kept from the Gentiles until the coming of Jesus.

...the unbelievers, not wishing to hearken to them, make war against them, banishing, persecuting, hating them. But those who suffer these things, pitying those who are ensnared by ignorance, by the teaching of wisdom pray for those who contrive evil against them, having learned that ignorance is the cause of their sin. The teacher himself, while being nailed to the cross, prayed to the Father that the sin of those who slew him might be forgiven, saying: *Father, forgive them their sins, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34). They also, therefore, being imitators of the teacher in their sufferings, pray for those who contrive them, as they have been taught. Thus they are not separated as hating their parents, since they make constant prayers even for those who are neither parents nor relatives, but rather enemies, and they strive to love them, as they have been commanded. (*Hom.* 11.20; cf. *Rec.* 6.4-5)

Jesus' death serves here solely as an example of graciousness and forgiveness towards one's enemies, consistent with the argument, elsewhere in the *Homilies*, that the righteous recognize pain and suffering as transitory and that true suffering is the lot of those who are enslaved to demons.³⁷ No blame is laid for the murder of Jesus, and there is no hint of a claim that his blood had the power to atone.³⁸

Early and late antique Christian literature is rich with references to blood, voiced largely with reference to the vicarious suffering and death of Jesus and Christians martyrs as well as to the ritual of the Eucharist.³⁹ This appeal to the power of blood echoes and extends Pentateuchal statements about blood as a ritual detergent in the ancient Israelite sacrificial system, drawing on the understanding of blood as a substance with unique power to protect and purify.⁴⁰ The authors/redactors of the *Homilies*, by contrast, selectively redeploy another element in the Pentateuchal understanding of blood's special status – namely, its power as a pollutant.⁴¹ Blood here

³⁷ E.g., *Hom.* 8.8; 10.4; 11.16; 12.29-30; 19.15, 20, 22.

³⁸ Importance is placed on Jesus' incarnation and the resultant opening of a way to salvation to the Gentiles. Nothing, however, is said to suggest that Jesus' actual *death* played a significant role in salvation history. Rather, in the summary of salvation history in *Hom.* 2.16-17, the turning point is the "removal of the Holy Place" (i.e., the destruction of the Temple), which ushers in eschatological events such as the secret sending of the true Gospel "abroad for the rectification of the heresies," the appearance of the anti-Christ, and the revelation that Jesus is the messiah, after which "after the eternal light has sprung up, all the things of darkness must disappear."

³⁹ See our discussion in the introduction to this theme-issue and references there.

⁴⁰ E.g., Exod 29:20-21; 30:10; Lev 5:9; 8:15; 14:49-52; 16:14-19. For views of blood in the Torah, see further J. Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), pp. 12-18, 31-32, 85-86, 104-106, 184-192; W.K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2004).

⁴¹ On blood as the "stuff of life" that belongs to God alone and is thus taboo for humans, see, e.g., Gen 9:4-5; Lev 7:26-27; 17:10-14; Deut 12:23-25. Notably, just as the *Homilies* appears to draw on *Jubilees'* version of the angelic descent myth, so its authors/redactors may hold a similar view of the transgression of the prohibitions on blood-eating as paradigmatic of

emblemizes, not the atoning deaths of Jesus or Christian martyrs, but rather the impurity associated with demons and idolatry as well as “heresy,” impiety, and disease.

The *Homilies*’ understanding of blood as paradigmatic pollutant is further illustrated by its treatment of menstruation. In the explanation of the nature of prophetic succession in *Hom.* 3.20-28, for instance, two prophetic lineages are identified and distinguished: the female line of false prophesy, from which all error springs, and the male line of true prophesy, in which salvation lies. At the origins of false prophesy and polytheism is the first woman, Eve, whose menstrual blood is connected with the blood of both sacrifice and war:⁴²

...she [i.e., Eve], not only presuming to say and to hear that there are many gods, but also believing herself to be one... as a female in her menses (ὡς θήλεια ἐν μηνίοις γινομένη) at the offering of sacrifices, she is stained with blood (αἱμάσσεται), and thus she pollutes (μολύνει) those who touch her (cf. Lev 15:19). When she conceives and brings forth temporary kings, she stirs up wars pouring out blood (τοὺς αἶμα πολὺ χέοντας ἐγείρει πολέμους). With respect to those who desire to learn truth from her, she keeps them always seeking and finding nothing, even until death, by telling them all things contrary and by presenting many and various services (ὑπουργίᾳς). From the beginning a cause of death lies upon blind men. Prophesying deceit, and ambiguities, and obliquities, she deceives those who believe her. (*Hom.* 3.24)

That the appeal to menstrual pollution is not mere metaphor is clear from the prescriptions for proper practice in *Hom.* 7.8 and 11.30 (cf. *Rec.* 6.11), wherein Gentile followers of Jesus are enjoined to observe menstrual separation.⁴³

the transgression of covenantal obligations more broadly; on the importance of the prohibitions related to blood in *Jubilees*, see M. Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), pp. 61-66.

⁴² Some rabbinic traditions also pair menstrual blood and the blood of death in discussions of Eve; see discussion in C.E. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2000), pp. 30-31.

⁴³ Interestingly, this very practice is condemned in the third-century Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum*. This text addresses members of its community who, under the influence of their Jewish contemporaries, seem to be keeping *kashrut*, menstrual separation, and other purity laws (*DA* 23-24); see further Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, pp. 166-209. Just as the ritual expertise in the manipulation of animal blood served as major factor in the construction of priestly authority in ancient Israel (Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, passim), so hermeneutical expertise in the “reading” of menstrual blood was one nexus for the assertion of rabbinic authority in the early centuries of the Common Era (Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, pp. 103-127). Seen from this perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that the authors/redactors of the *Didascalia*

Also suggestive is the *Homilies'* view of the mechanisms of atonement. Jesus' death does not cleanse the sins of all. For this, the *Homilies* prescribe ritual practices of purification. Baptism is promoted as the first step in purifying the demonic defilement of Gentiles (e.g., 11.26-27; cf. *Rec.* 6.9). Even after baptism, however, the Gentile follower of Jesus must continue to live a pure life – by immersing after sexual intercourse, by practicing menstrual separation, and by avoiding blood, carrion, food offered to idols, and any meat that has been improperly slaughtered (7.4, 8; 11.28-30). Together with pious acts, such practices are said to cleanse the soul from sin, extinguishing the fiery defilement of demonic possession.

