

## Comment

Akira Echigoya

I have three questions to ask.

First of all you showed the Jews' attitude to Mary in two Jewish books, *Nizzahon Vetus* and *Sefer Toledot Yeshu*, and then you raised two questions. The first question was: "How did the Christians react to Jewish criticism of Mary and Jewish contempt for her?" The second question was: "What role did the Christians assign to the Jews in the emergence of Marian theology?"

You tried to answer these questions by referring to several early Christian stories about Mary and the Jews. The first question is difficult to answer because these Christian stories were not told primarily as a reaction to the Jewish criticism of Mary; this is very clear in the story of Mary's robe in Galilee. However with regard to the second question, it is much easier to see the role assigned to the Jew in each story.

We can say that the audience of each story was Christian, not Jewish. Each story was directed at Christians, not Jews. Therefore what was the purpose of these stories? Why were they told?

You have already answered this last question, by saying that "These stories were told for Christian needs....". Can you expand on these Christian needs? You added, "The Jewish voice in these stories is the voice of criticism—namely, that of Jewish criticism and also that of the Christian opposition...." The voice of the Christian opposition was not heard in these stories; however it might have been represented by the voice of Jewish criticism. The voice of the Christian opposition might have overlapped the voice of Jewish criticism. Would you tell us about this Christian opposition in more detail? This is my first question.

As for my second question: In one of the Christian stories, the story of Mary's robe in Galilee, which explains why the robe is in Constantinople, you showed that many people gathered around the chest in which Mary's robe was kept. Mary's robe was venerated and admired in Galilee too. You also introduced the same kind of story with an account by an anonymous traveler from Italy in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. You said, "His account may hint at some local Marian rituals observed around sites and objects associated with Mary, with the participation of both Christian and Jewish women." This is very interesting. It may be possible to suppose that the worship of Mary first

came out of Galilee, or Nazareth. Are there any other texts or archaeological finds which show the worship of Mary by Jewish women?

As for my third and final question: In the Christian stories you introduced, the Jews were described in different ways. The impressions which we receive from each story are rather different. In the story of Mary's robe, there is an old Jewish woman who is deceived by two men from Constantinople. She is a victim of her own generosity. On the other hand, in the story of the portrait of Mary, a Jew appears as an opponent to the worship of Mary. You also introduced the story of the Lincoln blood libel (1225) and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in which the powerful and dangerous image of the Jew is emphasized. The change in the way Jews are described is thought to reflect to some extent the change in the relationship between the Jews and the Christians. You talked about "the unfavorable turn taken by Christian-Jewish relations in Byzantium from the sixth century on, and the subsequent decline of the Jews' position there". Would you explain this "unfavorable turn" in more detail please.