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## Christian Attitudes toward the Jews in the Earliest Centuries A.D.

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CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JEWS  
IN THE EARLIEST CENTURIES A.D.

by

S. Mark Veldt

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of History  
Dr. Paul L. Maier, Advisor

Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
August 2007

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JEWS  
IN THE EARLIEST CENTURIES A.D.

S. Mark Veldt, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2007

This dissertation examines the historical development of Christian attitudes toward the Jews up to c. 350 A.D., seeking to explain the origin and significance of the antagonistic stance of Constantine toward the Jews in the fourth century. For purposes of this study, the early Christian sources are divided into four chronological categories: the New Testament documents (c. 50-95 A.D.), the Apostolic Fathers (c. 90-135 A.D.), apologists and theologians (c. 130-260 A.D.), and an era of conflict (c. 250-350 A.D.). Within the last period, special attention is given to the work of Eusebius, particularly *The Proof of the Gospel (Demonstratio)*. This author's relationship with the Christian emperor and his development of explicit theological responses to the Jews make his contributions especially significant to the question at hand. Jewish and classical sources are also briefly examined to place the Christian views in historical context.

The conclusions of this study challenge the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether, who asserted that there was a consistent anti-Jewish theological bias present within Christianity as far back as its New Testament roots. Instead, this research finds that relations between the Christians and Jews in this period were much more complex and diverse than her view suggests, and that political considerations, rather than theological differences, were the most significant factor in the development of Constantine's stance.

The research revealed that anti-Jewish sentiment was relatively absent among Christians in the earliest periods and increased noticeably only in the fourth century. Throughout the first three centuries A.D., Christian attitudes toward the Jews were built on an underlying foundation of dependence and appreciation, and the occasional outbursts against the Jews were the consequence of the Fathers' awareness that absorption back into Judaism was a constant threat for a religion so reliant upon its Jewish legacy. Especially enlightening are the instances in which Christian writers align themselves with the Jews against pagan and heretical opponents, for these occasions demonstrate that Jewishness continued to be a sign of Christian orthodoxy throughout the period.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Paul Maier, my supervising professor, a great teacher, trusted advisor, and indispensable editor. I am also indebted to my entire dissertation committee: Dr. Rozanne Elder, Dr. Brian Wilson, and Dr. Dimiter Angelov. Through this process, Dimiter has become both a valued mentor and esteemed friend. Special thanks is due to Dr. Larry Simon for serving on my exam committee and for persuading me in 2002 to pursue doctoral studies; also to Dr. Marion Gray and Dr. James Palmitessa for their administrative assistance.

I would also like to give credit to past teachers: Mr. William House, my world history teacher at Utica High School in 1970-71, first sparked my interest in history and taught me the importance of critical thinking. Dr. John Wilson and Dr. Ronald Mayers, professors at Cornerstone University, showed me what it meant to uphold both academic excellence and Christian commitment.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Renia for her unwavering support throughout my academic efforts. She did not merely patiently endure my pursuit of this demanding project; she passionately insisted that I continue chasing my lifelong dream, even during those times when I was tempted to give up because of the strain it placed on my time and energy. Without her love and encouragement, this dissertation would have remained only a dream.

S. Mark Veldt

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Books of the Bible

Ac	Acts
Col	Colossians
1Co	1 Corinthians
2Co	2 Corinthians
Dan	Daniel
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis
He	Hebrews
Isa	Isaiah
Jas	James
Jn	Gospel of John
1Jn	1 John
2Jn	2 John
Jd	Jude
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Num	Numbers
1Pe	1 Peter
2Pe	2 Peter
Ph	Philippians
Ps	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Rev	Revelation
Ro	Romans
1Th	1 Thessalonians
1Ti	1 Timothy
2Ti	2 Timothy
Tt	Titus

### Post-Biblical Jewish and Rabbinic

B.	Babylonian Talmud
J.	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>Abod.Zar</i>	<i>Aboda Zara</i>
<i>BQam</i>	<i>Baba Qamma</i>
<i>Ber.</i>	<i>Berakoth</i>
<i>Ger.</i>	<i>Gerim</i>
<i>Mek.</i>	<i>Mekilta</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Menahoth</i>
<i>MidrGenR.</i>	<i>Midrash Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>MidrEcclR.</i>	<i>Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>
<i>MidrLevR.</i>	<i>Midrash Leviticus Rabbah</i>
<i>MidrNumR.</i>	<i>Midrash Numbers Rabbah</i>
<i>MidrRuthR.</i>	<i>Midrash Ruth Rabbah</i>
<i>Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i>
<i>Pes.</i>	<i>Pesahim</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>Shab.</i>	<i>Shabbath</i>
<i>Yebam. Yebamoth</i>	

List of Abbreviations—Continued

**Early Christian**

<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i>	<i>ApConst</i>
Archelaus – <i>Disp.</i>	<i>The Acts of the Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes</i>
Aristides – <i>Apol</i>	<i>Apology</i>
Barnabas – <i>Barn.</i>	<i>The Epistle of Barnabas</i>
Clement of Alexandria	
<i>Exh.</i>	<i>Exhortation to the Heathen</i>
<i>Instr.</i>	<i>The Instructor</i>
<i>Passover</i>	<i>Fragment from the Last Work on the Passover</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromata</i>
Clement of Rome – <i>1 Clem</i>	<i>First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians</i>
Cyprian – <i>CypJews</i>	<i>Against the Jews</i>
<i>LPrayer</i>	<i>On the Lord's Prayer</i>
<i>Spain</i>	<i>To the Clergy and People Abiding in Spain</i>
<i>Vanity</i>	<i>On the Vanity of Idols</i>
Diognetus – <i>Diog.</i>	<i>The Epistle of Mathetes of Diognetus</i>
Hermas, the <i>Shepherd</i>	
<i>Comm.</i>	<i>Commandments</i>
<i>Sim.</i>	<i>Similitudes</i>
<i>Vis.</i>	<i>Visions</i>
Hippolytus – <i>AgJews</i>	<i>Expository treatise against the Jews</i>
<i>CPent</i>	<i>Commentaries on the Pentateuch</i>
<i>CProv</i>	<i>Commentary on Proverbs</i>
<i>Refut.</i>	<i>Refutations</i>
Ignatius of Antioch	
<i>IgnAnt</i>	<i>To the Antiochians</i>
<i>IgnEph</i>	<i>To the Ephesians</i>
<i>IgnHero</i>	<i>To Hero</i>
<i>IgnMag</i>	<i>To the Magnesians</i>
<i>IgnPhld</i>	<i>To the Philadelphians</i>
<i>IgnPhlp</i>	<i>To the Philippians</i>
<i>IgnPoly</i>	<i>To Polycarp</i>
<i>IgnRom</i>	<i>To the Romans</i>
<i>IgnSmy</i>	<i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>IgnTral</i>	<i>To the Trallians</i>
<i>MarIgn</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Ignatius</i>
Irenaeus – <i>AgHer</i>	<i>Against Heresy</i>
Justin Martyr – <i>1 Apol.</i>	<i>First Apology</i>
<i>2 Apol.</i>	<i>Second Apology</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew</i>
<i>Hort.</i>	<i>Hortatory Address to the Greeks</i>
Lactantius – <i>DivInst</i>	<i>The Divine Institutes</i>

List of Abbreviations—Continued

<i>Liturgy of James – LitJas</i>	
Methodius – <i>Banquet</i>	<i>The Banquet of the Ten Virgins</i>
<i>Palms</i>	<i>Oration on the Palms</i>
<i>Simeon</i>	<i>Oration concerning Simeon and Anna</i>
Novatian – <i>Trinity</i>	<i>Treatise concerning the Trinity</i>
Origen – <i>AgCelsus</i>	<i>Against Celsus</i>
<i>CJohn</i>	<i>Commentary on John</i>
<i>CMatt.</i>	<i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>De Princ.</i>	<i>De Principiis</i>
<i>LAfr</i>	<i>Letter to Africanus</i>
Polycarp – <i>PolyPhlp</i>	<i>Epistle to the Philippians</i>
<i>MPol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
Pseudo-Clement – <i>CHom</i>	<i>Clementine Homilies</i>
<i>Recog.</i>	<i>Recognitions of Clement</i>
Tatian – <i>Greeks</i>	<i>To the Greeks</i>
Twelve Patriarchs – <i>12Pat</i>	<i>Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs</i>
Theophilus of Antioch	
<i>Autol.</i>	<i>Epistle to Autolycus</i>
Tertullian – <i>AgMarc.</i>	<i>Against Marcion</i>
<i>Flesh</i>	<i>On the Flesh of Christ</i>
<i>Jews</i>	<i>Answer to the Jews</i>
<i>Mod.</i>	<i>On Modesty</i>
<i>PHer</i>	<i>On Prescription against Heretics</i>
<i>Prayer</i>	<i>On Prayer</i>
<i>TApol</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>TRes</i>	<i>On the Resurrection of the Flesh</i>
Victorinus – <i>Apoc.</i>	<i>Commentary on the Apocalypse</i>

**Classical**

Arrian – <i>Parth.</i>	<i>Parthica</i>
<i>Augustan Histories</i>	<i>HistAug</i>
Cassius Dio – <i>HistRom</i>	<i>Historia Romana</i>
Cicero – <i>DeProv</i>	<i>De Provinciis Consularibus</i>
Cleomides – <i>De Motu</i>	<i>De Motu Circulari</i>
Flavius Josephus – <i>Antiq.</i>	<i>Antiquities</i>
Martial – <i>Epig.</i>	<i>Epigrammata</i>
Ovid – <i>RAmoris</i>	<i>Remedia Amoris</i>
Persius – <i>PSat</i>	<i>Saturae</i>
Plutarch – <i>QConv</i>	<i>Quaestiones Convivales</i>
Ptolemy – <i>Apot.</i>	<i>Apotelesmatica</i>

List of Abbreviations—Continued

Quintillian – <i>InstOrat</i>	<i>Institutio Oratoria</i>
Sulpicius Severus – <i>Chron.</i>	<i>Chronica</i>
Tacitus – <i>Hist.</i>	<i>Historiae</i>
Valerius Maximus – <i>Facta</i>	<i>Facta et Dicta Memorabilia</i>

## INTRODUCTION

From the inception of the Christian church persistent animosity has been evident between this institution and the Jewish faith from which it had sprung. Early Jewish resentment was a response to the claims of Christians for the messianic and divine character of Jesus, as well as to active Christian proselytism of Jews and Jewish sympathizers, and to derogatory language about the Jews employed by the Christians. The New Testament records multiple incidents of Jewish-Christian conflict in the period of initial expansion by the church, especially related to the missionary activity of the apostle Paul. Justin Martyr and other early Christian writers composed tracts specifically intended to refute Jewish arguments and assert the superiority of Christian beliefs. The early Christian church believed that it was the heir to the promises made by God in times past to the Jewish nation and claimed that it was the new covenant people of God. If these desires were to be realized, the result would be the gradual disappearance of the Jewish religion, as its members were all eventually absorbed into the Christian church.

In spite of this admitted conflict between Christians and Jews in the first three centuries A.D., there was throughout this period a regular, if not universal, pattern of respect between the two groups. They did, after all, share the highest regard for the

same Hebrew scriptures,<sup>1</sup> the earliest Christian leaders and converts were Jews themselves, and many Jewish beliefs and practices persisted in the Christian church. Christian apologists in this period often confronted paganism with a defense centered as much on the general principles of monotheism and the Hebrew scriptures as on explicitly Christian beliefs and practices. When Justin reaches out specifically to the Jews in his *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, he does so in a brotherly, irenic tone that seeks to persuade and reconcile more than confront, emphasizing the love and high regard he has for the Jews. He and Trypho part as friends at the end of their discourse, expressing both their appreciation for the process they had undergone together and their desire to continue to learn from the cooperative study of the Scriptures they both held dear. Although Justin continued to implore Trypho to accept Jesus as Messiah as they parted, and Trypho remained unconvinced by Justin's arguments, there was no rupture in their social or intellectual interaction as a result of their differences.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this, one finds the following references to the Jews in a letter of Constantine, composed c. A.D. 325, regarding the observance of Easter:

In the first place it was decreed unworthy to observe that most sacred festival in accordance with the practice of the Jews; having sullied their own hands with a heinous crime, such bloodstained men are as one might expect mentally blind. It is possible, now that their nation has been rejected, by a truer system which we have kept from the first day of the Passion to the present, to extend the performing of this observance into future periods also. Let there be nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of Jews! We have received from

---

<sup>1</sup> References to "Jewish scriptures" and "Hebrew scriptures" are used interchangeably for the sake of variety, since both Jewish and Christian communities consistently used the label "Jewish" to refer to these writings during the early Christian centuries, the era upon which this paper will focus. This Jewish canon is referred to as the "Old Testament" only in connection with the perspective of those early Christian writers who used this terminology.

<sup>2</sup> *Dial.*, 142.

the Savior another way; a course is open to our most holy religion that is both lawful and proper. Let us with one accord take up this course, right honorable brothers, and so tear ourselves away from that disgusting complicity. For it is surely quite grotesque for them to be able to boast that we would be incapable of keeping these observances without their instruction. What could these people calculate correctly, when after that murder of the Lord, after that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not by any rational principle, but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their internal frenzy may lead them? Hence it comes about that in this very matter they do not see the truth, so that nearly always they get it wrong, and instead of the proper calculation they observe the Pascha a second time in the same year. Why then do we follow those who are by common consent sick with fearful error? We would never allow the Pascha to be kept a second time in the same year. But even if that argument were absent, your Good Sense ought to make it the continual object of your effort and prayer, that the purity of your soul should not by any resemblance appear to participate in the practices of thoroughly evil persons.<sup>3</sup>

Where did this venomous language come from? Was it unique to this first known Christian emperor? Were the words placed in his mouth for sinister sectarian reasons by Constantine's ecclesiastical "biographer" Eusebius? Did the church as a whole, represented by the bishops at Nicaea, share this viewpoint? If so, for how long had it been the position of the church? Were there earlier developments that should be recognized as steps leading in a direction that could only eventually arrive at such open animosity? Was there something inherently built into the beliefs, practices, and organization of the earliest church that guaranteed anti-Semitism, either latent or overt, in every era of the church's existence? The problem at the heart of the proposed research is to identify the source of the anti-Jewish language found in the writings and

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<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine*, 3.18.2-4, ed., transl. and commentary, Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

edicts of Constantine and Eusebius, and to discover the significance of their roles in the broader development of Christian/Jewish relations throughout the centuries.