In place of atonement by blood, the *Homilies* offer purification through water.⁴⁴ Accordingly, no reference is made to the Eucharist.⁴⁵ At the very same time that its authors/redactors depict Pharisaic and apostolic traditions as twin approaches to the same prophetic truth and thus portray “Judaism” and “Christianity” as allies in the battle against “paganism,” the *Homilies* also dismiss Jewish beliefs in the efficacy of sacrificial blood, together with Christian beliefs in the atoning power of Jesus' death.

From these features, one might be tempted to conclude that the *Homilies* preserve a stream of Christian (or “Jewish-Christian”) thought that developed independently of the supersessionism, anti-Judaism, and antinomianism presaged in the New Testament and developed in the writings of Justin and other church fathers. Ever since F.C. Bauer, scholars have delighted in speculating that the Pseudo-Clementine literature might preserve precisely this: a remnant of a primitive form of Christianity which retained its close links to Judaism and which was associated with Peter rather than Paul.⁴⁶ And, accordingly, the Pseudo-Clementine literature has

Apostolorum reject menstrual separation as emblematic of competing “Jewish” claims, while the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* embrace both Pharisaic/rabbinic authority and the need for menstrual separation. Their choice to attribute menstrual impurity to Gentile women is particularly intriguing when considered in the context of the mishnaic traditions, discussed by Fonrobert in her contribution to this theme-issue, which deny such impurity to non-Jews; in the *Homilies*, by contrast, the inclusion of Gentiles in Israel's purity-system arguably parallels the inclusion of Gentiles in the *Homilies'* notion of “Israel,” here constituted by monotheism and proper practice.

⁴⁴ Here too, we find a poignant contrast with the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which encourages its readers to “keep from vain bonds; purifications, and sprinklings and baptisms, and distinction of meats” (*DA* 26).

⁴⁵ McGowan has recently examined the Pseudo-Clementine literature for possible clues about the ideas about the celebration of the Eucharist in the community of its origin, in the context of examining early Christian evidence for Eucharists celebrated with salt or bread and water, rather than with bread and wine; he concludes, however, that “[i]t must be admitted that the Pseudo-Clementine works lack not only a eucharist consisting of the recitation of the institution narratives over bread and wine, but also any one meal radically distinguished from all others for its sacral quality” (*Ascetic Eucharists*, p. 121).

⁴⁶ For the history of scholarship see F.S. Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *Second Century* 2 (1982), pp. 1-33, 63-96; P. Geoltrain, “Le Roman Pseudo-Clémentin depuis les recherches d'Oscar Cullman,” in *Le Judéo-christianisme dans tous ses*

often been mined for earlier sources, in the hopes of discovering, buried somewhere within or behind its late antique forms, a fossil of an early variety of Christianity, formed prior to the purported “Parting of the Ways” with Judaism.

Closer examination, however, exposes a more complex – and, in our view, much more interesting – dynamic. The *Homilies* may preserve some earlier sources, but its “Jewish-Christian” features cannot be so easily dismissed as reflecting an anachronistic, isolated, or independent stream of Christian thought. The extant form of the novel is clearly a product of the fourth century, formed in interaction with Christian *and* Jewish traditions of the time.⁴⁷ With late antique rabbinic sages, for instance, its authors/redactors share a set of concerns, including the discussion of menstrual purity, the articulation of non-priestly models of authority, the tracing of oral lines of succession from Moses, and the argument for monotheism against scripture-wielding, dualist *minim* / “heretics.” If we are correct to see such connections, then it may prove especially significant that the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* are sympathetic to “scribes and Pharisees” and promote an image of true Judaism as an essentially non-priestly religion from its very origins.

Comparison with contemporaneous Jewish and Christian sources, however, does not suffice to explain the unusually negative view of blood and sacrifice found in the *Homilies*. For this, it may be useful to consider the Syrian cultural context in which this text likely took form and to follow its own overarching concern – namely, to counter Greek philosophy, “pagan” idolatry, and Hellenizing Christian “heresy.”⁴⁸ Justin’s critique of idolatry famously draws from Greek philosophical critiques of popular religious practice.⁴⁹ Similarly, the polemics against sacrifice in the *Homilies* may be best understood against the background of “pagan” philosophical discussions in the third and fourth centuries. At precisely the same time that the *Homilies* were taking form, Syrian Neoplatonists such as Porphyry and

états, ed. S.C. Mimouni – F. S. Jones (Paris: Cerf, 2001), pp. 31-38; N. Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines* (WUNT² 213; Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), pp. 1-26.

⁴⁷ E.g., Reed, “Heresiology”; eadem, “Jewish Christianity as Counterhistory”; D. Côté, “Orphic Theogony and the Context of the Clementines,” *Christian Apocryphal Texts for the New Millennium*.

⁴⁸ On its Syrian provenance see G. Ullhorn, *Die Homilien und Recognitionen des Clemens Romanus nach ihren Ursprung und Inhalt dargestellt* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1854), pp. 381-429; C. Biggs, “The Clementine *Homilies*,” *Studia biblica et ecclesiastica* 2 (1890), pp. 191-192; and, most recently, J.N. Bremmer, “Pseudo-Clementines: Texts, Dates, Places, Authors and Magic,” *Pseudo-Clementines*. The value of situating the Pseudo-Clementine literature in the fourth-century Syrian contexts of their redactional formation has been demonstrated by Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, esp. pp. 179-212.

⁴⁹ R.P.C. Hanson, “The Christian Attitude to Pagan Religions Up to the Time of Constantine the Great,” in *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), pp. 145-148; A. Droge, *Homer or Moses?* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), pp. 54-55.

Iamblichus were debating a parallel set of questions.⁵⁰ If gods do not need or eat sacrifices, what is the purpose of this practice? Is animal sacrifice a corruption of true worship? Or is it an efficacious means of interacting with the divine? How can one be pure if one slaughters animals and consumes their flesh?

Promoting vegetarianism, Porphyry denigrates animal sacrifice and denies that the divine realm is affected by sacrifices on earth (e.g., *De abstinentia* 2.37; ca. 270 CE).⁵¹ Iamblichus, by contrast, mounts a defense of sacrifice as an efficacious means of interacting with the divine (e.g., *De Mysteriis* 5.9; ca. 320 CE), outlining the position later taken up and promoted by the emperor Julian.⁵² The possibility that the authors/redactors of the *Homilies* might have been aware of such discussions is raised by their geographical proximity (i.e., to Porphyry's native Tyre and to Iamblichus' school in Apamea) and by the appearance of some theurgical themes in their descriptions of the "heretic" Simon Magus (e.g., the power to animate statues; *Hom.* 2.32). If we follow Jan Bremmer in locating this text specifically in Edessa, moreover, its cultural context may also help to explain its promotion of water, rather than blood, as the ritual agent that cleanses pollution and sin; Edessa, after all, was celebrated for its healing springs.⁵³

Whatever the precise precedents and contexts for the *Homilies'* understanding of blood, the example of this text suggests that the range of late antique Christian attitudes towards atoning death may have been much wider than typically allowed. So too with late antique Christian views of Judaism. Consequently, this example may also push us to consider some of the broader methodological issues involved in the reconstruction of fourth-century Christianity and its relationships to rabbinic Judaism. Partly due to practical necessity, most scholarship on early Jewish-Christian relations has built on the distinctions drawn in those polemical sources in which the

⁵⁰ The possibility that authors/redactors in the Pseudo-Clementine tradition are conversant and conversing with third- and fourth-century "pagan" philosophical ideas is richly explored in Côté, "Orphic Theogony"; idem, *Le thème de l'opposition entre Pierre et Simon dans les Pseudo-Clémentines* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001), esp. pp. 109-133. For examples pertaining to the *Recognitions*, see also Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, pp. 36-81, 194-196, 200-204.

