

Disputation
between Simon a Jew and
Theophilus a Christian

Translated from Latin
by

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The text translated here is from the Latin text published by Adolf Harnack 'Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani' in *Texte und Untersuchungen* vol. I, 3 (1883) pp. 1-136. A copy of the text was also published by J.P. Migne *Patrologia Latina* 20 (1845) col. 1165-1180, where the author is given as Evagrius.¹

I will try to summarize some of the points made by Harnack on pp. 125ff., using the sequence adopted by him. Harnack's notes are those of a truly great scholar who was completely immersed in the textual material he was studying and who had a formidable background knowledge. I would not claim any of these for myself, so I can only hope that I have understood the points he makes in his notes. I have not read the the disputes between Justin and Trypho or Jason and Papiscus, and a thorough knowledge of these texts is necessary to appreciate the arguments of Harnack. But one thing does seem to clear to him: what is said in the texts is no of importance in understanding the theology of the 2nd cent.

1. At the beginning of the dispute Simon uses the term 'Nazarene' to mean Christian. In the early centuries of Christianity this designation seems to have been used when Christians were regarded as a Jewish sect (as in Acts 24, 5).²
2. Towards the end of the text Simon addresses Theophilus as 'good doctor', and Harnack suspects a word play with the Greek name Jason and word 'iatros' (doctor), thereby establishing a connection with the dispute between Jason and Papiscus.
3. On the basis of Biblical passages quoted Harnack thinks that Simon is an Alexandrian Jew.
4. The dietary restrictions alluded to in §28 point to a form of Judaism where wine was frowned upon or simply rejected: the distinction may be between 'drinking wine' and drinking wine like a gentile'.

The exchanges are generally not too long, and it is noticeable that Theophilus has much more to say, largely because his speech is largely made up of Biblical quotations. Perhaps not surprisingly, the longest exchange (§25) in the dialogue is the one that deals with the delicate subject of fornication and its metaphorical role in the very

1 *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 1995 vol. 3, col. 1028

2 In the Arabic-speaking world the term (نصرانی) 'nasrani' is also still used alongside (مسیحی) 'masihi', which I think is more common. The former was given a certain prominence several years 2014 by the organization that calls itself 'Da'esh', but how this is to be understood I cannot say.

being of the Church and the Resurrection. The long and convoluted speech of Theophilus, with at least 15 quotations from the Psalms alone, is in reply to a deceptively innocent question of Simon about the morality of the Church.

I have occasionally consulted the pre-Vulgate version in P. Sabatier *Bibliorum sacrorum latinae versiones antiquae* (1743), which has parallel columns of the *versio antiqua* and the *vulgata nova*. Sometimes the Latin is that of the Vulgate, sometimes the pre-Vulgate and sometimes an adaptation. I have not given the references to all the passage from the Psalms.

At the beginning of Harnack's (but not Migne's) there is a greeting in square brackets to a certain Valerius, claiming that the text is an eyewitness account of the dispute which the recipient will enjoy.

[Greetings to my brother Valerius . . . I will relate to you a most pleasing enquiry that took place recently before us. When you have read it, you will be glad to have it.]. There was a dispute about the law between a certain Simon a Jew and Theophilus a Christian.

1. *Sim.* : Cross worshipper, standard-bearer, you claim to be the author³ of Christian law. You have in me a patient listener if only you are prepared to respond to my questions truthfully, not with ornamental conversation and word play but with the presence of the law. If you win, I will become a Christian. But when I have defeated you, I will make the Nazarene into a Jew.

Th. . : Let not the humpback boast like an upright man.

2. *Sim.* : Whom do you worship ?

Th. : God.

3. *Sim.* : I will argue with you about the crucified Christ whom you say is the Lord.

Th. : We certainly say and will boldly prove that the Lord is God.

4. *Sim.* : The holy and venerable Deuteronomy⁴ says: *See, I am alone, and there is no other God besides me.* And Isaiah⁵: *I am the first and the last and besides me there is no God.*

Th. : It is the most sacred name of Christ. If you wish to know it, you have to first to believe and

3 Conjectures such as 'learned person', 'listener', 'assistant' have been made for this word.

4 Deut. 32, 39.

5 Is. 44, 6

then finally you will be able to understand. Isaiah⁶ refutes you when he says: *Unless you believe, you will not understand.* Without any doubt, therefore, we have come to know, we know and we worship God as almighty, invisible, immense, incomprehensible, and accordingly we confess that Christ is God and the son of God. When he says *I am the first and the last*, he means the two comings of Christ.

5. *Sim.* : What does 'besides me there is no God' mean ?

Th. : Christ God, the son of God, said it of himself because he foresaw that the Antichrist would come and call himself God. Zachary the prophet⁷: *I will raise up a shepherd in the land, and he will not notice what is missing and not look for what has been scattered and not save the one who is suffering and not consume the one who is whole and he will eat the flesh of the chosen and tear apart their claws. And their sword is on his arm and over the his right eye. His arm drying up will become dessicated and his right eye becoming blind will be blinded.* Christ therefore said: *I am the first and the last and besides me there is no God.*

6. *Sim.* : So you make two gods ?