The importance of this question extends beyond its implications for understanding the religious world of late Roman antiquity. This research will shed light on imperial involvement in religious matters not only in Constantine's time, but also in the periods preceding and following his reign. An adequate understanding of this question can only broaden our general understanding of the fourth-century Roman Empire. Because of the fundamental nature of Constantine's rule for later Byzantine society, political and religious, this is another area in which this research can make a contribution. Beyond Roman and Byzantine history, these findings should also contribute to religious studies, specifically the relationship of Jews and Christians throughout the past 2000 years. Whatever it was that was at the heart of the Jewish-Christian conflicts observed in the early fourth century, it had a strong influence on the course of these relationships for generations to come. Medieval, early modern, and present-day relations between Christians and Jews cannot but be dependent in some way on the events of this critical earlier period. To the extent that unhealthy and ill-founded characterizations of each group by the other are at the root of present misunderstandings between the two groups, or to the extent that attitudes neither biblical nor Christian became fundamental to the outlook of the institutional Christian church, the explication and resolution of these errors holds promise to improve ecumenical relations.

The present researcher is obviously not the first person to consider these questions, although there is less written on the topic than might be expected. In 1939,

Bamberger claimed, "I have found only two works written by non-Jews on the subject that are really important."<sup>4</sup> Sixty years later, Cameron and Hall could observe that there was still no monograph, and only two brief commentaries, written on Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, a work of great relevance to the period in general and this topic in particular.<sup>5</sup> Both in popular literature and in academic research, it has been noted that: 1) Jewish-Christian confrontations in the earliest centuries of the Christian church were relatively moderate; and 2) the relations between the two groups had sharply deteriorated by the beginning of the early medieval period of European history. In reviewing the historical literature on this subject, however, one quickly discovers that there is not a consensus on the question of what caused this deterioration and when it occurred.

Rosemary Radford Ruether asserts that "along with this Christological interpretation of the 'Old Testament' there developed from the beginning an anti-Judaic 'left hand.'"<sup>6</sup> Some point to relatively early events, such as the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Marcel Simon, however, warns against accepting this explanation without adequate deliberation: "But a proper consideration of the matter shows not only the magnitude of the upheaval but its limits; shows, indeed, that to attribute to the events of A.D. 70 consequences either immediate or decisive is to simplify the issues to the point of falsification." Another possibility is that the turning

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*, (New York: Ktav Publ. House, 1939), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Averill Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, intro. to *Eusebius: Life of Constantine, Introduction, translation, and commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*, ed., Jeremy Cohen (New York and London: New York University Press, 1991), 174.

point in Jewish/Christian relations was around the time of the Bar Cochba revolt under Hadrian in A.D. 132. Simon points out that during the time from 70-135, the form of Judaism that found Alexandria as its home was on the wane, its Hellenistic orientation gradually losing out to a more separatist Talmudic Judaism. Further, the Christian Church was, during this same time, developing a permanent organization in the face of the delay in Christ's promised return. Along with this development, the Church was moving away from the synagogue, and writers such as Marcion and Justin tackled the question of Jewish/Christian relations, with dramatically different opinions.<sup>7</sup> Others, such as Max Dimont, in his popular work, *Jews, God, and History*, minimize fourth century developments and point to papal ascendancy at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century as the precipitant cause of hostility:

The establishment of the Papacy in the sixth century gave the Church a strong central rallying point. The last of the old dissident sects were stamped out; the last of the pagans in the former western half of the empire were converted. The Church could now afford to breathe more easily and to survey its domain in tranquility. The Jews, who had been virtually ignored by the Christians for six centuries, were now rediscovered.<sup>8</sup>

Others single out the fourth century as the era in which Jewish/Christian relations soured, but they differ as to the nature of the conflict. Jacob Neusner, in *Judaism in the Constantinian Era*, observes that this is the first and last time that Jews and Christians are asking the same questions about the same issues to different people,

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<sup>7</sup> Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire A.D. 135-425* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), xiv-xvi.

<sup>8</sup> Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God, and History*, (New York: Signet Books, 1962), 151.

and that this intellectual development accounts for the sudden recognition by both groups of the wide chasm that separates the two:

In many ways, therefore, the fourth century marks the point of intersection between the histories of the two religions, Judaism and Christianity. Before that time there was no confrontation. For Judaism and Christianity in late antiquity present histories that mirror each other. When Christianity began, Judaism was the dominant tradition in the Holy Land and expressed its ideas within a political framework until the early fifth century. Christianity was subordinate and had to operate against the background of a politically definitive Judaism. From the time of Constantine onward, matters reversed themselves. Now Christianity predominated, expressing its ideas in political and institutional terms. Judaism, by contrast, had lost its political foundations and faced the task of working out its self-understanding in terms of a world defined by Christianity, now everywhere triumphant and in charge of politics.<sup>9</sup>

Neusner suggests that this is the first era of which one can speak of “the anti-Judaism” of the Church, and that “the age of Constantine marked the turning of the world: all things were upside down.”<sup>10</sup> He finds that “the political revolution marked by Constantine’s conversion forced the two parties to discuss a single agenda,” comprised of three key issues: the meaning of history, the identity of the Messiah, and the definition of Israel as God’s people. Because of the “Christianization” of the Roman Empire, these issues were no longer items for oral or written religious debate, but urgent matters of public policy.<sup>11</sup> The rise of the Church as an organization that would rival the state in dominating social and civic matters, the end of the Jewish patriarchate, and Christian interest in the Holy land were all accompanying factors that made the fourth century a pivotal time for Christian/Jewish relations. Interestingly, Neusner identified

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<sup>9</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine: History, Messiah, Israel, and the Initial Confrontation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), x.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 61, 85.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

the last consideration as the “most profound,” one which drove Christians and Jews back to an examination of their commonly held Scriptures:

In the fourth century the two heirs of ancient Israel’s Scriptures, Judaism and Christianity, laid claim to the Land of Israel/the Holy Land. Constantine and his mother dotted the country with shrines and churches, so imparting to the geography of the land a Christian character. Israel for its part, was losing its hold on the Land of Israel, as the country gained a Christian majority. Here, in Genesis, sages found evidence for Israel’s right to hold the Land.<sup>12</sup>

The general observations of Neusner seem uncontested, and it is significant that he includes Eusebius (along with Aphrahat and Chrysostom) as one of three fourth century Christians whose writings demonstrate the validity of his claims. Neusner’s arguments need to be further evaluated to determine if he is correct in identifying intellectual differences as the basis of the fourth century change in Christian/Jewish relationships. Further, his identification of Eusebius as the earliest fourth century Christian thinker on this issue suggests the possibility of an instrumental role for the bishop of Caesarea.

Marcel Simon prefers a date of 425 for the key turning point in Jewish/Christian relations, pointing to the promulgation of the Theodosian Code, the disappearance of the Jewish patriarchate, and the shift from Palestine to Mesopotamia as the center of Jewish life, as dramatically important developments after the time of Constantine. He asserts that Constantinian-era changes “did not affect in any immediately perceptible fashion the relations between the two cults and the strictly religious problem they posed.” In spite of this argument, however, he immediately concedes the strategic importance of the time of Constantine: a “decisive change in the religious policies of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 19-20, 23, 40.

empire . . . changes in the legal status of Jews that changed the whole appearance of Judaism and contributed to its final disengagement,” and the uniting of Church and civil power. During this time, the “conflict lost none of its sharpness. . . . It was exacerbated.” Judaism, “far from capitulating immediately, made a supreme effort” to advance its cause, stimulated later by Julian’s pro-Jewish, anti-Christian policies. This era also witnessed a “rise within orthodox Christianity of ecclesiastical anti-Semitism.”<sup>13</sup> In light of these concessions, it is not surprising that Simon later suggests that Christian sentiment against the Jews, present in some measure from the Church’s inception, “only unfolded fully in the fourth century.” Now aligned with political rulers for the first time, the Church developed an attitude unknown before their ascension to power: “the new anti-Semitism expressed the opposition that the Church felt toward the Jews as obdurate dissidents.”<sup>14</sup> As a result of this outlook, the Church’s opposition to the Jews intensified throughout the fourth century, so that by the time of Chrysostom “everything, in fact, that had to do with Jewish practices, even the apparently ancient rites of synagogue worship, was to different degrees demon-inspired . . . to ask help from Jews is to appeal to demons.”<sup>15</sup>

An important source of information for the research in question is to be found within the Jewish writings of this period. It is during this same fourth century that the Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud are composed. Modern students of Roman history have generally not paid a great deal of attention to these writings or the

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<sup>13</sup> Simon, xvii.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 363.

developments in Judaism that they represent. In the same way, modern students of Jewish history (with exceptions such as Neusner) tend to view the developments of that history with only infrequent and generally superficial reference to the concurrent developments of Roman history. There is great potential in making an effort to merge the two worlds of scholarship. For example, as Feldman seeks to characterize the nature of rabbinic Judaism in the second through the fifth centuries, he concludes that there is a steady, and perhaps increasing, occurrence of Jewish proselytism of Gentiles during this period.<sup>16</sup> His observation, although not uncontested, perhaps yields some insight into the question of why the conflict with Judaism seems to have taken on a greater sense of urgency for fourth century Christians, compared to their counterparts in the first three Christian centuries. If, as suggested by Marcel Simon, there was a recent history of mutual concerted effort against the Christians by the Jews and the pre-Christian Roman emperors of the third century, then some degree of advance on the part of Judaism must have occurred during this period, as a result of its position as a recipient of “the imperial goodwill.”<sup>17</sup>

If it can be demonstrated that earlier Christians saw Judaism as an inward-looking faith on its last legs, while fourth century Christians saw it as a resurgent, newly-aggressive rival to the Christian church, a difference in the response to the Jews on the part of the two groups of Christians should not be surprising. This focus on fourth century people and events as critical in the development of Jewish/Christian

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<sup>16</sup> Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 413-414.

<sup>17</sup> Simon, 115.

relations is expressed well by Walter Pakter's conclusion about the origin of medieval western sanctions against the Jews:

Until the French Revolution, European Jews remained second-class citizens, subject to a series of disabilities which isolated them from the Christian majority physically and legally. With the notable exception of the ghetto itself, most of these restrictions were initiated by early canon and late Roman law in the period between Eusebius and Justinian.

Restrictions on Jews were developed mutually by the councils and the emperors. Early councils isolated Jews from Christian society by excluding them from social contracts and marriage. The Christianization of Roman law vastly increased the number of disabilities placed on the Jews . . . <sup>18</sup>

Although all agree that there is a definite development in the pattern of Jewish-Christian relations in these centuries, and while many agree that the fourth century is the most logical focal point to identify as a turning point, there has not been a systematic investigation of the reasons for this to be so. The present researcher plans to do just that: to look at various facets of fourth century Roman society that play into this development, to examine the possibilities that each aspect holds as an explanation for the changing attitudes evident in Christian writings about the Jews, and then to combine the information gleaned from each separate element into an integrated argument. The primary divisions of the research will be its Roman, Jewish, and Christian aspects. Limits of time and space prohibit a complete review of all three areas. Therefore, the research into Roman and Jewish sources will be abbreviated in order to assure an adequate examination of the Christian sources. It is hoped that adequate attention will

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<sup>18</sup> Walter Pakter, "Early Western Church Law and the Jews," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 727.

still be afforded to the Jewish and Roman perspectives in order to provide an accurate, if not exhaustive, understanding of their significance to the question.

Roman government for centuries had maintained friendly relations with the Jews. In spite of periodic revolts and other troubles, emperors had generally gone out of their way to avoid trouble with the Jews, and to allow them a relatively high degree of autonomy and freedom to practice their religion. If modern historiography is correct in emphasizing the conservatism of Constantine, his inclination to continue the programs of Diocletian and earlier emperors, and his reluctance to innovate,<sup>19</sup> what can then account for his reversal of imperial policy, in several instances, toward the Jews? Research will be directed toward a general overview of the earlier imperial policy, and toward a careful examination of Constantine's policies regarding the Jews, to investigate whether his directives were, as claimed by Dimont and others, insignificant hiccups in Roman policy, or whether they were, in fact, signs of a new attitude toward the Jews. If the latter proves to be true, these political and legal documents will be examined with an eye to finding hints at the reasons for this change.

As noted above, it is important to consider the potential contribution of Jewish writings of the period to the research question. This point could be expressed in another, broader way: what was going on in the Jewish community during this era, as evident from the Talmudic writings, other Jewish sources, and non-Jewish writings of the period that make reference to the Jewish community? Rather than focusing merely on

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<sup>19</sup> Hans A. Pohlsander, *The Emperor Constantine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 2004), 78-79.

the Christian references to the Jews in apologetic contexts, this research will seek to find references in Christian, government, and other non-Jewish writings of the time that give evidence of the existence, character, and vitality of the Jewish community in the late Roman world. Together with Jewish self-description in Talmudic and other sources, writings like these should provide insight into the question of the nature of Judaism as a rival of Christianity in the time of Constantine and Eusebius.

