CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The past half-century has been witness to an abundance of scholarship on the relations between Jews and pagans in the Second Temple and rabbinic eras.[1] Yet, within this expanding literature, surprisingly little attention has been paid to how Jews *viewed the religion* of their pagan neighbors.[2] What

[1] Though the description "pagan" has been, and continues to be, widespread in the literature on ancient Judaism – and, indeed, in scholarship on Greco-Roman antiquity more broadly – the term has come under some criticism for its perceived negative connotations, as well as for the fact that few in the ancient world would have categorized or understood themselves in the manner suggested by the term. The validity of these objections notwithstanding, it is hard, as Alan Cameron points out, to find a preferable substitute with which to designate these historical groups. See Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25–32. As such, we too will continue to employ the term, though always with due caution, and only in the limited sense of "those in antiquity who were neither Israelites/Jews nor Christians." For recent works in the study of ancient Judaism that also make prominent use of this designation, see, for example, Katell Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals: Pagan Rome's Challenge to Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021) and Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[2] Much of the existing research on Jews and pagans in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods has concentrated instead on three primary areas: intergroup boundaries and the construction of Jewish identity; the identification of Greco-Roman historical realia in Jewish texts; and the influence of Greco-Roman culture upon Jewish thought at large. For literature on the construction of identity, see, for example: Gary Porton, *Goyim: Gentiles and Israelites in Mishnah-Tosefta* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Sacha Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Catherine E. Bonesho, "Foreign Holidays and Festivals as Representative of Identity in Rabbinic Literature" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018); and Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Multiple Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For the identification of Greco-Roman (and other non-Jewish) historical realia in ancient Jewish sources, see Emmanuel Friedheim, *Rabbinisme et Paganisme en Palestine Romaine*

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did Jews think about the forms of non-Jewish worship that they saw all around them?

Those few scholars who have taken an interest in such Jewish perspectives on pagan religion have generally restricted their focus to the normative element of Jewish views. Their research, that is, has studied how Jews in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods attacked, hated, mocked, or even tolerated forms of devotion that were alien to them. Characteristic analyses in this normative mode of inquiry have asked whether pagan worship was, from a Jewish perspective, "a legitimate ancestral way of life" for gentiles, or whether in fact it was "always wrong for everyone?"[3] They have observed that "literature regarding the cult of the sun reveals that Palestinian rabbis presented this rite as a contemporaneous phenomenon that must be fought because of its despicable nature."[4] They have posited that Jews chose either "accommodationist" or "rejectionist" approaches to gentile religion.[5] And they have noted how "in post-biblical antiquity, core Jewish responses came in two basic varieties, which were by no means mutually exclusive. One was to regard other religions as simply erroneous, beneath contempt; the other was to think that they were nevertheless good enough for the gentiles."[6]

(Leiden: Brill, 2006); Mireille Hadas-Lebel, "Le paganisme à travers les sources rabbiniques des IIe et IIIe siècles. Contribution à l'étude du syncrétisme dans l'empire romain," in Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II (New York: de Gruyter, 1979); and Rivka Ulmer, "The Egyptian Gods in Midrashic Texts," *The Harvard Theological Review* 103:2 (2010), 181–204. For the influence of Greco-Roman culture on Jewish thought at large, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* vol. 1 trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); and Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). The literature on these areas, and in particular on the latter two, is extensive.

[3] Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not: Ancient Jewish Attitudes toward Other Religions* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1–2, and throughout.

[4] Emmanuel Friedheim, "Sol Invictus in the Severus Synagogue at Hammath Tiberias, the Rabbis, and Jewish Society: A Different Approach," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 12:1 (2009), 89–128, 107. The normative focus of Friedheim's article on Sol Invictus is ultimately directed toward a historical end – in this case, the contention that solar images in Roman Palestine were not neutrally decorative, but rather possessed potent pagan theological significance. See Friedheim, "Sol Invictus," 90–94 and 106.

[5] Paula Fredriksen and Oded Irshai, "Include Me Out: Tertullian, The Rabbis, and the Graeco-Roman City," in Katell Berthelot et al. eds. *L'identité à travers l'éthique: Nouvelles perspectives sur la formation des identités collectives dans le monde gréco-romain* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 119.