Th. : God is one, from whom there is Christ and in whom there is God, like the three who appeared to Abraham at the oak tree of Mamre, to one of whom Abraham said as he went forward to greet him: *If I have found grace in your sight, I will take water and your feet will be washed and you can rest under the tree.* That the three of course appeared by divine prescience, that the tree of the Cross of Christ represents a safe haven for believers, the prophet of Psalm 81 says rightly:⁸ *God stood in the assembly of gods, distinguishing between the gods in the midst.* As he says of Christ, who taught in your assemblies and performed great acts of virtue. Accordingly, we read in Psalm 44: *Your throne, God, is forever and ever, the staff of justice is the staff of your kingdom. You love justice and hate iniquity, so God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your fellows.* Which God, Jew ? As God the Father said of Christ his Son, on behalf of whom and about whom the most 'received' prophet, Jeremiah, says: ⁹*This is our God and there is no other nor will be reckoned without him who found the way of prudence and gave it his son Jacob and Israel his beloved son. After these things he appeared on earth and spoke with men.* Similarly in Psalm 45: *Be still and see that I am God, I will be exalted among people and on earth.* And in Psalm 67: *Sing to the Lord, sing psalms in his name. his name is the Lord.* I could offer more examples, but the truth is proved in

6 Is. 7, 9

7 Zach. 11, 16ff.

8 Quotations from the Psalms: 82,1ff. ; 45, 7ff.; 46, 11; 68, 5

9 Baruch 3, 36ff.

these few passages.

7. *Sim.* : This testimony is right enough for those who worship, those confess with a united spirit, those who agree with what you say. But I would like you to quote me a passage in which God makes Christ God in his own right, and then I will think of believing that Christ is God and the Son of God.

Th. : Unbelieving Jew, do you want to argue about the prophets too ? Here is my response to your questioning. God said to Moses: ¹⁰*Look, I have given you as a god to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron will be your prophet.* Consider this, that Moses was a model of Christ, the God of peoples who were not believed. How much more then is Christ the God of those who believe. As Moses liberated his people from Egypt, from the harsh servitude of Pharaoh, Christ too has liberated his people from the thrall of idols and the power of the devil.

8. *Sim.* : So, if Christ is God and the Son of God, how is it that Genesis says: *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* ? It could as easily have said: *In the beginning God the Father and God the Son made heaven and earth.*

Th. : You are mistaken, Jew, and you will never find the truth unless you understand the origin of truth. If you were willing to believe, the first thing you would be able to understand is who Christ the son of God is. *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* means in the judgement of Christ and at his will and in whose image he thought it worthy to make man. For it says: *Let us make man*, and again later: *God made man in the image and likeness of God, and he made them male and female.*

9. *Sim.* : He might have been saying this to the angels too.

Th. : Nonsense, Jew ! To which of the angels did God ever say: *You are my son. I have given birth to you this day* ? ¹¹Again in the Psalms: ¹²*I will make that prince exalted before all the kings of the earth.* But he ordered the angels to worship Christ. And again in the song¹³ of Deuteronomy: *Rejoice, nations, with him. And let all the angels of God worship him.*

10. *Sim.* : Prove to me that Christ is the prince.

10 Ex. 7,1

11 Ps. 2,7

12 Ps. 89, 28

13 A description of the words of Moses in the verse following Deut. 32,43. Cf. Sabatier p. 391

Th. : I have already given you one proof. Now accept another, if of course you are able to believe it. When Joshua son of Naue was standing on the other side of the Jordan, he saw a man with a sharp double-edged sword in his hand. Joshua said to him:¹⁴ *Are you for us or against us ? He replied: I am the commander of the troops of the Lord of majesty.*

11. Sim. : And I would like you to tell me how Christ is the son of God. For *all the saints are the sons of God*. As you proved to me that he is a prince, prove to me now that he is the son of God, born of God. For divinity is far removed from acts of human coitus and does not engage in physical embrace.

Th. : You speak like a Jew. Christ is God, the son of God, the firstborn, produced by the Word and brought forth by the mouth. As God made man in the beginning from the mud of the earth, breathed his breath into him and man was made into a living spirit, so also did he beget his Word, that is Christ, from the womb of his heart, as it says in Book Two of Samuel:¹⁵ *And the word of the Lord was with Nathan the prophet: "Go and tell my servant David, 'You will not build me a house to live in, but when your days are numbered and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise your seed after you. He will build a house in my name, and I will erect his house forever and I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me, and faith will follow his house.'" Similarly in Psalm 2¹⁶ it says: Why have nations trembled and peoples thought of inanities ? Kings of the earth have arisen and people come together against the Lord and his Christ. Let us break their chains and cast off their yoke from us. He who lives in heaven will laugh at them and the Lord will deride them. He will then speak to them in his anger and confound them in his rage. I have been made king by him over Mount Zion his holy place, preaching the precepts of the Lord. The Lord said to me: "You are my son. I have begotten you today. Ask me and I will give you nations as your inheritance and lands to the ends of the earth. You will break those kings with an iron rod like a pottery vessel." Likewise in Psalm 44:¹⁷ My heart pours forth my good Word, I mean my works for the king. And Isaiah says:¹⁸ I have heard things perfected and shortened. Because God will make the Word shortened in every land. This means that he has cured our wounds, as it says in Psalm 106: ¹⁹He sent his word and cured them. In another Psalm God speaks and bears witness through the prophet that he made heaven, of which we spoke earlier, is from Christ and in Christ, who is the Word of God: *The heavens have been strengthened by the Word of God and all their**

14 Joshua 5, 13ff.

15 2 Sam. 7, 4ff.

16 Ps. 2, 1ff.

17 Ps. 45, 1

18 Is. 10, 22

19 Ps. 107, 20

virtues by the breath of his mouth.²⁰ This means that Christ the Word travelled quickly through the world and converted the souls of those in error to God through a new law. In Psalm 146 we read: *He who sends his Word to earth, his Word runs quickly.* Isaiah says: ²¹*The Word of the Lord was made cursed in them, and they rejected it.* Perhaps you would like to hear our prophet John declaiming: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. In the beginning it was with God. All things are done through it and nothing is done without it.* Again the Son bears witness of a similar type to the Father and testifies to the beginnings of his birth, saying through Solomon: *I am the firstborn before every creature from the mouth of the most Exalted. I made the never-failing light rise in heaven. I live in the heights and my throne is in a column of cloud.* So you see, Simon, that as your fathers were leaving Egypt it was Christ who went before them in a column of cloud. One also reads in Proverbs:²² *God established me in the beginning of his words, in the beginning in his work, before he made the earth and set up the abyss and begotten me before all mountains. When he was preparing the heavens, I was at his side. When he was setting apart his seat, when he was making the foundations of earth stronger, I was also helping him to do this. I was the one in whom he found pleasure. Each day I rejoiced before him while he rejoiced in the world he had created.*

12. *Sim.* : The same can be said of wisdom.

