Vulgata in Dialogue 2 (2018) 1–14

THE VULGATE AND CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE

Matthew A. Kraus[1]

ABSTRACT Jerome is often mentioned in historical discussions of Jewish-Christian interactions. Although regularly identified as the author who translated the Latin Bible directly from the Hebrew, commonly known as the Vulgate, the implications of his long 'conversation' with the Hebrew text remains unexplored, with a few exceptions. Drawing on my recent research on Vulgate Exodus and Numbers, I present some examples of his translation that combine Classical, Jewish, and Christian traditions in order to illustrate the translation technique of the Vulgate. This translation technique offers ways of thinking about Jewish-Christian dialogue. Just as the Christian Jerome's training in Late Antique Classical grammar inspires and mediates his interaction with Jewish sources, so does a third system of shared values neither Jewish nor Christian stimulate contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue. Further, just as Jerome's encounter with Jewish sources in the translation process ultimately reinscribes Christian supersessionism, there are limits to dialogue between Christians and Jews.

KEYWORDS Saint Jerome, Vulgate, Jewish-Christian dialogue, translation, supersessionism

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Hieronymus wird oft in historischen Diskussionen über jüdisch-christliche Verständigung erwähnt. Obwohl er regelmässig als Autor identifiziert wird, der die lateinische Bibel direkt aus dem Hebräischen übersetzte, allgemein bekannt als Vulgata, bleiben die Implikationen seiner langen „Konversation" mit dem hebräischen Text, mit einigen Ausnahmen, unerforscht. In Anlehnung an meine jüngste Forschung zu den Büchern Exodus und Numeri der Vulgata, zeige ich einige Beispiele seiner Übersetzung, die die intellektuellen Traditionen aus dem klassischen, jüdischen und christlichen Bereich kombinieren, um so die Übersetzungstechnik der Vulgata zu veranschaulichen. Diese Übersetzungstechnik bietet Denkansätze zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog. Gerade so wie die Übung in spätantiker klassischer Grammatik die Verbindung des Christen Hieronymus mit den jüdischen Quellen inspirierte und vermittelte, so stimuliert ein drittes System von geteilten Werten – weder jüdisch, noch christlich – den zeitgenössischen jüdisch-christlichen Dialog. Ebenso wie Hieronymus' Begegnung mit jüdischen Quellen im Übersetzungsprozess letztlich auch den christlichen Supersessionismus nachzeichnet, sind dem Dialog zwischen Christen und Juden Grenzen gesetzt.

SCHLAGWORTE Heiliger Hieronymus, Vulgata, jüdisch-christlicher Dialog, Übersetzung, Supersessionismus

1. Matthew A. Kraus, Assistant Professor, Department of Judaic Studies, University of Cincinnati; 3508 French Hall West, University of Cincinnati 45221–0169; GND Nr.: 1122463049; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5252-180X

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25788/vidbor.v2i0.35

Introduction: Jerome and Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Three recent works addressing contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue through the prism of early Christianity offer more than passing reference to Saint Jerome. For Daniel Boyarin, he exemplifies the parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity that did not take full shape until the 4th century CE.[2] Building on the recent paradigms of ancient Judaisms and the Eusebian invention of Christian orthodoxy, Boyarin argues that early Christology would have been quite compatible with the versions of Judaism reflected in the Book of Daniel and Enochic literature.[3] Jerome, however, offers evidence of the later chronology for a parting of ways based on Christology when he criticizes the Nazarenes. This Jewish sect who believed that Christ is the Son of God, child of the Virgin Mary and was resurrected, is considered by Jews and orthodox Christians as neither Jewish nor Christian.[4] Post-Hieronymian Christian-Jewish dialogue, therefore, ultimately maintains clear distinctions between Judaism and Christianity and must acknowledge certain irreconcilable differences.[5] For Boyarin, Jerome represents the end of a hyphenated Jewish-Christian dialogue and the beginning of dialogue between Christians and Jews. In David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition*, our Church Father represents one of many examples of how Christians thought about themselves and theologized through Judaism. This ranged from associating literalism and materialism with Jews to him being accused of Judaizing by his school chum Rufinus.[6] Both relate to Origen:

2. Boyarin, Daniel, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, The New Press, New York, 2012.

3. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 25–101. The point of contention in the first centuries after Jesus was not whether a Christ-like human/divine figure was possible, but whether Jesus of Nazareth was this Christ.

4. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels*, 15–20.

5. 'Jerome and the Rabbis are engaged in a kind of conspiracy to delegitimate these folks who defined themselves as both Jewish and Christians, in order that the checklists remain absolutely clear and unambiguous' (Boyarin, p. 19). One implication of Boyarin's argument is that the period of the early Jesus movement could offer a paradigm of Jewish-Christian dialogue that permits a blurring of boundaries between the two religions.

6. Nirenberg, David, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition,* W. W. Norton and Co., New York, 2013, pp.121–122.

> On the one hand, [Jerome] insisted that he did right in 'having had a Jew as a teacher'… On the other hand, he reiterated with apotropaic intensity his hatred of Judaism… It is as if proclaiming one's hatred for the Jews could provide protection from whatever risks of 'Jewishness' came with appropriating their texts. Rufinus pointed to Jerome's 'Judaism' to defend Origen against him.[7]

As a follower of Origen, Jerome valued the letter which drew him to the Hebrew text of Scriptures and Jewish interpretive traditions. When the Origenist controversy broke out, unlike Rufinus, Jerome did not defend Origenist Christology which explains the vitriol from his former friend.[8] More than having Jewish teachers, being 'captured by Jews' is also Rufinus' way of accusing Jerome of an 'excessively carnal attitude toward God and his teachings'.[9] Jerome counters by defending his use of Jewish teachers while vehemently condemning Jews and Judaism.[10] Such a response is typical of the way in which the conceptual use of Jews by Christians in internal debates of the Church produced ambivalent characterizations of Judaism. In a sense, then, Jewish-Christian dialogue is really an intra-ecclesiastical conversation. Most recently, William Krewson devotes an entire monograph to Jerome and the Jews, contending that the monk himself offers a model for contemporary Christian-Jewish dialogue.[11] Writes Krewson:

> Jerome's self-motivated intrusion into Hebraic culture becomes a paradigm for contemporary Christian and Jewish interaction. He embodies a bold yet ambivalent maneuver that lurched the Christian church sideways to its neighbor and propelled the church ahead with a slightly more Hebraized identity than it had possessed… His endeavor to construct a literary legacy undergirded by text [the Hebrew Bible], exegesis [Jewish interpretations], and land [Bethlehem] reduced the distance between Jerome and actual Jews in his day. Far from revising supersessionism, these achievements were modest and unwilling moves toward the Jews.[12]

Although Krewson does a fine job surveying Jerome's often contradictory statements about Jews, his claim that Jerome offers an 'innovative supersessionism' that can serve as a paradigm for modern conversations is not convincing.

7. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 122.

8. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 122.

9. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 123.

10. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 123.

11. Krewson, William, *Jerome and the Jews: Innovative Supersessionism*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon, 2017.

12. Krewson, *Jerome and the Jews*, 174.

Rather, his genuine interest in Jews and Jewish teachings stimulates his reassertion of supersessionism thereby confirming Nirenberg's thesis that Christian thinking through Jews generates ambiguity at best.

In these discussions, two Hieronymian features receive insufficient attention: the translation of the Bible 'according to the Hebrew Truth' from Hebrew to Latin and his Classical background. Boyarin and Nirenberg do not ignore his authorship of the Vulgate, but it represents for them little more than a recognizable feature of his resume. Introducing Jerome as the author of the Latin Bible makes him relatable to readers. For Krewson, the fact that he learned Hebrew and worked carefully with the Hebrew biblical text especially demonstrates his dialogue with Jews and Judaism. Missing even from Krewson's work, however, is the evidence offered by a deeper analysis of the final result, the translation and process of translation itself. Such a close analysis indicates how Jerome engaged with his Jewish sources, offering a detailed glimpse of his Christian-Jewish dialogue. Eavesdropping on this conversation highlights a third participant, Classical tradition. In what follows, I share some examples from my recent work on Jerome's translation of the Bible that demonstrate the interaction between Jewish, Christian, and Classical traditions as an intercultural dialogue.[13] This will suggest a way of thinking about Christian-Jewish dialogue in our time.

