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Edited by Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Stroumsa

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## *Introduction*

*Graham N. Stanton*

The essays in this book consider issues of tolerance and intolerance faced by Jews and Christians between approximately 200 BCE and 200 CE. Where were boundaries drawn and bridges built? Although this theme is explored primarily from a historical perspective, for both Jews and Christians it resonates down through the centuries right up to the present day. Communities, groups or nations with rigid boundaries of intolerance quickly become sterile: where there is no vision, people perish. So bridges must be built. On the other hand, unless clear boundary lines are drawn, bridges of tolerance which straddle political, ethnic or religious boundaries are always vulnerable both to sudden attack and to steady erosion. The location of boundaries and bridges raised particularly acute problems for both Jews and Christians in the period under discussion in this book, but the issues at stake will always be with us. The contributors hope to stimulate further research on their chosen topics, as well as reflection on the wider implications of their essays.

This book is distinctive both in its concentration on a theme of perennial concern for humanity, and also in the breadth of the essays. As might be expected in a volume on tolerance and intolerance in antiquity, several chapters are concerned with many different aspects of early Jewish–Christian relationships. Five scholars, however, take a different tack and explore wider horizons: they discuss ways Jews and Christians defined themselves over against the pagan world. As minority groups, both Jews and Christians had to work out ways of coexisting with their Graeco-Roman neighbours. Relationships with those neighbours were often strained, but even within Jewish and Christian circles, issues of tolerance and intolerance surfaced regularly. So it is appropriate

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that several essays should consider 'inner-Jewish' relationships, and that several should be concerned with Christian 'sects'.

The opening essay, by Ithamar Gruenwald, explores the delicate interplay between intolerance and martyrdom. With a wide range of examples, he shows that 'they are not as sharply separated in human conduct as a liberal mind would wish them to be' (p. 15). The deaths of Socrates and Rabbi 'Aqiva are singled out for extended discussion, 'for each one in his own way . . . marks the way from philosophical self-resignation to religious martyrdom' (p. 20). In concluding comments with which every reader will concur, Gruenwald insists that in the last resort the unwavering declaration of faith and the total rejection of evil are most potent means of destabilizing the sophisticated machinery of evil.

The 'boundaries and bridges' between Jews and Gentiles in the Maccabean period are discussed by Daniel R. Schwartz. Whereas 1 Maccabees presents non-Jews as basically evil, in 2 Maccabees Gentiles are broadly sympathetic towards Jews. Schwartz shows that there are even more crucial differences: in 2 Maccabees (but not in 1 Maccabees) being a Jew is not determined exclusively by one's birth, but by one's adherence to 'Judaism', a word perhaps coined by the writer. This conviction eventually won the day.

Why did groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and the Qumran covenanters emerge and flourish in Second Temple Judaism? Albert I. Baumgarten suggests that in some respects sectarianism is like messianism: both are part and parcel of Judaism's biblical heritage, and both tend to break out at irregular intervals. He then examines one aspect of messianic expectations, the pursuit of the millennium, in order to shed light on the broader question of sectarianism. While he accepts that millenarian movements are often born out of despair, he shows that, somewhat surprisingly, some emerged in response to a victory.

'Inner-Jewish' tensions are explored in Michael Mach's essay on the Qumran community. Here the intolerance of a group which sees itself as 'the true Israel' is evident, even though that term is not used. The 'declared conservatism' of the Qumran community is defended by means of radical theological innovation which uses divine revelation as an exegetical device as part of a new scriptural hermeneutic. Although Mach does not discuss striking partial

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parallels from later Jewish and Christian history, the reader will have no difficulty in supplying some of them.

How did it come about that some Jews were considered to have crossed beyond the acceptable boundaries of Judaism? John M. G. Barclay notes that this issue is considered far less frequently than the acceptance of Gentiles who wished to cross the boundary and enter the Jewish community. He discusses various individuals and groups considered to be apostate within Diaspora Judaism. He rightly notes that there are important implications for the parting of the ways between some early Christian groups and Jewish communities. One of Barclay's examples, Paul, is discussed in the two chapters which follow.

Justin Taylor asks a well-known question: Why did Paul persecute the church? After carefully assessing the main answers which this question has received, he advances the hypothesis that before his 'call' or 'conversion', Paul persecuted the church as a result of his hostility as a 'Zealot' towards a group which stood apart from the national struggle against Rome.

Stephen C. Barton warns against reading Paul's writings with modern notions of tolerance and intolerance in mind, and explores passages which reflect the theological principles with which Paul operated. Barton insists that we do not do the cause of a proper tolerance and a proper intolerance any favours if we harness Paul (or Jesus, or early Christianity) to the band-wagon of post-Enlightenment secular individualism and pluralism.