Th. : You are wrong, Jew. Your senses are covered by a veil of ignorance. It is not unjust to say that, as Moses covered his face with a veil, a veil has covered your heart.²³ So, approach the Lord and believe that Christ is God, the son of God, and the veil of ignorance will be removed from your senses. You think that it a wise thing to profess your ignorance that Christ is himself the God of virtue and the wisdom of God. Your kings, who used to reign through succession, were unable to accept virtue and wisdom unless they were consecrated in the name of Christ. An example of this is Daniel:²⁴ *Vision and prophecy will be sealed. Eternal justice will arise and the saint of saints will be anointed. You will know and understand from the outset of speech in replying, and I will build Jerusalem reigning until Christ, the Anointed of the anointed, coming from God and king of your kings. The anointing of Samaria will desert that horn.* From whom your kings were anointed and all your prophets jumped for joy, because the one who had been announced had come, as Isaiah said: *I am the one who spoke and I have come to evangelize you.* So, as we have said, he is the Anointed of the anointed, Lord of lords. Isaiah also said: *The Lord said to my Lord Christ, whose*

20 Ps. 33,6

21 Jer. 6, 10

22 Prov. 8, 22

23 The NT passage referred to here is probably 2 Cor. 3, 13

24 Dan. 9, 24ff. I do not understand the final sentence, which is not in the Vulgate. The pre-Vulgate has as phrase *exterminabitur unctio et non erit.*

right hand I held that people might hear him out. I will disrupt the strength of kings and open the bronze gates before him, and the cities will be not closed. I will open the bronze gates and smash the iron bars and I will give you hidden treasures. To whom did the Father hold out his right hand if not his son Christ, whom all people hear, as it says in the Psalm: *You have always held my right hand with me ? Or what city is closed to him ? And to whom do all bronze gates open ? What will anyone dare to dispute about his birth when the same prophet says: ²⁵The Word of Lord was made to Achaz: Seek for yourself a sign from your Lord in the depths and the heights. And Achaz said: I will not seek and I will not test the Lord And he said: Hear now, house of David. Yours will not a weak struggle with men. And so you will set yourselves a struggle with God, for the Lord will give you a sign: A virgin will conceive in the womb and bear a son, and his name will Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'.*

13. *Sim.* : I believe prophets. Moreoever I believe that Isaiah is the most widely read. But I think he was talking about another virgin. When Shalmanassar king of the Assyrians sent his general to Jerusalem to test the living God, Isaiah prophesied against Shalmanassar: ²⁶*The virgin daughter of Zion has scorned you and ridiculed you. The daughter of Jerusalem has moved her head against you. When the angel struck 180,000 from the Assyrian camps, God was with us in this. Th.* : You are mistaken, Jew. And you still do not believe. If you think that the daughter of Zion is a virgin, who was the child she gave birth to ? Who ate butter and honey ? Who was the boy who, before he knew his father or mother, dragged off the spoils of Samaria ? Who was the boy she had from the seed of David ? Isaiah says: ²⁷*A virgin will conceive in the uterus and give birth to a boy. and he will be called Emmanuel. He will eat butter and honey. Before he learns to call his father and mother, he will receive the virtue of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria against the king of the Assyrians.*

14. *Sim.* : Tell me what those things are so that I can believe what is meant by butter or honey or what the spoils of Samaria were that Christ received.

Th. : If you stop disbelieving, you will hear the truth so that what is written in the Psalms²⁸ is not fulfilled in you: *As the serpents are deaf and block their ears, which do not hear the voices of those singing.* Isaiah²⁹ also boldly speaks out against your incredulity: *The words of this book will be to you*

25 Is. 7, 10ff.

26 Is, 37, 22

27 Is. 7, 14 On the term *virgo* העלמה cf. the note by the translator of F. W. Gesenius *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (1857) p. 634.

28 Ps. 58, 5ff.

29 Is. 29, 11ff.

like the words of a sealed book, and if you give the book to a literate man to read, he says: I cannot read it. It is sealed. If the book is given to an illiterate man and tell him to read it, he will say: I have not learned to read. First that Christ, like small children, ate butter and honey is something we believe and will continue to believe. And he was circumcised on the eighth day. Butter is understood as ointment of the spirit. Honey is the sweetness of its teaching that we acquire and enables us to attain to faith. He dragged away the spoils of Samaria in this way, that is, he received gifts from the Magi when he was a baby, gold, incense and myrrh. After growing up, when he taught and revealed every truth of God, Samaria and Damascus abandoned their idols and were easily persuaded to believe, leaving the Assyrian, the devil.

15. *Sim.* : Good, you open up to my questions through all mysteries, and you have shown that Christ is God, the son of God, brought forth from his mouth, created by the Word and born of a virgin. How is therefore that you assert that he was born from the seed of David in Bethlehem ?

Th. : I will quote Isaiah:³⁰ *A branch will come from the root of Jesse and a flower will ascend from its root, and the spirit of God will rest upon him.* The branch was Mary the virgin who came forth from the seed of David, from which Christ the flower of the patriarchs was born according to the flesh. God, who made a sign in Numbers³¹ that an ass should speak, wanted to make a much greater sign that Christ be born of a virgin, If the virgin had not given birth, would there be any dispute between us ?