[6] Seth Schwartz, "Review: Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not*," *Hebrew Studies* 40 (1999), 282–84, 282–83. For other discussions with a similar focus on the

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Such investigations into the normative element of Jewish views are, of course, entirely valid; Jewish views of other worship were rarely without a judgmental valence. Yet inquiry into the normative becomes problematic when it obscures or precludes investigation into the descriptive element of how Jews viewed other worship in antiquity. Rather than asking only how Jews judged and attacked foreign worship, we must take the further step of asking how they conceptualized and imagined it.

For Jews in antiquity, gentiles were not indistinguishable, nor were their forms of worship simply a featureless black box to be attacked.[7] Jews saw, considered, and intellectually categorized gentile worship and, more

normative, see also Alan Brill, *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Yehezkel Cohen, "The Attitude to the Gentile in the Halacha and in Reality in the Tannaitic Period" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1975); Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, trans. Robert Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 24–29; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38–59, 109–28; Maurice Gilbert, *La Critique des dieux dans le Livre de la Sagesse* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 94; Geert Roskam, "Philo of Alexandria on the Twelve Olympian Gods," *Classical World* 112:3 (2019), 169–92; and Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 351–52, 374–75. Consider also the essay collection Graham Stanton and Guy Stroumsa eds. *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). We might also note here Sacha Stern's discussion of the ways in which the rabbis constructed gentile libations, the primary conclusion of which is that "the myth of compulsive libation" by gentiles "was, in other words, a powerful way of demeaning and demonizing *avodah zarah*" and "a ploy to differentiate it from similar Jewish practices." See Sacha Stern, "Compulsive Libationers: Non-Jews and Wine in Early Rabbinic Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 64 (2013), 19–44, 41. Though see Stern, "Compulsive," 43–44 for a less normative and indeed more captivating take. Apposite are the words of William James who, speaking in 1902, declared that only "of late, impartial classifications and comparisons have become possible, alongside of the denunciations and anathemas by which the commerce between creeds used exclusively to be carried on." See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), 374. The viewing of one religion by another in premodern times was, for James, "exclusively" an exercise in "denunciation." Compare also Judah Bergmann's statement that "in der religiösen Polemik wird man selten Sachlichkeit und Unbefangenheit in der Beurteilung des Gegners finden. Der Wille, den Gegner zu verstehen, das Vermögen, in seine religiöse Gedanken und Empfindungswelt sich zu versetzen, fehlt in der religiösen Polemik gerade bei denen, die überzeugte und begeisterte Anhänger der eigenen Religion sind." See Judah Bergmann, *Jüdische Apologetik im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1908), 30.

[7] On rabbinic (and biblical) differentiation and nondifferentiation among gentiles, see Christine Hayes, "The Complicated Goy in Classical Rabbinic Sources," in Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Wolfgang Grünstäudl, and Matthew Thiessen eds. *Perceiving the Other in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

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important, projected their own ideas onto it.[8] Even when Jews judged and decried those forms of worship that they saw as transgressive, their polemics of necessity assumed a descriptive account of the worship being criticized – of its organization, of its values, and of the ways in which it created meaning for its participants.

A movement away from the normative toward analysis of the descriptive or conceptual might facilitate an entirely new set of topics for investigation. We might ask, for example, whether Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity ascribed to other ethnic groups their own alternative scriptures or sacred traditions, perhaps even imagining the ways in which these other groups interpreted such material; we might ask how Jewish authors pictured the workings of "idolatrous" rituals, prayers, and sacrifices; or we might ask whether the metaphors in which Jews described (or even attacked) foreign worship changed over time, and what this might tell us about shifts in their understanding not only of foreign worship, but of their own.[9]

Our account, however, will seek to answer only one such descriptive or conceptual question – a question, we will ultimately contend, with critical historical implications: How did ancient Israelites and their Jewish successors imagine the *subjectivity* of the worshipers of other gods and the

[8] See, for example, Jenny Labendz, *Socratic Torah: Non-Jews in Rabbinic Intellectual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), where Labendz notes that the rabbis "included within their epistemological repertoire (what they imagined to be) the assumptions and truth standards of outsiders." Labendz, *Socratic Torah*, 18, and cf. 95–96 where this notion is expanded to the Letter of Aristeas. See also Christine Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in b. Sanhedrin 90b–91a," in Hayim Lapin ed. *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 254.