The Vulgate, Classical Learning, and Jewish Traditions

Evolving from a revision of the Old Latin to directly rendering from the Hebrew Truth, Jerome's biblical translation is one of his longest projects, taking fifteen years to complete by some estimates (390–405 CE).[14] In addition to de-

13. Kraus, Matthew, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical Exegetical Traditions in Jerome's Translation of the Book of Exodus: Translation Technique and the Vulgate*, *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* series, Brill Publishers, Leiden, 2017.

14. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical*, 23. Jerome's rationale for translating according the Hebrew directly has received ample discussion: Grützmacher, Georg, *Hieronymus: Eine biographische Studie zur alten Kirchengeschichte*, Dieterich, Leipzig, 1901–1908, 96–106; Sparks, H.F.D., 'Jerome as a Biblical Scholar', *CHB*, 513–15; Kamesar, Adam, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, 64–69; Brown, Dennis, *Vir Trilinguis. A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome*, Kok Pharos, Kampen, 1992, 97–103; Schulz-Flügel, Eva, 'The Latin Old Testament Tradition', in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation,* vol. I

lays resulting from various controversies in his career, the process of translation itself was time-consuming.[15] The key to understanding this process is his *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* where he outlines and defends his method of *recentiores*-rabbinic philology.[16] This method involves careful comparison between the Hebrew, Septuagint, versions, and rabbinic traditions along with Classical philology and Christian theological considerations to determine the translation of the Hebrew text.[17] We see this method at work in numerous ways. First and foremost, he approaches the Hebrew language through Classical grammatical categories.[18] This includes more than the common categories of grammar such as morphology, semantics, and syntax, but those specific to Late Antique Latin grammarians such as Jerome's teacher Aelius Donatus. In particular, he relies on *lectio* (proper expression, accent and punctuation when reading), and *enarratio* ('explanation' of sections, clauses, and words that figures of speech, involved syntax, or unusual words may make difficult). As I have discussed this at length elsewhere, a few examples will suffice.[19] In Exod. 27:6 וְעָשִׂיתָ **בַדִּים** לַמִּזְבֵּחַ בַּדֵּי עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים IH *facies et* vectes *altaris de lignis setthim* duos, the rendering *vectes duos* 'two carrying poles'[20] indicates that he pronounced (*lectio*) בַּדִּים 'poles'[21] as the dual *בַּדַּיִם.

In Exod. 3:7–8 וְאֶת־צַעֲקָתָם שָׁמַעְתִּי מִפְּנֵי נֹגְשָׂיו **כִּי יָדַעְתִּי** אֶת־מַכְאֹבָיו: וָאֵרֵד לְהַצִּילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם [8] 'I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, [8]and I have come down', we find attention to the division of clauses, also an application of *lectio*. The phrasing of the Hebrew suggests that God heard the cry of the Israelites caused by their taskmasters because God knows their suffering. The Vg employs different phrasing by

from the beginnings to the middle ages (until 1300), Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen, 643; and Brown, Dennis, 'Jerome and the Vulgate', Hauser, A.J. and Watson, D.F. (edd.), *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, *vol. 1: The Ancient Period*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003, 359.

15. Kedar, Benjamin, 'The Latin Translations', in Mulder, Martin Jan (ed.), *Mikra*, CRINT 2.1, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1988, 320–321.

16. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship,* 176–191.

17. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical,* 15–42.

18. Graves, Michael, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*, Brill, Leiden, 2007.

19. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical,* 61–104.