16. *Sim.* : I believe that the virgin, as you say, could have conceived by the spirit. The question is whether the vrgin could have given birth.

Th. : Unbeliever. God was able to break a rock and produce water in the dryness, so how much more likely is it that God could have ordered a virgin to give birth ? I will produce another testimony. if you are prepared to believe Baruch son of Nerus, who prophesied in Babylon.

17. *Sim.* : So you think I am such an unbeliever that I do not accept Baruch the disciple of Jeremiah, whom Jeremiah so often sent to address the people and whom he ordered to write down his prophecy. Now Jeremiah knew that Baruch would prophesy, so he became the people's leader and prophet in captivity after Jeremiah, but he makes no mention of Christ.

Th. : So how is it that near the end of his book about the nativity and his dress and passion and resurrection that he prophesied: *This my anointed one, my chosen one is said to be the issue of an*

30 Is. 11,1

31 Num. 22, 28

uncontaminated womb, who was born and suffered. ³² If you believe, Simon, or come to a full knowledge of our gospels, you will come to know the tunic that covers him and all these things in full. On the subject of his birth in Bethlehem, listen to the prophet Micah:³³ *And you Behthelem of Judah, house of Ephratha, you will not be so small that you will be numbered among the thousands of Juda. From you there will come to me one to be a ruler in Israel, and his reign will be from the beginning and from eternity.*

18. *Sim.* : I have read a lot, but I do not understand. So I will ask you questions one by one and want to find out the things that have been proved to be true. Moreover, because God taught us that circumcision is to be celebrated, which he first handed down to Abraham, circumcision which you claim Christ had earlier, how is it that you are trying to persuade me to believe when you prohibit circumcision.

Th. : We prohibit circumcision of the flesh, but we gladly accept that the circumcised believe. Abraham, before he was circumcised, was a friend of God through faith, who had acquired righteousness through faith not circumcision. It says:³⁴ *I made you father of many nations before the Lord because you believed.* It then says: *Abraham believed in God, and righteousness was accounted to him.* Before he was circumcised, he heard. After circumcision he accepted, showing that two peoples would come to the faith of Christ, one with and one without a foreskin. If Christ had not been circumcised, how would you believe me or the prophets that he came from the seed of David ? Circumcision is the sign of descent not salvation.

19. *Sim.* : So, how is it that the angel would have choked the son of Moses when he was uncircumcised had not Seffora his mother, having taken the stone, circumcised the boy ? And when the blood was imminent, she kept praying: ³⁵ *Let the blood of the boy's curcumcision stand.*

Th. : Jew, you are contradicting yourself. I told you earlier how Moses was modelled on Christ and everything he did went before in the image of Christ. Seffora his wife, who circumcised the boy, is understood as the synagogue. *Let the blood of the boy's curcumcision stand* means that the circumcision of boys was still there when Christ arrived. God said to Moses:³⁶ *Build me an altar of stones not of the circumcised. bit bring no iron into it.* Which of course means that when Christ came

32 J. Rendel Harris *The Rest of the Words of Baruch* (1889) p. 11 points out that these words are not be found in any of the works of Baruch

33 Micah 5,2. The pre-Vulgate version is not dissimilar to the text here: *nequaquam minima es ut sis in millibus Juda* (Sabatier vol. 2 p. 949).

34 Gen. 17, 5ff.

35 Exodus 4, 23

36 Exodus 20, 25

he would build a church from the uncircumcised.

20. *Sim.* : Prove to me that nobody circumcised Christ.

Th. : Believe, and you will prove to yourself when you begin to consider the fullness of the Gospels. There you will find Matthew the tax-collecting apostle and Zacchaeus the chief tax-collector and you will find many uncircumcised who believed with Jews. For as sacrifices and offerings of bulls and goats and sheep and lambs are mandatorily slaughtered and the younger, that is our people, are placed before the older and the New Testament is placed before the Old, so it is that God has instructed us to celebrate circumcision not of the flesh but of the heart. In Genesis God said to Rebecca:³⁷ *There are two nations in your womb and two peoples from your belly will be divided. One people will conquer the other, and the younger will be served by the older.* In Deuteronomy:³⁸ *In the head you will be nations but in the tail an unbelieving people.* When Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasse, he changed his hand, laying the right on the younger, demonstrating the change of creature. For the New Testament Isaiah says: ³⁹*I will make new things that will rise presently and put rivers in deserts,* that is the Gospels in the church. Jeremiah says:⁴⁰ *The days will come, the Lord said, and I will perfect a New Testament for the house of Israel and the house of Juda, different from the one I gave to your fathers on the days when I brought them out of Egypt.* Listen to what Moses the bearer of the Law said about circumcision:⁴¹ *In the last days God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed to love the Lord your God.* Jeremiah says: *Men of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem, remove novelty from your midst and do not scatter your seed among thorns. Be circumscised for your God and circumcise the foreskin of your heart lest my anger go and forth and scorch and there will be nobody to put out the fire.* And God to Joshua son of Naue: *Make yourselves very sharp stone knives and, in a second foundation, circumcise the sons of Israel.* Was there no iron then ? But God said to our Jesus Christ that he spiritually circumcised hearts through his apostle. Our apostle was called Simon and was later given the name Peter.

21. *Sim.* : You have shown me clear proof through the scriptures, but what might circumcision of the heart be ? Or what is the foreskin to be circumcised from the heart ?

Th. : All libidinous concupiscence is generated from the heart, so the circumcision of the New Testament is of this sort, which Christ the son of God shows, so that we circumcise the sexual

37 Gen. 25, 23

38 Deut. 28, 44

39 Is. 42, 19

40 Jer. 31, 31ff.

41 Deut. 30, 6

appetite, greed, malice, desire, theft, deceit, fornication, and the desire to do others what we do not wish them to do to ourselves. This is the circumcision of Christians, and the first of the saints were endowed with it, to wit Enoch, Noah, Job and Melchisedek, who were circumcised in the heart but not in the flesh. If he had wanted, God could have made Adam circumcised.

