ANTI-JEWISH POLEMIC AND EARLY ISLAM

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During the late sixth to early eighth centuries several anti-Jewish polemical texts appeared in Greek. These were written by Chalcedonian Christians, probably from Syria. Recent research points out that some of these texts demonstrate an awareness of Arabs and Islam and are directed in part at this new challenge posed to Christians.¹

Four texts in particular can be plausibly dated to the middle third of the seventh century and thus provide contemporary evidence for the extent to which the religion of the Arabs had formed at that early date. The *Doctrina Jacobi* and the *Trophies of Damascus* purport to record dialogues between Christians and Jews.² The *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Judaeos* and parts of *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* of pseudo-Athanasius are collections of arguments against the Jews that would have served as preparatory tools for such dialogues.³

The author of both texts was probably Anastasius of Sinai, known from many other writings, and active in Egypt and Syria during the period 640-700.⁴

³ *Disputatio Anastasii*, *PG* LXXXIX, cols 1203-72. *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, *PG* XXVIII, cols 598-708, is largely though not entirely a work of anti-Jewish polemic. Déroche, ‘La polémique anti-judaïque au VIe et au VIIe siècle’, pp. 279, 283, 288-90, argues that Christian-Jewish debates took place even though the debates recorded in polemical literature records may be fictitious.
⁴ The attribution of *Disputatia* to Anastasius of Sinai is viewed favourably by W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 226-7, because a seventh-century compilation date can be proved and Anastasius’ *Hodegos* records that he wrote an anti-Jewish treatise. Attribution to Anastasius of Sinai of the pseudo-Athanasian *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* is discussed in J. Haldon, ‘The works of An-
Christian anti-Jewish polemic aims to show that Jesus Christ is the Messiah whom the Jews expect, and that his coming marks the superseding of the Jewish nation (together with its covenant, law, and rituals) by the Christian Church. The polemic is based on the argument that Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, an argument that runs throughout the New Testament. But anti-Jewish polemic only assumed a distinct literary form with the gaining of historical perspective. The prototype and exemplar is Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 150), which assembles many Old Testament prophecies and demonstrates their fulfillment in Christ and the early Church.5

The seventh-century texts discussed below follow this tradition of arguing from biblical prophecy. They appear simply to be anti-Jewish texts, for none of them mentions the Arabs or Islam by name. However, they arise in the east Mediterranean region, probably in Syria, during and shortly after the early Arab conquests. Hence, it is not surprising that they contain indirect references to the Astasius of Sinai: a key source for the history of seventh-century East Mediterranean society and belief, in A. Cameron, L. Conrad, and G. King, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Princeton NJ, 1992, vol. I, [pp. 107-47] pp. 109-10. The *Quaestiones* forms part of a complex network of literary influence and textual dependence. It lies in a tradition of Christian question-and-answer collections going back to the third century, and it is closely related to the *Quaestiones et responsiones* of Anastasius of Sinai, ibid., pp. 116, 120-2. *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* is also closely related to the *Disputatio* and to dialogues 3 and 4 of *Trophies of Damascus*. Finally, dialogues 1 and 2 of *Trophies* and parts of the *Disputatio* and *Quaestiones* are also closely related to another anti-Jewish text, the *Dialogue of Paphius and Philo*, ed. A.C. McGiffert, *Dialogue between a Christian and a Jew*, Marburg, 1889, which probably appeared earlier (Déroche, ‘La polémique anti-judaïque au VIe et au VIIe siècle’, p. 282; Cameron, ‘Byzantines and Jews’, p. 260). The *Disputatio Gregentii cum Herbano Iudaeo* (*PG LXXXVI*, cols 621-784) also derives from the same Greek-speaking Syro-Chalcedonian milieu. Estimates of its date range from the late sixth to the early eighth century; Déroche, ‘Polémique anti-judaïque et émergence de l’islam’, pp. 147-56.

5 Ibid., p. 284. See also Bardy, *Trophies of Damascus*, pp. 171-85 (the leading Old Testament prophecies used in the *Dialogue with Trypho* and later texts are the Suffering Servant passages in Is 53 and the Seven Weeks prophecy in Dan 9, but there are many others, including: Gen 1.26, 31; 3.22; 15.6; 18.2; 21.12; 49.10; Deut 21.23; 32.20; Ps 2.2, 4-6; 8.2-8; 11.1-2; 16.10; 18.9-11; 50; 22.17-19; 28.3; 35.11-12; 37.14; 41.9; 44.7-8; 46.1-9; 49.3; 53.4-5; 68.3; 72.1, 6-9; 17; 86.9; 87.5; 88.6-8; 95.8-11; 98.3; 104.4; 106.21; 110.1-7; 117.1; 118.26-7; Prov 8.25; Is 2.3; 3.9-10; 6.9-10; 7.14-16; 8.18; 9.1, 5-6; 11.1-5; 27.11; 28.16; 35.4-5; 50.6; 52.14-15; 57.1; 59.20; 65.1; Jer 4.4; 9.25; 31.31-3; 32.9; Baruch 3.36-8; Dan 7.9-14; Hos 2.25; 6.1-3; Joel 2.10; Amos 8.9; Micah 5.1; Hab, 3.3; Zach 9.9; 11.12-13; 12.10; 14.4-8; Malachi 1.2, 11).