20. Translations of Vg mine unless otherwise noted.

21. Translations of Hebrew Bible from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

reading ‘because I know’ with 3:8: [7]*et clamorem eius audivi propter duritiam eorum qui praesunt operibus* [8]et sciens *dolorem eius descendi* thereby indicating that God descended because God knew their pain.[22]

The use of Classical grammatical categories in the Vg appears most remarkably in the application of *enarratio* (‘explanation’ of the text). While we know that grammarians such as Servius concentrated on glossing difficult words, even relying on foreign languages,[23] Jerome incorporates the technical terminology for introducing a gloss into the translation itself: Exodus 15:23 offers an excellent instance of this:

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמָהּ מָרָה׃

> ‘When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah’.
>
> Vulgate: *et venerunt in Marath nec poterant bibere aquas de Mara eo quod essent amarae* unde et congruum loco nomen inposuit *vocans illud Mara* id est *amaritudinem*
>
> And they came to Marah, and they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter (*amarae*). *Whence he established a name suitable to the place*, calling it by the name Mara, *that is bitterness*.

This example is striking because it is possible that the biblical author intended to gloss Marah. By using the technical phrase *id est* ‘that is’, Jerome makes it abundantly clear that in his view the original Hebrew incorporated this Latin grammatical feature, a point he further emphasizes by commenting on the character of the gloss ‘whence he established a name suitable to the place’.[24] One of the most striking features about Vg Exodus compared to the Hebrew, LXX, and Old Latin is the variety of techniques employed to connect clauses. Jerome applies the full range of options available in Latin, coordinating particles, subordinating particles (e.g., relative clauses and purpose clauses), and participles. Since these clause connectors often highlight the semantic relationship between

22. Like the NRSV, the Septuagint takes ‘because I know their pain’ with Exod 3:7 rather than 3:8.

23. Graves, *Jerome’s Hebrew Philology,* 35–36.

24. Obviously, the translator takes advantage of the coincidental similarity between Hebrew *marah* and Latin *amara.* See also Vg. Exod. 16:15 which has the gloss not found in the Hebrew ‘which means what is this’ *quod significat quid est hoc* (describing *manna*).

clauses often in contrast to the paratactic style of the Bible, they represent another instance of *enarratio*.

For instance, in Exod. 20:18, the Vg has *autem* 'however' rather than the Hebrew 'and' which contrasts the people's experience of the Sinaitic revelation to that of Moses:

וְכָל־הָעָם רֹאִים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִם וְאֵת קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת־הָהָר עָשֵׁן
וַיַּרְא הָעָם וַיָּנֻעוּ וַיַּעַמְדוּ מֵרָחֹק׃

'And[25] all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance.'

Vulgate: *cunctus* autem *populus videbat voces et lampadas et sonitum bucinae montemque fumantem et perterriti ac pavore concussi steterunt procul*

'All the people, *however*, saw the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking' etc.

He also applies the philological technique of comparing versions in his use of his Greek and Latin *Vorlagen*.[26] The rendering of פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה 'It is the passover of the Lord' as *est enim phase id est transitus Domini* reflects such an interaction between the versions. He follows the Old Latin *pascha est enim Domini* by transliterating פסח and clarifies *enim* 'for' with the addition of the gloss, 'that is, a crossing over of the Lord'. Otherwise, the Old Latin would not make sense because, in context, it would mean that the Israelites ate the Paschal offering in haste because 'it is the Pascha of the Lord'. The Vg addition of *transitus* makes it clear that traveling, which might require haste, is involved. The *recentiores* also play a role. Symmachus provides the idea of a gloss (φασὲχ ὑπερμάχησίς ἐστιν) with the actual translation of the gloss deriving from Aquila (ὑπέρβασις).[27] Whenever Jerome converses with the Hebrew text, whether directly or through the Septuagint and versions, his Classical grammatical background moderates the discussion.

25. NRSV has 'When'.

26. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical,* 105–134.