22. *Sim.* : I am burning with passionate thoughts that Christ could have sustained such a cursed and scornful passion. If all the things you say are true, that he was nailed to the yoke of the Cross by our fathers. We know of course that the cursed Aman⁴² was deservedly crucified by our fathers because he sought to destroy our people: at his death we give thanks for the things done in the year just gone and celebrate a solemn holiday of prayers handed down to us by our fathers; and we read that Absalom the patricide was hanged on a tree.⁴³ But if Christ sustained the yoke of this death, why has this not been handed down to us by our fathers or why is there no passage in our scriptures that we might rejoice as if he were an enemy of our people.⁴⁴ You will blush to discover, Theophilus, that you are unlikely to prove this statement. Deuteronomy says: ⁴⁵*Everyone who hangs from a tree is cursed.*

Th. : First, accept the reasoning of this statement. Reconsider the reading of Deuteronomy. Moses says:⁴⁶ *If anyone commits a sin to be punished by death, let him be punished by example and hang him from a tree. Everyone who hangs from a tree is cursed.* This is said about the sinner who confesses to a mortal sin. Christ was without sin, as all the prophets testify. He had to suffer so that the scriptures might be fulfilled. Isaiah said:⁴⁷ *Because he did not sin and no deceit was found in him, the Lord handed him over for our sins.* Elsewhere we can show that the prophet said: *Behold, the Word of the Lord became a curse to them, and they did not want it.* And again: *He was sent among the cursed.* Listen to Jeremiah in Lamentations: ⁴⁸*Christ the Lord. under whose shadow we live among nations, was taken into their destruction.* We know that the most holy David, full of years. went to rest in peace and was not subjected to any passion or Cross. Psalm 21: ⁴⁹*They dug out my hands and feet and counted all my bones. They looked at me and examined me. They divided my garments among themselves and gambled for my robe. But you, Lord, do not draw out your help too long, but look to my defence, free my spirit from the sword and my only one from the hand of the dog. Save me from the mouth of the lion and my humility from the horns of the unicorn. I will tell your name to my brothers and*

42 Esther 6ff. for the full account

43 II Sam. 17ff. for the full account

44 For Talmudic accounts of the death of Jesus cf. Bernhard Pick *Jesus in the Talmud* (1913) pp. 39ff.

45 Deut. 21, 23

46 Deut. 21, 22ff.

47 Is. 53, 9ff.

48 Lam. 4, 20

49 Ps. 22, 17ff.

I will praise you in the middle of the assembly. Similarly in Isaiah:⁵⁰ *I stretched out my hands to people who did not believe me but contradicted me, who walked paths that were not good, but went in pursuit of their sins.* Also Jeremiah: *Come, let us put wood in his bread and eradicate his life from earth.* Deuteronomy: *Your life will be hanging before your eyes and you will be afraid day and night and you will not believe your life.* Psalm 118: *Make fast my flesh, key, from fear of you.* Psalm 140: *Let my speech be directed towards your face like incense and let the elevation of my hands be the evening sacrifice.* Zachary: *They looked at me, whom they transfixed.* Psalm 87: *I cried aloud to you, Lord, and extended my hands to you the whole day.* Numbers: *Now like a man God is hung and like the son of man suffers threats.* Song of Songs, on the part of the church: *My brother is white and ruddy and pierced with a lance by the soldiers.* Whiteness clearly demonstrate nothing other than the faith of the people and redness the passion. He came to this at his first arrival to show all humility and ugliness to the point of death on the Cross. And finally in Psalm 21: *I am a worm not a man, the shame of men, rejected by the people. All who looked at me derided me and spoke with their lips and moved their head.* It also says there: *My strength has become as dry as a potsherd and my tongue has stuck to my jaws, and you have led me to dust of death.* Psalm 68: *The Lord will be pleased over the calf producing its new horns and hoofs.* So, tell me, Jew, was David horned? Come now, what does the grape-cluster in Numbers mean, which two of them carried back from the Promised Land on a carrying pole? It is to be understood as Christ on the Cross, coming from the Promised Land, that is from Mary, who was from an earthly family. Two people are illustrated here: the older one, yours, has its back turned to Christ, the younger one is looking at the grape cluster, and this of course is our people.

23. *Sim.* : What do you have say about the pomegranates brought to Moses, along with the grapes?

Th. : Very properly the pomegranates came after the grapes. It is of course a figure of the Church, which has in it people marked by the redness of the blood of Christ.

24. *Sim.* : What do you have to say about the figs, or what arguments will you use in your writings to prove that the fig was not a sin? Adam the firstmade was in transgression when he covered his genitals with the leaves of a fig tree, the lasciviousness and bitterness of sin!