Christian sources of the first four centuries are filled with evidence of Christian views of the Jews, so an examination of these sources is the central part of the proposed research. It will focus on early Christian attitudes toward the Jews and Christian-Jewish relations as expressed in the New Testament documents, Apostolic Fathers, the second and third century apologists, and Constantinian era Christian writers, culminating in a review of the works of Eusebius, including his *Life of Constantine*, *History of the Church*, apologetic writings, and commentaries on the Scriptures.

Based on the preliminary reading and research already conducted, it is expected that this research will produce evidence that Constantine and Eusebius were not just recipients of an existing Christian view, but were, in fact, instrumental agents of significant change in Christian attitudes toward the Jews. Their motivation for bringing about this change came, on the one hand, from an imperial desire for uniformity and stability within the empire: this was demonstrated by new legal restraints placed upon the Jews by Constantine, supported by the development of a (Eusebian) Christian political theology which justified the new approach. On the other hand, it was a response to a Judaism which, for a brief moment in time, possessed an attractive vitality which convinced its Christian rivals that it must be taken seriously as a potential threat

to the universal spread of the Christian faith. This recognition inspired Eusebius and many of his fourth century successors to develop a Christian theological response to Judaism that was, in their estimation, more capable of overcoming the Jewish threat than the more fraternal, irenic approach of Justin and other earlier Christian writers.

If upheld, this thesis of a fourth century origin to significant anti-Judaism in the Christian church will contradict the conclusions of those who have determined that there is an intrinsic anti-Judaism inherent in Christianity from its beginning. Notably, Rosemary Radford Ruether has espoused just such a position and has successfully convinced others, such as Gregory Baum, of her position.<sup>20</sup> She found the following characteristics of early Christianity incompatible with Jewish-Christian reconciliation:

1. The Church asserted that it alone possessed salvation and the true knowledge of God. This belief inevitably led to its condemnation of Jewish belief and practice: "Like the Qumran community, Christianity vilified the Judaism outside its converted community as apostate, sinful, worse than the Gentiles, and even of the devil. It regarded the others as fallen outside the true covenant and ranked with the enemies of God."<sup>21</sup> The early Christians, therefore, refused to acknowledge that faithfulness to the Torah was for the Jews a legitimate path to salvation:

The crux of the conflict lay in the fact that the Church erected its messianic midrash into a new principle of salvation. For Christianity, salvation was now found no longer in any observances—ritual or ethical—founded on the Torah of Moses, representing the covenant of

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<sup>20</sup> Gregory Baum, Intro. to Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 1-22.

<sup>21</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 74.

the past, but only through the saving work of the person, Jesus, as predicted by the prophets.<sup>22</sup>

2. The Church misused the Jewish scriptures to support their Christological doctrines. For example, in order to make “religious sense” of the reality that Jesus the Messiah had been both rejected and killed by the people he came to save, Christians “read back into Jewish history a record of apostate Israel as rejecting and killing the prophets, in order then to read this pattern forward again to make the death of Jesus the predicted and culminating act of this history of apostasy.”<sup>23</sup> They posited that the Scripture was to be understood as relating to two distinct peoples: “Every negative judgment, threat, or description can then be taken out of context and read monolithically as descriptive of ‘the Jews.’ The positive side of the prophetic message—faith, repentance, and future promise—are said to apply not to the Jews, but to the future Church.”<sup>24</sup> If her assertions are true on this score, then she is certainly right to conclude that “this exegesis calls for extraordinary distortion of the actual meaning of the biblical texts,”<sup>25</sup> which address both promises and judgments to the one people, Israel.
3. These patterns of Christian rejection of the Jews are reflected in the earliest written documents of the Church, the New Testament. Yet, these writings are themselves the product of early Christians who were attempting to place

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

in a favorable light the tension in which they found themselves against the Jews. For example, although typical of the Synoptic view, “Matthew undoubtedly expressed a hardening of attitudes that came about as a result of competition between the Church and the synagogue in the Diaspora.”<sup>26</sup> The account of Simeon’s acknowledgement of Jesus in the Temple as the promised one who would become a “light to the Gentiles”<sup>27</sup> is not seriously regarded as an actual event. It can only be a construct of the synoptists, “read back into the beginning of Jesus’ life”<sup>28</sup> from the vantage point of the end of the first century. While anti-Jewish sentiment permeates the New Testament, it is especially evident in the writings of Paul, because of the apostle’s “remarkable fusion of Gnostic and apocalyptic dualisms,” which relegated the old Jewish system and its leaders to the realm of this present age, characterized as it is by “slavery, sin, and death,” in contrast to the “new age to come” brought in by Christ, which is “eternal and spiritual in character.”<sup>29</sup> The Gospel of John is the pinnacle of Christian polemic against the Jews, as it asserts that “only through Christ is there access to the Father.” As a result, the Jews, who did not accept Christ, approach the Scriptures “completely incapable of knowing their true meaning or of finding in them true knowledge of God.”<sup>30</sup> They are thus doomed to remain separated from God,

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Isa 42:1-6; Mt 12:18-21; Ac 13:47; Lk 2:32.

<sup>28</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 86.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

and their treachery against Jesus is but to be expected. By identifying the Jews as the children of the devil, “John gives the ultimate theological form to that diabolizing of the Jews which is the root of anti-Semitism in the Christian tradition.” Consequently, “there is no way to rid Christianity of its anti-Judaism, which constantly takes social expression in anti-Semitism, without grappling finally with its Christological hermeneutic itself.”<sup>31</sup>

4. The writings of the Church Fathers of the first five centuries continue the anti-Judaism of the New Testament. This takes different forms, including collections of scriptural “testimonies” against the Jews, fictional dialogues between Christians and Jews, treatises against specific Jewish practices, and comprehensive general assaults on Judaism. The result is invariably a negative portrayal of the spiritual condition of the Jews. Ruether insists that “the *adversus Judaeos* tradition represents the overall method of Christian exegesis of the Old Testament.” While acknowledging that this theme was “virtually absent” from the writings of Clement of Alexandria, she believes that it was so pervasive everywhere else that she can legitimately charge that “it was virtually impossible for the Christian preacher or exegete to teach scripturally at all without alluding to the anti-Judaic theses. Christian scriptural teaching and preaching per se is based on a method in which anti-Judaic polemic exists as the left hand of its Christological hermeneutic.”<sup>32</sup> A

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

significant aspect of her exposition of patristic texts is her conviction that there is little difference among the fathers over time in their use of this polemic, that the themes of this tradition, which include the displacement of the Jews by the Gentiles and the obsolescence of their religion, “remain quite constant from the second to the sixth centuries.”<sup>33</sup> Christians set out “to prove that the Jewish understanding of these things is unworthy and ‘carnal,’ while the Christian possesses the ‘spiritual’ realization of that which the Jew clings to in a merely outward way.”<sup>34</sup>

5. The early Church fathers are relatively unconcerned with the conversion of the Jews, for they “aim primarily at shoring up Christian self-understanding, rather than at dialogue with real Jews.”<sup>35</sup> The continued existence of a non-believing Jewish community serves as proof of the validity of Christian interpretations of their Old Testament, so conversion is less important to these writers than their ability to demonstrate the legitimacy of Christian claims.

This dissertation will examine the primary sources of the early Christian church in regard to these claims. After a survey of these sources, including brief looks at the Jewish and Roman perspectives as well, conclusions will be presented which will evaluate the legitimacy of Ruether’s arguments in light of the weight of the sources.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

**Part One:**  
**Early Christian Perspectives on the Jews**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE EARLIEST SOURCES: THE NEW TESTAMENT (C. A.D. 50-95)**

#### **The Gospels**

##### **The Synoptic Gospels**

The books of the New Testament are the earliest written account of the birth of the Church and the beginning of its relations with the Jews. Gospels and letters, history and apocalypse, all include insights into the sentiment of the early Christians toward the Judaism of their day. An examination of these documents is crucial to understanding the mindset that would become the foundation for many later generations of Christians.

The four gospels share much in their treatment of the relationship between the Church and the Jews. The synoptic gospels, especially, demonstrate a common underlying attitude, with each exhibiting unique characteristics in this regard. Matthew consciously identifies the areas of continuity between Judaism and Christianity. His introduction to the life of Jesus places it squarely in the context of Jewish history: “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.”<sup>1</sup> The gospel is full of citations from the Jewish scriptures, selected to demonstrate that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promises made by God to the Jewish people. For example, the religious leaders of the Jews explain to Herod that the Christ must be born in

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 1:1, 17; 2:1-2.

Bethlehem, for “this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’”<sup>2</sup> Again, as he introduces the ministry of Jesus in the region of Galilee, Matthew places it in the context of the fulfillment of Scripture: “. . . to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles □ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’”<sup>3</sup>

The slaughter of babies in Bethlehem was the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:15. The ministry of John the Baptist had been foretold in Isaiah 40, and was to result in the restoration of Israel’s relationship with God: “Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> The angel promised to Mary that her son “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.”<sup>5</sup> Mary’s song in response to these promises praises God because “he has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendents forever, even as he said to our fathers”; Zechariah’s song that follows begins, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of

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<sup>2</sup> Mt 2:6.

<sup>3</sup> Mt 4:12-16

<sup>4</sup> Lk 1:16-17.

<sup>5</sup> Lk 1:32.

salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”<sup>6</sup> None of these correlations were accidental; they showed that Jesus was the Christ, the one for whom the Jews had hoped.<sup>7</sup> In response to the appearance of John, great numbers of the Jews turned out to hear him, and responded positively to his message: “People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.”<sup>8</sup>

When Jesus began to teach, it was apparent that he was first and foremost a teacher of the law, which he upheld rigorously: “It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.”<sup>9</sup> He taught from the Scriptures in the synagogues of the Jews,<sup>10</sup> and in one narrative, the parent of a child healed by Jesus is four times over reported to be a ruler of the synagogue.<sup>11</sup> Matthew includes more than fifty direct quotations from the Jewish scriptures, Mark almost thirty, and Luke and John around twenty each. More than that, the words, thoughts, and worldview presented in these gospels are infused with the spirit of the Scripture. The disciples of Jesus are drawn from among the Jews.<sup>12</sup> Tempted by Satan in the desert, he responded three times with the words of Scripture.<sup>13</sup> He asserted that it stood as the standard for faith and practice for his followers: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I

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<sup>6</sup> Lk 1:54-55, 68-69.

<sup>7</sup> Mt 2:17; 3:1-3.

<sup>8</sup> Mt 3:5; Mk 1:5.

<sup>9</sup> Lk 16:17.

<sup>10</sup> Mt 4:23; Mk 1:21-22; 3:1; 6:2; Lk 4:16-17; 13:10.

<sup>11</sup> Mk 5:22

<sup>12</sup> Mt 4:18-22; Mk 3:13-19

<sup>13</sup> Mt 4:1-11.

tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”<sup>14</sup>

When challenged by the Pharisees regarding divorce, Jesus answered by referring them back to the law of Moses.<sup>15</sup> He tells the rich young ruler that his hope for eternal life was found in obeying the commands of God.<sup>16</sup> His confirmation of the validity of the Mosaic law did not restrict Jesus to a mere explanation of its precepts, however. He implied that the reign of the law was coming to an end, saying, “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.”<sup>17</sup> He placed himself above the law by insisting on a conformity to it that went beyond its literal instructions:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.<sup>18</sup>

Six times over in Matthew 5 the formula is repeated, “You have heard . . . but I tell you.” Jesus used the law as the foundation of his teaching, but his teaching went beyond the law. He taught, from the law, that there was a higher law to which his followers must comply: “He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a

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<sup>14</sup> Mt 5:17-20.

<sup>15</sup> Mk 10:2

<sup>16</sup> Mk 10:17-21.

<sup>17</sup> Mt 11:13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Mt 5:21-22.

pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”<sup>19</sup>

These expositions of the law did not denigrate its authority. Instead, they enhanced that authority, by demanding compliance of the heart as well as of external actions. Though he demanded this internal agreement with the intent of the law, Jesus continued to insist that obedience to the law, shown by actions, was the test of faithfulness for his disciples: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”<sup>20</sup>

Jesus’ mission is expressed in terms of the Jews. As he sent the twelve out to preach and do miracles, he reminded them, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.”<sup>21</sup> When Jesus teaches the crowds and ministers to them with miracles, “they praised the God of Israel.”<sup>22</sup> The lepers that he heals are directed to go and show themselves to the priest and offer the appropriate sacrifice.<sup>23</sup> When he feeds thousands of people miraculously on two occasions, the language is strongly reminiscent of Israel’s great prophet, Moses.<sup>24</sup> Jesus is identified as “the Christ,” i.e., the anointed one, thereby claiming the legacy of God’s covenant with David from the Jewish scriptures.<sup>25</sup> His transfiguration is completed in

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<sup>19</sup> Mt 12:11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Mt 7:21.

<sup>21</sup> Mt 10:5-6.

<sup>22</sup> Mt 15:31.

<sup>23</sup> Mt 8:4.

<sup>24</sup> Mt 14:13-21; 15:29-39.

<sup>25</sup> Mt 16:16.

the presence of Jewish heroes, Moses and Elijah.<sup>26</sup> The crowds welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, throwing palm branches and cloaks before the king on his donkey. They acclaim him with language drawn directly from Scripture: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”<sup>27</sup>

The establishment of “the Lord’s Supper” on the eve of the death of Jesus is presented as a continuation of the Jewish Passover and fulfillment of the Jewish law: “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”<sup>28</sup> When arrested, he warned his disciples not to intervene on his behalf, so that “the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way,” and Matthew editorializes that “this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.”<sup>29</sup> Even the Roman governor Pilate, who presided at Jesus’ trial, was aware of the attempt by the Jewish people to identify Jesus with the prophetic declarations which pointed to a coming king, as he queried Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”<sup>30</sup> From beginning to end, the Jesus story of the gospels links together the Scriptures, rites, and practices of the Jews with the founder and seminal beliefs of the Christian faith.

