

FASHIONING JEWISH  
IDENTITY IN MEDIEVAL  
WESTERN CHRISTENDOM

ROBERT CHAZAN



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Robert Chazan 2004

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2004

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Adobe Garamond 11/12.5 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [TB]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Chazan, Robert.

Fashioning Jewish identity in medieval western Christendom / Robert Chazan.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 83184 9

1. Christianity – Controversial literature – History and criticism.    2. Judaism – Apologetic works – History and criticism.    3. Judaism – France, Southern – History – To 1500.  
4. Judaism – Spain, Northern – History – To 1500.    5. Jesus Christ – Messiahship.    1. Title.

BM590.C495    2003

296.3'5 – DC21    2003051537

ISBN 0 521 83184 9 hardback

## *Contents*

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Short titles for frequently cited works</i>	xiv
Introduction	I
I. BACKDROP	
1. Jesus and the Jews: the Gospel accounts	25
2. Post-Gospel Christian argumentation: continuities and expansions	46
3. Pre-twelfth-century Jewish argumentation	67
II. DATA AND FOUNDATIONS	
4. The Jewish polemicists of southern France and northern Spain	91
5. Scriptural and alternative lines of argumentation	122
III. JESUS AS MESSIAH	
6. Biblical prophecy: messianic advent	143
7. Biblical prophecy: the Messiah reviled and vindicated	162
IV. REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH AND REJECTION OF THE JEWS	
8. Biblical prophecy and empirical observation: displacement of the Jews	181

9. Biblical prophecy: redemption of the Jews	198
10. Biblical prophecy and empirical observation: Christian failures	215
V. THE MESSIAH HUMAN AND DIVINE	
11. Biblical prophecy: the Messiah human and divine	233
12. Human reason: the Messiah human and divine	250
VI. JEWISH POLEMICISTS ON THE ATTACK	
13. Christian Scripture and Jesus	281
14. Comparative behaviors: Jewish achievement and Christian shortcoming	298
VII. UNDERLYING ISSUES	
15. Techniques of persuasion	317
16. Fashioning identities – other and self	339
<i>Bibliography</i>	360
<i>Index of subjects and proper names</i>	373
<i>Scripture index</i>	377

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Jesus and the Jews: the Gospel accounts*

Jesus is acknowledged by modern scholars to be an enigmatic and – to an extent – irretrievable historical figure.<sup>1</sup> It is now widely agreed that Christianity arose within the beleaguered and fragmented Jewish community of first-century Palestine. Jesus and his immediate followers were clearly Palestinian Jews. Living through a tumultuous period in Palestinian Jewish history, Jesus and his disciples adumbrated their own special view of the covenant between God and his people Israel – its essence, its dynamic, its demands, and the special significance of the immediate historical moment. To be sure, this formulation was but one of many competing first-century Jewish perceptions of the divine–human covenant.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, Jesus' vision did not win the day among his Palestinian Jewish contemporaries. However, exactly what he claimed and how they disputed these claims cannot now be known with certainty.<sup>3</sup>

This very earliest set of views and commitments – whatever they might have precisely been – proved attractive to groups beyond the original

<sup>1</sup> There have been a number of quests for the historical Jesus. For a useful review of what is now described as three quests for the historical Jesus, see Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995). The very diversity of the conclusions reached by the participants in what Wattenberg calls the third quest reinforces the sense that Jesus is probably an irretrievable historical figure.

<sup>2</sup> All histories of first-century Palestinian Jewry emphasize the diversity of views within the Jewish community. This sense of a religiously fragmented Jewish community was articulated clearly by the first-century Jewish observer/historian Josephus; it has been much reinforced by the Dead Sea scrolls. For two recent treatments of this diversity, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 124–173, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1991), 98–119.

<sup>3</sup> A number of recent scholars have gone to great lengths to present Jesus against the backdrop of first-century Jewish life in Palestine. Special note should be made of the work of Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: William Collins, 1973); E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–94); and Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). Two sets of essays edited by James H. Charlesworth are most useful in locating Jesus within the context of first-century Palestinian Jewry – *Jesus within Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) and *The Messiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

Palestinian Jewish matrix. We hear of a number of Diaspora Jews resident in Jerusalem who were attracted to the Jesus movement.<sup>4</sup> Paul, one such Diaspora Jew and a former persecutor of the young community, became an important figure in the movement, disagreeing on key issues with Jesus' more immediate followers. For many recent scholars, Paul represents the onset of a serious break between the new movement and its Jewish matrix. For others, Paul remained fully anchored within the Jewish world, seeing himself called upon for a special role as apostle to the gentiles, a role that by no means contradicted his Jewishness or the important role of the Jewish people.<sup>5</sup>

In yet a further evolutionary stage, the message of the young movement attracted gentile followers inside and especially outside of Palestine. Paul became a major – or perhaps even chief – spokesman to this new group. The adherence of non-Jews to the movement had to create a host of vexing issues. The account in the Acts of the Apostles suggests that these issues were resolved speedily and amicably between the Jerusalem-based leaders of the movement – the earliest followers of Jesus – and Paul as representative of new tendencies within the loosely knit young community.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the dynamics of resolution, the decisive expansion of the young movement took place outside of Palestine and within non-Jewish circles. What eventually emerged was a gentile Christianity, to be sure insistent upon its continuity with biblical Israel. More precisely, gentile Christianity asserted that Jewish sinfulness forced God to replace the Jews in the divine-human covenant with a new partner, the Christian Church. Christianity was thus claimed to be simultaneously new and old, innovative and venerable. Precisely when and where this critical break with the Jewish world and Judaism took place

<sup>4</sup> There has much uncertainty as to the proper terminology for this early group, since the term Christians is obviously inappropriate. Of late, the term "Jesus movement" has become widely used, and I shall utilize it as well.