27. See Salvesen, Alison, *Symmachus in the Pentateuch,* University of Manchester, Manchester, 1991, 83–85.

We find the same framework when textual sources alone cannot account for the Vg rendition. While all translations are interpretations, these moments in the Vulgate stand out because they differ too much from the Hebrew to be based solely on the textual source and must rely on exegetical traditions. A dramatic instance of this is in Numbers 25:7–8 where Jerome renders the Hebrew הַקֻּבָּה as *lupanar*.[28]

וַיַּרְא פִּינְחָס בֶּן־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיָּקָם מִתּוֹךְ הָעֲדָה וַיִּקַּח רֹמַח בְּיָדוֹ׃
וַיָּבֹא אַחַר אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־**הַקֻּבָּה** וַיִּדְקֹר אֶת־שְׁנֵיהֶם אֵת אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־קֳבָתָהּ

> 'When Phin'ehas the son of Ele'azar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation, and took a spear in his hand [8]and went after the man of Israel into the *inner room*, and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through her body.'
>
> Vulgate: *quod cum vidisset Finees filius Eleazari filii Aaron sacerdotis surrexit de medio multitudinis et arrepto pugione* [8]*ingressus est post virum israhelitem in* lupanar *et perfodit ambos simul virum scilicet et mulierem in locis genitalibus*

Since Symmachus and the Syro-Hexapla have πορνεῖον 'brothel', he is probably relying on an exegetical tradition indirectly through Symmachus, but it illustrates that Jerome is willing to go beyond the logical, contextual meaning of the text.[29] This can include Jewish tradition, as in his rendering of Numbers 10:5–7, in which the different ways of describing the trumpet blasts directly correspond to the various calls of the shofar described in the Mishnah.[30] He renders תְּקִיעָה 'blow' as *prolixior clangor* 'more extensive sound' and תְּרוּעָה as *concisus clangor* 'short or broken sound' and *ululatus* 'howling'. The fact that he distinguishes between two types of trumpet sounds, *tekiah* (ת.ק.ע) and *teruah* (ת.ר.ע) reflects rabbinic traditions.[31] Moreover, the different forms of the sounds parallels the Mishnah. According to mRosh Hashannah 4.9, 'the length of the *tekiah* is equal to three *teruot* and the length of a *teruah* to three *yevavot*'.[32] According to *Pirkei De Rabbi Eliezar* 32, a *yevavah* is equated to י.ל.ל which happens to be cognate with Vg's *ululatus.* In any case, both Jerome

28. For a more detailed discussion see Kraus, Matthew, 'Rabbinic Traditions in Jerome's Translation of the Book of Numbers', *JBL* 136.3 (2017) 555–556.

29. Philo, *Mos.* 1.302, Origen, *Hom. Num.* 20:5. Cf. b'Abodah Zarah 17b.

30. For a more detailed discussion, see Kraus, 'Rabbinic Traditions', 558–560.

31. *Sifre* Behaalotecha 16.

and the Mishnah define *tekiah* as a long blast and *teruah* as short staccato blasts. Since he refers to the current practice of Jews sounding the horn, he may have also had direct experience with hearing the ram's horn.[33] This means that Jerome does more than converse with the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts, but also includes Jews in the conversation. In fact, it is far more likely the case that Jerome conversed with actual Jews rather than rely on Jewish texts for his Jewish exegetical traditions.[34]

We encounter a hint of this conversation in the Vulgate rendition of Exod. 1:10.[35]

הָבָה **נִתְחַכְּמָה לוֹ** פֶּן־יִרְבֶּה וְהָיָה כִּי־תִקְרֶאנָה מִלְחָמָה
וְנוֹסַף גַּם־הוּא עַל־שֹׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ׃

> '*Let us deal shrewdly with them*, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground.'
>
> Vulgate: *venite* sapienter opprimamus eum *ne forte multiplicetur et si ingruerit contra nos bellum addatur inimicis nostris expugnatisque nobis egrediatur e terra*
>
> 'Come, *let us cleverly afflict them* lest they by chance multiply and if war should befall us, they might be added to our enemies and leave the land after we have been attacked.'