⁵¹ For comparison with the *Homilies*, it is perhaps also significant that Porphyry claims that animal sacrifice originated as a corruption from earlier forms of worship (e.g., *De abstinentia* 2.9-20). In addition, Porphyry admits that *daimones* can be influenced by sacrifices but differentiates these lower beings from the higher realities of the divine (e.g., 2.38-43).

⁵² See further J. Dillon, "Iamblichus' Defence of Theurgy: Some Reflections," *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 1 (2007), esp. pp. 37-39; S. Bradbury, "Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood Sacrifice," *Phoenix* 49 (1995), pp. 331-356. In "Pseudo-Clementine Polemics against Sacrifice," Kelley explores the anti-sacrificial polemics in the later *Recognitions* in relation to Julian's views of sacrifice in particular.

⁵³ Bremmer, "Pseudo-Clementines"; J.B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (repr. ed.; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2005), esp. pp. 71-73.

boundaries between Jews and Christians are most explicitly outlined, catalogued, and discussed. Faced with few late antique examples of explicit Jewish polemics against Christians, necessity has also pressed scholars to depend heavily on the witness of church fathers, reading the comparably ambiguous references in the classical rabbinic literature in light of the more lengthy and detailed comments in patristic literature.⁵⁴

To what degree, however, are the representations of Jewish and Christian difference in patristic literature really so representative? Might our scholarly focus on discourses of differentiation skew our understanding of the interactions between late antique Jews and Christians? How should we understand the points of commonality or convergence found elsewhere in our sources? What might we learn, in particular, from those examples that throw doubt on our usual assumptions about the beliefs and practices that purportedly mark the boundaries between “Judaism” and “Christianity”? Such sources have traditionally been isolated from the study of the so-called “Great Church” by means of the label “Jewish-Christianity.” But what might be gained from their re-integration into our portrait of late antique Christianity?

For the power of modern assumptions about “Judaism” and “Christianity” to guide research on premodern sources, the study of the Pseudo-Clementine literature provides a striking example as well. Past research on these sources has focused almost wholly on the task of recovering the lost second-century sources that might lie behind their extant fourth-century forms.⁵⁵ When characterizing the late antique authors/redactors and readers of this literature, scholars have tended to privilege a small handful of external witnesses. Writing at the beginning of the fourth century, shortly before the formation of the *Homilies*, Eusebius mentions dialogues of Peter circulating under the name of Clement, and he dismisses these writings as spurious (*Hist. eccl.* 3.38.5). At the end of the fourth century, Epiphanius makes reference to texts with some relation to material now found in *Homilies* and *Recognitions* when describing the “heresy” of the so-called Ebionites (*Pan.* 30.15-16). Precisely because none of these references correspond to the structure and form of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* themselves, the comments of Eusebius and Epiphanius have been pivotal for source-critical research. Interestingly, however, these comments have also influenced scholarly perceptions of the

⁵⁴ The value of such an approach to rabbinic and patristic discourses of differentiation is demonstrated by D. Boyarin in his monumental *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004). See, however, the assessment of the limits of this approach in R.S. Boustán’s review of the book in *JQR* 96 (2006), pp. 445-446, and in C.E. Fonrobert, “Jewish Christians, Judaizers, and Anti-Judaism,” in *A People’s History of Christianity*, vol. 2, *Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. V. Burrus (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), pp. 253-254.

⁵⁵ For a summary of research on the sources of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, see Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” pp. 8-33.

fourth-century forms of the Pseudo-Clementines – as marginal or “heretical” texts, fated to the status of “apocrypha.”⁵⁶

What is puzzling about this assessment, however, is its inability to account for our late antique and early medieval evidence for the rich reception-histories of the Pseudo-Clementine literature. It is true that the *Homilies* survive in only two manuscripts, but one dates from the twelfth century and the other from the fourteenth.⁵⁷ Unlike the *Homilies*, the *Recognitions* do not survive in the original Greek. Yet this version of the Pseudo-Clementine novel was translated into Latin by Rufinus in 406 CE, and over a hundred manuscripts of it still survive.⁵⁸ That both books were translated into Syriac soon after their composition is attested by a manuscript of 411 CE.⁵⁹ From later centuries, we also have epitomes of these books in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, and Armenian. We find fragments in Slavonic and Ethiopic,⁶⁰ and there is even a versified Old French version that circulated in the thirteenth century.⁶¹ In addition, material from the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* is quoted as authentic apostolic tradition in a broad range of medieval sources, ranging from the writings of Byzantine chronographers like George the Monk to the scientific and theological treatises of celebrated scholars in the Latin West such as Isidore of Seville, the Venerable Bede, and Thomas Aquinas.⁶²

⁵⁶ For instance, scholars have most often explained the anti-sacrificial polemics of the Pseudo-Clementine literature with primary reference to the attitudes towards sacrifice that Epiphanius attributes to the Ebionites; see esp. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 19.3.6; 30.16.5-7; Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, pp. 155-159; Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, pp. 179-184. The Ebionites, however, were hardly alone in mounting such critiques. As Kelley (“Pseudo-Clementine Polemics against Sacrifice”) rightly stresses, “Neopythagoreans, Neoplatonists, Hermetists, and Christians of various stripes all embraced the idea of spiritual sacrifice while disparaging or rejecting material sacrifice, particularly blood sacrifice.” And, as Kelley also notes, the importance of the “pagan” context for the *Homilies*’ understanding of sacrifice may be signaled by the narrative portions of the novel, wherein former “pagans” like Matthildia and Faustus are made to proclaim that “their multitude of sacrifices in a previous life did nothing to help their circumstances”; see *Hom.* 13.5; 14.3.