[9] It is occasionally possible, though only with difficulty, to find examples of secondary literature that does engage in this kind of descriptive investigation of Jewish views of other religions in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. The clearest example is probably Gerard Mussies, "The Interpretatio Judaica of Sarapis," in M. J. Vermaseren ed. *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), in which Mussies analyzes Jewish (and patristic) biblicizing rearticulations of the god Sarapis. Katell Berthelot's "Regards juifs alexandrins sur les religions," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 234:4 (2017), 635–60 on foreign religion in the works of Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon, and especially the euhemerist views therein, also contains much investigation of the conceptual, and Berthelot even suggests there in nuce a similar distinction between the normative and the descriptive. See Berthelot, "Regards," 636–37. So too, something akin to this division seems to appear in the opening pages of Wolfson's classic treatment of Philo. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 9–17. Such exceptions, however, are few and far between in the scholarship on Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism.

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devotees of their icons? How, that is, did they picture the *mindset* of those engaged in such activity?[10]

In answering this question, we shall argue that a fundamental change took place in the portrayal of pagan worship between two major eras in ancient Israelite/Jewish literature. In texts composed up to the third century BCE, the worship of other gods and the reverence of their icons was consistently depicted as sincere, and its appeal, whether to Israelites or non-Israelites, was, as a rule, not questioned. At some point around roughly the end of the third century BCE, however, we first begin to encounter, in addition to the earlier assumption of sincerity, a new argument, one that will persist into the *tannaitic* era and beyond: that the worship of other gods and the reverence of their icons is, in fact, an entirely unattractive practice, and that even those engaged in it must inwardly reject it. This novel outlook, which we shall term the "Bad Faith Argument," thus represented a momentous shift in the portrayal of worship seen as foreign or transgressive.

To put these two periods and their literatures into somewhat more concrete terms, the texts produced in the earlier era, up through the end of the Persian Period and into the third century BCE, are largely equivalent to the material found in the Hebrew Bible.[11] Three significant caveats,

[10] It is perhaps worth noting the presence of the overlapping terms "prescriptive" and "descriptive" within the essay collection *Religions View Religions: Explorations in Pursuit of Understanding*, eds. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), and in particular within Jerald D. Gort's "General Introduction" to the volume. These terms, however, express entirely different concepts in that volume than within our own account. As Gort defines them, the "descriptive" is the analysis of "how have the religions *judged* or how do they presently assess other religions." The "prescriptive," by contrast, asks "what is the *proper* attitude of a religion toward other religions." See Gort, "General Introduction," 6–7. Some emphasis added. For Gort, then, both terms are concerned with the ways in which religions judge each other. They are, however, distinguished by virtue of the scholar's own approach to that judgment. Scholars operate in what Gort defines as the "descriptive" mode when they analyze the ways in which religions judge each other; by contrast, they operate within the "prescriptive" mode when they suggest how religions *ought to judge* each other (namely, less than they have historically). From a purely academic perspective, however, Gort's latter question of how religions *ought to judge* each other is not strictly relevant. Meanwhile, the question that Gort defines as "descriptive" – how religions, in fact, do judge each other – is that very area of inquiry which we have labeled analysis of the "prescriptive" or "normative." The sort of "descriptive" analysis that we advocate in this monograph – focused not on how religions judge each other but rather on how they imagine and construct each other – is not present in Gort's proposed approach.

[11] As Lester Grabbe notes, already "by the close of the Persian period [i.e. approximately 332 BCE], a great deal of what later became known as the Bible or 'scripture' had taken shape." See Lester Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*

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however, are necessary to nuance this historical assessment. First, a small selection of the material that would eventually form the Hebrew Bible was composed after the end of this first historical period. This late biblical material, stretching in some cases even into the middle of the second century BCE, includes, for example, much of the Book of Daniel, as well as certain redactional layers within a number of other biblical texts.[12] Second, the precise wording of the texts written in this earlier period was, in many cases, relatively fluid up through the end of antiquity and beyond, with different versions circulating widely. In most cases, the variations between these texts were relatively minor and involved only subtleties of phraseology, but in some cases they could be quite significant indeed.[13] A certain amount of caution, then, must be exercised in

