Introduction

Two statues stand on either side of the south transept portal of the Strasbourg Cathedral, one personifying the Church in the figure of the triumphant *Ecclesia*, the other representing Judaism as the humiliated *Synagoga*. Between the two sits King Solomon on his throne, the sword of "Solomon's judgment" resting on his knee[2]; above him, Jesus holds an orb, symbolizing his cosmic status as the arbiter on the day of the Last Judgment.[3] This is apparently the only work of art placed in the public sphere that brings Solomon and Jesus together.[4] It presents the Christian side of what I will call the "encounter" or "correspondence" between these two figures, who are linked by a diversity of connections and contexts.[5] Their "correspondence" is, of course, an imaginary one. Even if we accept the idea that Solomon and Jesus, and not merely Aristotle, were, in fact, historical figures—or at least that their biographies contain a historical core—that core has over time given birth to a vast assortment of myths and legendary traditions, and it is within these myths and legends that the correspondence takes form.

2 This is the sword mentioned in 1 Kings 3:24–25: "So the king said, 'Bring me a sword', and they brought a sword before the king. The king said, 'Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other'".

3 See Rowe (2008, pp. 179–202), especially p. 182, according to which the image "alludes to the divine regulation of heaven and earth" and the figures depicting *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* appear in many European cathedrals, but those of Solomon and Jesus are unique to Strasbourg. Three responses to an article I published in the "Culture and Literature" supplement of the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on December 24, 2010, added several details about the cathedral and the statues. Dr. Margo Stroumza-Ozan wrote that the cathedral had been built in two major stages. The first took place in the 1230s and included the eastern portal, across from which was the yard that served as a public court; Solomon and Jesus served to underscore the authority of the local judges. Ruth Almog wrote that the creator of the statues may have been the builder-sculptor Sabina von Steinbach, the daughter of the architect and main builder of the cathedral. In the seventeenth century the originals were replaced by copies. In art, the sinful Temple often symbolized the *Synagoga*. See Pinson (1996, pp. 147–174).

4 The two appear in a painting of "The Descent of Christ into Hell" (*Descensus Christi ad Infernos*) from Byzantium c. 700. See Trumbower (2001), as well as paintings from the eighth century and later.

5 Two more figures could, in theory, be added to the trio. The first is Hermes Trismegistus, a legendary and perhaps mythical figure. It was said of Solomon that he had "all signs of a perfect Hermetist". See Ebeling (2007); Idel (1988, pp. 59–76), the quotation is from p. 129. The second is the neo-Pythagorean philosopher and miracle worker, Apollonius of Tyana. The *Ars Notoria* refers to him as the friend and successor of Solomon (see in chapters five and seven). There is little substance to the "parallels" drawn between Apollonius and Jesus, but what is important for my purposes is that neither does the Christian literature express any need to reject that comparison.

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The correspondence between Solomon and Jesus, or perhaps more accurately between Jesus and Solomon, is part of a long-standing correspondence between Christianity and Judaism, at times direct and at times less so: In some cases both Christianity and Judaism are addressed clearly, while they constitute a latent presence in others. Here it is necessary to warn against the trap of overanalysis, in which nearly every biographical account of Solomon and Jesus is interpreted as a trove of concealed parallels or contrasts between the two and between the ideas they represent.[6]

What do Solomon, the biblical king, and Jesus, the Christian messiah, have in common with the Greek philosopher? What have the three to do with one another? They lived, after all, in periods far removed from one another: Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E., Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E., and Jesus in the first century of the common era. While Jesus was familiar with Solomon's biblical biography, he apparently never heard of Aristotle; the latter knew nothing of the existence of King Solomon and was, necessarily, unaware of Jesus.

The response to this rhetorical question is that centuries of legendary biographical traditions have joined the three figures in an *imaginary trio*; creative imagination has woven links and correlations. The correspondence this book will describe exists within a broader cultural field wherein the three figures—and the correspondence between them—express, represent, and symbolize a vast range of phenomena in human existence and culture.