The following three essays return to a topic raised by Daniel R. Schwartz: the boundaries and bridges drawn by Jews and Christians and the pagan world at large. Maren R. Niehoff considers Philo's views on paganism: he generally tends to stress the religious boundaries between Jewish monotheism and pagan idolatry. And yet there is irony in the way that Philo has appropriated pagan hermeneutics and philosophy in order to maintain and redefine the boundary between Judaism and paganism.

Moshe Halbertal considers the same topic from the very different second-century rabbinic perspective of the Mishnaic tractate *Avodah Zarah*. This tractate 'reflects a reality of two communities, Jewish and pagan, entangled with one another, within the setting of Hellenistic cities of the land of Israel' (p. 159). He outlines different conceptions of toleration and discusses their relations to the

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rabbinic world, noting that coexistence of Jews and pagans is a fact; the aim of the Mishnah 'is both to continue a form of the struggle and distancing on the one hand and on the other hand to create a space for legitimate interaction' (p. 166). This principle is discussed with reference to several fascinating examples.

Guy G. Stroumsa also considers the Mishnaic tractate *Avodah Zarah*, although his primary focus is on an almost contemporary Christian writing, Tertullian's *De idololatria*. Stroumsa shows that there are interesting similarities and differences between *Avodah Zarah's* rabbinic and Tertullian's early Christian response to the dominant pagan religious currents in the early Roman Empire.

The nine papers which form the second half of the book are all concerned with aspects of early Jewish–Christian relationships. François Blanchetière expounds three very different attitudes towards Judaism held by early Christian writers. His discussion ranges from the New Testament to Theodosius the Great at the end of the fourth century.

The essay which follows complements Blanchetière's survey. Joel Marcus discusses in detail the anti-Jewish polemic of one key passage, Mark's Parable of the Vineyard (Mark 12:1–12). He claims that under the impact of a chaotic social setting, Mark's parable is a thoroughly polemical re-reading of the Vineyard Song in Isaiah 5, which illustrates how highly charged the inheritance dispute between Jews and Christians became in the first century. Marcus distances himself from the fierce language of Mark 12:1–9 and suggests that one way forward may be by returning from Mark 12 to Isaiah 5, for, after all, 'Isaiah's tenderly nurtured vineyard that has sprung Eden-like from God's hand' is also part of the Christian canon (p. 223).

Richard Bauckham and Martinus C. de Boer consider two Jewish–Christian groups where continuity with Judaism is more in evidence than in most other strands of early Christianity. Bauckham discusses neglected evidence from the *Apocalypse of Peter* for the existence of Jewish Christians in the land of Israel early in the second century. He shows that the opening and closing sections of this work fit the context of Bar Kochba's war against Rome and that they illuminate Jewish–Christian responses to that war.

Martinus C. de Boer examines the complex evidence from Jewish and Christian writings for the existence and influence of

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the Nazoreans. There is continuity between the Nazorean ‘sect’ or ‘party’ mentioned in Acts 24:5 and the Nazoreans discussed by Epiphanius in the fourth century. By this time both Jewish and Christian authorities had come to regard them as ‘heretics’; squeezed by intolerance from both sides, they failed to retain their toe-hold on history.

Second-century Christian writings of particular interest to the student of early Christian–Jewish relationships are discussed by two contributors. Graham N. Stanton claims that Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue* with his Jewish opponent Trypho contains neglected evidence for the existence of Gentile ‘God-fearers’ with a close attachment to Judaism, even though Justin does not use a special term for this group. The *Dialogue* also shows that although both ‘synagogue’ and ‘church’ are concerned to maintain firm boundary lines, there is movement across both boundaries.

With special reference to Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue* and *Apologies*, and also to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Judith M. Lieu discusses the relationship between rhetoric and reality in second-century accusations of Jewish anti-Christian persecution. She insists that when we read these passages, the first question should not be, ‘Did Jews persecute Christians?’, but rather, ‘Why did Christians perceive Jews as persecutors?’ While not denying that there may be some historical reality behind the rhetoric, she shows that references to Jewish persecution of Christians have been shaped by a variety of theological concerns. The extent to which this has happened will surprise many readers.

William Horbury notes that our knowledge of Jewish worship in the ancient world is limited, and considers passages from a wide range of early Christian writings which historians must take seriously in discussions of the rise of the synagogue and of Jewish public prayer. Although he recognizes that Judith M. Lieu (and other scholars) have shown that Christian writings have been shaped by polemic and theology, he insists that assessment of the Christian sources should also take account of the invaluable if hostile observations which are often made concerning Jewish worship.