⁵⁷ The circulation of the *Homilies* in the early modern period is also attested by Turrianus, who writes in 1573 mentioning the book; see F.J.A. Hort, *Notes Introductory to the Study of the Clementine Recognitions: A Course of Lectures* (New York: Macmillan, 1901), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁸ B. Rehm (ed.), *Die Pseudoklementinen*, vol. 2, *Rekognitionen in Rufinus Übersetzung* (GCS 51; Berlin: Akademie, 1969), pp. xvii-xcv, cix-cxi.

⁵⁹ I.e., *Rec.* 1-4.1.4; *Hom.* 10-14 in British Museum add. 12150; see W. Frankenberg, *Die syrischen Clementinen mit griechischem Paralleltext: Eine Vorarbeit zu dem literargeschichtlichen Problem der Sammlung* (TU 48.3; Leipzig: J.C. Henrichs, 1937); Jones, *Ancient Jewish Christian Source*, pp. 39-49.

⁶⁰ See Jones, “Pseudo-Clementines,” pp. 6-7, 80-84, and references there.

⁶¹ M.R. James, *The Western MSS of the Library at Trinity College* (Cambridge, 1901), vol. 2, pp. 117-118; see also p. 220 on the versified version of the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle of Clement to James*.

⁶² See, e.g., Isidore, *De natura rerum* 31, 36, 39-41; idem, *Etymologies* 3.41; Bede, *Comm. Gen.* 1.1.6-8; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, question 117, article 4; M.L.W. Laistner, “The Western Church and Astrology during the Early Middle Ages,” *HTR* 34

Our evidence for the *Nachleben* of the Pseudo-Clementine literature thus suggests that we may be missing something when we dismiss these texts solely as evidence for the Ebionites and/or as expressions of idiosyncratic beliefs with limited relevance for the history of Christian thought. Not only has the modern scholarly neglect of the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* contributed to the naturalization of questionable assumptions about Jewish and Christian difference in Late Antiquity, but it has also deprived scholarship of a rich source for understanding how Neoplatonic discussions of blood, sacrifice, prophesy, diet, and piety may have shaped parallel discussions among proponents of biblically-based religions in Late Antiquity.

2. Blood and Atonement in Post-talmudic Rabbinic Martyrology

Like the Pseudo-Clementine literature, the Hebrew narrative known as *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is no marginal or idiosyncratic composition. Indeed, from the time of its emergence until the present day, the work has been enormously popular among Jews as a piece of narrative literature and has formed an integral part of the Jewish liturgy. It has been customary in central European communities since at least the Middle Ages to recite a poetic version of the anthology, *Selihah elleh ezkerah*, each year during the Yom Kippur *Mussaf* liturgy, alongside the special 'Avodah service describing in elaborate detail the cultic ritual that was carried out by the high priest in the Jerusalem Temple when still in operation.⁶³ Another version of the work has been preserved among the dirges recited on the Ninth of Av.⁶⁴ Moreover, the earliest versions of the martyrology number among the anonymous, pre-classical *piyyutim* dating to the fifth century and the first half of the sixth century.⁶⁵ Thus, while many modern Jews may not

(1941), pp. 251-275; W. Ullman, "The Significance of the *Epistula Clementis* in the Pseudo-Clementines," *JTS* 11 (1960), pp. 295-305; W.D. Sharpe, "Isidore of Seville: The Medical Writings," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 54 (1964), pp. 20, 22-23; W.A. Adler, "Abraham's Refutation of Astrology: An Excerpt from Pseudo-Clement in the Chronicon of George The Monk," in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, ed. E.G. Chazon – D. Satran – R.A. Clements (Leiden: Brill 2004), pp. 227-242; A.Y. Reed, "The Pseudo-Clementines and their Early Reception," paper presented at *The Dark Ages Enlightened*, University of Pennsylvania, February 1, 2008.

⁶³ D. Goldschmidt (ed.), *Mahazor la-yamim ha-nora'im: lefi minhagei benei Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 568-573. On the *Sidrei 'Avodah*, see now M.D. Swartz – J. Yahalom (eds. and trans.), *Avodah: An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2005), especially their valuable introduction to the collection.

⁶⁴ *Arzei ha-levanon*, written by Meir ben Yehi'el, is found in D. Goldschmidt (ed.), *Seder ha-qinot le-tisha'h be-'av* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1968), pp. 82-85.

⁶⁵ A number of examples of these early poetic versions of the martyrology have been published: *Az be-shivyeinu* appears in A.M. Habermann, "Ancient Piyyutim" [Hebrew],

recognize the theological underpinnings of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* as their own, it is clear that this martyrological narrative has been an integral part of Jewish literary culture for a millennium and a half.

More importantly for our purposes, the work also reflects important trends within Jewish discourse and practice already in Late Antiquity. Although set during the “Hadrianic persecutions” of the second century CE, *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* developed as a literary composition in Byzantine Palestine several centuries later, most likely between the late fifth and early seventh centuries, and it reflects that specific cultural milieu.⁶⁶ The story draws on pre-existing martyrological material found scattered throughout classical rabbinic literature, particularly on traditions contained in the Palestinian Talmud as well as in various early midrashic compilations from Palestine.⁶⁷ But the work does not merely collect this material into a loosely structured anthology. Rather, this full-scale martyrology supersedes the prior stage of rabbinic martyrological discourse by assimilating otherwise disparate martyrological material within a single, coherent narrative and theological framework; it is for these reasons that the work can be termed “post-talmudic.”

The organizational structure of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* combines rabbinic literary tradition with themes and forms from genres that were emergent or newly revived in this period for Jewish use – such as apocalyptic literature, liturgical poetry, and prose narrative. In this respect, the martyrology is quite typical of the eclectic Jewish literary production in Byzantine Palestine, much of which is characterized by the integration of “rabbinic” and “non-rabbinic” elements.⁶⁸

Tarbiz 14 (1942), pp. 57-58, and in a slightly different form in S. Speyer, “The Dirge *Az be-veit shivyeinu*” [Hebrew], *Sinai* 63 (1968), pp. 50-55; see also the *qedushta* entitled *Az be-ma’asi diberot ‘asarah*, which may have been composed by the Byzantine-period liturgical poet Yannai, published in M. Zulay, *The Liturgical Poems of Yannai, Collected from Geniza-Manuscripts and Other Sources* [Hebrew] (Berlin: Schocken, 1938), pp. 374-375. In addition, our colleague Ophir Münz-Manor has recently identified a number of as-yet-unpublished early “ten martyrs” piyyutim found in manuscript, and Boustan and Münz-Manor are currently writing a paper on the relationship between the early poetic and prose versions of this material. For a brief discussion of the martyrological tradition within the Jewish liturgy for fast days in general, see S. Elizur, *Wherefore Have We Fasted? Megillat Ta’anit Batra and Similar Lists of Fasts* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), pp. 204-214.

