

Afterword

The biblical King Solomon is “a king for all seasons”, and he is the main character in the correspondence between the imagined trio not only because he predates the others, but because the many facets of his legendary image provided a wealth of raw material for the links that have been forged between him, the Greek philosopher, and the Christian messiah.

Solomon’s “correspondence” with Jesus and Aristotle reflects the various aspects of the relationships between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but also between the three monotheistic religions and the cultural heritage of the classical world.

Solomon, Aristotle, and Jesus are not only historical figures; they are also meta-historical, trans-cultural, and symbolic. Solomon is more than a king, Aristotle transcends the philosophers, and Jesus is a son of God and the messiah. Solomon, of course, was unacquainted with the others; Aristotle never heard of Solomon; and Jesus was familiar with Solomon’s biblical biography but was probably unaware of Aristotle. This correspondence occupies a textual expanse both broad and varied, as we have seen, and this study journeyed through a sea of textual worlds, some well-known and others esoteric, in which Solomon’s identities have shifted from text to text and traversed cultures and religions, retaining their essentiality over the course of twenty-five hundred years, and maintaining, all the while, a correspondence with Aristotle and with Jesus. As such, it is a deeply rooted case study in trans-cultural transmission, cultural appropriation, and cultural debt.

Christianity’s foremost concern with Solomon was the result of his description in the Bible as both a “son of god” and the son of David. It inspired a sense of competition between him and Jesus: thus, Christian Christology and tradition described Jesus as the “true Solomon”; identified in Solomon’s life events that prefigured the life of Jesus; appropriated the three biblical books attributed to Solomon, interpreting them as referring to Jesus and the Church; and ascribed additional books to Solomon. The Church corresponded not only with the biblical but also the post-biblical Solomon—the Solomon of apocryphal literature and the *Aggadah*—and this latter image retains a place and status in Christian theology and culture. It is threaded throughout generations of Christian literature that appropriated the biblical and meta-historical Solomon and compared and contrasted him to Jesus.

Solomon would re-emerge in the thirteenth century as a magus—a philosopher well-versed in the occult sciences—and the correspondence between him and Aristotle was born. Jewish philosophy (including the *Kabbalah*) could not

ignore the status and influence Aristotle gained in Latin Christianity, and the pro-Aristotelian stream in Judaism attempted to resolve the tension inherent in adopting the words of a pagan philosopher by inventing a legendary tradition in which Aristotle's wisdom derived from Solomon's. Though Christianity was generally not in need of legends or apologetics in order to accept Aristotle as an inspiration and influence, there were some Christian writers who found in this legendary tradition legitimization to adopt Aristotle's philosophy and create an "Aristotelian Christianity". Thus, in the imagined correspondence Jesus was seen both as the "true Solomon" and as "greater than Solomon", while Aristotle was described as a precursor of Jesus and a student of Solomon.

Solomon, Aristotle, and Jesus were utilized to personify various intangible phenomena such as inter-religious and intercultural transmissions and encounters; modes of reception and internalization of beliefs and customs; the boundaries between magic, occultism, the sciences, and philosophy; and more. Thus, this imaginary correspondence is not a history of texts from the distant past—theological writings, legends, bizarre composition, etc.,—but one that is present as well as relevant in our modern culture.