How were messianic expectations and convictions about Torah taken up and developed or reinterpreted in early Christian writings? Andrew Chester calls in question some widely accepted answers to this key question: he shows that within the main strands of the early Christian movement there was a very wide range of attitudes

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to Torah. In some Christian writings there is a call to intensify the demands of Torah, while at the other extreme there is a deliberate rejection, or least superseding, of Torah. So Torah both unites and divides early Judaism and early Christianity.

In the final chapter Markus Bockmuehl takes up a theme discussed in the earlier essays by Daniel R. Schwartz, Maren R. Niehoff, Moshe Halbertal and Guy G. Stroumsa: the stances Jews and Christians adopted towards the pagan world with which they had to come to terms. Bockmuehl concentrates on the many similarities and the smaller number of differences in the ways in which Jews and Christians communicated their ethical convictions to 'outsiders', i.e. within the early imperial environment of pluralistic paganism. Here, as in Andrew Chester's essay, it is the extent of the common ground between Jews and Christians which is perhaps unexpected. Bockmuehl lays particular stress on the way in which traditional Jewish halakah for Gentiles 'provides much of the chicken stock for the broth of internal Christian ethics' (p. 351). He notes that his point is regularly ignored by writers on Christian ethics who overemphasize the distinctively Christian theological factors which shaped the moral vision of early Christian writers.

This is the first time scholars from British and Israeli Universities have collaborated in a venture of this kind. The essays in this volume are revised versions of papers delivered at a symposium in Jerusalem in April 1994 which was sponsored by the Academic Study Group, a British organization which links British and Israeli scholars from a wide variety of academic disciplines. The essays have all benefited from questions and discussion initiated by colleagues from very different backgrounds. Readers will soon discover that some of the most perceptive insights into Christian writings are made by Jewish scholars, and vice versa. The contributors are grateful to the Academic Study Group for its generous financial support, and to its Director, John Levy, and to Guy G. Stroumsa, for making all the detailed arrangements for our fruitful seminars in Jerusalem.

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## CHAPTER I

*Intolerance and martyrdom: from Socrates  
to Rabbi 'Aqiva**Ithamar Gruenwald*

## I

The terms used in the title of the present paper point to the moral polarization of philosophical norms and historical inevitabilities. Philosophical principles aim at setting clear moral norms and standards of behaviour. They are expected to guide people in their practical decisions even in the face of adverse historical and personal events. However, as is well known, adhering to one's philosophical convictions often leads to head-on clashes with practical needs and the will to survive. Thus, it turns out that matters are not as simple and as clearly defined in the cases which will be discussed in the present essay as one would wish them to be.

Martyrdom results when attempts at maintaining moral integrity in the face of evil and acts of despotism end in death or personal disaster. Those who are exposed to the martyrological ordeal are likely to become master-models of moral perseverance and standing. Their personal agony is turned into a display of public heroism. If they do not succeed in securing for themselves physical survival, they still survive in the memory of people as models of courage and moral integrity. Martyrs are likely to be viewed as heroes who could look into the face of death without succumbing to selfish desires of physical survival.

Socrates and Rabbi 'Aqiva are victims whose deaths received the limelight of historical attention. They were executed for different reasons and at different times. Their respective deaths are almost minutely recorded. Their names stand out in history as heroes whose moral standing and steadfastness are of exemplary importance. However, when intolerance is viewed in conjunction with martyrdom, matters become more complicated than they sometimes look. In principle, intolerance is the obvious opposite of

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martyrdom, and often its very cause. In practice, however, the distinctions between these two terms and their actual manifestations are not as clearly delineated as we would like them to be. The complexities involved in these matters are the subject of the present essay.

Let us start by stating the fact that history abounds in cases in which the potential martyr of today becomes the instigator of intolerance in the days to come. *Mutatis mutandis*, when today's propagators of intolerance are executed, they are likely to become in the eyes of their supporters the martyrs of the next day. In this respect, the martyrological situation is not as unambiguously outlined as it often appears to those who derive their notions about martyrology from a well-formulated theology of martyrdom.

There are an amazing number of cases in which dramatic changes occur in the roles enacted on the historical scene: the potential victim of today dramatically turns the tables and becomes the actual victimizer of the next historical phase. Or, to put it even more succinctly, categories of moral and immoral behaviour all too easily shift roles. Sometimes, it takes only a wink of the eye to bring about vicissitudinous changes in the respective forms of behaviour.