Th. : You understand this to be above that skin, Jew. The fig tree and leaf covering are understood to be a figure of old man. If you wish to consider spiritual man, the inner man, you will find that the fruit of the fig brought from the Promised Land to Moses is spiritual life, as

⁵⁰ Is. 86,2

the life of Hezekiah king of Judaea was increased by the medicinal use of figs. It was enough for God to say:⁵¹ *Fifteen years have been added to your life.* He added: *Accept this old fig medicine, lay it on the body and you will be cured,* and of course when you are broken of the drive of your libido, you will recover. Let us now return to the humility of Christ's advent, about which we were talking. Listen to Isaiah: ⁵²*God, who believes us and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed. We announced his advent. And, as the infant boy has no form or honour, we saw him, and he has no form or beauty. Man is made in suffering and knows how to bear infirmity; and because his face is turned away, he is not appreciated or valued. He has carried our sins and suffers for us. He has been badly treated for our sake and has been led to the slaughter like a sheep and is silent like a lamb before the one shearing him. not opening his mouth. Judgement is passed on him in humility. Who will tell the story of his birth ? His life will be taken away from him and he is led to his death by the crimes of my people. I will not give grudgingly for his burial, for he committed no sin and no guile was found in him. But the Lord handed him over for our sins and he was sent among the unjust.* Similarly, witness of the humility of his first advent: *I put my back to the scourge, my cheeks in my palms. My face I did not avert from the foulness of those spitting, and the Lord heard me.* And Jeremiah says:⁵³ *Like a sheep I was led to the slaughter and did not know.* And because of this lamb Moses in Egypt celebrated the passover and the liberation of his people in the image of Christ, and the people would otherwise not have been freed from servitude and the pressure of the Egyptian king if the lamb had not been killed and the passover celebrated and the doorposts of the houses marked with its blood, so that the angel of destruction would come, see the blood and those in their houses be saved. Thus the sacrament before the foretold coming of Christ was completed. On his first coming Christ was killed to liberate us from the power of the devil and the cult of idols. He is said to have been one year old because, after he had been immersed in the Jordan, he predicted the year and thus suffered, and it is thought that we will be marked on the forehead with his blood so that at the second coming, when the world is destroyed, we can be saved. Testimony of this may be found in Ezekiel, who refers to the two comings:⁵⁴ *Cross the middle of Jerusalem, and you will see a sign on the foreheads of men greiving for and lamenting the iniquities committed on earth.* On the destruction of the world at the second coming: *Go into the city and do not spare the old or the young, and put the women and the children to the sword that they might die. Those on whose foreheads you find a mark, do not touch them, and start with my saints.* This was the mark and the harlot Rahab, who represents the Church, hung scarlet and broom on her window so that when Joshua came to capture

51 Is. 38, 5ff.

52 Is. 53, 1ff.

53 Jer. 11, 19

54 Ez. 9, 5ff

Jericho, he saw Rahab's scarlet and those in her house were saved. And when Christ son of God comes to burn the age in fire, the Church and those in it with a marked forehead will be saved. Thus, Hosea, who was a model of Christ, is ordered to accept a woman of fornication, that is the Church, which Christ received from the fornication of idols. The Lord said:⁵⁵ *Take for yourself a woman of fornication.* This means, he took the Church away from the fornication of idols, for the the fornication of idols is the beginning of servitude.

25. *Sim.* : So the Church is a harlot ?

Th. : How is a harlot to be understood except as one who submits to all comers ? Thus, the Church does not reject anyone seeking faith of all those who come to her. Listen to Jeremiah: ⁵⁶*I let your your mother go and gave her a divorce notice, which I gave her because I let her go.* Another prophet: *You are judged by your mother, because I am not her husband.* This is Christ the righteous son of God, about whom Solomon prophesied on behalf of the Jews: ⁵⁷*Let us surround the righteous one, for he is of no use to us and contrary to our works. He reproaches us with the sins of this law and maligns us with the sins of our teaching. He promises that he has knowledge of God and calls himself the son of God. He has become for us the translator of our thoughts. He is difficult for us to see because his life is unlike that of others and his ways are unchanged. We are considered by him as of little value and he keeps himself from our ways as from uncleanness. He prefers the last things of the righteous and boasts that God is his father and calls himself the son of God. So let us see if his words are true and test what will happen to him and find out what will become of him. If the righteous one really is the son of God, he will take him up and liberate him from the hands of his opponents. We will question him with insults and torture to discover his reverence and test his patience. We will condemn him to a most degraded death. Respect for him will come from his words. These were their thoughts, and they were wrong. They were blinded by their malice and did not know the sacraments of God. Moses said in Deuteronomy:⁵⁸ *You will not kill an innocent and righteous person.* The scriptures testify that he rose from the dead. Psalm 15: *Since you will not leave my soul in hell, you will also not allow your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence.* Also in Psalm 29: *Lord, you have brought my soul out of hell.* In Psalm 3: *I slept and took sleep and arose, for the Lord will protect me me.* Hosea testifies about his resurrection from the dead on the third day: ⁵⁹*He will make us live after two days on the third day.* In Exodus ⁶⁰the Lord*