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The principal figure in this trio is King Solomon, not only because he antecedes the others but mainly because of his multifaceted image, replete with contradictions. Both earthly and atemporal, he is trans-cultural in status and function, assuming complex and disparate roles within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, why was Solomon granted so rich an afterlife in such diverse cultures? Is it due to a deep-seated tendency in the ancient world to credit new ideas to figures from the distant past, anchoring new views in *prisca sapientia* (ancient knowledge)? In such a context, might Solomon have been the most appropriate—or even the sole—biblical figure to serve that function? Or did his fame spread because the eventful episodes that characterized his long life, the biblical

6 See Brezis (2018). I will not delve into the subject here and will only note that the theory on the subject of a "hidden debate" on the part of the Sages is an example of how radical modern interpretations impose themselves on ancient texts, and that it is unclear why it would have been necessary to conduct such a veiled debate, when its audience or readers would have been unlikely to discern it.

accounts of his virtues and actions, and, of course, the books he was said to have written inspired and fueled the creative imagination, making Solomon a complex figure—and, as such, accessible and available for various purposes? I have no precise answer to the question; it would require a Solomon, the wisest man, to settle.

Solomon's biblical biography expanded and proliferated beginning in the Hellenist and Roman periods, evolving into a plethora of legendary traditions that traveled from culture to culture and across literary traditions. He was cast in myriad roles, as an ideal king, exemplum, symbol, *topos*; he was, at the same time, a judge of great wisdom and justice, a sage of all sages, a magus of all magi[7]; a prophet,[8] a great builder,[9] an artist,[10] a poet, and a philosopher; a miracle worker, a fool, and a beggar[11]; a man to whom God revealed himself twice in a dream[12]; a sinner and a penitent; the prolific author of far more than the Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes; and a man active in realms both earthly and supernatural, "not only king in this world, but in the next world as well".[13] The course of his life was likened to that of the moon, waxing full and subsequently waning, and came to represent various existential, theological, and moral questions, as well as the blurred boundaries between philosophy and faith, magic, and natural philosophy.

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7 Butler (1993, pp. 35–43).

8 *Sotah* 45b; *Seder olam rabbah* 17.

9 Van Leeuwen (2007, pp. 67–90).

10 In romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there is mention of the term *L'Uevre Salemon*; the term represents the technique of engraving material like gold, attesting to the popularity of the term and to an assumption that Solomon himself engaged in that craft, based on the Vulgate translation of Song of Songs 3:10: "King Solomon made himself a chariot of wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver. The bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it purple", (*Ferculum fecit sibi rex Salomon de lignis Libani; columnas ejus fecit argenteas, reclinatorium aureum, ascensum purpureum*). See West (1954, pp. 176–182).

11 Fleg (1959, p. 8). Fleg writes that Solomon was "alternately a wise man, or a fool, prince or beggar, philosopher, master of the demons or their dupe, at once the pattern of faith and humility, and a monster of impiety and arrogance; warrior, tyrant, or apostle of peace, in whom already the justice of the Messiah is incarnate". And to all these, one can add that the legendary Solomon was a philosopher, the author of many books, a great builder, a just judge, an alchemist, astrologer, horseman, and more.

12 1 Kings 5:5–15, 9:2–9, and parallels in 1 Chronicles 29. Origen stressed that as these revelations occurred in a dream, they were different than the communication between Jesus and God. See Young (2007, p. 134).

13 From the *Second Targum to the Book of Esther*, a collection of *midrashim* in Aramaic evidently from the eighth century. See Grossfeld (1994). For a modern German translation see Ego (1996, pp. 59–137).

The Hebrew Bible does not present Solomon purely as an exemplar, but also as one who sinned and led others to sin, his reign simultaneously a golden age and a prelude to a schism within the nation. Hence the ambivalent attitude towards Solomon in Jewish and Christian cultures, and why his biography has long been the subject of a theological and philosophical debate touching on issues of sin, punishment, and atonement. The Solomon depicted in aggadic *Midrashim*, in Christology, in sermons, and in theology differs from the Solomon of occult literature and various genres of "secular" literature. One may well refer to him in the plural; he was a "Solomon for all seasons". Yet it seems to me that the widespread attempt to find hidden meaning in every Solomonic verse, and deliberate inter-textuality in every sentence, is often excessive. At least some of the *Midrashim*, legends, and folklore about him are simply an outcome of *Lust zum fabulieren*—that is, the urge to amuse and be amused, which discovered in Solomon an unparalleled protagonist.