There is, however, an openness to the Gentiles that is expressed by the gospels alongside this Jewish emphasis. Luke especially demonstrates this inclusion, beginning with the song of Simeon in the temple: “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which

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<sup>26</sup> Mt 17:1-9; Mk 9:1-13; Lk 9:28-36.

<sup>27</sup> Mt 21:7-9; Mk 11:4-11; cf. Ps 118:26.

<sup>28</sup> Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20.

<sup>29</sup> Mt 26:53, 56.

<sup>30</sup> Mt 27:11.

you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”<sup>31</sup> The “gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.”<sup>32</sup> A demoniac freed of his oppression spreads his story throughout the Decapolis, a region populated by Gentiles, and a deaf man from this region is also healed by Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Jesus extends God’s favor even to a Roman centurion, commending him for his exceptional faith.<sup>34</sup> The obvious implication of this account is not merely that this Gentile was capable of faith, but that his faith was in sharp contrast to the lack of faith of the Jews, “the subjects of the kingdom.” Luke adds to this that the elders of the Jews had appealed to Jesus in this case: “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”<sup>35</sup>

The inclusion of the Gentiles seems to come at the expense of the Jew:

There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.<sup>36</sup>

Another incident reinforces this perspective, noting both Jesus’ call to minister to the Jews, but also his willingness to go beyond it in the presence of faith:

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Jesus

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<sup>31</sup> Lk 2:30-32.

<sup>32</sup> Mt 24:14.

<sup>33</sup> Mk 5:20; 7:31.

<sup>34</sup> Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10.

<sup>35</sup> Lk 7:4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Lk 13:28-30.

did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.<sup>37</sup>

The Roman centurion at the cross declared the divine uniqueness of Jesus;<sup>38</sup> and the gospels close with the command to take the good news about Jesus to all the nations.<sup>39</sup>

This story is also heavily laced with accounts of conflict between the Jews and Jesus. John warned the Pharisees and Sadducees who came out to him in the desert, "And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'" <sup>40</sup> Although there were isolated incidents in which entire groups of Jews are shown as opposing Jesus (in his hometown, e.g.),<sup>41</sup> the synoptists generally go out of their way to lay the guilt for this conflict squarely on the institutional leadership of the Jews, who "loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus."<sup>42</sup>

The Jewish people themselves, however, are ordinarily presented as supportive of Jesus' ministry. They "listened to him with delight," were "amazed and gave praise to God" for his miracles, and believed that "God has come to help his people."<sup>43</sup> It is recorded that "A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned

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<sup>37</sup> Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24f.

<sup>38</sup> Mk 15:39.

<sup>39</sup> Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47.

<sup>40</sup> Mt 3:7-9.

<sup>41</sup> Mt 13:53-58.

<sup>42</sup> Lk 16:14.

<sup>43</sup> Mt 3:5; 4:23-25; 7:28-29; 14:34-35; 15:31; 21:7-11; Mk 12:37; Lk 5:26; 7:16.

and wailed for him,” even as he was being led away to be killed.<sup>44</sup> While “all the people hung on his words,” the “chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him”; “the teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.”<sup>45</sup> This distinction was not merely implied, but was explicitly stated: “All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.”<sup>46</sup> The “people” recognized a difference between Jesus' authoritative teaching and those “teachers of the law” to whom they were accustomed.<sup>47</sup> Even as “all Judea” was going out to John to be baptized by him, the leaders of the people were found to be guilty of spiritual arrogance by the Baptist:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”<sup>48</sup>

Luke includes the crowd in this denunciation by John: John warned the crowds who came out to him in the desert, “And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have

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<sup>44</sup> Lk 23:27.

<sup>45</sup> Lk 19:47-48; 20:19.

<sup>46</sup> Lk 7:29-30.

<sup>47</sup> Mk 1:22, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Mt 3:7-12.

Abraham as our father.”<sup>49</sup> He also has Jesus condemn this wider audience: “As the crowds increased, Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.’”<sup>50</sup> Luke goes on to indict the crowd, and not just their leaders, for their hypocrisy in knowing the weather better than they do the signs of the times.<sup>51</sup> It appears to be the crowd, and not the leaders to whom he delivers this stinging warning: “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’”<sup>52</sup> When some Pharisees try to scare Jesus away from Jerusalem with the news that Herod wants to kill him, only Luke reports that Jesus included in his response the words, “surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.” Then follows Jesus’ lament over the city:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’<sup>53</sup>

Even though these verses are found in both Matthew and Luke, Matthew places them in the context of Jesus’ denunciation of the Pharisees, whereas Luke places it immediately after Jesus’ words of condemnation to people of the villages on his way to Jerusalem.

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<sup>49</sup> Lk 3:8.

<sup>50</sup> Lk 11:29.

<sup>51</sup> Lk 12:54-56.

<sup>52</sup> Lk 13:25-30.

<sup>53</sup> Lk 14:34-35; Mt 23:37-39.

Yet, throughout all the gospels it continues to be the religious leadership whose religious scrupulosity Jesus rejects, and of whom he warns his followers to beware: “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”<sup>54</sup> The Pharisees represented all “who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else.” They were the ones who needed to learn the lesson that “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”<sup>55</sup> On repeated occasions, the Pharisees, Sadducees, or teachers of the law are portrayed as attempting to trap Jesus out of malicious intent and distrust of his teaching. They criticized his practices and those of his disciples, especially relating to keeping the Sabbath and other traditional observances. They prodded him to do miracles to verify his claims. They tried to set him up with contrived questions about the law, and contested the authority with which he taught and acted. A series of passages from the later phase of his ministry illustrates their attitude:

But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

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<sup>54</sup> Mt 6:5.

<sup>55</sup> Lk 18:14.

Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.<sup>56</sup>

The leaders' hostility toward Jesus can be explained at least in part by their conviction that he was a blasphemer and false teacher: "The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, 'Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" He recklessly disregarded their religious scruples and attempts to remain unpolluted from evil: "But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners?'"<sup>57</sup> Ironically, as pointed out by Simon, the gospels' negative preoccupation with the Pharisees and doctors of the law implies the continued strength of these groups in the later part of the first century when these gospels were composed: "It bears witness to the disappointment and frustration the Church felt in the face of Pharasaism. In its way, therefore, it bears witness to the vitality of the Pharasaic ideal."<sup>58</sup> There was an obvious competition between Jesus and the established leaders for the hearts and loyalty of the people:

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Mt 12:1-2, 9-10, 38; 15:1-2; 16:1; 19:3; 21:15, 23; 22:15-17, 23; Mk 2:5-6, 16, 18, 23-24; 3:1, 22; 8:11-12; 10:2; 11:27-28; 12:13, 18; 15:31-32; Lk 5:33; 6:1-10; 11:53-54; 14:1; 20:21.

<sup>57</sup> Lk 5:21, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Simon, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5; Mt 15:1-20; Mk 7:1-23; Lk 13:14-17.

In these situations, Jesus responded sharply to the Jewish leaders, appealing to scriptural precedent and common decency, refusing to satisfy their probes with signs and wonders, choosing to accuse them of disobedience to the law rather than to answer their questions, and on more than one occasion, leaving them in disgust. He defends his disciples against their accusations in regard to handwashing and Sabbath practices, and when the crowd began to sing his praises, he quieted their protests by saying, “. . . if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”<sup>60</sup> He embraces, rather than denies, that he is the “Lord of the Sabbath.” He identifies them as a “wicked and adulterous generation.”<sup>61</sup> He goes so far as to assert that the Sadducees do not know God or his word: “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”<sup>62</sup> He rejects the rules of ritual purity regarding hand-washing, and is unconcerned with the possibility that he had offended the leaders, since they were “blind guides” who were not related to his Father in heaven.<sup>63</sup> He tells several parables that deliver not very subtle condemnations of the Jewish leaders for being poor stewards of God’s blessings.<sup>64</sup>

While defending a woman of ill-repute, Jesus scolds the Pharisee, Simon, for his self-righteousness: “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”<sup>65</sup> His followers are to

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<sup>60</sup> Lk 19:40.

<sup>61</sup> Mt 12:39; Lk 6:5.

<sup>62</sup> Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24.

<sup>63</sup> Mt 15:11-12.

<sup>64</sup> Lk 13:6-9.

<sup>65</sup> Lk 7:47.

avoid the sins of these hypocrites, in regard to prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. They are to “avoid the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”<sup>66</sup> In the gospels, Jesus declares that the prophets had spoken not only of himself, but also of his opponents, as he says, “You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’”<sup>67</sup> Jesus’ cleansing of the temple symbolizes his conviction that the entire Jewish religious system was corrupt and in desperate need of purifying.<sup>68</sup>

Ironically, Matthew is the gospel that delivers the sharpest, and longest, denunciations of the Jewish leaders by Jesus, at the same time that it is the one gospel that most attempts to tie the Christian message to its Jewish roots. Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees and other leaders is expressed through parables, for example in the parable of the tenants, the conclusion of which points accusingly at these leaders:

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.<sup>69</sup>

Matthew 23 is another key passage notable for its extended presentation of a blunt confrontation of the Jewish leaders by Jesus:

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<sup>66</sup> Mt 6:1-18; Mk 8:15.

<sup>67</sup> Mt 15:7-9.

<sup>68</sup> Mt 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-19.

<sup>69</sup> Mt 21:35-46; Mk 12:1-12.

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. “Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ . . . “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? . . . “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?<sup>70</sup>

This chapter includes many significant terms which display Jesus’ attitude toward the Jewish leaders. Most of these are self-evident from the bluntness of the language that is used. It is worth noting, however, that at the very beginning of the

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<sup>70</sup> Mt 23:1-33; cf. Lk 11:37-54.

chapter, Matthew separates the characters into three groups: “the crowds,” “his disciples,” and the “teachers of the law and the Pharisees.” There is no mistaking the significance of this division. He is reaching out to the crowds, from whom he has received regular, if not complete, support. His disciples are those who have left the crowd in order to follow him wholeheartedly. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are left as the villains of the story. They are hypocrites, they love public attention and titles, they are agents of hell and not of heaven, they are experts in external compliance at the expense of inner commitment, they robe their disobedience in religious zeal, and they will ultimately be responsible for the persecution of God’s true people.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in Luke, Jesus said to his disciples, “while all the people were listening”:

Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.<sup>72</sup>

Occasionally, Jesus speaks to or about the Jewish leaders as if he expects that they might actually respond well to his teaching. One of the teachers of the law exclaimed to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.”<sup>73</sup> After relating several of Jesus’ parables, Matthew adds, “He said to them, ‘Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.’”<sup>74</sup> On another occasion, we see a Pharisee hosting Jesus at his home for a dinner; although the event eventually

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<sup>71</sup> Mk 12:38-40.

<sup>72</sup> Lk 20:46-47; cf. Mt 23:7; Mk 12:38-40.

<sup>73</sup> Mt 8:19.

<sup>74</sup> Mt 13:52.

gave rise to conflict, it appears that the invitation was extended in good will, as demonstrated by Jesus' acceptance of it: "When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table."<sup>75</sup>

When Jesus silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees seem to have desired to take another look at him. Mark observes, "Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with a question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'" Jesus' response, "Love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself," shows that he took this questioning seriously, and was willing to enter into a respectful dialogue with these teachers. Matthew's gospel leaves it there, with no further comment on the man's response. Luke's account questions the man's sincerity, as Luke reports, "But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" However, Mark presents a much more positive view as he records the words of Jesus to the man, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."<sup>76</sup>

Throughout the gospels, but increasingly toward the end of the story of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish leaders are accused of plotting to kill Jesus. He warns his disciples, "Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles."<sup>77</sup> After witnessing his apparent disregard for the Sabbath rules, "the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill

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<sup>75</sup> Lk 11:37.

<sup>76</sup> Mark 12:34.

<sup>77</sup> Mt 10:17-18.

Jesus.”<sup>78</sup> Jesus saw this opposition as inevitable, and even necessary for the completion of his mission: “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” On a later occasion, as he and his disciples were leaving to go into Jerusalem, Jesus informed them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”<sup>79</sup> As recorded above, Jesus’ parables incurred the wrath of the leaders against him. “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.”<sup>80</sup> Again, “the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. ‘But not during the Feast,’ they said, ‘or there may be a riot among the people.’”<sup>81</sup> Recording the same events, Mark is somewhat softer on the Jewish leaders, spreading the blame for Jesus’ death to all humanity on at least one occasion. “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise,” Mark reports, not naming the Jewish leaders explicitly as Matthew did,<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Mt 12:14; Mk 3:6.

<sup>79</sup> Mt 16:21; 20:18.

<sup>80</sup> Mt 21:45-46; Mk 11:18.

<sup>81</sup> Mt 26:3-5; Mk 14:1-2

<sup>82</sup> Mk 9:31.

although at other times he uses the more specific language.<sup>83</sup> Luke goes somewhat further, implying that the Jews' guilt would arise from their complicity with the Gentiles, the ones who would actually abuse and kill Jesus, for "He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him."<sup>84</sup>

As a consequence of the sin of the Jews, they would experience the total destruction of their city and the decimation of their people:

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."<sup>85</sup>

This destruction will descend upon the Jews because of their sin, in accordance with the writings of their prophets, and is connected with the rise of the Gentiles:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.<sup>86</sup>

They eventually acted on their plans, in accord with Judas, the traitor from within the circle of Jesus' disciples: "With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people."<sup>87</sup> The Jewish leaders are shown to be the instigating cause of the prosecution and death of Jesus: they

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<sup>83</sup> Mk 8:31; 10:33.

<sup>84</sup> Lk 18:31-33.

<sup>85</sup> Lk 19:41-44.

<sup>86</sup> Lk 21:20-24.