⁶⁶ Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic*, pp. 51-198. The Byzantine-period dating for the martyrology was already suggested by L. Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (2d ed.; repr.; Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967), pp. 139-144, and P. Bloch, “Rom und die Mystiker der Merkabah,” in *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage Jakob Guttmanns* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1915), pp. 113-124.

⁶⁷ All citations of the work refer to G. Reeg (ed.), *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrem* (TSAJ 10; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985). All translations of this work below are by Ra’anan Boustan.

⁶⁸ On Jewish literary production in the Byzantine period as marking a distinct phase in Jewish social and cultural history, see L.I. Levine, “Between Rome and Byzantium in Jewish History: Documentation, Reality, and the Issue of Periodization” [Hebrew], in *Continuity and*

It will not be possible here to recount this elaborate tale in full. In essence, however, the martyrology relates in gruesome detail the sequential executions of ten rabbinic sages at the hands of the Romans, including Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael, two of the most well-known figures in the rabbinic tradition. According to the narrative's overarching conceptual framework, the executions of the ten martyred sages are not due to their individual guilt or even to the immediate political circumstances of the persecution. Rather, their martyrdoms are explained as the direct consequence of the crime committed by Joseph's ten brothers when they sold him into slavery (Gen 37:18-28). The scriptural logic works in the following fashion: based on the authority of Exod 21:16 (*He who kidnaps a man – whether he has sold him or is still holding him – shall be put to death*), the narrative considers the sale of Joseph described in Genesis 37 to be a capital crime. The deaths of these rabbinic martyrs are thus explicitly presented as vicarious atonement for the *original national sin* committed by the progenitors of the tribes of Israel.

The association between the sin of Joseph's brothers and Israel's need for communal atonement on Yom Kippur is already attested in the literature of Second Temple Judaism, prior to the emergence of either rabbinic Judaism or Christianity. In *Jubilees*, we find the following etiology for the Day of Atonement:

Jacob's sons slaughtered a he-goat, stained Joseph's clothing by dipping it in its blood, and sent it to their father Jacob on the tenth of the seventh month. He mourned all that night because they had brought it to him in the evening. He became feverish through mourning his death and said that a wild beast had eaten Joseph. That day all the people of his household mourned with him. They continued to be distressed and to mourn with him all that day... He (Jacob) continued mourning Joseph for one year and was not comforted but said: "May I go down to the grave mourning for my son." For this reason, it has been ordained regarding the Israelites that they should be distressed on the tenth of the seventh month – on the day when (the news) which made him lament Joseph reached his father Jacob – in order to make atonement for themselves on it with a kid – on the tenth of the seventh month, once a year – for their sin. For they had saddened their father's (feelings of) affection for his son Joseph. This day has been ordained so that they may be saddened on it for their sins, all their transgressions, and their errors; so that they may purify themselves on this day once a year. (*Jub.* 34:12-19)⁶⁹

Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine, ed. L.I. Levine (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2004), pp. 7-48, esp. 45-47.

⁶⁹ J.C. Vanderkam (trans.), *The Book of Jubilees* (CSCO 511; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), pp. 228-229.

Commenting on this passage, Solomon Zeitlin rightly explains that “the author of this book, or the school of the men who wrote it, held that the sin of the ten sons of Jacob, who sold Joseph into slavery, had not been atoned, and that hence the Jews must afflict themselves annually on the day on which Joseph was sold, in order to attain atonement for this sin which their forefathers committed.”⁷⁰ Although the text does not explicitly refer to Yom Kippur, the date indicated for the commemorative mourning of Joseph’s “apparent death” – the tenth day of the seventh month – unequivocally denotes this festival. The motif of the sale of Jacob and its concomitant notion that the tribes of Israel remained stained by the sin of their eponymous ancestors served as one of the generative principles around which *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* gradually crystallized.⁷¹

Yet, how are we to explain a Jewish work from Byzantine-period Palestine that embraces a theology of collective sin and vicarious atonement? Indeed, *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is not the product of the early Roman period, when we might imagine that Jews could still have claimed for themselves the notion of the atoning sacrifice of a righteous or holy person (or people) without being too troubled about its “Christian” overtones. All indications suggest that this narrative developed centuries later – toward the end of Late Antiquity rather than the beginning. This wildly popular work, which became a standard piece of the Yom Kippur liturgy, comes from a world in which the notion of vicarious atonement through the exemplary death of a special human being – one perhaps connected or even identical to the divine – is an unmistakably marked Christian theme.

Nevertheless, *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* betrays deep affinities with Christian salvation history, especially as formulated in such texts as the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews. At the same time, it offers a damning critique of the coercive power of the Roman (or, perhaps better, Roman-Christian) state. The authors/redactors of the martyrology painted a graphic portrait of the bleak experience of late antique Jews under Roman domination. They did so, however, by deploying a set of highly charged literary motifs that were seemingly at odds with the more conventional scholastic orientation of their rabbinic source material – and seemingly far closer to the religious imagery and attitudes of their Christian neighbors.

We should perhaps not be surprised, however, at such seemingly precarious fusions of polemical and apologetic aims: even where it is possible to speak of Jews and Christians as two distinct communities in

⁷⁰ S. Zeitlin in “The Legend of the Ten Martyrs and its Apocalyptic Origins,” *JQR* 36 (1945-46), pp. 1-16, esp. 4-7. For discussion of this passage in the context of the various etiologies for Yom Kippur in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, see D. Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr, 2003), pp. 95-97.

⁷¹ For a full account of this process, see Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic*, pp. 51-98.

Late Antiquity, they shared many common discursive categories, ritual practices, and literary forms, despite (and perhaps especially *while*) maintaining a rhetoric of difference and, at times, overt hostility. That said, we must be cautious about using an overly general and undifferentiated notion of shared cultural space. The act of participating in a common culture also always entails marking out where one stands on that terrain. Quite often, the trick is to locate the precise strategies by which people fashion the elements of a common idiom into an exclusionary practice – or, in this case, narrative.

The ideology of vicarious atonement through martyrological self-sacrifice that is at the heart of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* centers on the image of the heavenly altar upon which the angelic high priest Metatron (or Michael) sacrifices the souls of the righteous martyrs who offer their lives on behalf of the Jewish people (*Ten Martyrs*, I-IX.20.1-5). We learn about this awful truth when the central martyr in the story, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, ascends to heaven in order to learn whether it is in fact the will of God that the group of ten sages should embrace their martyr's deaths. There, Rabbi Ishmael, who is himself of high priestly lineage, is met by the angelic high priest Metatron.⁷² It is from his angelic guide that Rabbi Ishmael learns that Israel's ultimate redemption depends on the willingness of the martyrs to lay down their lives in order to atone for the nation's ancestral sin.