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The correspondence between Jesus and Solomon apparently grew out of the story about the Queen of Sheba —who came from the "uttermost parts of the earth to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold, something greater than Solomon is here".[14] The "something greater than Solomon" is Jesus, who is also, in the people's appeals to him as a healer of the sick and exorcist of devils, referred to as "the son of David". Perhaps this is the origin of Jesus' description as "the true Solomon" by Athanasius (c. 296 – 373), the bishop of Alexandria known as the "father of orthodoxy", in his work *Expositiones in Psalmos*.[15] Origen (c. 185 – 254) wrote in the prologue to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* that "It is, I think, unquestionable that Solomon is in many respects a type of Christ" (*typos Christi*)[16]; others offered similar sentiments.[17] The Solomon-Christ typology—that is, the Christian predilection to view the figure of Solomon through the lens of Jesus, and even more so vice versa—made Solomon a vital figure in the Christian polemic; this predilection was rooted in the fact that Christianity, like Second-Temple Judaism, was a text-based religion and, like Judaism,

14 Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:30 – 31.

15 Hanig (1998). See also Perkins (1998).

16 Origen (1957, p. 51).

17 The Dominican friar Lorens of Orleans, who served in French royal court, wrote in *Somme le Roi* (The Book of Vices and Virtues, 1270), a book intended to help prepare penitents for confession: "These are the seven streams of the holy life that the true Solomon teaches us".

drew upon the same inexhaustible wellspring[18]—the Bible, which in Christianity came to be termed the Old Testament—as a sacred textual authority.[19] This exegetical reading of the Bible played an important role in the shaping and self-definition of both rabbinical Judaism[20] and nascent Christianity, a process during which the boundaries between the two were delineated. On the Christian side, that process involved the appropriation of the Bible, with an argument that the role of Judaism was obsolete once Jews completed their historical task of passing the Bible to the Christians. Jews had once been, in the words of Augustine of Hippo, *custodes librorum nostrorum* ("custodians of our books"); that task was now accomplished. Christianity regarded itself as a "new covenant", deprecating its predecessor: "And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear".[21] But in order to be "new", Christianity had to imbue the Old Testament with new meaning, for Christianity's newness was only partial. Its God was the biblical God, and its cosmogony and history derived from the holy scriptures of the Jews—in other words, from the Old Testament. Hence the new religion turned to polemics and apologetics[22] to legitimize the use it made of that heritage. In the apologetics of the bishop Ambrose (c. 339 – 397) of Milan, for example, Christianity is depicted as having received "the clothing of the Old Testament", including "the royal Davidic clothing" and that of King Solomon; it was given to the Christians, who "would know how to use the garment they had received, since the Jewish people kept it without using it and did not know its proper adornments. This clothing was lying in shadow, cast off and forgotten [...] The Christian people put it on, and it shone brightly".[23] In truth, Christianity borrowed far more than a garment from the Bible and from Jewish culture of the Second Temple period: it absorbed and assimilated ideas, symbols, and rituals. As a "new" religion, it needed to construct and furnish a social and cultural structure, and to do so it borrowed many elements, primarily from Judaism, from which it had emerged and which it knew very well.[24] Thus, while Judaism

18 The New Testament contains about a thousand quotations from the Hebrew Bible.

19 Paul writes to Timothy: "Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching..." (1 Tim. 4:13).

20 There is such an abundance of research literature on this subject that I will mention here only one recently published book: *The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul* (Collins 2017).

21 Hebrews 8:13.

22 On the difference between polemic, dispute, and debate, see Rokeah (1982, pp. 9 – 10).

23 *De Jacob et Vita beata*, 2,9,2 ("On Jacob and the Happy Life"). In Saint Ambrose (1972).