<sup>87</sup> Mt 26:47; Mk 14:43.

arrested him and took him first to a hearing before Caiaphas, the high priest. They searched intently for a reason to accuse him, eventually concocting a bogus charge against him by twisting some of his words. After condemning him as a blasphemer, they physically abused him, spitting, slapping, and hitting him.<sup>88</sup> They dragged him into Pilate's court and served as his formal accusers. They persuaded the crowd to demand his execution and ask for the freedom of Barabbas instead of that of Jesus.<sup>89</sup> They took on themselves and their posterity the blood of Jesus.<sup>90</sup> Once Jesus was on the cross, they mocked and jeered at his inability to deliver himself.<sup>91</sup> Finally, faced with the possibility of Jesus' resurrection following his death, they first demanded a guard for the tomb, then later conspired to create an alternative explanation and bribed the guards who might otherwise have prevented their story from taking hold.<sup>92</sup>

In the gospel account, Pilate takes an active, if secondary, role in the trial and death of Jesus. Jesus is brought to him by the angry leaders of the Jews. Pilate takes the initiative in questioning Jesus, twice attempting to elicit from him an explanation of the charges made against him. He perceived the jealousy of Jesus' opponents and, prompted by his wife's bad dream, tried three times to get the crowd to allow Jesus to go free. When that failed, he literally washed his hands of the affair and gave Jesus over to the desires and the responsibility of the Jews. Mark specifically attributes his actions to his desire to win favor with the Jews. Pilate certainly does not appear noble in this account,

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<sup>88</sup> Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:55-59; Lk 22:52,66.

<sup>89</sup> Mt 27:1-15.

<sup>90</sup> Mt 27:25.

<sup>91</sup> Mt 27:39-40; Mk 15:31-32.

<sup>92</sup> Mt 28:12-15.

since his inner perception of Jesus' innocence did not translate into just actions, and he allowed his soldiers to beat, mock, and torture Jesus on his way to crucifixion.<sup>93</sup>

Even after his death and resurrection, Jesus instructed his disciples to remain true to the Jewish law, since he himself was at the heart of that law:

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. . . . He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.<sup>94</sup>

His followers remained committed to their Jewish roots, for after his ascension, "they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God."<sup>95</sup>

### **The Gospel of John**

The Gospel of John deserves individual attention, for it has been singled out as especially, foundationally, anti-Jewish in its account of the life of Jesus. Dubnov places the gospel's composition well into the second century, asserting that its anti-Jewish slant arose from an established pattern of events up until that time:

The author of the fourth Gospel had lived among Hellenist-Christians, and from the standpoint of time and place, was far away from the national drama of the Judeans during the reign of Titus; the face of Jerusalem was for him the last act of that drama; and the epilogue of the drama that he witnessed, the uprising under Trajan and Hadrian, apparently held no interest for him. The alienation of

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<sup>93</sup> Mt 27:11-31; Mk 15:1-20.

<sup>94</sup> Lk 24:25-27, 44-45.

<sup>95</sup> Lk 24:52-53.

Christianity from its historical source already manifested itself here in full measure.<sup>96</sup>

This perspective has not received recent support, and it is generally agreed that the gospel originated in the late first century. Yet, it remains true that the villains of John's account are clearly "the Jews," and that animosity between Christians and Jews was a reality both at the time of the incidents recorded in the gospel and at the time of its composition. Whomever he had in mind, John certainly made them the persistent opponents of Jesus' life and teaching:

Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. . . . For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him.

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

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<sup>96</sup> Dubnov, 71.

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”<sup>97</sup>

Some have suggested that those John refers to in these passages were the inhabitants of Judea, in contrast to the Jewish people who lived in Galilee or other areas in the nation, thereby interpreting Jesus’ conflict with “the Jews” as one within and among the Jews, a sort of religious civil war.<sup>98</sup> This theory is supported by some passages within the gospel that acknowledge some level of animosity between the regions of Judea and Galilee: “After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.”<sup>99</sup> The Pharisees jeer Nicodemus for defending Jesus, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”<sup>100</sup>

Others have suggested that “John” must not have been a Jew himself, since only an outsider would refer to the Jews in the third person, and that his continual usage of the term, as summarized above, implies a negative connotation that a Jew would not have used of himself and his own people. In support of this perspective, advocates of this view point to numerous passages where John explains Jewish customs to an audience that must have been unfamiliar with them. For example:

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).

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<sup>97</sup> Jn 2:18; 5:16, 18; 7:1; 8:48; 9:22; 10:31; 11:8; 18:35; 19:7,12.

<sup>98</sup> James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), 78, 85.

<sup>99</sup> Jn 7:1.

<sup>100</sup> Jn 7:52.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.<sup>101</sup>

That these explanations assume a non-Jewish audience seems entirely reasonable, but they do not require a non-Jewish author. In fact, they demand an author who, if not Jewish, at least had adequate interaction with the Jews to have acquired the knowledge of Jewish customs and beliefs that lie behind these explanations.

Upon closer inspection, however, John's treatment of the Jews is consistent with that of the other evangelists, and is not hostile toward the Jews, as is often asserted. When John says of Christ the Word, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him," he is not pointing exclusively to the Jews, but to the world, for the verse immediately prior reports, "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him."<sup>102</sup> That this is a depiction of separation between earthly and heavenly realms, and not a Jewish-Gentile issue, is affirmed when Jesus later says, "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."<sup>103</sup>

Even though John makes accusations against "the Jews," as listed above, these are most accurately seen as references primarily to the leaders of the Jews, rather than the people themselves, just as in the synoptic gospels. It was, after all, priests, Levites, and Pharisees who went to John the Baptist and were condemned by him. It was the

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<sup>101</sup> Jn 2:6; 19:13, 31.

<sup>102</sup> Jn 1:10-11.

<sup>103</sup> Jn 16:28.

Pharisees who “heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John,” thereby causing Jesus to leave Judea and return to Galilee. Although John indicts “the Jews” for plotting to kill Jesus in chapter five, Jesus’ words there make it plain that it was the leaders who were involved, for of whom but them would Jesus claim, “You diligently study the Scriptures . . . yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” After John has reported that “the Jews” wanted Jesus dead, and that the crowds avoided public discussion about Jesus “for fear of the Jews,” he clarifies of whom he is speaking by explaining, “some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, ‘Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?’” John thus ties together “they,” “the Jews,” and “the authorities.” When the crowds began to speak positively about Jesus, “the Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.” It was not the people in general, but their leaders who turned against Jesus, for the attempt to arrest him originated within the institutional powers, not among the people: “The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.” The conflict in chapter eight, in which Jesus challenges the “Jews who had believed him” regarding their spiritual lineage, makes sense when placed in the context of a division between the people and their leaders: early in the chapter, Jesus “spoke again to the people,” but “the Pharisees challenged him.” When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath who had been born blind, it was the Pharisees who cross-examined the man, and they were, therefore, the “Jews” of whom the man’s parents were afraid because they had “decided that anyone who

acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.” After this incident, Jesus confronts the Pharisees, and not the crowd, with their spiritual blindness.

When Jesus had not yet gone up to Jerusalem for the Passover, there were two groups awaiting him: the “many” who “went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover,” who were apparently interested in hearing Jesus teach; and “the chief priests and Pharisees,” who were trying to hunt Jesus down. Because of the notoriety surrounding the resuscitation of Lazarus, “a large crowd” gathered to see him and hear his story, while “the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well” as Jesus, lest he cause even more people to turn to Jesus. The Pharisees intimidated even others within the Jewish leadership from publicly declaring their faith in Jesus. Not the people in general, but the “Jewish officials,” led by Annas and Caiaphas, were responsible for the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Jesus: these were the ones introduced by John as the conspirators in the plot to kill Jesus, so they are also the ones to whom he refers in the ensuing story. When he continues, “the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor,” he is making clear his accusation that it is these Jews, the group surrounding the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who would repeatedly shout for Jesus’ execution against Pilate’s attempts to free him. The high priest is the one who “questioned Jesus” after his arrest. It is explicitly “the chief priests” who argue, “We have no king but Caesar.” Finally, when Pilate labeled Jesus on the cross as the “King of the Jews,” it was only “the chief priests of the Jews” who

protested, apparently in the absence of any widespread sentiment among the rest of the people.<sup>104</sup>

If John's negative response to "the Jews" is an indictment of the Jewish leadership, and not Jews in general, then it could be expected that the gospel expresses support for the Jewishness of Christianity as the other gospels were shown to do. This is, in fact, what is found. Andrew first followed Jesus on the recommendation of John the Baptist, who had proclaimed that Jesus was "the Lamb of God," a term rich in meaning derived from the sacrificial system of the Jewish scriptures. He, in turn, told his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah." The first interaction of Jesus with Philip and Nathanael shows that these disciples followed Jesus as a Jew, in the hope that he was the fulfillment of their Scriptures:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." . . . Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."<sup>105</sup>

John tells the story of Nicodemus, a Pharisee who was "a member of the Jewish ruling council." He is portrayed as an earnest searcher after truth in chapter three, defends Jesus against the accusations of the Pharisees in chapter seven, and shows up again in chapter nineteen as one who cares for Jesus' body after he had died on the cross.<sup>106</sup> He does not minimize distinctive Jewish beliefs but embraces them. Instead of seeking common ground with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus states clearly,

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<sup>104</sup> Jn 1:19, 24-25; 4:1; 5:39-40; 7:25-27, 45; 8:12-13, 31-41; 9:13, 22, 39-40; 11:55-57; 12:9-11, 42; 18:12-14, 19, 28-40; 19:1-16, 21.

<sup>105</sup> Jn 1:29, 40-41, 45-49.

<sup>106</sup> Jn 3:1-21; 7:50-52; 19:39.

“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”<sup>107</sup> The fact that Jesus spoke this in the context of a coming worship of the spirit does not negate his assertion of the exclusivity of the Jewish way to God.

Jesus spoke as the one who fulfilled the law because he was the one of whom the law spoke: “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”<sup>108</sup> He had respect for the observance of the law, and participated in its prescribed rituals, including, for example, the Feast of Dedication at the temple in Jerusalem, even when that was a dangerous place for him to be because of his enemies.<sup>109</sup> At his trial, Jesus could claim, “I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together.”<sup>110</sup> When many people from among the Jews rejected his message, John placed this rejection in the context of the prophetic

Scriptures:

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.<sup>111</sup>

In spite of widespread rejection, Jesus yet attracted many of the Jews to himself.

As indicated above, Nicodemus was apparently at least a secret follower of Jesus. He

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<sup>107</sup> Jn 4:22.

<sup>108</sup> Jn 5:45-47.

<sup>109</sup> Jn 10:22.

<sup>110</sup> Jn 18:20.

<sup>111</sup> Jn 12:39-41.

was not alone, for “at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.”<sup>112</sup> To a greater extent than among the leaders, however, there appears to have been fairly wide popular support of Jesus. John indicates that “many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.”<sup>113</sup> Jesus’ reluctance to take these professions of belief at face value is not in any way connected to the Jewishness of the converts, but to their basic human nature, for Jesus “knew all men.” The problem with the Jewish people was not that they disbelieved Jesus’ claims, but that they believed them to be the announcement of a re-establishment of a political kingdom for Israel, with him at its head: “After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”<sup>114</sup> The response of the Jewish people was positive enough that John could observe that “many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, ‘When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?’”<sup>115</sup> His teaching drew them in: “Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.”<sup>116</sup> When Jesus raised Lazarus

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<sup>112</sup> Jn 12:42.

<sup>113</sup> Jn 2:23-24.

<sup>114</sup> Jn 6:14-15.

<sup>115</sup> Jn 7:31.

<sup>116</sup> Jn 8:30.

from the dead, the result was that “many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.”<sup>117</sup>

The thing that separated “the Jews” of John’s account from the rest of the people was their response to the claims of Christ; for example, “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”<sup>118</sup> For the most part, the leaders of the Jewish nation (with the exception of people like Nicodemus) rejected these claims, while many of the people from the common population accepted them. The result was a clear divide between the people and their leaders, and in some cases, among the leaders themselves. After Jesus claims that he is “the living bread that came down from heaven,” the Jews “began to argue sharply among themselves.”<sup>119</sup> At the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, a similar conflict arose: “Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’”<sup>120</sup> This division reached into the body of leaders themselves:

Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared. “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Has any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”<sup>121</sup>

Jesus’ miracles caused some to give credence to his claims, while others remained unconvinced: “Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others asked, ‘How can a sinner do such miraculous

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<sup>117</sup> Jn 12:11.

<sup>118</sup> Jn 8:58.

<sup>119</sup> Jn 6:52.

<sup>120</sup> Jn 7:12.

<sup>121</sup> Jn 7:45-49.

signs?’ So they were divided.”<sup>122</sup> Along with the miracles, Jesus’ teaching caused a rift among the Jews. After hearing Jesus explain that he is “the good shepherd,” “the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’ But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”<sup>123</sup> Even in his death, Jesus represented a division between the people and their leaders: when Pilate attached the notice, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” “many of the Jews read this sign,” yet only “the chief priests of the Jews protested” against it to Pilate.<sup>124</sup> That John’s record is essentially historical is confirmed by statements by Paul and Josephus, as well as by similar actions by the Jewish leadership against other individual Jews.<sup>125</sup> John’s continual reference to the Jews in a negative connection seems to be intentional, as he seeks to force the Jewish people to choose between the Jewish leaders and Jesus’ miracles and teachings, which these leaders had rejected.<sup>126</sup>

Other aspects of the gospel account are the same in John as in the synoptic gospels. Jesus’ teaching, life, and death are presented as the fulfillment of the Jewish scriptures,<sup>127</sup> Pilate represents Roman involvement in the death of Jesus in a way that indicts the Jewish leaders for their stubborn insistence on Jesus’ execution and, at the same time, includes Pilate in the responsibility for this crime because he weakly gave in

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<sup>122</sup> Jn 9:16.

<sup>123</sup> Jn 10:19-21.

<sup>124</sup> Jn 19:19-21.

<sup>125</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997, 166-167.

<sup>126</sup> D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 272.