The narrative makes absolutely clear that the spilling of the martyrs' blood will affect atonement for the blood-guilt of the Jewish people. After having learned from Metatron that it is the sin of Joseph's brothers that has set in motion the cruel fate he and his colleagues now face, Rabbi Ishmael asks the angel in despair:

“Has the Holy One, blessed be He, not found someone *to redeem the blood of Joseph* (תובע דמו של יוסף) from the days of Jacob until now throughout all those generations?” He answered: “The Holy One, blessed be He, has not found ten like the sons of Jacob except you.”⁷³

As we will see, the atoning function of the martyrs' blood is a leitmotif running through the remainder of the narrative.

Following this awful revelation, Rabbi Ishmael is given a guided tour through heaven by Metatron. As they are moving about, the sage and future martyr comes across an object he does not immediately recognize and asks the angel,

⁷² This material is found in its fullest form at *Ten Martyrs*, I-X.15.20-28 + 18.1-3. It is also found in what is perhaps its earliest extant formulation in *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* to Song 1:3 (Grünhut, p. 4a).

⁷³ *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* to Song 1:3 (Grünhut, p. 4a); cf. *Ten Martyrs*, I-X.18.1-3.

“What is this in front of you?” He answered him: “An altar.” He asked him: “Is there an altar above (in heaven)?” He answered him: “Yes, everything that exists above also exists below, as it is written *I have now built for You a stately house* (1 Kgs 8:13).” He asked him: “And what do you sacrifice upon it? Do you have cows, rams, and sheep?” He answered him: “We sacrifice the souls of the righteous upon it (נפשותיהם של צדיקים אנו מקריבין עליו).” He declared: “Now I have heard something that I have never before heard!” (*Ten Martyrs*, I-IX.20.1-5)⁷⁴

The sacrifice of the souls of the righteous on the heavenly altar is essential to the proper maintenance of Israel’s relationship with God and, ultimately, to the redemption of Israel from the yoke of Christian Rome. Thus, immediately following Rabbi Ishmael’s return to earth to inform his colleagues what he has learned, Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel declares that they should rejoice because “God will receive our souls as a sacrifice so that He may exact vengeance through them from wicked Rome.”⁷⁵ Similarly, following Rabbi Ishmael’s death, Michael and Gabriel, along with the rest of the angelic host, praise Rabbi Ishmael for joining the rest of the martyred righteous, who are blessed to have been “brought as offerings upon the altar that is in heaven.”⁷⁶ The message is quite clear: the human sacrifice entailed in the martyr’s death replaces the animal offerings of the earthly Temple. Moreover, the blood of the martyrs is the sole guarantee of salvation for the Jewish people.

The imagery associated with the theme of eschatological vengeance in *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is not an isolated phenomenon. In one of the martyrology’s many scenes of confrontational dialogue between an imperial authority and a rabbinic martyr on the cusp of death,⁷⁷ the Roman emperor asks Rabbi Eleazar ben Shammua’, who has just requested to be allowed to observe the Sabbath before he is executed, how he can still trust in his God at such a dire moment. Their conversation runs as follows:

“If your (pl.) god is a great king, why does he not save you from me?” He [i.e. Rabbi Eleazar] answered: “In order to exact our blood from you (כדי לפרוע דמינו מידכם).” He said: “Let him exact it right away.” He answered: “If He showed forbearance⁷⁸ to those who destroyed His

⁷⁴ The translation follows recension VII.

⁷⁵ *Ten Martyrs*, V-VIII.21.10.

⁷⁶ *Ten Martyrs*, V-VIII.22.63.

⁷⁷ Compare, e.g., the dialogue between R. Ishmael and his executioner at *Ten Martyrs*, I-VII.22.39-42; IX-X.28.10-11.

⁷⁸ Recension VII here reads “length of days” (אריכות ימים). The translation follows the dominant reading אריכות אפים found in most other recensions.

house and burnt His Temple, in your case all the more so.” (*Ten Martyrs*, I, VI-VII, IX-X.43.13-15; I, III-V.51.18-19)⁷⁹

The executions of the martyrs and the destruction of the Temple are not simply juxtaposed but are implicitly likened to each other. God has no intention of sparing the lives of the sages, but he will remember the blood of the martyrs when it comes time to call Israel’s oppressors to task for their crimes. God’s retribution of the martyrs’ blood will ultimately bring closure to the cycle of persecution inaugurated with the destruction of the Second Temple.

Another one of the martyrs, Yeshevav the scribe, similarly warns the Roman emperor that, although he and his colleagues will inevitably experience the murderous cruelty of Rome, God will ultimately avenge their blood:

He [i.e., the emperor] asked him: “Old man, how old are you?” He answered: “Today I am ninety years old. Even before I left my mother’s womb, God had resolved to hand me and my colleagues over to you in order to demand from you requital for our blood.” He asked him: “Is there another world?” He said: “Yes, and woe unto you for your shame when He exacts the blood of His pious ones from you.” (*Ten Martyrs*, I.50.6-8)

In these passages – and indeed throughout the martyrology – Jewish history is, at a basic level, constituted by a series of bloody moments. There are three, to be exact. First is the apparent fratricide committed by the brothers of Joseph (that is, the biblical past). Second is the atoning death of the rabbinic martyrs (that is, our present condition). And third is God’s future remembrance of the martyrs’ blood, which will prompt him to wreak vengeance on the enemies of Israel in an eschatological blood-bath.

A passage found in a number of late midrashic sources suggests strongly that this understanding of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* was already current in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.⁸⁰ In the Byzantine-period rabbinic midrash on the Psalms, we find the following interpretation of Ps 9:13 (*For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted*):

When the Holy One, blessed be He, comes to avenge the suffering of the righteous and demands requital for the blood of R. Akiva (ולתבוע דמו)

⁷⁹ The translation follows recension VII.

⁸⁰ On the reuse of the midrashic motif of the blood of vengeance within Jewish anti-Christian discourse in the high Middle Ages, see I.J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. B. Harshav - J. Chipman (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), pp. 93-109.