24 On this matter, too, the research literature is far too abundant to cite more than a small portion of it. And so, I mention only one book from which I learned a great deal: *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Young 2002).

was reshaping its world in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple, it found that the Bible had been "appropriated" by others, and responded by creating and developing its ways of reading the text.[25] While the Church Fathers and their successors unreservedly accepted the Bible's historical accuracy and added few details of their own to Solomon's biography, the Jewish Sages frequently made additions to biblical lore (thus "confirming" the Christian polemic that "the Talmud nefariously deviated from the Bible and competed with it".[26] Rabbinic Judaism did not adhere to the "letter" in the literal sense of the word but instead saw "well beyond the veil of the letter"—partly in response to Christian exegesis and commentaries. The two camps contended over true "ownership" of the Bible and over which of them interpreted it correctly. This was a polemic at once overt and covert; it could not have existed if both sides had not held firmly to their belief in the sanctity and authority (*exousia*) of the Bible and were not both using similar strategies of intertextuality and *post-factum* argument in order to prove their case. In other words, each camp brandished supposedly overwhelming proof for its claim in the form of quotations from the Holy Scriptures. For the Christian side, it was essential to prove that the decisive evidence of Jesus' gospel, the *demonstratio evangelica*, existed in the Old Testament, while the Jewish side rejected such alleged evidence and even mocked it. Pagan philosophers, as we shall see,[27] also contested these narratives—both Christian and Jewish—but the Jewish disagreement was the greater challenge for Christianity throughout the ages.

The parallel development and historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity over the first centuries C.E. are well-known; I have nothing new to add here. My interest lies instead in the roles that Solomon was assigned in both Jewish and Christian traditions as part of the "correspondence" between them,[28] and in how and why the conflict of Jesus contra Solomon arose in Christianity. This conflict was waged both orally and in writing; Justin Martyr (c. 100 – 165),[29] for example, wrote that "select [Jewish] messengers" went forth from Jerusalem to denounce the Christians.[30] Works such as Justin's *Dialogue with Try-*

25 Pelikan (2005).

26 On this, see *inter alia* Yuval (2008) and Cohen (1999, pp. 59 – 60).

27 In Athens, Paul was challenged by several philosophers from the Epicurean and Stoic schools but persuaded only a few in the audience (Acts 17).

28 Torijano (2002, pp. 113 – 114).

29 Justin Martyr (2003).

30 Acts 15 speaks of "certain individuals [who] came down from Judea".

phon and *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*,[31] probably from the second century or later, are "dialogues" in which a Christian speaker defeats his Jewish interlocutor (Aquila is eventually baptized into Christianity).[32] Other early polemic works included the *Epistle to Diognetus* (c. 120 – 200) and the *Epistle of Barnabas* (between 70 – 200), as well as homilies by the Church fathers such as Tertullian's (c. 120 – 160)[33] *Answer to the Jews*, John Chrysostom's *Homilies Against the Jews* (387 – 389), and various works by Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430).[34] Horbury writes that these "seem to reflect genuine debate, and hence genuine common ground between Jews and Christians."[35] In some of these writings, particularly in the dialogues I have mentioned, Solomon and the books attributed to him play a major role.[36]

In contrast, we have no Jewish polemical works at all from the first centuries C.E., nor any echoes of sermons that may have been delivered in synagogues. Instead, the Jewish response and counter-biography of Jesus appears both within the text and between the lines of the literature of the Sages,[37] and, more explicitly, in later works against Christianity such as *Toldot Yeshu* (The Life of Jesus)[38] and *Sefer Nestor haKomer* (The Polemic of Nestor the Priest).[39] Jewish literature openly sparred with the Christian historical narrative and Christology from the eleventh century onward. This literature included *The Kuzari* by Judah Halevi (c. 1040 – 1080), *Sefer Bitul Ikarei haNotzrim* by R. Ḥasdai Crescas of the fifteenth century,[40] *Sefer Behinat haDat* by R. Elijah Delmedigo (1490),[41] *Clipeus et Gladius*

31 Varner (2004); *The Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (1986). Also see Kraft (2009) and Lahey (2001).

32 Of the vast literature on this subject, see Lucas (1993 [1910]); Parkes (1934); A. L. Williams (1935); Limor and Stroumsa (1966); Rosenthal (1960); Lasker (1997, 2017, 2019); V. Martin (1995).

33 Tränkle (1964). To prove his claim that the Christians had taken over from the Jews as the people of God, he cites Zechariah 1:3 "Return to me, says the LORD of hosts".