<sup>5</sup> The debate over Paul and his relationship to Judaism and the Jews has produced a vast literature. For a valuable review of the dispute, see the first two chapters of John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). While Gager is a strong proponent of one side of the dispute (the side that sees Paul as more positively oriented to Judaism and the Jews), he offers a clear and thorough presentation of the issues. Two sets of essays are useful for illuminating the issues and the diversity of views – Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (eds.), *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), and James D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). Major recent students of Paul have sought to place him more firmly within his Jewish context. See especially W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); *idem*, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:1–35. Throughout this study, citations from the New Testament will be taken from the Revised English Bible.

is subject to considerable dispute; that such a development took place is not.

What modern scholars would most like to know is the precise thinking of Jesus himself, including the claims made to his fellow Jews and the grounds upon which these claims were rejected by most of these Jewish contemporaries. Modern scholars have concluded that, regrettably, no literature whatsoever survives from the first – and arguably most important – phase of Christian history. So long as Jesus has to be reconstructed from late sources, which inevitably bear the imprint of their altered gentile Christian circumstances, there is little hope of reaching sound conclusions as to the life and activities of Jesus and his immediate followers, including the messages projected to his fellow-Palestinian Jews and the responses generated among them.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest surviving New Testament sources – in the eyes of modern scholarship – are the epistles of Paul, surely an innovating figure in the early history of the movement.<sup>8</sup> There is widespread agreement that Paul introduced a somewhat novel interpretation of Jesus, his activities, and his meaning, an interpretation at odds to an extent with that held by Jesus' original followers. As noted, the precise nature of Paul's interpretation is the subject of serious academic dispute. For modern scholars, the sources that describe the lifetime of Jesus himself – the four Gospels – all stem from the post-Pauline period and come out of circumstances increasingly remote from the Galilean ambience of Jesus and his immediate disciples.<sup>9</sup>

The most obvious difference between Jesus and the Gospels is linguistic. While Jesus surely communicated with his followers and detractors in Aramaic or Hebrew, the Gospel accounts are in Greek. This linguistic difference is, however, only the beginning. While there is considerable disagreement with regard to the provenance of each of the Gospels, much of this material came out of gentile Christian settings and was intended for a gentile Christian audience, far removed from the Palestinian Jewry within which Jesus circulated. Although there is surely much in the Gospels that accurately reflects the realities of Jesus' lifetime, including material related to the disagreements with his fellow-Jews, there is also considerable retrojection from altered circumstances. Distinguishing the more or less accurate from

<sup>7</sup> Note again the literature cited above, in n. 1 and 3.

<sup>8</sup> Literature on each of the books of the New Testament is vast, and there are numerous introductions to the New Testament as a whole. I will regularly cite Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Anchor, 1996; *Anchor Bible Reference Library*), partly because of the great erudition of the author and partly for the generally moderate nature of his suggestions. On the Pauline letters, see 409–584.

<sup>9</sup> On the Gospels, see *ibid.*, 99–382.

the later retrojections is the stumbling block that has regularly impeded all quests for the historical Jesus – his life, his thinking, and his interactions with Jewish contemporaries.

What has been depicted thus far reflects modern scholarly doubts and questions. For medieval Christians and Jews, who are at the center of this investigation, none of the foregoing ambiguities, uncertainties, and doubts existed. For both medieval Christians and Jews, the Gospels were authoritative and reliable accounts of the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth. For medieval Christians, these accounts were divinely inspired, thoroughly accurate, and richly allusive to profound religious truths. For medieval Jews, these were reliable but flawed human records, close inspection of which would convince unbiased readers of the nullity of the Christian religious vision.

For both sets of readers, the great issues that divide Christians and Jews are clearly adumbrated in the Gospels. These accounts of earliest Christianity constituted for medieval Christians and Jews the beginning and foundation of their historic debate. In these books – divine to one community, while human and errant to the other – could be found the earliest formulation of ongoing disagreement and a guide to subsequent argumentation pro and con. The importance of the Gospels for Jewish understanding of Christianity deserves special emphasis. For Jews over the ages, Christianity has been primarily understood and defined by the Gospels. These are the texts transliterated and translated by Jews, quoted by Jews, and attacked by Jews. Jews knew of Paul and his influential version of the Christian vision; they were likewise well aware of later modifications in Christian thinking. Nonetheless, Christianity for Jews has meant first and foremost the Gospels – the stories told of Jesus and his followers and the claims embedded in those stories. The Jewish perceptions of and responses to Christianity that we shall study are conditioned, in the first place, by Jewish knowledge and understanding of the Gospels.

Despite the great gulf that separates modern scholars from the thinking of the Middle Ages, there is considerable agreement as to the very broadest outlines of Christian history among modern scholars, medieval Christians, and medieval Jews. For all three of these disparate groups, Jesus and his followers were part and parcel of first-century Palestinian Jewry, failing ultimately to win a sizeable following among their contemporary Jewish neighbors. The movement eventually turned outward toward a new and different set of adherents. All three groups acknowledge that, as a result of this historical trajectory, the Gospels contain much thinking that can be



traced back to Jesus' first-century Palestinian Jewish ambience. Such thinking would be easily recognized, understood, and reacted to by medieval Jews.<sup>10</sup>