55 Hosea 1, 2

56 Jer. 3, 8

57 Wisdom 2, 12ff.

58 Exodus 23, 7

59 Hose 2, 2

60 Exodus 19,10ff.

said to Moses: *Come down and bear witness to the people and purify them today and tomorrow. Let them wash my garments and let them be ready on the third day.* For on the third day the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai and Jonah that he might be sent to preach to the Ninevites: he demonstrated a model of Christ by emerging on the third from the belly of whale deep down in the sea. ⁶¹Isaiah said:⁶² *Now I will arise, now I will be made clear, now you will see and now you will blush. The strength of your hope will be vain. You will be consumed by fire.* In Psalm 77: *And the Lord arose like a sleeper from sleep and like a strong man overcome by drunkenness.* The alcohol is to be understood as his passion, for in his passion there was darkness from the 6th to the 9th hour. Night closed day, in the words of Amos: ⁶³*The sun will set at midday and the light of the day will be made dark. I will change your feast days into grief and all your songs into dirges.* Jeremiah:⁶⁴ *The woman giving birth is frightened. Her soul is full of loathing. The sun sets while it is still day. There is confusion and cursing. I will put the rest of them to the sword in the sight of their enemies.* After the resurrection he went up to heaven and sat at the right hand of his father, according to all the scriptures, as it says in Psalm 67: *Make your way to the one who rises above the setting. His name is Lord. They will be confused by the sight of him, the father of the orphans and judge of the widows.* Similarly in Psalm 46: *God ascended in jubilation, and the Lord in the voice of a trumpet.* Psalm 18: *Whether he comes forth from the height of heaven or ascends to the summit of heaven there is no-one who can conceal himself from his heat. The unstained law of God is what converts souls.* Psalm 17: *He turned back the heaven and descended, and there was darkness beneath his feet. He ascended above the Cherubim and flew over the wings of the winds and made the darkness his hiding place. The clouds passed because of his brightness, hail and fire. The Lord thundered in heaven and the Most High gave voice. He sent from on high, took and set me free and snatched me from my powerful enemies and those who hated me.* Isaiah: *Who is this lord who comes from Edom, the redness of vestments from Bosor, so distinguished in dress and violent ?* And the reply on behalf of Christ: *I dispute the judgement and announce the truth.* Psalm 23, as Christ ascends to heaven it is said to the angels at the gates: *Open the gates for your Lord and, eternal gates, raise yourselves, and the king of glory will enter.* And those who did not know that Christ as the Word had been in the womb of the virgin, marvelling that with such dress he was carrying his victorious trophy to heaven, asked: *Who is the king of glory ?* The reply: *He is the lord of virtues, the king of glory.* Psalm 109: *The Lord said to my lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord puts forth the staff of your virtue from Zion and you will dominate your enemies in the midst. In the beginning with you on the day of your*

61 Jonah 2, 1

62 Is. 33, 10ff.

63 Amos 8, 9ff.

64 Jer. 15, 9ff

virtue in the splendour of the saints. I begot you from the womb before Lucifer. The Lord has sworn and will not regret it: You are priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek, the Lord at your right side. Hear now about the clarity of the kingdom of his second coming in Daniel: ⁶⁵I saw at night in a vision. and behold it was like the son of man in the clouds of heaven, he came to the Ancient of Days and he was given the power of king. All the kings of the earth will serve him and his faith will be eternal and unmoveable and his kingdom will not be corrupted. Psalm 92: God reigned and put on beauty. The Lord put on strength and girded himself with virtue. For he confirmed the earth, which will not move. Your seat is prepared. You are from the that age. Psalm 49: God of gods, the Lord spoke and called what is between the rising and setting of the sun earth. The appearance of his beauty is from Zion. God will clearly come, our God, and he will not be silent. Fire will burn before him and there will be a strong storm around him. He will call heaven and earth from above to judge his people. Gather there his saints who arrange his will in sacrifices. The heavens will announce his justice because God is judge. Also in Psalm 44: Gird your sword around your thigh, most powerful one of appearance and beauty. Go forth and hasten and reign for the sake of the truth, gentleness and justice. Psalm 95: Speak among nations. The Lord has reigned from the Cross. Also Isaiah:⁶⁶ A boy is born to us whose dominion has been made over his shoulders. His name will be the angel of great counsel. If you wish to know in detail what the Gospels say, you will find in our John as he was going to the passion of Christ that he carried the Cross on his shoulders.⁶⁷ In the words of Isaiah: Whose dominion has been made on his shoulders. As in Psalm 71: God, give your judgement to the king and your justice to the son of the king. Judge your people in justice and your poor in in judgement. Let the mountains take peace for your people and the hills justice. He will judge the needy and make the sons of the poor safe and humble the backstabber. And he will endure with the sun and before the moon for generations. His justice and abundance of peace will rise in days until the moon is exalted. His dominion will reach from sea to sea and from rivers to the ends of the earth. Before him the Ethiopians will fall, and his enemies will lick the earth and adore him forever and bless him the whole day. The firmament will be on the earth and in the highest mountains. Its fruit will be raised above Lebanon, and they will flourish from the city like the grass of the earth. Let his name be blessed forever. His name will endure before the sun and his seat before the moon. All the tribes of the earth will be blessed in him and all nations will magnify him.

26. *Sim.* : You have shown me, using my scriptures with clear proof, all things prefigured, and I would willingly have believed you, had not deliberation of that⁶⁸ Psalm given me pause for

65 Daniel 7, 13ff.

66 Is. 9, 6

67 John 19, 17

68 Lat. *istius* here refers presumably to the last one quoted.

through. For this Psalm is about Solomon. So the title of it, *Psalm of Solomon*, weakens your contention.

Th. : The envious one, who tricked the firstmade man and deceived your people, through whose envy death came into the world, he clearly occupies the perception of your heart so that you fail to understand what is clear and has been elucidated. Solomon, within certain limits, reigned for forty years from Dan to Beersheba⁶⁹ and afterwards did wrong, as it is says in the third book of Kings: ⁷⁰ *Solomon did wrong and did not walk in the footsteps of his father David and built a lofty shrine for Chamos, the idol of Moab, and their king, the idol of the sons of Ammon, and Astaron, the abominated idol of the Sidonians. The Lord roused Satan against Solomon, Ader the Idumaeen, to destroy him.* The reign of Christ was extended beyond the unknown wastes, about which God said through the prophet:⁷¹ *He will endure with the sun and before the moon for generations and he will dominate from sea to sea and from the river to ends of the earth.* What, he says of Solomon, did I show you earlier of his reign and years ? Christ reigns always and everywhere.

27. Sim. : I see that the enemy of my fathers, the devil who was blinding my heart, is receding from my thoughts. I have begun to want to know that light of truth.

Th. : Believe therefore in such a way that you can come forth with the light from the chains, as Isaiah said of Christ: ⁷²*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because it has anointed me and sent me to announce to the poor. to heal the contrite of heart, to lead forth those bound from their chains and those who sitting in darkness and the shadow of death from their house of prison, to give light to the blind.*

How are the house of prison and men oppressed in chains to be understood other than as men of this age imprisoned in the blindness of ignorance and fettered by the sins of the devil ? As it says in Genesis: *The darkness was upon the abyss and God said: Let there be light.* Men were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, but the darkness receded when the light came.