34 Rokeah (1980, pp. 55 – 87).

35 Horbury (1998, p. 201).

36 The fact that there is hardly any mention of Jews in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Rokeah 1982, p. 71) does not mean that the "Jewish question", in contrast to the "pagan question", was not an important item on the Christian "agenda" in the first centuries.

37 Schäfer (2016).

38 Regarding this book, apparently written between the third and fifth centuries and translated into several languages, see Deutsch (1997) and Schäfer, Meerson, and Deutsch (2011). For a scholarly edition of all these versions, see Meerson and Schäfer (2014). Also see Limor (1998a).

39 Originally written in Arabic in the ninth century under the title *Qissat Mujadalat al-Usquf;* the Hebrew version appeared prior to 1170. About the book and its author, see Chapter Two.

40 Crescas (c. 1340 – 1412) was the rabbi of the Jewish community of Saragossa; the book was translated into Hebrew from Arabic by Joseph ben Shem Tov in 1451. See Ḥasdai Crescas (1990).

41 Delmedigo (1984).

by Judah Arye of Modena (1571–1648),[42] and others. The polemic continued even after Christianity became the victorious religion and no longer needed to compete with Judaism; even then, the homiletic interpretation of the Bible persisted in order to vindicate "Christian truth" (*veritas Christiana*). Many explanations have been offered for Christianity's continued dependence on the Bible even after it ceased to be merely a persecuted sect and, having established a separate identity, developed into a universal religion; there is no need for me here to repeat those explanations and theories. For our purposes, what matters is that Christianity's adherence to the allegorical mode of reading the Bible made Solomon a cardinal figure in the Christian imagination.

It should be noted that the different characterizations of Solomon (and Jesus) are not merely a product of the Christian-Jewish conflict, but also of controversies and trends internal to both rabbinical Judaism and Christianity (controversies which, in the latter case, did not end with the Council of Nicaea). Nor was each religion's attitude towards Solomon and Jesus always, or necessarily, a response to their characterizations in the other religion, or a result of the influence of those characterizations. As we shall see, Solomon and the events and writings attributed to him inspired a cornucopia of interpretation and allegorization. His reign was perceived as both a positive and a negative exemplum, and the idea of Jesus' prefiguration in Solomon aroused substantial internal tension and controversy among both Jews and Christians.

Such dialogues and polemics were not conducted solely between Jews and Christians, but also between pagans and Christians. This latter type continued for about three hundred years; we know of it mainly from the surviving account in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* of the writings of the "pagan" philosophers, which do not necessarily reflect the nature of the response of the general pagan public to Christianity. Celsus, Porphyry, and the emperor Julian were apparently well-versed in the Bible and in Christian writings (just as some of the Church Fathers were knowledgeable about anti-Christian writings). They also criticized the Old Testament, as it formed the basis for Christian claims, and exposed what they saw as the contradictions in both the Bible and the Christian interpretations thereof, including Christianity's interpretation of the figure of Solomon.

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Within the broad trans-cultural space of Christianity Jesus gained immortality, as well as a totally different status than that of Solomon. The New Testament attrib-

42 Arye Yehuda of Modena (1960).

utes several identities to him. He is the "son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God"[43]; the "Rabbi, the Cosmic Christ, the Son of man, the Bridegroom of the Soul, the Universal man".[44] But he is also a teacher of morals, a miracle worker, and an expeller of demons. Canonical Christian literature did not embroider Jesus' biography with additional acts or exploits beyond those related in the New Testament; what additions did develop emerged in the Apocryphal and pseudo-Apocryphal literature and in folk literature. At the same time, Christianity was familiar with Jesus' counter-biography in rabbinic literature and with the name by which he is known there (Jesus ben Pantera); there are reactions to the rabbinical approach in Tertullian's *De Spectaculis*, as well as in works by Justin Martyr and others. In later generations, Christians knew of it from works such as *Toldot Yeshu (The Life of Jesus)*, which we encountered briefly above and to which I shall return. The Christian polemic was directed against the Talmud, which it perceived as *id est doctrina*. Article 26 of the *Articuli litterarum Pappe*, a series of charges against Judaism written in 1239 by the convert Nicolas Donin and presented to Pope Gregory IX, is a reaction to *Sanhedrin* 43a, in which Christ's mother is said to have conceived Jesus "while whoring with a man they called Pandera"; Donin's charge led to the burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1242. Others, such as the Benedictine monk Petrus Cluniacensis (Petrus of Cluny) in *Contra perfidum Iudaeorum* (1146) and Petrus Comestor (?-1178) in his *Historia Scholastica*, which has been dubbed "the Medieval popular Bible", reacted in a similar manner.