vol. 2 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 245. At the same time, however, significant amounts of editing and revision continued into the third century BCE. As Karel van der Toorn observes: "From various references to Greece in the prophetic corpus it is clear that the publication of the Prophets cannot have preceded the Hellenistic era. A rough estimate puts the edition [of the Prophets] somewhere between 300 and 200 BCE." See Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 255, and cf. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 247. So too, works like Chronicles were likely still in the process of composition into the early Hellenistic age. Sara Japhet notes that "the most common view" places "the book's composition some time in the fourth century BCE or towards its end," and Japhet herself proposes a time frame as late as "the end of the Persian or, more probably, the beginning of the Hellenistic period, at the end of the fourth century BCE." See Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 24 and 28, as well as her larger discussion there. For further literature on the history and dating of the biblical texts, as well as the processes involved in their composition, see, for example, David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, throughout; William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and T. C. Vriezen and A. S. van der Woude, *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Literature*, trans. Brian Doyle (Leiden: Brill, 2005), especially 3–500.

[12] Wills observes on this point that "Daniel 7–12 (or at least 8–12), the latest part of the Jewish Bible, was likely written in the middle of the Maccabean Revolt, about 165 BCE, and some of the Apocrypha may have been composed before that: Tobit, the original version of Ben Sira, and parts of 1 Enoch." See Lawrence M. Wills, *Introduction to the Apocrypha: Jewish Books in Christian Bibles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 11. So too Alan Cooper, for his part, notes that "during the same period in which the Book of Psalms was stabilized, the first 'post-biblical' interpretations of psalms were [already] being authored," such that "'post-biblical' literature was being written while biblical books were still being composed." See Alan Cooper, "Biblical Studies and Jewish Studies," 24 in Martin Goodman ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also the discussion of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah in the notes to Chapter 7.

[13] See the classic treatment of the issue in Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), especially 283–326, as well as Eugene Ulrich,

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speaking, in this period, of the texts that would go on to comprise the Hebrew Bible, when the precise forms of these texts were not yet entirely stable. Most important, third, the notion of a "Bible," a clearly defined canon that separates authoritative and nonauthoritative works, was not in evidence until after this earlier period (though the Pentateuch – and perhaps even some of the prophetic works – seems to have begun to play such a role already by the end of it).[14] Thus, though the literature from our first period is largely equivalent to those books that would go on to form the biblical corpus, it must be understood that such works were not yet canonized and delineated into anything as fixed as the "Hebrew Bible." For our purposes, in other words, what unites these works into one category of analysis is not canonicity but chronology.

Our second period, meanwhile, commences around roughly the end of the third century BCE. At this point, midway through the Second Temple era, we begin to encounter a new flourishing of Jewish literature, responding to a very different set of cultural and intellectual circumstances. These later texts, including the "apocrypha," Jubilees, the writings of the Qumran

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible (Leiden: Brill, 2015). Cf. also Carr, who notes that "the Hebrew Bible as we have it, even just the consonantal text, is – at the earliest – a product of the Hellenistic (and Roman) periods," and that "the clearer we become on the fluid character of the transmission of many ancient texts . . . the more difficult it becomes to insist on an early date of biblical texts – centuries before the Hellenistic period – at least in something like their present form." Carr, *Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 7. My phrasing on the significance of textual variation in the Hebrew Bible is influenced by Bart Ehrman's discussion of New Testament text criticism. See, for example, Bart D. Ehrman, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3.

[14] Collins notes: "It is now generally acknowledged that the canon of Jewish scriptures as we know it did not take shape until the late first century CE, at the earliest." See John J. Collins, *The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 82, and cf. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* vol. 2, 245, as well as G. W. E. Nickelsburg and Robert A. Kraft, "Introduction: The Modern State of Early Judaism," 16–18 in Robert A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg eds. *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), and Timothy H. Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). The growing awareness of the complex (and, indeed, late) development of the canon has led to a number of attempts to rethink the role played by sacred literature and textual authority in ancient Judaism. On this, see, for example, Hindy Najman, "The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the 'Canon,'" *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 43 (2012), 497–518 and Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). In contrast to the late consolidation of the canon overall, the Pentateuch in particular seems to have attained a pride of place already at a relatively early date: "The Torah, however, was regarded as authoritative from the Persian period onward." See Collins, *Invention of Judaism*, 82, and cf. the discussion of this topic and its implications for our subject in Chapter 7.