Among the elements in the Gospel accounts of Jesus readily recognizable to medieval Jews was – first of all – the narrative format. There are of course many ways of laying out a compelling case for religious truth. Indeed, the figure whose work constitutes the earliest surviving stratum in Christian Scripture, Paul, chose a distinctly non-narrative format for his argumentation. Strikingly, however, late first-century Christianity opted to make its most telling arguments in the narrative mode. The acts and utterances of Jesus were chosen as the most effective vehicle for presenting Christian views and for arguing their truth. It hardly seems accidental that narrative was precisely the format used by biblical Israel in presentation of its views and its argumentation for their truth. Just as prior Hebrew Scripture had gravitated to the narrative mode – the deeds and statements of the patriarchs and Moses – in its presentation and argumentation, so too did later Christian Scripture choose narration of the acts and utterances of Jesus as the vehicle for enunciating and defending Christian faith. Medieval Jews felt quite at home with the narrative format of the Gospels. Habituated to parsing the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, they found it quite congenial to continue such reading into Christian Scripture as well.

Moreover, many of the key themes in the Gospels, involving the most basic truth claims for Christianity, were quite familiar to medieval Jewish readers. The centrality of miracles in the Gospel accounts' truth claims would have resonated comfortably among medieval Jews. The critical episodes in the history of Israel, those events that were determinative of early Israelite faith, show the same reliance on miracles evidenced in the Gospel accounts; put differently, the Gospel miracle stories show considerable influence from prior Israelite tradition.

Surely central to the early Israelite experience was a series of miraculous incidents accompanying the exodus from Egypt. These miracles were seen as shaping the entire history of the community. Moses' encounter at the burning bush, the signs accorded him for his encounter with Pharaoh, the plagues that afflicted the Egyptians while sparing the Israelites, the crossing of the Red Sea on dry land, the drowning of the Egyptians attempting the same traversal, the direct appearance of God to the people in its entirety at Sinai – all these miraculous occurrences lie at the core of Israelite/Jewish

<sup>10</sup> To be sure, medieval Jews believed that there was much innovation reflected in the New Testament, i.e. much that diverged from the teachings of the Hebrew Bible. For that theme in the Jewish polemical literature we shall study, see below, Chaps. 11 through 13.

faith. Thus, the notion of God's intervention on behalf of his people and his messengers was well rooted in prior Jewish tradition and constitutes a line of argumentation that would surely have been understandable to a Jewish audience. To be sure, specific claims could always be rejected, and indeed were, both by Jesus' Jewish contemporaries and by their medieval successors. Nonetheless, Christian claims associated with Jesus' miracles were, in Jewish eyes, incorrect, but not incomprehensible. Miracles had an acknowledged place in Jewish thinking of late antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Likewise congenial to medieval Jewish thinking was veneration for the utterances of the prophets of ancient Israel. Like argumentation from miracles, claims based on fulfillment of prophetic prediction were well known to the Jews of Jesus' day and to later Jews as well. Among the writings of the Qumran Jewish community, roughly contemporaneous with the lifetime of Jesus, are a number of biblical commentaries that see events in the life of the sect as fulfilling prophetic prediction, in a manner strikingly parallel to that found in the Gospels. In fact, a leadership figure – the Teacher of Righteousness – plays a central role in such fulfillment of earlier prophecy.<sup>11</sup> Once more, a familiar style of argumentation by no means guaranteed acceptance of the specific case made by any group, whether the Qumran sectarians or the early Christians. Nonetheless, first-century Jews and twelfth-century Jews acknowledged the validity of biblical prophecy and accepted the search for evidence of its fulfillment.

Related to the founding of claims on fulfillment of biblical prophecy was the importance of later parallels to earlier biblical experience. Already in the Hebrew Bible itself, we find repetition of experiences and motifs a common phenomenon. The authenticity and importance of later figures and events are regularly reinforced by parallels to earlier Israelite experience. Thus, for example, much of the projected redemption envisioned by the latter sections of the book of Isaiah was patterned after the exodus from Egypt that loomed so large in Israelite memory. For Christians, the parallels between earlier biblical experience and the lifetime of Jesus provided a sense of the legitimacy of the latter. The very opening, for example, of the Gospel of Luke abounds in earlier biblical motifs, suggesting the repetition of divine intervention in the birth of John and Jesus in the same way that God had intervened in the birth of such key biblical figures as Isaac and Samuel.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On these *pesharim*, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 223–241, and James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 43–51.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 1:5–38.

Again, this line of argumentation – for such it really is – would have been comprehensible to Jews of all eras, although by no means necessarily convincing in its details.

Yet another Gospel element that would have resonated for Jews of late antiquity and the Middle Ages involves the complexity of religious law, more specifically its potential for engendering hypocrisy and exploitation and the clashes between alternative priorities that must be mediated in a legal tradition. The nature of first-century Palestinian Jewish religiosity is as difficult to reconstruct as the earliest phase of Christianity, for many of the same reasons. Once again, there is the problem of reconstructing earlier realities from later texts. In a very broad way, there is nonetheless a consensus that religious law played a critical role in the life of this Jewry and that these Jews were fully engaged with the problematic of such religious law, including its propensity for fostering hypocritical exploitation of the system. The prophets of Israel, whose writings were key to both Jewish and Christian thinking, had regularly denounced such hypocrisy. The later (second- and third-century) extant rabbinic materials suggest that the leaders of first-century Palestinian Jewry were sensitive to this propensity and sought as well to battle against it. Thus, again both they and their medieval heirs would have been familiar with critiques of hypocritical legalism. Moreover, the same later rabbinic sources suggest that first-century Palestinian Jews knew well of clashes between diverse priorities in a legal system. Thus, they and their successors would have readily recognized criticism of failure to order religious priorities in the proper way, without necessarily agreeing to the specific strictures purportedly leveled by Jesus against his Pharisaic contemporaries.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, first-century and medieval Jews agreed that history was ultimately the arena within which God made his will known to humanity. The Hebrew Bible is, at its core, a historical saga devoted to explicating the actions of God on the historical scene. The story itself was ordered in such a way as to offer a key to understanding the vicissitudes of history. The prophets of the Hebrew Bible regularly interpreted these vicissitudes. The basic scheme adumbrated in both the biblical narrative and in prophetic interpretation involves virtue and its rewards, on the one hand, and sin and its punishment on the other. Much of prophetic consciousness was directed toward the future, elaborating a system that attempted to foretell in the broadest strokes divine plans for the human scene. Central to this