של ר' עקיבא), He will also requite the blood of ben Qufya. What is meant by the end of the verse *He does not forget the cry of the afflicted* (Ps 9:13)? God will not forget Israel's blood shed by the nations of the earth – not only the blood of the righteous, but also the blood of any one of Israel slain in times of persecution and the blood of those ten executed by Rome (דמן של עשרה הרוגי מלכות): Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel, R. Ishmael ben Elisha the High Priest, R. Yeshevav the Scribe, R. Hutspit the Translator, R. Simeon ben Azzai, R. Ḥanina ben Teradyon, and R. Akiva. Of them it is said *He does not forget the cry of the afflicted*. (*Midrash Psalms* 9:13 [Buber, pp. 88-89])⁸¹

Expanding on its notion of divine vengeance, the text continues:

R. Abbahu taught in the name of R. Eleazar: The Holy One, blessed be He, records (the name of) every single righteous man whom the nations of the earth put to death upon His purple robe (פרפוריא), for it is said *He that is enrobed with the dead shall spread doom among the nations* (Ps 110:6). And the Holy One, blessed be He, will demand of the nations of the earth: “Why have you put to death R. Ḥanina ben Teradyon and all the others who were killed for the sanctification of My name?” And when the nations of the earth perjure themselves and reply “We did not put them to death,” the Holy One, blessed be He, at once fetches His royal robe, so that He may judge them and decree their doom. Hence it is said, *He forgets not the cry of the afflicted* (Ps 9:13). (*Midrash Psalms* 9:13 [Buber, pp. 88-89])

This description of God's uniquely gruesome form of record-keeping circulated in a number of forms in midrashic literature.⁸² A close parallel in the high medieval *Yalqut Shim'oni* explicitly explains that the garment is red from the martyrs' blood: “*He that is enrobed with the dead shall spread doom among the nations* (Ps 110:6) – Our rabbis taught: Every single life that Esau has eliminated from Israel, God has, as it were, taken the blood of that life and dipped His garment (in it) until it was colored red.”⁸³ The garment that God dips in the blood of the martyrs is situated at the opposite end of history from the bloodstained cloak brought by Joseph's brothers to their father Jacob (*Jub.* 34:13, 18).

This bloody idiom of vengeance is most fully developed in another, closely related group of sources that enumerates the seven (or ten) garments

⁸¹ The translation follows closely, with slight modifications, W.G. Braude (trans.), *The Midrash on Psalms* (3rd ed.; YJS 13; New Haven: Yale University, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 144-146.

⁸² *Yalqut Shim'oni* to Psalms, §869; *Bereshit Rabbati* to Gen 37:26 (Albeck, p. 176); cf. *Ten Martyrs*, III.52.5-9.

⁸³ *Yalqut Shim'oni* to Psalms, §869.

that God dons at crucial moments in Jewish history, stretching from “the day the world was created until He [i.e., God] requites wicked Edom.”⁸⁴ At the moment God seeks to exact vengeance from the last of Israel’s enemies, “he wears red apparel, as it is said, *Why are Your garments red?* (Isa 63:2).” This image, of course, bears a striking resemblance to the famous “Grapes of Wrath” image from the New Testament book of Revelation, where blood simultaneously signifies the suffering of God’s beloved martyrs and the chastisement of His foes (Rev 14:17-19). In Byzantine-period Jewish sources, God’s blood-spattered garments are similarly stained with the blood of Israel’s enemies and with the blood of God’s own people.

Rabbinic exegetes, along with their Christian counterparts, employed a common stock of biblical blood imagery (esp. Isa 63:1-6; Joel 4:5) and a parallel set of interpretative traditions, which bound them in a mutually intelligible polemical discourse. Yet, whereas Christian sources often linked the blood on God’s robe to the punishment of Israel for spilling the blood of Christ, the rabbis played with the long-standing association between Esau and the color red to conjure up vivid images of Israel’s bloody final victory over Edom = Rome (and eventually) = Christianity.⁸⁵ That the closest parallels to the martyrology are to be found in New Testament texts such as Revelation and Hebrews does not, of course, efface the violent rhetoric of difference that is so central to its construction of an oppositional Jewish identity.

It is not the case, however, that the two aspects of this polyvalent symbol were mutually exclusive, as Joshua Schwartz would have it.⁸⁶ Not only is God’s intention to redeem Israel from Rome perfectly compatible with the notion that the blood of the righteous must first be shed, but the spilling of expiatory blood was, in fact, absolutely essential to setting this redemptive process in motion. At least according to *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*, the cyclical economy of sin and atonement complicates any effort to uncouple the blood of the martyrs from the blood of vengeance. The deaths of Israel’s cherished sages, Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva among them, are a precondition for divine retribution and redemption.

The rich strain of materials here surveyed, which is found in numerous genres and literary settings in late antique and early medieval rabbinic or

⁸⁴ *Pesiqta Rabbati* 37, §7 (Ulmer edition). Cf. *Midrash Psalms* 93:1 and *Pirqe de Rav Kahana* 22, which similarly list seven garments. In contrast, *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2.37 and *Song of Songs Rabbah* 4.10 list ten garments. On the textual relationship of these sources, see A. Goldberg, *Erlösung durch Leiden: Drie rabbinische Homilien über die Trauernden Zions und den leidenden Messias Efraim (PesR 34.36.37)* (FJS 4; Frankfurt: Gesellschaft zur Förderung Judaistischer Studien, 1978), pp. 308-318.

⁸⁵ See especially J. Schwartz, “Treading the Grapes of Wrath: The Wine Press in Ancient Jewish and Christian Tradition,” *TZ* 49 (1993), pp. 215-228, 311-324, and the sources collected there.

⁸⁶ Concerning those traditions in which blood denotes the punishment of Israel, Schwartz writes: “This type of motif could, of course, never appear in the anti-Christian wine press traditions of *MidPs*” (“Grapes of Wrath,” pp. 313-314).

post-rabbinic sources, should lay to rest overly simplistic identifications of the atoning function of human blood as a strictly Christian preoccupation. Yet, when presented with this material today, both scholarly and lay audiences often respond with a palpable wish to distance *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* from their conception of “normative” Judaism; they often ask point-blank: “Are you sure this is a Jewish and not a Christian work?” Some may wish to question the representative nature of this text, in the hopes of reaffirming that there exists an essential difference between Judaism and Christianity. That Jews and Christians share some parts of Scripture is not news. But surely they do something fundamentally different with these scriptures? However tempting such clarity might be, it remains that some extraordinarily popular and highly revered Jewish sources from Late Antiquity appear to insist that the spilling of the blood of exemplary human beings is absolutely essential to the redemption of the Jewish people.

At the heart of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is a potent critique of Christian Rome. We should not mistake this critique, however, for proof that a core set of essential differences between late antique Jews and Christians in matters of religious ideology and practice did in fact exist. Rather, this “parade example” of the type of oppositional discourse that was so instrumental in the emergence in Late Antiquity of an autonomous Jewish identity attests the degree to which Jews and Christians continued to occupy a common discursive space well after the fourth century. Indeed, as is so often the case with rhetorics of religious differentiation, the martyrology reveals (albeit inadvertently) similarity rather than difference, as it seeks to wrest control over the meaning and function of the martyr’s blood from an increasingly hegemonic Christian culture.