There is no apparent textual explanation of the reading of נִתְחַכְּמָה as *sapienter opprimamus* 'let us cleverly afflict them'. Going beyond the LXX (κατασοφισώμεθα αὐτούς), for instance, Jerome has extrapolated from the *hitpa'el* of ח.כ.ם 'be wise' to an adverbial explanation of how the Egyptians planned to oppress the Israelites. It requires some creativity to imagine exactly how one might cleverly plot against a nation. And yet this is precisely what we find in the Babylonian Talmud (b.Sotah 11a):

32. שִׁעוּר תְּקִיעָה כְּשָׁלֹשׁ תְּרוּעוֹת. שִׁעוּר תְּרוּעָה כְּשָׁלֹשׁ יְבָבוֹת (tran. mine). According to bRosh Hashannah 33b, *yevavot* can mean drawing a long sigh or short, piercing cries. מר סבר: גנוחי גנח, ומר סבר: ילולי יליל

33. 'Whence also as a sign of the ram that was sacrificed even today the Jews are accustomed to sound the horn.' *Qu. hebr. Gen.* 22:14 *Unde et in signum dati arietus solent etiam nunc cornu clangere*. See Newman, 'Jerome and the Jews', 165.

34. Newman, 'Jerome and the Jews', Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1997 (Hebrew), 70–74; Krewson, *Jerome and the Jews,* 79.

35. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical*, 147–150.

> 'Let us deal wisely with him' (Exod. 1:10)… Rabbi Chama said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: Come let us outsmart the redeemer of Israel. How shall we punish the Israelites? If we punish them with fire, [we could be punished reciprocally] as it is written, 'Lo, God will come with fire' (Isa. 66:15)… How about by the sword? But it is written 'and God will judge all flesh by the sword' (Isa. 66:16). Rather, let's punish them with water because the Holy and Blessed One has already sworn not to bring a flood to the world, as it is written 'For these are the waters of Noah to me [which I swore never to bring again upon the earth]' (Isa. 54:9). They did not know, however, that God promised not to bring the flood waters over the entire world, but God can bring a flood to one nation.[36]

Jerome is not only in exegetical conversation with Jews, he also brings pagans into the mix. We see this in both Exod. 21:12–13 and Exod. 12:14, 17. In Exod. 21:12–13, the Hebrew refers to any person who kills another and someone who does not plot a murder:

מַכֵּה אִישׁ **וָמֵת** מוֹת יוּמָת׃
וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא צָדָה וְהָאֱלֹהִים אִנָּה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה׃

> 'He who *fatally* strikes a man shall be put to death. If he did not do it by design, but it came about by an act of God, I will assign you a place to which he can flee.'

The Vulgate clarifies the precise difference between these two murderers:

> *qui percusserit hominem* volens occidere *morte moriatur. qui* autem *non est insidiatus sed Deus illum tradidit in manu eius constituam tibi locum quo fugere debeat.*

> 'He who strikes a person *intending to kill* shall be put to death. The one who does not ambush, *however*…'

The addition of *volens* 'intending' and *autem* 'however' reflects a distinction between accidental (*casus*) and premeditated (*voluntas*) homicide that is found in *A Comparison of Roman and Mosaic Law* also going back to a rescript of Hadrian.[37] In summarizing the Passover legislation, חֻקַּת עוֹלָם 'eternal law', as 'eternal veneration' (*cultus sempiternus*) in 12:14 and 'continuous religious observance' (*ritus perpetuus*) in 12:17, we can almost hear Jerome responding to Julian's critique of Christianity who cites Exodus 12:14 as an example of 'eternal law' that counters claims of Christian supersessionism:

36. *The Babylonian Talmud,* ed. Isidore Epstein, Cohen, A. (tran.), Soncino, London, 1936.

37. *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio*, I.vi.1, M. Hyamson, M. (ed.), Oxford University Press, London, 1913.

> 'For they [the Christians] assert that God, after the earlier law, appointed the second. For, say they, the former arose with a view to a certain occasion and was circumscribed by definite periods of time…' (Emperor Julian's *Against the Galileans* I.319d–e).[38]

Christians would be subject to an eternal law, whereas Jews must observe only an eternal religious rite. This reflects Jerome's position condemning Nazarenes for following Jewish laws and engaging in sacrifice because it subverted supersessionism.[39] Jerome has no issue with Jews celebrating the Passover ritual.