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community, Philo, Josephus, and even parts of the New Testament not only emerged after the material appearing in the Hebrew Bible (or, at least, after the vast majority of it) but were profoundly influenced by it; indeed, the intense and dedicated engagement with such earlier, "biblical" material is one of the most prominent characteristics of the age. It is here, in works like the Epistle of Jeremiah and Bel and the Dragon, that we will encounter our earliest examples of the Bad Faith portrayal of non-Jewish devotional practice – a portrayal that we will document up through the end of the Second Temple Period and within *tannaitic* literature as well.[15]

Such an assessment of this later era and its writings, however, demands a set of caveats similar to those that our earlier literature required. First, as we noted previously, a small amount of the material produced in this later period – that is, beginning from approximately the late third century BCE – would ultimately be included in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. A book like Daniel, then, while part of the Hebrew Bible as canonically defined, is in fact "mid Second Temple" literature for the purposes of our historical periodization here.[16] Second, while Jewish authors writing in this

[15] The analysis of roughly the third century BCE to the third century CE as a distinct period in Jewish history is widespread in scholarship on ancient Judaism. The terminology that has been applied to this era, however, has been the subject of great variation. See, out of many possible examples, James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), vii–xii, who labels the era "early Judaism" and locates it from 250 BCE to 200 CE, as well as Nickelsburg and Kraft, "Introduction," 1–2, who assign the same name to the period from approximately the end of the Persian era (i.e. around the late fourth century BCE) to the middle of the second century CE. And cf. also the discussion of "Middle Judaism" in Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 BCE to 200 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). Perhaps the most frequent designation for this era, however, is, simply, the "Second Temple period." Indeed, as Collins notes, "the distinction between 'Bible' and 'Second Temple' remains commonplace, and Second Temple literature is commonly taken to refer to the literature between the Bible and the Mishnah." See John J. Collins, "The Literature of the Second Temple Period," in Martin Goodman ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53, and see Collins' larger discussion there (including his hesitations about the terminology). The designation "Second Temple," in other words, is frequently used to indicate roughly the same time frame as labels like "early" or "middle" Judaism. As Boccaccini points out, however, such a usage of the term is, in fact, quite "chronologically imprecise," as "the age of the Second Temple actually began three centuries before the terminus post quem of the third century BCE" See Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 21. Without additional specification, in other words, the "Second Temple period" should, strictly speaking, extend to include Jewish literature originating already in the Persian era, perhaps as far back as the late sixth century BCE.

[16] As Collins notes, "it is important to bear in mind that some of the later books of the Bible share a common literary context with this [other 'non-biblical'] literature, and that the

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later period generally conceived of themselves as standing in relation to some preexisting, authoritative set of texts, what those texts were – and in what way, precisely, they were "authoritative" – differed widely between them. As much as these authors, then, were defined in many ways by their relationship to such earlier literature, their understanding of that relationship was far from uniform. And, third, as is so often the case in historical analysis, it is quite difficult cleanly to separate the end of our first period from the beginning of our second. Indeed, the perennial challenges of historical periodization are compounded, in our case, by the relative lack of sources for Jews and Judaism in the early Hellenistic age – that is, in precisely the period between our two eras.[17] As such, rather than attempting to assign any exact date to this shift in rhetoric, we should instead think of the third century BCE as a whole as a period of transition between two broader eras in the portrayal of the Other.[18]

Before proceeding to the substance of our argument itself, allow me to offer one last methodological note. Thematic studies of ancient Judaism – those aimed, that is, at the elucidation of any one topic in

canon has in some cases created artificial distinctions within the literary genres of the Second Temple period." Collins, "The Literature of the Second Temple Period," 53–54.

[17] As Hengel observes of the years 333 to 175 BCE, "we only have very fragmentary and sporadic information about the Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora during this period." See Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 51, and cf. the even more chronologically capacious assessment in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Judaism: The First Phase* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 162 and 205.