<sup>127</sup> Jn 19:24

to the demands of the Jewish leaders in spite of his conviction that they were not worthy of death.<sup>128</sup> There are hints of the inclusion of the Gentiles: Jesus “had to go through Samaria” to get to Jerusalem, even though this was not necessary geographically and contradicted normal Jewish practice of avoiding contact with the Samaritans.<sup>129</sup> John perhaps has the Gentiles in mind when he records the words of Jesus to his disciples: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”<sup>130</sup> Yet, these references are neither stronger nor more numerous than the other gospels.

When all is considered, John’s purpose can hardly be construed as an apologetic against the Jews, or as a vilification of them as the most evil of all peoples. If anything, he is confronting Christian heresies which had sprung up by the end of the first century, when he was writing. He insists on both the deity of Jesus the Christ and his full humanity: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”<sup>131</sup> To all his readers, Jews and Gentiles, John presents an apologetic for belief in Jesus: “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Jn 19:1-16.

<sup>129</sup> Jn 4:4.

<sup>130</sup> Jn 10:16.

<sup>131</sup> Jn 1:14-18.

<sup>132</sup> Jn 20:30-31.

## Acts

In the book of Acts, there continue to be indications of the close relationship between Christianity and its Jewish foundation. Dozens of times throughout the book, the Jewish scriptures are cited as authoritative texts for the Church, and to illustrate the Christian contention that the events of Jesus' life and the birth of the Church were clear fulfillments of prophecies uttered by the Hebrew prophets. In addition, there are multiple instances of links between the emerging Christian Church and its continued connection with Israel. Jesus, before his ascension, instructs his disciples to remain in Jerusalem, prompting them to ask, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>133</sup> The Day of Pentecost, regarded in many ways as the birthday of the Church, marked the conversion of thousands of "God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven" to become followers of Jesus.<sup>134</sup> In his sermon on this occasion, Peter addressed "men of Israel," "brothers," and "all Israel."<sup>135</sup> He and John were next found continuing their Jewish religious practices, "going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon," as Paul and his companions did later in Philippi: "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer."<sup>136</sup> In order to explain the miraculous healing of a lame man, Peter exclaimed, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified

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<sup>133</sup> Ac 1:4-6.

<sup>134</sup> Ac 2:5-14.

<sup>135</sup> Ac 2:22, 29, 36.

<sup>136</sup> Ac 16:13.

his servant Jesus.”<sup>137</sup> Peter’s address to the Jewish leaders on this occasion emphasized that these events occurred as “promised long ago through his holy prophets,” including Moses, Abraham, and “all the prophets from Samuel on.”<sup>138</sup> Even after threats from the Jewish leaders, the apostles continued to enter the temple courts to preach.<sup>139</sup> Stephen, speaking to the Jewish leaders as his “brothers and fathers,” answered the accusations against him by reviewing the entirety of Jewish history, beginning with a reference to God’s appearance to Abraham as “our father,” not “your father.”<sup>140</sup> When Saul was transformed from a persecutor of the Christians into a leader among them, his efforts were directed to the Jews, not the Gentiles: “At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God;” he “baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.”<sup>141</sup>

There continued to be an influential role for the “circumcised believers,” especially in relation to the ministry of Peter.<sup>142</sup> Even when forced from the environs of Jerusalem, “those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews,” and only afterwards did they extend their preaching to the Gentiles.<sup>143</sup> Paul and Barnabas followed this same pattern on their missionary journeys: for example, “when

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<sup>137</sup> Ac 3:1,13.

<sup>138</sup> Ac 3:21-26.

<sup>139</sup> Ac 4:21.

<sup>140</sup> Ac 7:2f.

<sup>141</sup> Ac 9:20,22.

<sup>142</sup> Ac 10:45; 11:1-2.

<sup>143</sup> Ac 11:19.

they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.”<sup>144</sup> To another group of synagogue leaders in Pisidian Antioch, Paul preached a Stephen-like sermon that began, “Men of Israel,” emphasized his common link with them with “our fathers,” and built the case that all of Jewish history pointed to the coming of Jesus as the Christ, the one who “God has brought to Israel” as the Savior, according to his promise.

This effort to win the apostles’ own countrymen was not without effect, for as the three thousand converts on the Day of Pentecost came from among the Jewish people, and to them were added another two thousand as the result of Peter’s preaching in the temple,<sup>145</sup> so from the synagogues of the cities of Asia Minor, “many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.”<sup>146</sup> In Corinth, “Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord.”<sup>147</sup>

Paul went out of his way to build bridges to his fellow Jews, avoiding potential offenses by circumcising Timothy, for example,<sup>148</sup> and apparently apologizing for unintended disrespect toward the Jewish high priest.<sup>149</sup> He devoted himself to the instruction and persuasion of Jews like Apollos, who possessed “a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.”<sup>150</sup> He did not distance himself from his Jewish background, but

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<sup>144</sup> Ac 13:5; see also 14:1, 17:1, 17; 18:5.

<sup>145</sup> Ac 4:4.

<sup>146</sup> Ac 13:14-43.

<sup>147</sup> Ac 18:8; see also 28:23.

<sup>148</sup> Ac 16:1

<sup>149</sup> Ac 23:4-5.

<sup>150</sup> Ac 18:24, 28.

instead embraced it and promoted it: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.” He explained his conversion to Christianity in the context of continued faithfulness to his Jewish faith: “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.”<sup>151</sup> He even sought to use his allegiance to his Jewish training as a Pharisee to divide his accusers, “knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees. . . .”<sup>152</sup> Paul insisted, “I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.”<sup>153</sup> To Agrippa, who was “well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies,” he asserts that he has remained faithful to Judaism in a public way known to all who have watched him: “The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.”<sup>154</sup>

At the end of the book, Paul is found in Rome, even at this late stage reaching out to the Jews to convince them that to follow Jesus was to find the one of whom their Scriptures pointed: “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the

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<sup>151</sup> Ac 22:3, 12.

<sup>152</sup> Ac 23:6-10.

<sup>153</sup> Ac 24:14.

<sup>154</sup> Ac 26:4-7.

kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”<sup>155</sup>

As he did in his gospel, however, Luke also makes clear in Acts that Gentiles, along with the Jews, were now to be included in the new kingdom of the true Israel. Before Jesus ascends to heaven, he instructs his disciples to take their message beyond the Jews to all people: “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>156</sup> The vast number of converts on the Day of Pentecost include “both Jews and converts to Judaism” from many nations. Peter assures his audience on this occasion that “the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”<sup>157</sup> The men selected by the early Church to manage the distribution of food among the widows included “Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.”<sup>158</sup> In spite of the fact that Saul (Paul) reached out to the Jews first in all his travels, it remained true that he had been given a special mission to the Gentiles as well, as indicated by God to Ananias at the time of Saul’s conversion: “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.”<sup>159</sup> Cornelius and his family, Gentile “God-fearers,” “were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” God used visions to convince a reluctant Peter that this man and his family, though not Jews, ought to receive the gospel and be included in

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<sup>155</sup> Ac 28:23.

<sup>156</sup> Ac 1:8.

<sup>157</sup> Ac 2:11, 39.

<sup>158</sup> Ac 6:1.

<sup>159</sup> Ac 9:15.

the Church: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."<sup>160</sup>

When the Gentiles to whom Peter preached believed his message, "the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles."<sup>161</sup> Peter had to explain to the other apostles and Jewish believers what had happened, since their outlook on the Church at this time did not allow for the inclusion of those who did not observe the Jewish law. However, once they heard Peter's explanation of what had happened, "they had no further objections and praised God, saying, 'So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.'" There began to be a gradual extension of the Church's reach to non-Jews, not by all Christians in all places, but at least by some:

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.<sup>162</sup>

As he went into the Jewish synagogues of Asia Minor, Paul found there "Gentiles who worship God."<sup>163</sup> These proselytes became the source of much of the new growth of the Christian Church. They, along with Gentiles converted directly from paganism to faith in Jesus, were seen by Paul as the intended objects of God's grace in Jesus, in contrast to the rejection of Christ by the Jews:

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<sup>160</sup> Ac 10:1-2, 9-16, 34.

<sup>161</sup> Ac 10:45.

<sup>162</sup> Ac 11:18-20

<sup>163</sup> Ac 13:16, 26; see also 17:17.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.<sup>164</sup>

Increasingly, Gentiles were being brought into the Church along with believing Jews: at Iconium, for example, “a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.”<sup>165</sup>

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, they “reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles,”<sup>166</sup> showing that this result was not entirely expected, and was thought to be of great importance.

The Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 proved a turning point in the direction and composition of the Christian Church. Hearing that Gentiles were turning to faith in Jesus, some Jewish believers responded by asserting, “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church in Antioch to go to Jerusalem and consult the “apostles and elders about this question.” The opposition arose from “some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees,” who taught that “the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.” After input from Peter, based on his experience with Cornelius and the divine vision, James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, concludes, “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult

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<sup>164</sup> Ac 13:44-48.

<sup>165</sup> Ac 14:1.

<sup>166</sup> Ac 14:27.

for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”<sup>167</sup> The Gentiles are welcomed into the Church, in effect, without any imposition of Jewish law upon them.

From this point forward, this model becomes normative for the Church’s outreach to the Gentiles. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Gentiles was expedited by Jewish rejection of the Christian gospel. In Corinth, for example, after the Jews rejected Paul’s message and opposed him, “he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God.”<sup>168</sup> When Paul retold his own story in Jerusalem, he made this contrast very clear: God directed him away from the Jews because of their hard-heartedness, “Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.” He then gave him a new mission, “Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”<sup>169</sup>

The picture of the Gentiles in Acts is not entirely positive, however. They stand with the Jews as guilty before God for the death of Jesus: “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.”<sup>170</sup> In Iconium, Paul was threatened by “a plot afoot among the Gentiles and the Jews, together with their leaders.”<sup>171</sup> The

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<sup>167</sup> Ac 15:1-29.

<sup>168</sup> Ac 18:5-7.

<sup>169</sup> Ac 22:17, 21.

<sup>170</sup> Ac 4:27-28.

<sup>171</sup> Ac 14:5.

prophecy of Agabus regarding Paul implicated the Gentiles as well as the Jews: “In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.”<sup>172</sup> They, as well as the Jews, stand in need of the forgiveness and grace of God available only through belief in Jesus.

Not surprisingly, the Church’s inclusion of the Gentiles was accompanied by increased antagonism from the Jewish religious leaders. From the beginning, the followers of Jesus held the Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, responsible for the death of Christ: “This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”<sup>173</sup> The audience at the Day of Pentecost responded to this message with sorrow and repentance: “. . . they were cut to the heart and said . . . ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”<sup>174</sup> This response, however, did not become the pattern experienced by the apostles. Peter repeated his charges against the Jewish people in the temple courts: “You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”<sup>175</sup> This time the apostles’ message is met with swift and severe rejection as the “priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees” became “greatly disturbed” at this preaching and threw the apostles into jail

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<sup>172</sup> Ac 21:11.

<sup>173</sup> Ac 2:22-23.

<sup>174</sup> Ac 2:37.

<sup>175</sup> Ac 3:13-18.

out of “jealousy” on more than one occasion.<sup>176</sup> They did not accept the responsibility for the death of Jesus. In the assembly of the Sanhedrin before which they brought the apostles, they attempted to assert their own authority over these dangerous maverick preachers:

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.”

The apostles, in turn, directly repeated their accusation against the leaders: “The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.”<sup>177</sup> This interaction, of charge and counter-charge, became the pattern for the relationship between the Church and the Jewish religious leadership from this time forward.

Stephen encountered opposition “from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia,” who, through the formation of false testimony, conspired against Stephen and aroused hostility toward him from other religious leaders and from the people.<sup>178</sup> Stephen concluded his review of Jewish history by indicting his accusers boldly:

You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your

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<sup>176</sup> Ac 4:1-3; 5:17-18.

<sup>177</sup> Ac 5:21-30.

<sup>178</sup> Ac 6:9-14.

fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.<sup>179</sup>

Arising from this incident was the career of Saul as a persecutor of the Church, hunting down followers of Jesus, whether in Jerusalem or in places some distance away:

But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. . . . Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.<sup>180</sup>

After Saul was dramatically converted on his way to Damascus, the hunter now became the hunted, for having heard about this turnaround, “the Jews conspired to kill him,” requiring a covert escape operation to save him. Upon his return to Jerusalem, the new Christian found the same peril, for “he talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.”<sup>181</sup> When he and Barnabas arrived in Pisidian Antioch, Paul proclaimed in the synagogue there that, after rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt, God “endured their conduct for about forty years in the desert.”<sup>182</sup> He asserts that the rebellious history of the Jews continued to the present day, when “God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised,” only to have that Savior rejected by them:

Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ac 7:51-53.

<sup>180</sup> Ac 8:3; 9:1-2; 26:10-11.

<sup>181</sup> Ac 9:23-29.

<sup>182</sup> Ac 13:18.

<sup>183</sup> Ac 13:23-29.

In response to this appeal, many people, Jews and Gentiles, believed in Jesus, but as a result, the Jewish leaders of the area “were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.” Not content with their verbal response, “the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.”<sup>184</sup> Again in Iconium, “a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed, but the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.” Continued preaching, accompanied by miracles, only exacerbated the situation, leading to division among the people of the city, with some so opposed as to plan to “mistreat them and stone them.”<sup>185</sup> In Lystra, Paul faced not only local opposition, but from Jews “who came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.”<sup>186</sup>

Preaching in Thessalonica, Paul won over some of the Jews, along with “a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.” As a result “the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.” In Berea, the next city on his journey, Paul found similar responsiveness to his message, but “when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there

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<sup>184</sup> Ac 13:45, 49-50.

<sup>185</sup> Ac 14:1-5.