In a final example, Exod. 1:19, we find all of Jerome's interlocutors together:

וַתֹּאמַרְן הַמְיַלְּדֹת אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי לֹא כַנָּשִׁים הַמִּצְרִיֹת הָעִבְרִיֹת
כִּי־חָיוֹת הֵנָּה בְּטֶרֶם תָּבוֹא אֲלֵהֶן הַמְיַלֶּדֶת וְיָלָדוּ׃

> 'The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are *vigorous*. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth.'
>
> Vulgate: *quae responderunt non sunt hebraeae sicut aegyptiae mulieres* ipsae enim obstetricandi habent scientiam *et priusquam veniamus ad eas pariunt* …
>
> **'**for they have the knowledge of delivering babies…'
>
> Targum Yerushalmi: ארום זריזין וחכימן בדעתיהן הינין, 'for they were quick and wise in their knowledge'
>
> *Ambrose:* 'Indeed, in regard to other Hebrew women you find it written that the Hebrew women give birth before the midwives arrive. This is so because the souls of the just do not wait upon branches of learning arranged according to kinds of knowledge, nor do they require assistance in parturition, but they bring forth their offspring spontaneously and anticipate the expected time'.

There is much debate over the meaning of חָיוֹת 'vigorous', but the simple meaning is a physical characteristic of the Hebrew woman that enables them to give birth before the midwives arrive. Jerome, however, seems to be relying on

38. Julian goes on to cite Exod. 12:14–15 as one of the many references to an 'eternal law', proving that the Christians must be arguing falsely.

39. Jerome *in Hier.* 3.14–16 refers to the 'the erring Nazoraeans serving the sacrifices which have been abolished' (Frederik, Albertus, Klijn, Johannes, and Reinink, G. J., *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum, V. 36, Brill, Leiden, 1973, 229). This typifies his general assessment of them 'Since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians', *Ep.* 112.13 cited in Krewson, *Jerome and the Jews,* 154–155.

a rabbinic tradition preserved in Targum Yerushalmi that understands it in intellectual terms, as the knowledge of obstetrics. His rendition seems similar to Ambrose's reading of the story, who also sees it in intellectual terms. Ambrose, however, offers an allegorical interpretation differentiating just souls who have ready access to the intelligible world and the unjust who require extensive education. The allegory only works if the literal reading is 'vigorous'. Just as the virtuous Hebrew women gave birth quickly, the virtuous soul quickly produces true thoughts. This begs the question of why Jerome would reject a Christian allegorical reading in favor of a carnal Jewish reading. The answer lies in the other participant in the conversation, the pagan. The Classical grammatical tradition in which Jerome was schooled had a serious interest in *historia*, which included the explication of *realia.*[40] As in his other writings, Jerome resorts to Jewish tradition to answers questions stimulated by this Classical concept of *historia*. Rather than characterize the rendition as a Jewish reading that rejects the more Christian reading of Ambrose, it is better understood as a response to a Classical grammarian's question with the response happening to derive from a rabbinic tradition.

Conclusion

Recognizing that the translation technique of the Vulgate includes the influence of Classical as well as Jewish traditions has implications for Christian-Jewish dialogue. Krewson is correct in noting that the use of Jewish sources such as the Hebrew biblical text and rabbinic traditions problematizes Jerome's supersessionism. This does not offer a paradigm for Christian-Jewish dialogue, as he claims, however, but rather exemplifies its inherent challenges.

Jerome's genuine interest in Jewish learning deriving from his Classical background is not obviously consistent with his supersessionism. Supersessionism will always subvert the sincere interest and respect for Jewish traditions. The dilemma for Christians is to either reject the legitimacy of Judaism or reject supersessionism. Jerome ultimately chooses the former, which is why he cannot serve as a model for contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue. He represents a

40. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, Classical*, 30, 63, 157–167.