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How and why did a correspondence emerge between Aristotle and Solomon—or, to be more accurate, between Solomon and Aristotle—and how did Jesus enter the mix?[45]

In the Middle Ages, Aristotle gained the status of the most learned and wisest man of all time—the very personification of all human knowledge. Did he, therefore, take Solomon's place as the "sage of all sages"? The answer may be found in a Jewish legendary tradition wherein Solomon was *magister omnium physicorum* (master of all natural things), his wisdom encompassing all branches

43 Luke 3:23–38.

44 Pelikan (1999); Fredriksen (2000). There are no folk tales about Jesus like the ones about Solomon. On the "Jewish Jesus", see Garber (2001). And about Jesus in Islam, see Khalidi (2001); Parrinder (2013); and Akyol (2017).

45 On the various versions of Aristotle's biography, see Natali (2013), And see at length in Chapters Seven and Eight.

of philosophy and science—and in which he was presented as a teacher to the Greek philosopher. This tradition first appeared in the thirteenth century, after Aristotle's writings were translated into Latin and became the basis of Christian Scholasticism and Thomism in the West, as well as an authoritative source for Christianity's worldview and understanding of the universe. The acceptance of Aristotelian philosophy (here we must distinguish between the acceptance of Aristotle's logic, metaphysics, ethics, and natural philosophy) evoked a piercing polemic in Judaism and Christianity, as it had earlier in Islam; theologians and philosophers in all three faiths were divided between Aristotelians and anti-Aristotelians. Against this background emerged the tradition of Solomon as Aristotle's teacher and of their wisdom as the product of natural wisdom; the spheres of knowledge in which Solomon engaged were now defined according to Aristotelian categories.

For Solomon to fill the role of "Aristotle's teacher", it was necessary for the idea of Solomonic wisdom to encompass both "occult wisdom" and comprehensive knowledge of what was then known as natural philosophy, or science. Thus, medieval and later traditions held that he was well-versed in all branches thereof, and the three books attributed to him were perceived as conveying views about the order and structure of the world that predated scientific or pseudo-scientific theories.

The legend that Aristotle studied with Solomon was intended to affirm and bolster such theories and grant them legitimacy and prestige. In this context, Solomon is one of the ancient wise men representing *prisca sapientia*—the wisdom of old, its antiquity a testament to its truth. It sufficed merely to mention his name, quote from his books, or ascribe aphorisms to him in order to endow a newer opinion with authority (in the words of Tertullian: "*Primam instrumentis istis auctoritatem summa antiquitas vindicate*"—"Supreme antiquity, then, claims for these books the highest authority").[46] In Solomon's case, this wisdom was either a gift from God, inspiration from the heavens, or a personal quality.

And what about Jesus and Aristotle?—for generations Aristotle continued to represent "philosophy" in Jewish internal polemics; this was true even after the sixteenth century, when Aristotle, Christianized Aristotelianism, and Aristotelian science were dethroned. In contrast, in its engagement with philosophy and the sciences and in its attitude towards Aristotle, from the twelfth century onward Christian scholasticism had no need to depend on the legendary story in order to ground its legitimacy in Solomon's wisdom or in legends of his teaching Ar-

46 Tertullian (1984, pp. 92–93).

istotle, the *praecursor Christi* (precursor of Christ) and to become both *Aristoteles judaicus* and *Aristoteles christianus*.