<sup>186</sup> Ac 14:19.

too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.”<sup>187</sup> In Corinth, Paul reached out first to the Jews, as usual, but “when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive,” he absolved himself of any responsibility to them and turned to the Gentiles.<sup>188</sup> In Paul’s mind, to mention the city of Jerusalem was a reminder that his life was at risk from the Jews.<sup>189</sup> The prophet Agabus accurately predicted that “the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles,” for once in Jerusalem, “some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him.”<sup>190</sup> As a result of this confrontation, “the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul,” demonstrating that the cycle of conflict was continuing to escalate.<sup>191</sup> Paul had earned a wide reputation for “stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world.”<sup>192</sup>

Peter also spoke out against the Jewish leaders and encountered opposition from them. In Caesarea, he reported about Jesus to Cornelius and his household, “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.”<sup>193</sup> After being released from jail by an angel in the middle of the night, he declared, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and

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<sup>187</sup> Ac 17:1-13.

<sup>188</sup> Ac 18:5-7.

<sup>189</sup> Ac 20:22-24.

<sup>190</sup> Ac 21:10-11, 27-28.

<sup>191</sup> Ac 23:6-15.

<sup>192</sup> Ac 24:5.

<sup>193</sup> Ac 10:39-40.

rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.”<sup>194</sup>

Throughout the book of Acts there is a continual appeal to the Jews to turn to faith in Jesus as their Christ in order to find the salvation promised to them in their Scriptures. After indicting his Jewish co-patriots for their guilt in the death of Christ, Peter implores them, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.” Jesus reached out to the Jews even after his death and resurrection: “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”<sup>195</sup> Peter asserts that they will inherit this salvation only as they come to God through Jesus: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”<sup>196</sup> The very purpose of the mission of Jesus remains tied to the Jewish people: “God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.”<sup>197</sup> Even the prophets of old saw that this would be true, for “all the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”<sup>198</sup> Paul likewise testifies to the unity of the Jewish scriptures with the Christian message, for the gospel declares: “What God

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<sup>194</sup> Ac 12:11.

<sup>195</sup> Ac 3:19-20, 26.

<sup>196</sup> Ac 4:12.

<sup>197</sup> Ac 5:31.

<sup>198</sup> Ac 10:43.

promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’”<sup>199</sup>

To the leaders of the church in Ephesus, Paul proclaims, “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”<sup>200</sup> Relating his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul explains that Jesus sent him to “his own people” as well as to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”<sup>201</sup>

## Letters and Revelation

### Letters of Paul

In his epistles, Paul continues the same themes seen in his ministry in the book of Acts. There is a primacy for the Jews in the program of God: “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”<sup>202</sup> They were given a preferred place by God: “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of

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<sup>199</sup> Ac 13:32-33, 38-39.

<sup>200</sup> Ac 20:21.

<sup>201</sup> Ac 26:17-18.

<sup>202</sup> Ro 1:16.

God.”<sup>203</sup> Paul had an abiding love and concern for his own people: “Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”<sup>204</sup> He insists that the Jews continue to hold a place in the program of God:

Did God reject his people? By no means! . . . God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. . . . So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. . . . Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. . . . And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written.<sup>205</sup>

The clear affirmation of this passage, along with others, is what leads many to conclude with Simon that “there is no shadow of anti-Semitism in Saint Paul.”<sup>206</sup> The Jews are the foundational people of God, to whom the Gentiles have a continuing obligation, even in matters of economic assistance: “For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.”<sup>207</sup> Paul claims that he had attained great heights in his pursuit of legalistic Judaism: “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”<sup>208</sup>

There was a group of Jewish believers, albeit small in number, who accompanied Paul on his various missions: “These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.”<sup>209</sup> The Jewish scriptures were regarded as an essential foundation for reliable Christian teaching:

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<sup>203</sup> Ro 3:1.

<sup>204</sup> Ro 10:1.

<sup>205</sup> Ro 11:1-26.

<sup>206</sup> Simon, 207.

<sup>207</sup> Ro 15:27.

<sup>208</sup> Gal 1:13-17.

<sup>209</sup> Col 4:11.

“... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. . . .”<sup>210</sup> The record of Israel’s disobedience to God was used, not to castigate the Jews, but to instruct Christians: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”<sup>211</sup> The new covenant in Jesus was not the abandonment of the law of Moses, but its fulfillment, as demonstrated in the transformation of circumcision into its non-bloody form expressed in Christian baptism: “not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”<sup>212</sup>

Side by side with his affirmation of his dependence on Jewish precedence, Paul asserts the inclusion of the Gentiles with the Jews in God’s new covenant. He has “received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”<sup>213</sup> Though appearing only in the time of Paul, this extension to the Gentiles was revealed in advance to the Jews:

... to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.” Again, it says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.” And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse

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<sup>210</sup> 2 Ti 3:15-16.

<sup>211</sup> 1 Co 10:11-12.

<sup>212</sup> Col 2:9-12.

<sup>213</sup> Ro 1:5; see also Col 1:27; 1 Ti 2:7.

will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.”<sup>214</sup>

Paul relates that he met with the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem, explaining to them his mission to the Gentiles. They did not compel Titus to be circumcised; rather, the Jewish “pillars” of the Church affirmed what Paul and Barnabas were doing, and “they agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.”<sup>215</sup> Jew and Gentile alike are under the same judgment and mercy of God: “There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.” Without the law, Gentiles “are a law for themselves . . . the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.”<sup>216</sup>

Through this extension of salvation to the Gentiles, Paul brings all of humanity under God: “Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”<sup>217</sup> Not only are the Gentiles now able to inherit salvation along with the Jews, they have actually surpassed them due to the latter’s persistence in error: “What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it

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<sup>214</sup> Ro 15:8-12.

<sup>215</sup> Gal 2:1-14

<sup>216</sup> Ro 2:9-11, 14-15.

<sup>217</sup> Ro 3:29-30.

not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone.’”<sup>218</sup>

Their religious passion was not unnoticed, but was misdirected: “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”<sup>219</sup>

Such an approach demanded a new look at the place of the law in the life of the believer. The importance of the law was seen as something more than external compliance, for: “If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?”<sup>220</sup>

The law is not evil merely because those who pride themselves in following it always come short: “Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. . . . Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.”<sup>221</sup> The law was good, and Paul claims to “uphold the law.”<sup>222</sup> It was, however, unable to bring people into righteousness, for that was never its purpose. Its job was to bring people to a consciousness of their sin, so as to point them to Christ for forgiveness:

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. . . . Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ro 9:30-32.

<sup>219</sup> Ro 10:2.

<sup>220</sup> Ro 2:25-27.

<sup>221</sup> Ro 7:7-13.

<sup>222</sup> Ro 3:31.

<sup>223</sup> Gal 3:10-25; see also 1 Ti 1:8-10.

Those who continue to hold on to the law as a means of righteousness are hardening their hearts against God: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”<sup>224</sup> They demonstrate through their adherence to the law that they are motivated by the desire to make an impression on people: “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.”<sup>225</sup> Those who have experienced salvation in Christ are now free of the expectations and consequences of the law: “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”<sup>226</sup> The reason for Paul’s strong resistance on this point was defensive: “Judaism was not dead, and many Christians, including some of gentile background, continued to feel its pull.”<sup>227</sup>

Because Paul believed that the Jews had missed the significance of the life of Jesus, he took them to task for failing to respond to God’s revelation with faith and obedience. He asserted that their disobedience to the law they knew and preached had become a stumbling-block to those who were outside the law:

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<sup>224</sup> Gal 5:4.

<sup>225</sup> Gal 6:12-13.

<sup>226</sup> Col 2:13-14.

<sup>227</sup> Simon, 72.

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law. . . . You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”<sup>228</sup>

Paul teaches that the Jewish people were hindered in their understanding and required provocation to open their eyes to God’s truth: “Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, ‘I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.’” Their lack of understanding arose from their persistence in disobeying God: “But concerning Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.’”<sup>229</sup> In spite of unprecedented spiritual blessing and divine revelation, they had failed to obey God, and in their failure, had provided a lasting warning not to live as they had:

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.<sup>230</sup>

In contrast to the Jews, believing Gentiles were now included in the family of God because they had turned from their former godless ways to follow Christ: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and

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<sup>228</sup> Ro 2:17-24.

<sup>229</sup> Ro 10:19-21.

<sup>230</sup> 1 Co 10:1-10.

prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone . . . heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.<sup>231</sup>

Paul makes the case that the Jews were not the only people of God, that by their disobedience they opened the way for another people, the Gentiles who believe in Jesus, to take their place as the children of Abraham, the true Israel:

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.<sup>232</sup>

With the emergence of this new, true, spiritual Israel, the way of Judaism has become obsolete. Paul did not teach that the old way was bad, but he did assert that it was incomplete, and that it was comparatively inferior to the way of God now made known in Christ: “For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”<sup>233</sup> Because Judaism clung to the law for its righteousness, it was subjected to slavery and separation from Christ: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”<sup>234</sup> Those who continued to seek to satisfy God’s requirements through adherence to the law were relegated to inferior status by their choice: “Now Hagar stands for Mount

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<sup>231</sup> Eph 2:11-13, 19-20; 3:6.

<sup>232</sup> Ro 4:16; 9:8.

<sup>233</sup> 2 Cor 3:10-11.

<sup>234</sup> Gal 5:4.

Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.”<sup>235</sup>

This view has strong consequences for Paul’s understanding of the spiritual receptiveness of the non-Christian Jew. The Christian is led by the Spirit into spiritual wisdom, freed from ignorance, and transformed into the likeness of Christ himself. Those who follow a “Christ-less” observance of Judaism do so because they are under a spiritual darkness: “But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.”<sup>236</sup>

Paul did not exclude the Jews, nor did he give preference to the Gentiles. All people are to come to God in Christ, each forsaking their prior way of life: the Gentiles “must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking,” the Jews must give up their pursuit of “a law of righteousness.”<sup>237</sup> To both the way of salvation is open through Christ, but through Christ alone:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. . . . For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Gal 4:24-26.

<sup>236</sup> 2 Co 3:6-11, 12-18.

<sup>237</sup> Eph 4:17; Ro 9:31.

<sup>238</sup> Ro 3:21-22; 10:12-13.

Jew and Gentile are to come together to salvation in Christ, creating a unified Church which obliterates differences between people: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”<sup>239</sup>

This is where Paul incurred the wrath of his former colleagues. It was not that the Jews denied a place for Gentiles in the plan of God. In fact, “within Judaism there was a well-established position accepting that righteous Gentiles are the equivalent of Jews when the issue is salvation.” The point of contention came when “Paul overstepped his bounds in insisting that the boundaries between Jewish and Gentile communities be dissolved.”<sup>240</sup>

Yet, in spite of his desire for his fellow Jews to follow him in the Christian faith, Paul recognized that many, even most, would not do so. He takes this view, not only toward the Jews, but toward all unbelievers: “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. . . .”<sup>241</sup> Paul sought to reach everyone and aimed to “not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.”<sup>242</sup> His evangelistic efforts are aimed at turning people from every nation to God:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law . . . to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law . . . to win

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<sup>239</sup> Gal 3:26-29; cf. Col 3:11.

<sup>240</sup> Alan F. Segal, “Jewish Christianity,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 328.

<sup>241</sup> 1 Co 1:22-25.

<sup>242</sup> 1 Co 10:32.

those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.<sup>243</sup>

He does, however, specifically identify the Jews as the source of persecution, for himself and for other Christians. He requests prayer that “I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.”<sup>244</sup> Although Gentiles have also brought trouble on the Church, the Jews remain the standard for hostile resistance to the Gospel:

You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.<sup>245</sup>

The false teachers who incur Paul’s wrath on several occasions are also often identified as Jews. They seek to combine Jewish belief with the Christian message, and it is this Judaizing effort, rather than Jewish belief itself, that brings down upon these men the condemnation of Paul: “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I.”<sup>246</sup> Judaizers have failed to see that the system they wish to appropriate has been made obsolete by the work of Christ, which fulfilled all the expectations of the law. The old ways have passed, for they were “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> 1 Co 9:19-23.

<sup>244</sup> Ro 15:31.

<sup>245</sup> 1 Th 2:14-16.

<sup>246</sup> 2 Co 11:4-5, 13-14, 22.

<sup>247</sup> Col 2:16-17, 23.

## General Letters

### Hebrews

The Epistle to the Hebrews, though not Pauline in authorship, echoes Paul's attitude toward the Jews. The letter's extensive quotation and commentary on the Jewish scriptures demonstrates the author's conviction that the Christian faith was the fulfillment of, and not the contradiction to, the religion of those Scriptures. In this brief letter, there are over forty citations from the Jewish scriptures, with much of the rest of the letter devoted to an explanation of these citations. The author's high view of the Jewish scriptures is signaled from the very first verse: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways."<sup>248</sup> The ministry of Jesus is described in comparison to Moses (chapter three), Joshua (chapter four), the Aaronic priesthood (chapter five), Melchizedek (chapter seven), animal sacrifice in the Tabernacle (chapters nine and ten), and the Jewish patriarchs, prophets, and heroes (chapter eleven). He seeks to help "Abraham's descendants" as he serves as a "great high priest."<sup>249</sup> He is proclaimed as the answer to the messianic hopes of the psalms and the prophets. As the fulfillment of the promises of the Scriptures, Jesus is the author of a new and better way: "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."<sup>250</sup> He stands above even the angels: "For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every

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<sup>248</sup> He 1:1.

<sup>249</sup> He 2:16; 4:14.

<sup>250</sup> He 1:2.

violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?”<sup>251</sup> Compared to Moses, he is at an entirely different level: “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. . . . Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.”<sup>252</sup>

He simultaneously fulfills and makes obsolete the Jewish sacrificial system: “If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?”<sup>253</sup> He is the fulfillment of that which Jeremiah spoke, when he predicted the coming of a new, spiritual covenant between God and his people:

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

He has so far surpassed the old system as to render it useless: “By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> He 2:2.

<sup>252</sup> He 3:3-6.