Christian who learns what he can from his dialogues with Jews and ultimately rejects the legitimacy of Judaism.

Even if he cannot be a model for Jewish-Christian dialogue, I would suggest that the *study* of Jerome can serve as such a paradigm. His wide-ranging scholarship and interests that include Jewish and Christian elements brings Jews and Christians together. More importantly, that his encounter with Judaism is mediated through Classical ways of thinking, also offers a paradigm for Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is the values of a third party shared by Jews and Christians that encourages such a conversation. This does not mean that supersessionism can be set aside, but rather it becomes a challenging and ultimately irresolvable part of the conversation. We do not follow Jerome's lead in studying Jewish learning only to reject Judaism, but rather study Jerome to understand that supersessionism is an inescapable element of Christian thinking. This does not preclude dialogue, but underscores its limits.

Postscript

We only have one side of Jerome's encounter with Jewish traditions. We do not have any references to him in rabbinic literature that might explain meeting with the Church Father from the Jewish point of view. Nevertheless, we are at least able to imagine being in dialogue with someone like Jerome. Such is the case in a famous passage from Avodah Zarah 2a-3a:

> R. Hanina b. Papa — some say R. Simlai — expounded the verse (Isa. 43:9) thus: In times to come, the Holy One, will embrace a scroll of the Law and proclaim: 'Let those who have occupied themselves with Torah, come and take their reward'. Thereupon all the nations will crowd together in confusion, as it is said: All the nations are gathered together, etc. (Isa. 43:9)… The nations will then contend: 'Lord of the Universe, have You given us the Torah, and have we declined to accept it? (But how can they argue thus, seeing that it is written, *God came from Sinai and rose from Seir unto them, He shined forth from Mount Paran*? (Deut. 33:2)'… R. Johanan says: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, offered the Torah to every nation and every tongue, but none accepted it, until God came to Israel who received it… The nations will then say, 'Sovereign of the Universe, has Israel, who accepted the Torah, observed it?' The Holy One, will reply, 'I can give evidence that they ob-

> served the Torah'. 'O Lord of the Universe', they will argue, 'can a father give evidence in favour of his son? For it is written, Israel is My son, My firstborn' (Exod. 4:22).[41]

This narrative, which continues at length, has been characterized as a dramatic courtroom dialogue.[42] What is particularly striking about the nations is how well they know Hebrew scripture as well as the techniques of rhetorical argument. In other words, they mediate Jewish tradition through a Classical education.[43] This reminds us of Jerome. It is also striking that the topic of the dialogue closely relates to supersessionism in that it challenges Jewish legitimacy to receive the rewards of following the Torah. Moreover, as the dialogue continues, the nations seek to replace Israel as the true followers of Torah. The nations, however, miserably fail at observing even one simple commandment, to dwell in a Sukkah. Ultimately, the dialogue reconfirms the distinction between Israel and the other nations.

The purpose then of Jewish-Christian dialogue is not somehow to efface the hyphen or eliminate the categories of Jewish and Christian. In fact, it is the opposite. Such dialogue is impossible without there being Jewish and Christian. We see that in the case of Jerome. He regularly encounters and applies Jewish learning in his translation of the Bible which then requires him to reassert Christian supersessionism as he defends his translation. There is no doubt that Jewish learning affected him and he appropriated it in forming his own Christianness, but he categorically rejects mixing the two. The rabbis similarly reserve Torah observance to Israel alone. Dialogue re-inscribes difference, but in a way that confirms, develops, and perhaps strengthens the particular identities of the conversants. It should be noted that the third conversant provides the impetus for dialogue in the first place and that represents the common ground between Jews and Christians.

41. *The Babylonian Talmud,* Isidore Epstein (ed.), Mishcon (tran.), Soncino, London, 1935.

42. See the excellent analysis of this passage in Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999, 212–242.

43. On rabbinic familiarity with Classical rhetoric, see Lieberman, Saul *Greek in Jewish Palestine/Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 1942, Reprint, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1994 and Fischel, Henry *Essays in Greco-Roman and related Talmudic Literature*, Ktav Pub. House, New York, 1977.