<sup>13</sup> Extremely helpful in identifying rabbinic parallels to Jesus' critiques of hypocrisy and misordered legal priorities is Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament* (Hoboken, Krav Publishing House, 1987).

sense of future developments was the notion of a messianic redeemer who would, by divine fiat, appear on the historical scene and bring salvation to God's people. In the most basic way, this seems to have been the core notion projected onto the image of Jesus. Once more, such imagery was congenial to Jewish thinking in the Middle Ages. As always, the devil was in the details, as groups and individuals were called upon to assess a specific set of historical and messianic claims.

Thus, in many ways, medieval Christians and Jews were poised to argue out of a shared legacy and with a shared set of assumptions. This is, of course, hardly surprising, given the broad agreement already noted as to the placement of Jesus and his immediate followers within first-century Palestinian Jewry. What we must focus upon, however, are the points of contention, those issues on which Jesus and his first-century Jewish contemporaries are portrayed as disagreeing. Modern scholarship has shown us that we cannot know precisely what divided Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries. Medieval Christians and Jews, however, were willing to accept the Gospel accounts at face value and to see therein the beginnings and the backbone of the historic Christian–Jewish debate.

In even the most cursory reading of the Gospels, it is clear that Jesus' main adherents and main opponents were Jews. It is Jews whom Jesus attracted, and it is Jews with whom he contended. Curiously absent from this Gospel picture are the Roman overlords of first-century Palestine, who stand outside the orbit of Jesus' activity, appearing as bemused if somewhat sympathetic observers of internecine strife among their Jewish subjects. This portrayal has come under considerable scrutiny and criticism of late.<sup>14</sup> It is, however, the historical picture shared by both medieval Christians and Jews, a picture that highlights disagreement from both sides – criticisms leveled by Jesus and rebuttal by his fellow-Jews.<sup>15</sup>

The strongest case for belief in Jesus and his message made to Jewish onlookers in the Gospel narratives seems to have involved the miraculous. As noted, this theme accorded well with the legacy of biblical Israel, where the miraculous was regularly adduced as indicative of truth. If we begin, for example, with Mark as the earliest of the Gospels, we find a staccato series

<sup>14</sup> This criticism is widely advanced in the scholarly literature. It is expressed with unusual impact in James Carroll's semi-popular *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 79–88.

<sup>15</sup> Christians over the ages have highlighted the criticisms, and Jews have highlighted the rebuttals. For a helpful general discussion of Jewish responses to Jesus and his followers, see the opening chapters of Claudia J. Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

of events highlighting Jesus' capacity for the wondrous.<sup>16</sup> Let us attempt to glean some sense of this series through the following listing:

- (1) 1:23–26 – an unclean spirit was exorcised by Jesus;
- (2) 1:30–31 – Simon's mother-in-law was healed from her fever by Jesus;
- (3) 1:32–34 – wide-ranging healing by Jesus;
- (4) 1:40–42 – a leper cured;
- (5) 2:2–5 – a paralytic cured;
- (6) 3:1–5 – a man with a withered arm healed;
- (7) 3:10–11 – wide-ranging healing and exorcism;
- (8) 4:35–39 – storm waters stilled;
- (9) 5:1–13 – a lengthy story of exorcism;
- (10) 5:21–24 and 35–42 – a young woman revived from death;
- (11) 5: 25–34 – a woman cured of her hemorrhages.

These eleven incidents are taken from only the first five chapters of Mark. The rest of Mark, Matthew, and Luke abounds in similar tales.<sup>17</sup> Jesus' ability to exorcise, to heal the sick, and to control the forces of nature are advanced as central indices of the unique role accorded him and convincing proof of the truth he brought to his followers.

A particularly striking passage in Luke reinforces this sense of the importance of healing and miracles as proofs of the role and message of Jesus. After two further story of miracles performed by Jesus, word reached John the Baptist, who sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the following question: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?" These two disciples made their way to Jesus and asked as they had been ordered. The story continues:

There and then he healed many sufferers from diseases, plagues, and evil spirits; and on many blind people he bestowed sight. Then he gave them [John's disciples] this answer: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are brought good news. Happy is he who does not find me an obstacle to his faith."<sup>18</sup>

Here Jesus is made to note explicitly the implications of his wondrous interventions for his role and, by extension, for the truth of his teaching. It is no longer the narrator claiming the significance of the miraculous; it is Jesus himself who is made to utter this claim.

<sup>16</sup> I will generally try – where possible – to cite Mark, as the earliest of the Gospels. On the dating of Mark, see Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 163–164.

<sup>17</sup> I will generally cite Mark, Matthew, and Luke, the Synoptic Gospels, and omit John, which differs markedly from them.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 7:21–23.

