Christian anti-Jewish polemics include a vast amount of heterogeneous texts over many centuries, belonging to different literary genres and related to various historical contexts. To comment on them is accordingly no simple task, and since A. von Harnack first attracted scholarly interest to those polemics through his study of the *Altercatio Simonis et Theophili*,¹ no such thing as a scholarly consensus has appeared. As a matter of fact, the anti-Jewish character of a precise text is rarely disputed, but it is not always clear whether every text with anti-Jewish features should be included in the category “anti-Jewish polemics”: should the latter be reserved only to texts explicitly apostrophing the Jews, as dialogues do? For instance, are the famous *Contra Judaeos* orations of John Chrysostom² anti-Jewish polemics, although they address Christians and not Jews? Anti-Jewish polemics are often tacitly equated with dialogues only, but as the most recent lists of such texts in Late Antiquity and Middle Ages³ show, it seems more appropriate to include all works whose main purpose is to seek a confrontation with Judaism, even in homiletics, theological treatises, and so on.⁴ There is no exhaustive catalogue of such productions, and it is not the scope of the present paper to provide one. It is moreover very difficult to ascertain how many texts, in percentage, survived from the original production: polemical texts often do not fare well out of the exact context they are aimed at, and B. Blumenkranz

¹ *Die Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophili Christiani* (Leipzig, 1883).
⁴ I rejoin here the conclusion of Av. Cameron, “Apologetics in the Roman Empire: A Genre of Intolerance?” in *Humana sapit*, eds. J.-M. Carrié and R. Testa (Turnhout, 2002), 219–27: to define a genre and even a specific audience is difficult, because “apologétiques is a strategy, not a genre.”
has shown for the (better documented) western Middle Ages that many such texts, too closely related to a specific historical context, were preserved only in very few manuscripts while the patristic texts, more authoritative and more general in their scope, were reproduced in a vast amount of manuscripts.\(^5\) In Byzantium, many texts of the sixth and seventh centuries have survived (and even then only as fragments) only because of the zeal of iconophile writers who used them and reproduced them against the iconoclasts, especially at the council of Nicaea II;\(^6\) other periods were perhaps less fortunate. We shall deal in this paper mainly with the texts produced by Oriental Christians from the fourth to the tenth centuries, but it should be noted in pre-amble how impressive the sheer continuity of this production is: few Christian periods do not practice some form of apostroph of Judaism, many texts copy without qualms an important part of older argumen- tations, as if time had not passed since then.\(^7\) For instance, the title itself of the *Dialogue of Papiscus and Philo* alludes to the title of a much older anti-Jewish text, now lost, as if to exhibit continuity in a very different context.\(^8\) The Jewish problem (*la question juive*, as Sartre said) is a constant phenomenon of Christianity, but this permanence is, so to say, virtual: it is a possibility which may or may not be much exploited. The amount and quality of anti-Jewish literature has been subject to drastic changes throughout the ages, and its interest has gone to different articulations of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. To sketch a short phenomenology of this literature may contribute to a clarification.

The first and most evident approach is to study the relation of these texts with the historical reality of their time. It is no simple task: when P. Maas reported the first edition of the *Doctrina Jacobi*, he patently believed that it was a nearly stenographic transcription of a real debate,


\(^7\) See in the last instance Aulisa, *Dialogo*. That does not imply, of course, as Arthur C. McGiffert believed, that one could find entire parts of works of the first Christian centuries in the later texts; L. Lahey’s essay, *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, Fitzwilliam College thesis (Cambridge 2000), is still too optimistic on that point.