From the "Jewish" standpoint, one might say that the legendary tradition in question closed an imaginary circle, since it claimed that Christian Scholasticism and medieval Jewish philosophy would never have come into being without the challenge and influence of Aristotelian philosophy—which was, of course, born of the wisdom of Solomon, King of Israel, whose writings Aristotle read and absorbed. (Jesus was not considered to have authored any texts). However, because this Jewish tradition ascribed to Solomon the authorship of a large pseudo-Solomonic literary corpus, apparently as a response to the existing pseudo-Aristotelian corpus[47] (but could only enumerate the names of the books, and not relate their content), the result was the creation of an imaginary Solomon as a counterpart to Aristotle—that is, Solomon as a philosopher and scientist, a *magister omnium physicorum* representing *sapientia*, *scientia*, and *intelligentia*.[48]

And is it convincible that Aristotle, like Solomon, was both an occultist and sinner? Well, as we shall see, at the margins of this correspondence, both Solomon and Aristotle's experiences with women—experiences that would lead to loss and humiliation for both,[49] and around the first century C.E. the imaginary Solomon became well-versed in the secrets of esoterica and, like Jesus, was attributed the power to heal the sick and exorcise demons. Aristotle too was said to deal in occultism, especially in the field of alchemy, which seeks ways to convert metals by transmutation. This belief emerged because of the putative similarity between that study and Aristotle's theory of the four elements, even though in his *Meteorology,* Aristotle described alchemy as a fantasy; the claim was that later in life Aristotle changed his mind.[50] Plutarch tells that "It would appear, moreover, that Alexander not only received from his master [Aristotle] his ethical and political doctrines, but also participated in those secret and more profound teachings which philosophers designate by the special terms 'acromatic' and 'epoptic', and do not impart to many".[51] According to Plutarch, Aristotle wrote—and published—esoteric writings, which, in Alexander's view, should not become public. The philologist, theologian, and critic of Aristotle's

47 On this corpus, see Thorndike (1964, pp. 246–278). I will return to this corpus in Chapter Eight.

48 Yates (1984).

49 See Chapter One.

50 For example, Petrus Bonus' *The Precious New Pearl (Pretiosa Margarita Novella)*. See Thorndike (1964, Vol. 3, pp. 147–162). Bonus was a late medieval alchemist; his book was first printed in Venice in 1546.

51 Plutarch (1958, Vol. 7, p. 241; 1973, p. 259).

writing John Philoponus of Alexandria (c. 570 – 1198) asserted that Aristotle believed in demons.

Various apocryphal writings such as the *Secretum Secretorum* (Secret of Secrets) were attributed to Aristotle, yet the canonical and most widely-accepted view rejected the idea that he dealt in "esoteric doctrines".[52] Maimonides wrote of a book entitled *Istimachis* and attributed by others to Aristotle, though he hastened to add that "[Aristotle] can by no means have been its author"[53]; the medieval philosopher and kabbalist Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman (Naḥmanides, 1194 – 1270) described Aristotle, "may his name be obliterated", as an obdurate rationalist because he rejected the existence of "demons and witches" and the like, and denied "spirituality"—while in contrast the wisdom of Solomon, the wisest of men, did encompass sorcery.[54] Roger Bacon (1215 – 1294), whose empirical approach to scientific discovery was influenced by Aristotle (*De Scientia Experimentali*), did his best to refute what he termed the *vanitas* of magic and its attribution to Moses, Solomon, Hermes, and Aristotle, as well as the authenticity of several apocryphal books about astrology that were credited to the latter.[55] Doctor Faustus, in Marlowe's play of that name, wonders whether to "live and die in Aristotle's works"—that is, whether to adhere to scientific thinking or to prefer Solomon's wisdom—the wisdom of magic—which rendered its possessor a kind of demi-god; or, alternatively, to adopt the wisdom of Solomon-Ecclesiastes, who discovered late in life that all study is the vanity of vanities?[56] The belief in occult powers—especially in astral magic (which requires a knowledge of astronomy)—was perceived as an alternative to Aristotelian physics and rationalism,[57] and the imaginary trio, therefore, represented the blurred boundaries between "science" and "magic" until the seventeenth century.[58]

I do not intend to deal with the history of these texts, but rather how the texts impressed their readers. Nor, again, will I attempt to paint a complete picture of the pseudo-Solomonic or pseudo-Aristotelian corpora, for the book does not purport to be a collection of the depictions of Solomon, Aristotle, or Jesus, or

52 See Chapter Seven.

53 Maimonides (1904, 3:29). The French-Jewish scholar Salomon Munk wrote that the book deals with the subject of magic; he added that in Moriz Steinschneider's view, the name of the book is a distortion of the Greek expression *stoicheiomatikos* – "an astrologist reading a horoscope". See Maimonides (2002), note 51 on p. 527.