As a matter of moral preference, the praise, of course, goes to those who suffer and are the victims or martyrs in our historical and theological perception. That is, Socrates and Rabbi 'Aqiva stand high in our historical esteem. Our Western cultural values and religious attitudes make this an almost automatic choice. However, it belongs to the sad side of our historical consciousness when the memory of the martyrological acts is not always as enduring as it should be. In fact, when it comes to it, martyrological awareness seldom becomes an efficient tool in suppressing admiration for unrestrained political strength. We are somehow inclined to live in situations in which ambivalence prevails: moral codes enhance one set of values, while political practice sets different models of preferences and priorities. The great heroes of a nation are not always the martyrs of blessed memory, but the great conquerors that bring worldly power and success to their nations.

In spite of all the moral values that are at the heart of our Western culture and religious consciousness, we often fall into the trap of making wrong choices in regard to what real strength is and what its ideal forms of expression are. We frequently think that, because it enjoys the mere power of its sway, a certain politi-

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cal regime is correctly geared and should therefore be universally supported. However, sooner or later we realize that this was yet another trap into which we inadvertently fell. On other occasions, we discover (once again at a rather late moment) that our choice of a martyr was wrong. The person whom we had naively considered to be a martyr turned out to be an impostor.<sup>1</sup> With this we reach the heart of our problem, with all its inevitable complexities and mixed attitudes. Every example that can be given to illustrate our line of argumentation can be subjected to conflicting evaluations. Who stands for what in our evaluation of historical figures? Or, are moral choices a matter of playing around with ambivalent attitudes?

Cultural and religious values are easily proclaimed as normative forms of behaviour. More rigour and determination are demanded, though, from those who are called upon to enact these forms of behaviour in practical life. Moreover, when it comes to maintaining clear distinctions between opposites and contrasting values (to say nothing of reserving praise for, or else condemning, historical heroes), routinely marked borderlines are not always discerned, let alone consistently observed. Humans are given to quick shifts in moral judgement and behaviour. Thus, moral standards that are expected to help differentiate between a persecuted person and his persecutor are recklessly abandoned for the sake of a more opportunist stance.

As indicated above, the persecutor may even be viewed by his supporters as the sage forced to do things as a result of which he will have to suffer the criticism of his 'blindfolded' opponents. One group of people may consider him as fulfilling a historical mission in redressing evil and social injustice. The other group, belonging to the 'opposition', whether on the left or the right, is always viewed as foolish and evil. How long did it take people to realize that the so-called 'Great Light of the Nations', Joseph Stalin, was really a bloodthirsty tyrant? It is reasonable to argue that the Prince of History could have done a better job, if he had given people the chance of writing their once imprisoned later-to-become-dictators in the lists of political martyrs rather than allowing them to become the all-powerful leaders of nations.

In the light of the above, it should not appear strange that our discussion has begun by highlighting paradoxes and dialectical attitudes. History is not painted on one side of the canvas. When

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ITHAMAR GRUENWALD

we look at the reverse side, we are very likely to be struck by the unexpected. In fact, experience shows that the unexpected should always be expected. But when it comes to the teaching of moral values, we hold fast to the ground on which we stand, trusting it not to be as slippery as it sometimes proves to be. The fact that this quite often turns out to be a self-deluding expectation is at the very heart of our perception of the subject-matter.

Psychologically speaking, intolerance may be a manifestation of something much more disturbing than just a failure of nerve or an overdose of political tactics. Intolerance can reflect frustration, impatience, fear, weakness and even despair. Admittedly, in speaking about martyrs we incline to emphasize the opposite qualities, such as moral courage, political integrity and pious perfection. However, the martyr, too, can be shown as the inevitable victim of his own mental frailties: instead of finding solutions that require all the resources of his practical shrewdness and courage, he responds with what may be described by some as paralysing despondency. We still believe that moral dignity is a fortitude; those who can carry that dignity even to their own gallows are justly called martyrs. However, different people may have different views on the same subject.

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When we are able to sympathize with the victim rather than side with the victimizer, we are inclined to see that as a sign of our own moral integrity. But practice shows that people do not always stand the test of their own code of moral values. An internal moral voice tells us that we should favour the victim. The victimizer should always be condemned as the cowardly rascal in the camp of the enemy. One of the sad lessons that history teaches us is that it amounts to moral blindness if intolerance is singularly detected in 'them' and never in 'us'. We morally compliment ourselves on the preference we are able to show towards those suffering misery, dejection and the consequences of political oppression. We equally praise ourselves for the fortitude shown in rejecting all forms of tyranny. We Jews cannot forget for a single moment the horrors inflicted upon our forefathers by the crusaders and the executioners of the Spanish Inquisition. However, we should not be forgetful of the fact that even Scripture testifies that when the Israelites