[18] Of those sources that do survive from this period, the most important likely include parts of 1 Enoch, possibly the Book of Ecclesiastes, and perhaps elements of late biblical books like Ezra-Nehemiah. One might reasonably assign these works to either our earlier period or to our later one, or perhaps to the transition between them; they do not, in any case, present instances of the Bad Faith Argument. (See e.g. 1 En 19:1 and 80:7, in which transgressive worship is evidently portrayed as sincere – though, in the former case at least, it is ultimately the result of supernatural manipulation.) On the relevant portions of 1 Enoch – in particular, the so-called Book of the Watchers and the Book of the Luminaries – see G. W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 3 and 6, and cf. Wills, *Introduction to the Apocrypha*, 180–85. On scholarly attempts to date Ecclesiastes, see the discussions in R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 196–201 and Michael V. Fox, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ecclesiastes* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), x–xiv. On the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah, see the discussion in Chapter 7. Though the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch, it may be worth noting, also has its origins in this intermediate period, and though it does, on occasion, reflect certain distinct ideological tendencies, as a (relatively) strict rendering it is perhaps not of great importance for our purposes. For some of the more pronounced intellectual inclinations of the Greek translation, see Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians*, 95–96.

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classical Jewish thought – necessarily rely on the analysis of a diverse array of sources that touch upon and inform that issue. Often, these sources derive from authors who were widely separated in time and space and held divergent perspectives on key subjects. Naturally, then, the primary challenge faced by any such investigation is the risk of overlooking the distinct contexts of these works and the varied goals of their creators. The reward of such a project, however, is the opportunity to trace ideas and their evolution not merely within one text – or even one milieu – but throughout the ancient Jewish world more broadly.

For many scholars, the intellectual potential of such an approach has proven well worth its challenges. Recent decades have seen thematic monographs on the development of a wide variety of concepts in ancient Jewish thought, including priesthood, the authority of the law, impurity, sin, repentance, and the idea of "the gentile," among others.[19] In a number of these works, the reception and transformation of a biblical conception in the literature of the mid to late Second Temple and rabbinic periods is a subject of primary importance. Following in the footsteps of such analyses, then, this monograph too will attempt to focus on one topic or theme and trace the ways in which it morphs and transforms across a diverse array of Israelite/ancient Jewish texts.

Corresponding to this synthetic, thematic approach, the sources that we will consider from our earlier era, up into the third century BCE, represent, for their part, a wide variety of the major historical contexts reflected within the biblical corpus. Indeed, in investigating the depiction of transgressive worship in the Hebrew Bible, we will encounter texts that likely originated in the Northern Kingdom, texts from the Southern Kingdom with strong

[19] For existing works of scholarship that also investigate a theme or concept across a wide array of ancient Jewish texts – often separated from each other by several centuries, as well as by the language and location of composition – see, for example, Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), as well as her *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law: Early Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical: Judaism, Christianity, and the Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Naphtali Meshel, *The "Grammar" of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings with a "Grammar" of Σ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Ophir and Rosen-Zvi, *Goy*, as well as the methodological discussions in a number of these works.

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northern influence, texts written in Babylon during and after the exile, and texts from the Persian Period and perhaps even the early Hellenistic era. Beyond their chronological and geographical diversity, these sources will cross genres as well, embracing everything from legal literature to polemical poetry to narrative, and much else besides. Our discussion, as such, will show the assumption of sincerity in transgressive worship to be, rather than a function of any particular biblical author or context, a consistent feature of Israelite thinking well into the Second Temple era.

Within the literature of our later period, meanwhile, the diversity of our sources will be even greater. Here, we will meet with texts ranging from the "rewritten Bible" of the Land of Israel in the second century BCE, to the Greek philosophical commentaries of Philo of Alexandria in the first century CE, to the *tannaitic* midrashic collections compiled in the Land of Israel in the third century CE, and even to the murals of Dura Europos in Syria at around the same time. In all of these sources, however, we will encounter the same accusation: that of feigned piety.

The depictions of non-Jewish worship in any one of these contexts could, on their own, be the object of fruitful scholarly enquiry. And indeed, throughout our investigation we will seek to remain attuned to the distinct backgrounds and unique provenances of our many sources. In our concluding chapter, furthermore, we will deliberate in depth on the impact of these varying contexts both upon particular instances of the Bad Faith Argument, as well as on our overall thesis of a shift in Jewish portrayals of the Other. As we shall see in the course of our study, however, it is not the differences between these sources and the varieties of their contexts that will ultimately prove most significant, but rather the overarching trends of perception that they reflect: namely, the increasing tendency away from an assumption of the sincerity of transgressive worship and toward its dismissal as just so much pretense.

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