54 Cited in Dov Schwartz (2004b), or Dov Schwartz (2005) for the English edition.

55 On these books, see Thorndike (1964, pp. 246 – 278). On Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089 – 1164) see Sela (1999), or Sela (2003) for the English edition.

56 See Hattaway (1968), pp. 499 – 530.

57 On this, see Schwartz (2004a, 2004b, 2005).

58 See Greg (2015). Greg does not, however, deal with Solomon.

of their countless representations in theological studies, *midrashim*, legends, sermons, *belles lettres*, and folklore. It touches briefly upon weighty themes such as the Jewish-Christian polemic,[59] the essence of magic and its place in Judaism and in Christianity, and the link between magic and science—but only to the degree to which these themes are reflected in the correspondence between the three figures in our trio. The few citations noted here from Islamic tradition do not reflect the extent of Solomon's status within it.

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The underlying assumptions that directed my reading of the texts, and those at which I arrived after concluding my research, are as follows. First, appearances and representations of Solomon, Aristotle, and Jesus must be evaluated within the broad context of the array of texts contemporary to those representations. In quite a few cases, scholars dealing with the different instances of a tradition, a theme, a motif, or an image tend to assign status or value to the topic of their research without weighing it with other traditions, themes, motifs, and images of the same period. Second, the Solomon who emerged from sermons, *belles lettres*, legends, and folktales had a far more substantial presence than did the Solomon of theological or philosophical writings, which were known only to a limited circle. Third, the texts cited in this book are not representative of the whole of "Judaism" or of "Christianity", and not only because most of the cited Christian sources come from Western (i.e., Roman Catholic) Christianity. Hence, I claim neither that the texts cited here had a formative status in Jewish and Christian cultures, nor that most texts cited here, or their contents, were known to or understood by a large audience. Fourth, there is no doubt that at least part of what I describe as a "correspondence" between the three is the fruit of my creative imagination, and that at times I find correspondence in places where it does not exist. However, it is precisely the retrospective reading of texts that gives rise to today's comparative research literature examining the various presentations of Solomon in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and only from a later perspective can one argue for the existence of such a correspondence. Fifth, Solomon's biography has a monogenesis in the Old Testament Urtext, from which it developed into various branches. But in many cases, particularly when the ancient world is involved, it is difficult to reconstruct the way that stories and motifs developed, largely because much of the literature written in that time period has been lost. Hence, I have not attempted to reconstruct the often-circuitous

59 It suffices to mention two out of numerous books: Merchavia (1970) and Kraus (1995).

ways in which themes and motifs were transmitted between cultures, texts, and versions; these transmissions often have missing links that can only be filled in by hypothesis. It is possible to perceive in Solomon a case study in the similarity, proximity, and affiliation between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, expressed in the mutual flow of ideas between them and in the similar status they accorded their holy texts and exegetical methods. However, it is important to recall that similarity in terms of theological and philosophical inquiry, themes, motifs, and exegetical approach may not in itself create affinity, and certainly not affiliation, but may lead instead to hostility and competition.

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During the rather long period in which I was writing this book, the body of research on nearly every one of the aspects mentioned above continued to expand[60] and to build upon the literature written on the subject throughout the twentieth century. Some of these works also discuss the imagined encounter between the three, and from these, I have learned much. Although a great deal of the material in this new research was already known to me, I see fit to mention it since on several matters at least it has expanded my horizons and my knowledge and referred me to many new sources. My hope is that, even after all that has been researched and written, this book may be of interest to the reader, and perhaps contribute a few new insights of its own.

60 Among these books and articles, I will mention only some of the several that were published recently: Klein-Braslavy (2007); Sasson (2013), which is a comprehensive study on the figure of Solomon in the literature of the Sages; M. Bloch (1925); Verheyden (2013a); Shalev-Eyni (2006); Milstein (1995); Vanning (2002); Nitsche (2017).