3. *Concluding Reflections*

By way of conclusion, we would like to return to the methodological questions we raised at the beginning of our inquiry. More specifically, we would like to consider how the two examples discussed in this paper might offer a fresh perspective onto the epistemological issues surrounding [1] the *process of selection* in which scholars engage and [2] the judgments that we make concerning the *typicality* of some sources and the *marginality* of others.

As we have seen, research on rabbinic attitudes towards atoning death provides a striking example of the power of modern assumptions to shape scholarly *selectivity*. Rabbinic literature includes a wide range of traditions that embrace the notion of vicarious suffering and death. Yet, by virtue of the entrenched perception of Judaism noted at the outset, these traditions

have attracted only meager scholarly attention.⁸⁷ The neglect of these traditions has, in turn, helped to re-inscribe and naturalize common assumptions about the irrelevance of atoning death for our understanding of rabbinic Judaism and its history.

For the problem of determining *typicality*, the modern study of so-called “Jewish-Christian” sources is a similarly apt example. Research on these sources has arguably been guided by the assessment of the Pseudo-Clementine literature voiced in the nineteenth century by the church historian Adolph von Harnack. Although admitting that “Jewish-Christianity” continued well beyond the apostolic age, Harnack emphasized its complete isolation from the rest of the church. Accordingly, he dismissed the significance of the Pseudo-Clementine literature for our understanding of the doctrine and development of Christianity.⁸⁸ Subsequent scholarship has followed suit; sources deemed “Jewish-Christian” have been relegated to the domain of specialists and accepted as significant only insofar as they might speak to the situation in the apostolic age.⁸⁹

As is the case for post-talmudic rabbinic martyrology, the relative neglect of the Pseudo-Clementine literature may also speak to a broader phenomenon, namely, the tendency of modern scholarship on premodern Jews and Christians to focus on those sources that most fit our modern views concerning the differences between “Judaism” and “Christianity.” Sources that do not conform to these preconceptions are often cast as sociologically, temporally, or spatially marginal – and thus eliminated from serious consideration. In the case of scholarship on both the Pseudo-Clementines and *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*, this has entailed the marginalization of traditions with exceptionally rich reception-histories in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and beyond.

Scholarly judgments about typicality and marginality have had historiographical consequences as well. In modern times, our understanding of the historical trajectories of early Jewish-Christian relations has been shaped by a select group of premodern writings. Perhaps most influential among them have been *late antique* reflections upon the first and early second centuries CE – the centuries celebrated in patristic literature as the

⁸⁷ For a recent attempt to fill this lacuna, see Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, esp. pp. 149-198; also Y. Elman, “Righteousness as its Own Reward: An Inquiry into the Theologies of the Stam,” *PAAJR* 72 (1990-91), pp. 35-67, esp. 41-45, 62-63; idem, “The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources,” *JQR* n.s. 80 (1990), pp. 315-339, esp. 316 and 321.

⁸⁸ Harnack stated outright, in fact, that “the Pseudo-Clementines contribute *absolutely nothing* to our knowledge of the origin of the Catholic church and doctrine”; *History of Doctrine*, trans. N. Buchanan (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1974), vol. 1, p. 441 (emphasis added). See pp. 289-290, 314-315 for his dismissal of “Jewish-Christianity” more broadly. On Harnack’s influence on later scholarship, see Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, pp. 1-35, esp. 1-2.

⁸⁹ See further Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” pp. 188-231.

apostolic age, in the classical rabbinic literature as the tannaitic period, and in modern scholarship as the era of the “Parting of the Ways.” With church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, such as Eusebius and Augustine, modern scholars have read the initial centuries of church history primarily in terms of the progressive actualization of Christianity’s originary separation from Judaism.⁹⁰ Likewise, the image of late antique Judaism in modern research has been shaped by the views, voiced in the Babylonian Talmud in particular, of the tannaim as leaders of the Jewish people, whose authority was ratified soon after the Temple’s destruction and who created a new and enduring form of Judaism by turning their attention towards “this-worldly” and inner-Jewish concerns.⁹¹

Even beyond challenging our modern conceptions of the discursive boundaries within which Jews and Christians could operate in Late Antiquity, the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* challenge us to take into account *other* late antique vistas onto the same temporal horizon. Both recount the experiences of celebrated figures from the first and early second centuries CE (e.g., Peter, Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Ishmael, Clement of Rome); both stake their claims to authority by imaginatively re-narrating what they see as critical events in this past era; and both rework, reweave, and re-contextualize earlier traditions in order to reaffirm for new audiences this era’s enduring and formative status in the cultural memories of their respective communities. Yet, the examples of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* may in fact be most significant for modern scholars as powerful reminders that distinctions between Jews and Christians remained shifting and contested throughout Late Antiquity. The trajectories of the early history of Jewish-Christian relations were not inevitable, unilinear, or self-evident; rather, these trajectories seem to have looked different to different Jews and Christians at different times, as did their intersections with “pagan” culture and imperial power.

Modern scholars have often been tempted to seek stable markers of Jewish and Christian difference and to try to trace straight lines of differentiation from the apostolic/tannaitic age to the present. When we take seriously the diverse perspectives preserved in our late antique sources, however, we discover that the relationship between Jewish and Christian

⁹⁰ On the construction of (and contestation over) the “apostolic age” in Late Antiquity, see Reed, “Jewish Christianity as Counterhistory”; A.J. Droge, “The Apologetic Dimensions of the Ecclesiastical History,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. H.W. Attridge – G. Hata (StPB 42; Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 492-509; J.-D. Kaestli, “Mémoire et pseudépigraphie dans le christianisme de l’âge post-apostolique,” *RTP* 125 (1993), pp. 41-63; A. Hilhorst (ed.), *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁹¹ On the re-imagining of the tannaitic past by Babylonian amoraim, see esp. D. Boyarin, “A Tale of Two Synods: Nicaea, Yavneh, and the Early History of Orthodox Judaism,” *Exemplaria* 12 (2000), pp. 21-62; idem, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *CH* 70 (2001), esp. pp. 428-435.

identities remained a topic of active discussion and re-interpretation in Late Antiquity and well beyond. Far from being firm and stable, the boundaries of Jewish and Christian identities seem to have been continually drawn and re-drawn in new and different ways on the palimpsest of the formative past – sometimes inscribed in blood and sometimes re-imagined in its absence.