In the Gospel accounts, many Jews are portrayed as moved by Jesus' miraculous achievements. However, some – especially Jewish leaders – are shown as skeptical. To be sure, skepticism over miracle-working is regularly expressed in the Hebrew Bible. In the biblical legacy, there are recurrent stories about the wonder-working capacity of magicians, who do not perform their deeds through divine intervention, but rather through the magical arts. In most of these biblical stories, the wonder workers are made to fail in competition with God's true agents.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that some Jewish observers are portrayed as questioning the wonders performed by Jesus. Such questioning is indicated in the Gospel of Mark in the following terms:

When his [Jesus'] family heard about it, they set out to take charge of him. "He is out of his mind," they said. The scribes too, who had come down from Jerusalem, said: "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He drives out demons by the prince of demons."<sup>20</sup>

This reflects rather standard questioning of miracles.

A slightly different and more intense Jewish opposition is reflected a bit later, in Mark's account of the Crucifixion. Here, with reference to Jesus' purported threat to pull down the Temple and rebuild it, passersby (certainly intended to be understood as Jews) are depicted as jeeringly proclaiming: "So you are the man who was to pull down the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Save yourself and come down from the cross." The chief priests and scribes are portrayed as echoing that denigration: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross. If we see that, we shall believe."<sup>21</sup>

Here the opposition is to Jesus' seeming lack of power at this critical juncture. Implicit here is the sense that a miracle worker who cannot save himself is surely no miracle worker.

Even more significant than the wonders performed by Jesus are the miracles performed on his behalf. Every major milestone in Jesus' life is accompanied by what are for his followers unmistakable signs of direct divine intervention. Thus, to begin with birth, the fullest birth tale is to be found in Luke. It opens with miraculous conception by the aged Elizabeth of John the Baptist, a conception announced by the angel Gabriel. In a further angelic appearance, Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her of the yet more miraculous virgin birth that will produce Jesus, who is to "be great

<sup>19</sup> Recall, for example, the contest between Moses and the Egyptian magicians in Exodus 7:8–8:15 and between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:19–40.

<sup>20</sup> Mark 3:21–22. <sup>21</sup> Mark 15:29–31.

and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be king over Israel forever; his reign shall never end.”<sup>22</sup> Yet further miracles are associated with the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, with the birth of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus, and the family’s visit to Jerusalem to perform the post-birth Temple obligations.

Mark tells of a particularly striking divine intervention during the baptism of Jesus by John.

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. As he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens break open and the Spirit descend on him, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; in you I take delight.”<sup>23</sup>

Yet another life milestone attended by God’s presence and involvement.

Surely the most decisive divine intervention in the life of Jesus was the miracle of his resurrection. Hints of such an eventuality, expressed prior to the Crucifixion, abound throughout the Gospels. The fullest account of the aftermath of the Crucifixion, that found in Luke, shows a set of disciples sorely perplexed and distressed by the event, dismissive of the reports of resurrection delivered by a number of women observers. Jesus is portrayed as rebuking these disciples for their uncertainty. He makes his resurrection the foundation of the message his disciples were enjoined to bring to the world at large. With exhilaration, the apostles then take a new kind of leave from their leader and proceed to embark on their worldwide mission. Without the Resurrection, there would have been no Christianity; it formed the cornerstone and capstone of the new faith. Thus, from beginning to end, the lifetime of Jesus was studded with divine involvement, meant to serve as irrefutable evidence of his mission and the truth of his teachings.

Once again, Jews are portrayed regularly as challenging these miracles purportedly performed on Jesus’ behalf. Interestingly, Christian claims associated with Jesus’ birth and baptism do not enter the arena of contention. As important as these claims are in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life and in their case for the truth of his mission and teachings, the Gospels do not portray overt argumentation between Jesus and his Jewish detractors over this issue.

In contrast, Jesus speaks regularly of the significance of his death and his subsequent resurrection, and Jews are made to deny that reality and hence its

<sup>22</sup> Luke 1:32.

<sup>23</sup> Mark 1:9–11. We shall see, in Chap. 13, a Jewish critique based on these verses.

significance. Jewish denigration of the claims of Jesus' resurrection appears prominently in Matthew. According to this report, at daybreak on the third day after the Crucifixion, a violent earthquake shook the grave area, with an angel appearing and rolling away the stone covering the site. The angel reassured the female followers of Jesus, while terrifying the guards placed there. The women hastened to convey their message.

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. After meeting and conferring with the elders, the chief priests offered the soldiers a substantial bribe and told them to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole the body while we were asleep." They [the chief priests] added, "If this should reach the governor's ears, we will put matters right with him and see you do not suffer." So they took the money and did as they were told. Their story became widely known, and is current in Jewish circles to this day.<sup>24</sup>

Reflected here are two stages of Jewish rejection of the major miracle associated with Jesus. Most Jews – not directly privy to the reports of the guards – rejected the story of a resurrection, to be sure as a result of manipulation by their leaders. In many senses, these leaders were yet more reprehensible from the Christian perspective, for they had the objective evidence of the guards, dismissed it, and manipulated their fellow-Jews into misguided disbelief.

Looking ahead to subsequent chapters in this study, one concluding remark is in order with respect to the Gospel claims of great miracles performed by Jesus and even greater miracles performed on his behalf. Early Jewish rejection of these miracles made them problematic elements in later Christian argumentation. If Jesus' Jewish contemporaries dismissed the evidence provided by the miracles performed in plain sight by and for Jesus, there could be little hope of convincing latter-day Jews of Christian truth by citing written testimony to those miracles. To the extent that Christian polemical literature included evidence of the miraculous, such argumentation was by and large addressed to believing Christians only. The evidence of the miraculous does not play a major role in Jewish perceptions of Christian truth claims or in Jewish refutation of those claims.<sup>25</sup>

A second central line of Christian argumentation in the Gospels portrays Jesus as fulfilling divinely revealed prophecies in Hebrew Scriptures. The early Christians clearly shared the traditional Jewish sense that God's

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 28:11–15.