28. Sim : You have made clear to me things that were hidden and unheard, but I still feel a certain diffidence, namely, that your religious observance of all things is scrupulous, except in your neglect of the Sabbath which God ordered should be respected and kept. You also take food and wine like Gentiles: God gave special instructions about which parts of animals and fish were to be eaten and which parts were to be avoided and which, as carrion, were not to be touched. Unless this is proved to me by the scriptures, my belief remains insecure.

69 Meaning from north to south

70 I Kings 11, 6

71 Ps. 72, 5ff

72 Is. 61, 1

Th. : I said to you earlier that the devil envies you because of course you are the son of your fathers, who were supported by so many benefits and were liberated from Egypt, when they exchanged the walls for the waters of the sea. In the desert they were supplied with ample meals, where there was no shortage of celestial manna. Forgetfully, they transgressed, worshipping profane gods and anointing them and daring to pray to them. Deservedly, God through Jeremiah, berates and rebukes your people: ⁷³*If the Ethiopian changes his colour and the leopard his spots, you too can change your teaching.* The unlucky sabbath, that is the traditional imaginary rest of the seventh day, firstly because Joshua son of Naue, in his attack on Jericho, went around the walls for seven days, carrying weapons of war and the ark of the covenant, and on the seventh day they did it seven times. The plain truth is either that they started on the Sabbath or it was on the Sabbath that the walls of Jericho fell. It was also reported in Maccabees that their greatest victory over their enemies was on the Sabbath and that they took their revenge on their adversaries with their swords on the Sabbath. There is also the passage in Isaiah that God rejected the human Sabbath: ⁷⁴*Fasting and your feast days and your Sabbaths are repellent to my soul. I am tired of you and I will not dismiss your sins.* God wants the Sabbath to be a day when you ought to rest from your importunate labours, so that in the seven thousandth year, understood as the Sabbath of Sabbaths, you will be found clean of wicked work. These will be the gentle Sabbaths sacred to God, in which God delights. The food that you reject you will have to eat. It is not the meat of pigs but the deeds of pigs that will be forbidden to you. Similarly, you will mix water with mud, take your sister in marriage, join blood with blood, examine the earth thoroughly with pillage, make public your festal matters, pray in the streets. This is how you sin and you do not understand of yourself that it is written in Psalm 16: *They are filled to excess with pork and have left the remains to their little ones.* This is your sin for your descendants. You eat from fish whose skin is covered in scales. Other fish, which you pretend to avoid, are extracted in nets and mixed with many fish and you eat them with a sauce as a delicacy after they have been inwardly sucked out. The wine of the Christians, show me the passages in the scriptures where you interpret it as prohibited, and you will be able to convince me properly. I will show you passages where Jewish wine is prohibited, and we are forbidden to consume your unfermented grapes.⁷⁵ Hear Isaiah: *Your hands are full of blood, wash and be clean.* Psalm 13: *Their feet are swift to shed blood. Contrition and unhappiness are the ways they know and they do not know the way of peace.* What feet ! And with what hands they make wine and

⁷³ Jer. 13, 23

⁷⁴ Is. 1, 13ff.

⁷⁵ *azymus* is an adj. and I can only guess that the missing noun here is something like *uvas*. I am not entirely confident that I have understood the sections of this speech dealing with food restrictions.

unfermented grapes ! In Deuteronomy we find:⁷⁶ *Concerning the vine, it is of the wines of Sodom and the propagataion is in Gomorrah. Their grape is the grape of gall and the cluster of bitterness is in them. Their wine is snake madness, and this is incurable. Is this not gathered with me and sealed in my treasure chests ?* If you are unable to believe so much evidence of such weight, Simon, you are putting your salvation in jeopardy. Read Daniel,⁷⁷ and you will find Nebuchadnezzar saying: *Did we not put three men in the furnace ? Now I can see four and the fourth looks like the son of God.* So, Jew, what do say ? Nebuchadnezzar a barbarian recognized the son of God, whom you have been slow to find. Have a care that the invective of Habbakuk is not fulfilled in you:⁷⁸ *See, scorners, and look carefully and be amazed, for I will do something in our time which you will not believe if anyone tells you.*

29. *Sim.* : Bringer of salvation, Theophilus, beneficent doctor of the sick, I have no more to say. Order my instruction in the faith and bless me with the sign of the Cross. I think I will accept absolution for my sins by the laying on of hands.

Th. : No less than benediction. As Isaac blessed Jacob, he received blessing through the hands so that the greater came from the smaller. And as Ephrem and Manasse increased in size with the laying on of hands.

30. Theophilus then soaked Simon the Jew and the latter acquired faith. Simon then began to give thanks: ' I thank you, Jesus. I have never seen you, but now I believe in you. I thank you, Jesus. I have never heard you, but now I hear. I call upon you, Jesus, of whom until now I have had no sense, but now wish that my sense is in you, the sense through which I made the acquaintance of Theophilus your disciple. Lord Jesus, if I am worthy of faith, strengthen me in my recognition of you. You show the way to the erring, you recall the lost, you raise the dead and confirm the unfaithful in your faith and illuminate the eyes of the blind. You are the sacred tabernacle that was with our fathers in the desert. You are the candelabrum of light, the altar and showbread,⁷⁹ the altar and willing victim. You, Lord, are life, a pearl, a crystal, a great plough. I pray you, Lord, not to remember my ignorance and my lack of belief. For you are where all benefits are. You are the one who saw fit to give me everything. May honour and power be yours for all ages of man and forever.'

76 Deut. 32, 32ff.

77 Dan. 3, 24ff.

78 Habb. 1, 5

79 *panis propositionis* cf. Matth. 12, 4