Study of the Aramaic Targumim continues to excite scholarly interest. Indeed, an international project to translate the whole Targum into English is already under way; and some sections of it, including the present writer's translation of *Targum Jeremiah*, with a critical introduction and commentary, are already completed.\(^1\) The Targum, as a Jewish institution closely associated with the synagogue, has an importance and value in its own right, which have often been studied.\(^2\) Its use in the liturgy ensured that its interpretations of the Scriptures were widely known, and recent studies have drawn attention both to the antiquity of some of these traditions, and to their possible influence on the writers of the New Testament.\(^3\)

Recent scholarship, however, has devoted rather less attention to the relationship between the Aramaic Targumim and the writings of the Church Fathers, although it seems probable that such a relationship existed.\(^4\) St Jerome’s commentary on Jeremiah, for example, indicates his knowledge not only of a wide range of Jewish traditions, but also of exegesis which survives today solely in the Aramaic Targum.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) It will be published later this year by Michael Glazier.


\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 103–108; 109–111.
This commentary, which occupied him from AD 415 to 420, was never completed; and it was his last major work.\footnote{For the dating of Jerome’s commentaries, see especially F. Cavallera, \textit{S. Jérôme: sa vie et son œuvre}, vol. 2 (Louvain 1922), pp. 20–63; J.N.D. Kelly, \textit{Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies} (London 1975), pp. 163–167, 290–316, 326–327.}

This paper sets out to explore some examples of Jerome’s use of Jewish tradition now extant in the Targum of the Minor Prophets. In particular, we shall look at his commentaries on Zechariah and Malachi, published around 406, and that on Nahum, published around 391/2. We shall make an attempt to see whether, during the twenty-nine years or so which separate the Nahum commentary from that on Jeremiah, there is any significant development in Jerome’s use of material which may derive from Targumic sources. This is a matter of some importance, because it was during the fourth and fifth centuries that the Targum of the Prophets was being moulded into its final form.\footnote{On the growth and redaction of the Targum of the prophets, see R. le Déaut, \textit{Introduction à la littérature Targumique} Première Partie (Rome 1966), pp. 124–127; B.D. Chilton, \textit{The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum} (Sheffield 1982); M. McNamara, ‘Targums’, in \textit{Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible}, Supp. Vol., pp. 860–861; and the valuable information collected by L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, \textit{Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets} (New York 1983).} This was happening at a time when repressive laws were being passed against the Jews, and conversions to Christianity were on the increase.\footnote{See J.E. Seaver, \textit{Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire 300–438}, University of Kansas Publications, Humanistic Studies No. 30 (Lawrence 1952); Y. Baer, ‘Israel, The Christian Church and the Roman Empire’, \textit{Scripta Hierosolymitana} 7 (1961), pp. 79–149; M. Avi-Yonah, \textit{The Jews of Palestine} (Oxford 1976), pp. 158–231.} The appearance of the Jerusalem Talmud around this time was itself, in one respect, a response on the part of the Jewish Sages to those events which were to prove so critical for their people.\footnote{See J. Neusner, \textit{Midrash in Context. Exegesis in Formative Judaism. The Foundations of Judaism: Method, Teleology, Doctrine}, Part 1, \textit{Method} (Philadelphia 1983), pp. 111–137.} On the popular level, too, the Targum was in dispute with the Christians. A good example is provided by Targum Jeremiah 31:35–6; 33:25, which asserts that Israel is no more likely to cease being God’s people than that the earth and creation should pass away, or that God’s ordinances with the heavenly luminaries should come to an end. Jerome directly counters such teaching in his commentary, and disproves it to his own satisfaction.\footnote{See Hayward, art. cit., p. 114.} What, we may ask, was his attitude to the Targum in his earlier works?