<sup>25</sup> To be sure, Jews do utilize Jesus' miracles, which they perceive as weak and inconclusive, as part of their attack on Christian Scripture, as we shall see below, Chap. 13.



prophets had been given the power to foresee the future and had predicted important events and developments to come. All the Gospels assert recurrently that Jesus fulfilled a series of such prophecies and that such fulfillment of prophecy once more attests to the divine origins of Jesus' mission and the truth of his teaching.

For some sense of this line of argumentation, let us turn to Matthew, who is richest in his presentation of it. The opening chapters of Matthew are replete with a set of fascinating stories, the point of which is to show Jesus as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Let us note this sequence:

- (1) 1:18–23 – the story tells of Mary's betrothal to Joseph, her pregnancy through the Holy Spirit, Joseph's inclination to set the marriage contract aside in order to protect Mary, an angelic visitation via a dream telling Joseph to take Mary as his wife and to name the child Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins;" all this is then taken as fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14;
- (2) 2:1–6 – Jesus was born in Bethlehem; reports of the birth of the king of the Jews perturbed Herod, who inquired as to the birthplace of this promised king; in reply he was cited Micah 5:2, which Matthew clearly presents Jesus as fulfilling;
- (3) 2:13–15 – in the face of Herod's fear and wrath, Joseph was warned through yet another angelic intervention via a dream to take his wife and child to Egypt; in this way Jesus fulfilled Hosea 11:1;
- (4) 2:16–18 – committed to slaying the promised king of the Jews, Herod had all youngsters under two years of age massacred in the area of Bethlehem; this set of events thus fulfilled Jeremiah 31:15;
- (5) 2:19–23 – upon Herod's death, Joseph intended to return to Bethlehem; once more forewarned by a dream, he made his way to Galilee instead; this fulfilled Isaiah 11:1;
- (6) 3:1–3 – John the Baptist is introduced; he is taken as fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3.

It is possible to continue further through Matthew, but the point seems clear enough. The events in Jesus' life are regularly projected as fulfillment of prophetic promise.

The concluding sections of the Luke narrative provide particularly striking expressions of this conviction, with Jesus himself proclaiming his fulfillment of prophecy. In the closing chapter of Luke, devoted entirely to the aftermath of the Crucifixion, two of the apostles are portrayed as meeting Jesus (without recognizing him) and describing uncertainly the events of the prior few days, culminating in the report of resurrection. Jesus upbraids them in the following terms:

“How dull you are! How slow to believe all that the prophets said! Was not the Messiah bound to suffer in this way before entering upon his glory?” Then, starting from Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them in the whole of Scripture the things that referred to himself.<sup>26</sup>

After these two apostles shared their news with the others, Jesus appeared within the entire group. Disconcerted, the apostles were reassured by touching Jesus and eating with him. He then shared the following message with them:

“This is what I meant by saying, when I was still with you, that everything written about me in the prophets and psalms was bound to be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. “So you see,” he said, “that Scripture foretells the sufferings of the Messiah and his rising from the dead on the third day, and declares that in his name repentance bringing the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.”<sup>27</sup>

Again Jesus is himself projected as making the argument for his fulfillment of prophecy, particularly the prophecies purported to foretell suffering, resurrection, and conferral of forgiveness.

Obviously, these arguments for fulfillment of biblical prediction in the life and activity of Jesus would be meaningful only to Jews. The premise of this line of argumentation is that David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets of Israel spoke God’s truth. Although these claims are clearly designed for a Jewish audience only, Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries are not shown as deeply engaged with this line of Christian argumentation. The claims are essentially developed in the third-person narrative and in Jesus’ conversation with his immediate disciples. Nonetheless, there are occasional hints of this claim being voiced to a wider Jewish audience and rejected by that audience. Mark depicts the arraignment of Jesus in the house of the high priest, the questioning, and Jesus’ silence in the face of these queries. Only when he is asked as to whether he is the Messiah, does Jesus break his silence. His response – “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven” – is purported to occasion outrage and immediate conviction by the Jewish leaders.<sup>28</sup> Embedded within this brief statement by Jesus are two important references to biblical prediction, that is to say two major claims of impending fulfillment of prophetic prediction. Portrayal of the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty is an obvious reference to Psalm 110; depiction of his coming with the clouds of heaven is a clear reference to

<sup>26</sup> Luke 24:25–27.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 24:44–47.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 14:62–65.

Daniel 7. With both images, Jesus is proclaiming himself the fulfillment of biblical predictions. The Jewish response was hardly acquiescence; it was, rather, intense agitation and rejection.

The miraculous and fulfillment of prophetic prediction surely lie at the heart of the Gospel case for the truth of the new faith. They are perceived by medieval Christians and Jews as the two central claims that Jesus' Jewish opponents rejected. We might note, however, two further themes in the Gospel narratives that will emerge as well in the later Christian-Jewish debate. The first of these involves the importance of the moral dimension in religious life or – more accurately – the requisite balance between the ritual and the moral in observance of God's law. More specifically, the Gospels portray Jesus as critical of the balance struck by the Jewish authorities of his time between the ritual and the moral, implying error on their part and truth on his. The second further theme projects history as the scene of eventual reward and punishment, with the clear implication that, at a later point in time, it will be obvious in retrospect where truth and error lie. The emphasis in both these themes on error and truth made them amenable to inclusion in the eventual cases made by both Christians and Jews over the ages.

