



Preface

They just don't fit very neatly; they never did. Ever since it became clear that the law-free mission to the [G]entiles would create a church and not a synagogue, Jewish-Christianity has been an uncomfortable reality with which to deal. The "Synagogue" didn't like it. The "Church Catholic" didn't like it. And modern scholarship, far less ready to accept the vagaries of a religion that resembles but cannot be made to fit known varieties of religion, seems to like it even less. . . . Yet it is the very fact that Jewish-Christianity occupies a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity (as though there were such "normative" religions in antiquity or today) that makes it the object of fascination to modern scholarship.¹

This is as true today as when Burton L. Visotzky wrote it in 1989. The present book is another fruit of this "object of fascination." In 1995 the director of the Caspari Center of Biblical and Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Torkild Masvie, suggested to me that time was ripe for a full history of Jewish Christianity, or rather, as we soon agreed, a history of the Jewish believers in Jesus—the "they" rather than the "it" in Visotzky's quote.

In a moment of rashness that came with enthusiasm for the idea I agreed to act as chief editor of such a project. Had I known the magnitude and the difficulty of the subject, I would certainly have thought twice about undertaking the task. In any case, it took quite some time before the initial idea had gestated so as to be mature for birth. I soon realized that the organizational part was completely beyond my capacity, and I was happy to be joined by my good and close colleague Reidar Hvalvik, who has carried the main burden of organization, and also, and increasingly as the work went along, acted as co-editor. Without his administrative, organizational, and editorial talents, this project had never been realized.

I realized right from the beginning that this was a subject beyond the competence of one scholar. We would have to be a team in order to handle the different

¹Burton L. Visotzky, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities," *AJSR* 14 (1989): 47.

aspects of it in a competent way. It is a great pleasure and a pleasant duty to express here my great gratitude to those fellow scholars who so willingly, even enthusiastically, responded to my pleas for contributions. Two seminars were arranged—one in Tantur, Israel, 2000, and one in Cambridge, England, 2001—in which first and second drafts of contributions were discussed and ideas exchanged. This does not make any contributor responsible for anything said in this volume outside the author's own contribution. Most of the contributions were print-ready in 2003. Only to a very limited extent has it been possible for the authors to take account of literature published after that date.

In the early stages of this work, our common perception was that we were concerned with a category of people who by their very existence somehow refused to take in the reality of what was happening around them—the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity. Then, in 1999, Daniel Boyarin published his intriguing book *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, in which he challenged the paradigm of the parting ways in a groundbreaking manner. In 2003 a new book appeared; challenging the traditional paradigm already in its title: *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed), a conference volume based on a joint Princeton-Oxford conference in 2002. These were not the only publications to signal a shift in scholarly attention and a new awareness of the great relevance of studying the groups and individuals who, so to speak, embodied the non-parting of the ways. Two symposia, one in Jerusalem (1998) and one in Brussels (2001), resulted in one volume each: *Le Judéo-Christianisme dans tous ses états: Actes du colloque de Jérusalem 6–10 juillet 1998* (ed. S. C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones); and *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (ed. P. J. Tomson and D. Lambers-Petry, 2003). Prior to any of these, Simon Claude Mimouni had published his magnificent survey *Le Judéo-Christianisme ancien: essais historiques* (1998). One could add several more titles to these, including Boyarin's own follow-up of his pioneering work mentioned above: *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (2004).

With regard to the present volume, the process behind which has been quite independent of any of the above projects, this has meant that while we were at work, a paradigm shift was going on around us. From the marginal position described by Visotzky, Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile Christian Judaizers moved into the very center of scholarly interest. The present volume, however, is not meant to be a programmatic statement in the scholarly debate about old and new paradigms. There is hardly any one position in regard to this question among the contributors of this volume. What unites us is a common conviction that the phenomenon of Jewish believers in Jesus has its own significance in the history of Christianity, and also for the history of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Neither authors nor editors think of this volume as a definitive history of Jewish believers in Jesus during the early centuries (first to fifth centuries C.E.).

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Nor have the editors made any attempt at unifying and streamlining the points of view expressed in the different contributions. We have regarded it an advantage that the book contains more than one opinion on some of the problems treated. There is, at present, no established scholarly consensus on the different themes treated in this volume. This goes for the many large as well as many of the smaller questions. In this way it is hoped that this volume, rather than summing up current scholarship, may in some measure contribute to it. A continuation of this history through the centuries until our own time is at an early stage of planning. This is a report on plans, not a binding promise.

On behalf of both editors I would like to extend thanks to the many persons who have been involved in the project—first and foremost our fellow authors in the present volume. Torkild Masvie, director of the Caspari Center for Jewish and Biblical Studies, initiated the project and supported it with staff and funds all along. His and the Center's support were ideal from the scholar's point of view: no strings attached. Among the Center's staff, Bodil Skjøtt made invaluable contributions on the organizational side, and Ray A. Pritz provided scholarly and editorial inputs. Our own employer, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, funded part of our own research and writing. Good colleagues at MF provided invaluable assistance during the last hectic stages of editing: Gunnar Haaland, John Wayne Kaufman, Bjørn Helge Sandvei, Andrew Donald Wergeland, and Karl William Weyde. Some gave a hand in assembling the bibliography, some helped in linguistic polishing of English, Greek, and Hebrew. To all of them we extend our deep feeling of gratitude. In the production of this book, Shirley Decker-Lucke and her colleagues at Hendrickson Publishers have made significant contributions towards improving the consistency and the argument of some of the chapters of the book, and, when necessary, polished our English. For this we owe them great gratitude, while taking full responsibility for the end result.

Last but not least, we thank our wives for having put up with absent and absent-minded husbands for all too long.

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Oskar Skarsaune
Chief Editor