Let me begin with a brief disclaimer as regards the first of these two themes. The issue of the ritual/legal versus the moral in the Gospels is exceedingly complex, largely because it is caught up in the related problem of the Law and its status in gentile Christianity. Both issues are reflected in complex ways in the New Testament corpus and have given rise to recurrent reevaluation and considerable debate in subsequent Christian thinking. A major shift that took place within the early Christian community was the abrogation of Jewish law for gentile converts to the movement. Obviously, this change required considerable justification and would of necessity have entailed a reconsideration of the overall nature and importance of the Law. Of the truth claims embedded in the Gospels, this one may well show the most significant alteration from Jesus' own day down through the end of the first century.<sup>29</sup> In view of the complexity of this issue, I shall tread lightly, attempting only to highlight the broadest lines of the argument purportedly carried on by Jesus with his Jewish contemporaries on the issue of the Law.

The significance accorded the Pauline effort to free gentile converts from the demands of the Law suggests that, for Jesus' original circle of Jewish believers, those demands were simply a fact of life. Mention has already

<sup>29</sup> See again the works cited above, n. 5.

been made, for example, of the family's visit to Jerusalem, after Jesus' birth, to fulfill the sacrificial obligations associated with that birth. At the same time, Jesus is described as regularly attacking certain kinds of problematic fulfillment of the Law. Since it is not possible to treat in full measure the complexities of this critique of Jewish law and ritual, I shall confine myself to focusing on the two categories of such criticism already noted. The first is concerned with intrusion of externals into religious observance, the second with failure to order properly priorities associated with observance of the Law. Again I shall draw my examples largely from Mark, as the earliest of the Gospels. Most of the passages cited herein are in fact absorbed into the later Gospel narratives.

At the simplest level, Jesus is portrayed as opposing the intrusion of externals into the realm of the sacred, for example by cleansing the Temple area of its moneychangers and provisioners.

He went into the Temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold there. He upset the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of the dealers in pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to carry goods through the Temple court. Then he began to teach them and said: "Does not Scripture say, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it a robbers' cave."<sup>30</sup>

This is a trenchant critique of the necessary business dealings that surround and compromise almost every religious shrine; it has a near universal quality to it. Of course, the fact that business is necessary for fulfillment of major rituals (Jewish, Christian, and other) remains. Nonetheless, distress at the realities of this infringement of the sacred by the profane is intense. Special note should be made of Jesus' justification of his action by reference to a scriptural verse that highlights prayer as the core of the Temple service. According to the report in Mark, this initiative was widely applauded by the Jewish populace, although it engendered anxiety and disquiet on the part of the religious leadership in Jerusalem.

Yet another critique aimed at the impingement of externals onto the essentials of religious life has to do with the likewise universal tendency of religious leaders to flaunt their piety. Jesus warns against such behavior.

Beware of the scribes, who love to walk up and down in long robes and be greeted respectfully in the street, to have the chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at feasts. Those who eat up the property of widows, while for appearance's sake they say long prayers, will receive a sentence all the more severe.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Mark 11:15–17. The citation is from Isa. 56:7.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 12:38–40.

This is actually a conflated criticism. The initial level involves rebuke of those who enjoy exhibiting their religiosity. Jesus then extends this attack by combining lengthy prayer with oppression of widows, a more heinous perversion of the religious realm, a perversion regularly decried by Israelite prophets. Since this critique was delivered among his followers, the Gospel account does not specify any broad Jewish response.

Yet another type of critique involves conflict of values, more specifically the occasional conflict of ritual imperatives with moral imperatives. This conflict is concretized in Mark by the issue of healing on the Sabbath. The story is somewhat ambiguous.

There was a man in the congregation who had a withered arm; and they [the Pharisees] were watching to see whether Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they could bring a charge against him. He said to the man with the withered arm, "Come and stand out here." Then he turned to them: "Is it permitted to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" They had nothing to say; and, looking round at them with anger and sorrow at their obstinate stupidity, he said to the man, "Stretch out your arm." He stretched it out, and his arm was restored.<sup>32</sup>

The Pharisees are portrayed here as stung to silence by Jesus' critique. This response is a bit curious in that the issue appears prominently in later rabbinic literature.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, the deeper meaning of ritual is recurrently cited. While this theme appears in Mark, let us move for a moment to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew for a full sense of this, elegantly couched. The middle of this extended sermon provides a series of six citations of prior injunction, regularly beginning with a formulaic "You have heard that our forefathers were told," followed by elucidation of the deeper meaning of the commandment. The first in this series, for example, begins by citing the prohibition of murder. To this Jesus adds: "But what I tell you is this: Anyone who nurses anger against his brother must be brought to justice. Whoever calls his brother 'good for nothing' deserves the sentence of the court; whoever calls him 'fool' deserves hell-fire."<sup>34</sup> Again, since this is a discourse delivered to followers, there is no overt reference to broad Jewish reaction.

Finally, there is wrestling with the priorities of religious life that takes the form of attempted identification of the key to the system in its entirety.

<sup>32</sup> Mark 3:1–5.

<sup>33</sup> See the material gathered in Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament*, 199–200.

<sup>34</sup> Matt. 5:22.

In one of Jesus' skirmishes with the Jewish religious establishment, the following episode is included:

Then one of the scribes, who had been listening to the discussions and had observed how well Jesus answered, came forward and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" He answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, Teacher. You are right in saying that God is one and beside him there is no other. And to love him with all your heart, all your understanding, and all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself – that means far more than any whole-offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw how thoughtfully he answered, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."<sup>35</sup>

The issue here is to identify the core of religious faith, which Jesus does by citing Scripture. I have chosen to close this brief survey of his critiques by adducing one in which a leading Jew is portrayed as responding positively to the words of Jesus. As is true for most of the critiques leveled by Jesus, in fact the thrust of these particular criticisms would hardly have been alien to his Jewish contemporaries.<sup>36</sup> To be sure, the Gospels generally portray Jesus' Jewish contemporaries as benighted, insensitive to the moral concerns he expresses and the religious insights he conveys.

One last item in the Gospels must be mentioned, and that involves the warnings given to Jesus' Jewish contemporaries of the punishment to befall them for failure to recognize the Messiah sent by God. This is once again an issue caught up in the rapid evolution of Christian thinking and in the fact that the Gospels are late and derive from an altered ambience. Subsequent Christian preaching to the gentiles involved wrestling with the issue of the Law and disparagement of its importance. This later preaching also had to deal with the dynamics and implications of the purported shift in divine favor from the Jews to the new gentile Christian community. Since much of the Gospel material was written out of and for a gentile Christian audience, we might well expect once more significant contamination by later perspectives. As with the issue of Jewish law, I shall therefore again tread lightly.

To be sure, warnings of impending punishment are not all that common in the Gospels. Nonetheless, such warnings are there and assume heightened

<sup>35</sup> Mark 12:28–34.

<sup>36</sup> See the rabbinic parallels brought by Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament*, 280–281.

significance in the later Christian–Jewish debate. Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, has only the briefest reference to this theme, with Jesus simply indicating that the magnificence of the Jerusalem Temple should not be misconstrued, that in fact “not one stone will be left upon another; they will all be thrown down.”<sup>37</sup> Such prediction would not have been all that shocking to his Jewish contemporaries or to medieval Jews either. Jesus is simply reiterating the stance earlier uttered by Jeremiah, indicating that the sanctity of the Temple does not preclude divine punishment upon it as a result of sinfulness.<sup>38</sup>

Luke’s reference in this same direction seems rooted in Mark, but is far more explicit. Luke after all considerably postdated the destruction of Jerusalem at Roman hands, which probably accounts for some of the fullness of his report. Luke describes Jesus as weeping over Jerusalem and lamenting in the following terms:

If only you had known this day the way that leads to peace! But no, it is hidden from your sight. For a time will come upon you, when your enemies will set up siege works against you. They will encircle you and hem you in at every point; they will bring you to the ground, you and your children within your walls, and not leave one stone standing on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s visitation.<sup>39</sup>

Particularly striking is the reference to Jewish failure to “recognize the time of God’s visitation” as the basis for the destruction of the Temple. The reality of that destruction then serves as *ex post facto* proof that the Jews were thus punished, which in turn demonstrates that God’s visitation did in fact take place.

Matthew’s treatment of this theme is fuller yet, with Jesus engaging the chief priests and elders and delivering his warning directly to them. This warning was couched initially in the form of a parable, involving a landowner who prepared a vineyard and then let it out to vine-growers. At the proper time, the landowner sent his servants to collect the produce due him. These servants were maltreated, with one even killed. A larger number of servants were then sent and similarly maltreated. The landowner then opted to send his son, who was in turn killed. With this story spun out, Jesus then asked his interlocutors what they thought the fate of the tenants would be. Their purported answer was ominous: “He will bring those bad men to a bad end and hand the vineyard over to other tenants, who will

<sup>37</sup> Mark 13:2.

<sup>38</sup> See the lengthy episode depicted in Jer. 26:1–19.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 19:41–44.

give him his share of the crop when the season comes.” Building on this response, Jesus then says:

Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the main cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.” Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that yields the proper fruit.<sup>40</sup>

Here we may indeed have echoes of a later thrust, with another people replacing the errant Jews.

Most important to our purposes, however, is the underlying presupposition of these warnings, the assumption that history is the arena in which corporate sin and punishment are worked out. In all these warnings, the shortcomings of the Jews are portrayed as calling down upon them divine anger and eventual punishment, with destruction of the Jerusalem Temple a central manifestation of that punishment and loss of the covenant a further possibility. Couched in terms of a Christian argument, the case would run as follows: You Jews were warned of impending doom for your rejection of Jesus as a divinely sent messenger; the doom has eventuated; there can be no reasonable explanation other than the fact that Jesus was in fact the divinely sent messenger, as claimed. Modern scholars may well see these purported assertions by Jesus as contaminated by later perspectives. Nonetheless, once more subsequent Christians and Jews would not impose the doubts of modern research and would tend to see this as one last – and powerful – element of dispute between Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries.

The potent medieval Christian challenge to Jews was deeply rooted in the Gospels. Key lines of anti-Jewish argumentation were set forth, with meaning for believing Christians, for potential gentile converts to Christianity, and for Jews. For medieval Jews, it was possible to see the bulk of the Gospel argumentation in Jewishly meaningful terms. Christians claimed divinely grounded miracles performed by and for Jesus, and Jews disagreed. Christians claimed Jesus’ fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and Jews again disagreed. Christians and Jews disagreed over the Law, its status, and its abuse. Christians and Jews agreed that history was the scene in which the divine plan was carried out, but disagreed in their reading of historical realities.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 21:41–43. The citation is from Ps. 118:22–23.



To be sure, the key elements in the Gospel portrait of Christian–Jewish argumentation could not and did not remain static. They were inevitably embellished, expanded, and intensified. In order to understand properly subsequent Jewish perceptions of the Christian challenge, let us turn briefly to some of the early evolution of these key anti-Jewish arguments.