<sup>253</sup> He 7:11.

<sup>254</sup> He 8:8-13.

The reason for the obsolescence of the Jewish law in the face of the arrival of Jesus was its transitory and preparatory nature. The law of Moses was from its beginning a code derived from a greater and prior reality: “They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”<sup>255</sup> They were intended only to point people forward to the coming work of Christ: “They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.”<sup>256</sup> Moses’ law was “only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered?”<sup>257</sup>

Yet, the law continues to have an important role in the life of the believer on Jesus. The teachings of the law were intended to keep Christians from wandering from their relationship with God. The disobedience of the Jews in the desert is a warning to Christians to remain true:

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us,

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<sup>255</sup> He 8:5.

<sup>256</sup> He 9:10.

<sup>257</sup> He 10:1-4.

just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.<sup>258</sup>

As those who follow an even higher calling than the Jews under the law of Moses, Christians must pay attention to the lessons of that earlier time to be sure they live in a manner worthy of their heavenly religion: “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?”<sup>259</sup>

The reason that this diligence is necessary to the readers of this letter is that there were those who would seek to draw them away from the path of true Christian faith. Perseverance, endurance, and faith were called for in order to weather the time of discipline in which the people found themselves. There were those within their assembly who were in danger of falling away to the peril of false teaching, those who were the “feeble arms and weak knees” of the Christian body. These people had to be warned against the appeal of a reversion to the Jewish system: “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by ceremonial foods, which are of no value to those who eat them. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.”<sup>260</sup> The seriousness of their decision could not have been greater, due to the finality of its consequences:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness

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<sup>258</sup> He 3:16-4:2.

<sup>259</sup> He 12:25.

<sup>260</sup> He 10:35-39; 12:7,12; 13:9.

of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.<sup>261</sup>

The point of contention was the adequacy of the sacrifice of Christ. While the Judaizers insisted that conformity to the law was necessary, the author of this epistle pointed to the supremacy of Christ and his ability to put the law aside as he paid the price for all the sin of humanity: "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption . . . he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."<sup>262</sup> His sacrificial work has obtained its objective. The backdrop to this entire argument is the reality of an alternative Jewish interpretation of the biblical texts upon which Christians built their understanding of the person and work of Jesus as the Christ: "In all this theological dialectic argument against the great temple cult are intermingled arguments against the political Messianism of the Judeans and their aspiration to national rebirth."<sup>263</sup>

### **James**

The Epistle of James exhibits a positive attitude toward the Jewish law that might be expected from this leader of the Church in Jerusalem. Like other New Testament epistles, James looks to the heroes of the Jewish scriptures for inspiration. For example, "Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the

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<sup>261</sup> He 6:4-6.

<sup>262</sup> He 9:12, 26.

<sup>263</sup> Dubnov, 72.

prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. . . . You have heard of Job’s perseverance . . . Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”<sup>264</sup> However, James goes beyond this devotional appreciation for Jewish ways. Whereas Paul observed that “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness,” James counters, “Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?”<sup>265</sup> The law is not presented as an obsolete standard that has been replaced. It stands, rather, as a reflection of God’s justice that does not need human approval: “Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.”<sup>266</sup> The law is not a slavemaster but an agency of freedom: “But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”<sup>267</sup> To live by the law brings freedom. Although the demands of the law are severe, the proper response to this rigorous standard is not to set the law aside, but to find in it mercy as well as judgment:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the

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<sup>264</sup> Jas 5:10, 11, 17-18.

<sup>265</sup> Ro 4:3; Jas 2:21.

<sup>266</sup> Jas 4:11-12.

<sup>267</sup> Jas 1:25.

law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!<sup>268</sup>

Where Paul says, “to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness,” James declares “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”<sup>269</sup> Paul finds faith a victor over law; James finds obedience to the law the only proper evidence of faith.

### **Peter**

At its inception, Peter’s first epistle sounds as if its audience is primarily Jews scattered across the empire by Roman action against their homeland: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.”<sup>270</sup> This might be as expected from one deemed by Paul to be an apostle with a mission to the Jews.<sup>271</sup> Yet, the remainder of the epistle makes clear that it was not, in fact addressed to Jews, but to newly converted Gentile Christians, to those of whom it could be said, “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have

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<sup>268</sup> Jas 2:8-13.

<sup>269</sup> Ro 4:5; Jas 1:26-27.

<sup>270</sup> 1 Pe 1:1.

<sup>271</sup> Gal 2:9.

received mercy.”<sup>272</sup> These were a people not long delivered from paganism: “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.”<sup>273</sup>

It was not Jews but pagans who were seen by Peter as the greatest source of accusation, persecution and temptation for these believers. The Christians were to “live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” They were to respect and honor kings, governors, and other authorities, presumably all Gentiles. They were to avoid entanglement with the pagans with whom they used to carouse, and expect that those pagans would, in response, “heap abuse” on them.<sup>274</sup> Nowhere in this letter is there a hint that Jews were causing grief for the Christians or that there was an ongoing strife between the two groups. Instead, Peter claims for his converted pagans the legacy of the Jews. They were heirs of the salvation foreseen by the Jewish prophets, who understood that their words were meant for these very people outside of the Jewish nation:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> 1 Pe 2:10.

<sup>273</sup> 1 Pe 4:3.

<sup>274</sup> 1 Pe 2:12; 13-17; 4:4.

<sup>275</sup> 1 Pe 1:10-12.

These words of the prophets were consistent with the message of Jesus and the apostles who had led these people to faith in Christ. In the words of Peter's second epistle, "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles."<sup>276</sup> These converts had been saved by "the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect,"<sup>277</sup> in clear fulfillment of the sacrificial system of the Jews, now expanded to those who trust in Jesus, regardless of ethnicity. As the believing people of God, they have inherited all the promises given to the Jews. They have become "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."<sup>278</sup>

### **John and Jude**

The epistles of John and Jude are pre-occupied with the problem of false teachers. The authors perceived that "many false prophets have gone out into the world,"<sup>279</sup> that they lived in an age especially vulnerable to the evil influence of these men:

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> 2 Pe 3:2.

<sup>277</sup> 1 Pe 1:19.

<sup>278</sup> 1 Pe 2:9.

<sup>279</sup> 1 Jn 4:1.

<sup>280</sup> 1 Jn 2:18-19.

The specific form of heresy against which these authors wrote appears to be a form of docetism. The standard of truth which one must uphold is “that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.” Those who acknowledge this are from God, while those who deny it are of “the spirit of antichrist.”<sup>281</sup> It is true that Jews might be indicted along with these heretics, for both would differ with the orthodox Christians’ view of Jesus:

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.<sup>282</sup>

Although later Christians would, in fact, draw comparisons between heretics and Jews, the Jews are clearly not intended by these writers. The heretics they had in mind were those who necessitated warnings against idolatry,<sup>283</sup> a charge not leveled against the Jews in this early period. The dangerous doctrine attacked by Jude was not primarily theological, but practical: along with their denial of Jesus as the divine Christ, they promoted a life of licentiousness: “They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”<sup>284</sup> Even as he mentions the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Jude refrains from any negative reference to the Jews, for his immediate concern was with non-Jewish false teachers.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> 1 Jn 2:22; 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7.

<sup>282</sup> 1 Jn 2:22-23; 5:11-12.

<sup>283</sup> 1 Jn 5:21.

<sup>284</sup> Jd 4.

<sup>285</sup> Jd 5.

## Revelation

In the book of Revelation, there are a couple of early references to the Jews which suggest a derogatory view:

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.<sup>286</sup>

While clearly expressing a negative view of the Jews, these verses reveal a defensive attitude of the Church toward the Jews rather than an offensive campaign against them. The Christians are experiencing “slander” from the synagogue which comprises the “hour of trial” that they are enduring.

In contrast to these isolated references, the book is full of indications of its rooted-ness in the Scriptures and religion of the Jews. Israel’s enemies are the enemies of the Church: Balaam and Balak, for example, sought to seduce Jews and Christians to eat food sacrificed to idols and to indulge in sexual immorality.<sup>287</sup> The Jewish scriptures are the foundation for much of the teaching of the book, implicitly or explicitly. For example, the author’s view of heaven at the beginning of the apocalyptic vision combines language of Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6:

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were

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<sup>286</sup> Rev 2:8-9; 3:9.

<sup>287</sup> Rev 2:14.

covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."<sup>288</sup>

The eternal residence of the believer in Jesus is defined in Jewish terms: "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name."<sup>289</sup> The hero of the account is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David."<sup>290</sup> The faithful people of God who are sealed to endure the time of tribulation on the earth are referred to as "144,000 from all the tribes of Israel," including 12,000 from each tribe.<sup>291</sup> The prayers of the saints ascend to heaven as "smoke of the incense," reminiscent of the worship conducted in the Jewish Temple.<sup>292</sup> In the midst of the time of tribulation on the earth, the Temple, "that is, the tabernacle of the testimony," stands in heaven as the home of angelic beings who would become the executors of God's wrath upon the evil of the earth. No one could enter this temple due to the powerful glory of God with which it was inhabited.<sup>293</sup>

At the close of human history, the resulting eternal fellowship between God and his human creatures can only be described as "the new Jerusalem, coming down out of

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<sup>288</sup> Rev 4:6-8; see also the use of Psalms and Daniel in 1:13; 2:27; 19:15.

<sup>289</sup> Rev 3:12.

<sup>290</sup> Rev 5:5.

<sup>291</sup> Rev 7:4-8.

<sup>292</sup> Rev 8:3.

<sup>293</sup> Rev 15:5-8.

heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”<sup>294</sup> This heavenly city will combine angelic, Jewish, and Christian elements as a unified testimony to the greatness of the God who gives life and blessing to all:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.<sup>295</sup>

In this final dwelling place of God and people, the Temple is replaced with the very presence of God which once had been represented by the Temple. The Jews themselves become part of a greater people of God from all the nations: they are part of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”<sup>296</sup> No longer would they be an isolated nation in the midst of others hostile to their God, for: “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”<sup>297</sup>

In this book, it is the Gentile powers, not the Jews, who serve the role of anti-hero. In his vision, the author is told to “measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it

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<sup>294</sup> Rev 21:1-4.

<sup>295</sup> Rev 21:10-14.

<sup>296</sup> Rev 7:9.

<sup>297</sup> Rev 21:22-27.

has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample the holy city for 42 months.”<sup>298</sup> The number of the beast, 666, has often been linked to Nero or another Roman emperor. There is no mistaking the author’s intent to portray Rome in chapters seventeen and eighteen as “Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes,” who was “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. . . . The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come. . . .”<sup>299</sup>

Conversely, Israel is depicted as the mother of the Savior Jesus: “A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.” The dragon, representing all that is evil, was poised in front of the woman, waiting to devour her son, “a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter,” but was unable to do so, because the child was “snatched up to God and his throne.”<sup>300</sup> Her children are identified, not by biological descent, but by their adherence to both the law of God and commitment to Jesus: they are “those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus,” “the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.”<sup>301</sup> Old and new covenants are thus drawn together by law and Christ, as they are also by “saints and prophets,” the faithful of old and new ages who are subjected to persecution and martyrdom as the

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<sup>298</sup> Rev 11:1-2.

<sup>299</sup> Rev 17:3, 5-6, 9-10.

<sup>300</sup> Rev 12:1-5.

<sup>301</sup> Rev 12:17; 14:12.

result of their faithfulness to God.<sup>302</sup> Such a synthesis of old and new is possible, and in fact is necessary, because “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”<sup>303</sup>

### Summary—The New Testament Writings

The variety of themes within this collection defies summarization. Jesus and his disciples are only accurately understood in the context of first century Palestinian Judaism. Jesus’ teachings are an exposition of the law of Moses and the Jewish prophets, and he leads his disciples into a way of life that would bring about the fulfillment of the law, not its negation. Yet, his ministry is received with mixed reviews from the Jewish populace, as people are at once amazed and confused, inspired and insulted at his teaching and miraculous acts. The Jewish leaders are identified as the villains of the story, as they persistently oppose Jesus’ ministry and conspire against him until they are finally successful in having him executed.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, throngs of Jewish people believe in him and join the disciples in the fledgling Christian Church. Thousands of Jewish Christians from around the Roman empire hear and accept the proclamation of the apostles that Jesus is the Christ. The leaders of the Jews continue in their opposition to the followers of Jesus, both in Jerusalem and beyond, as Paul and other Christians take the message of Jesus throughout the empire, “to the Jew first and also to the Greeks.” In city after city across Asia Minor and Greece, the vast majority of Jews eventually reject

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<sup>302</sup> Rev 16:6.

<sup>303</sup> Rev 19:10.

the claims about Jesus, while God-fearers and other Gentiles begin to compose an increasing proportion of the membership of the Church.

The letters of the New Testament wrap the new faith in the language and tradition of the Old Testament, seeking at the same time to uphold the law as a standard of morality and to assert that Gentile Christians are free from any obligation to follow Jewish customs. Letters such as Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews explicitly take on the issues of Jewish-Christian relations, as they wrestle with the reality and consequences of the fact that the people of Israel have largely rejected Jesus. The Church of Jesus Christ is connected to the law and the prophets through its fulfillment of the promises given centuries earlier by Jewish prophets. The book of Revelation appropriates for the Church the language of the Jewish prophets in order to find comfort and purpose for early Christians as they endure persecution at the hands of the Gentile powers who control the Roman world at the end of the first century A.D..

These themes, as divergent as they are, would become the foundation for Christian attitudes toward the Jews in the centuries to come. Depending on their personalities, circumstances, geography, and relationships, various Christian leaders would emphasize one or another of these New Testament themes. Until the very end of the ante-Nicene era, Christian continuity with its Jewish background, not reaction against it, would dominate the development of those Christian attitudes.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE SECOND GENERATION: THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS (C. A.D. 90-135)**

#### **The Apostolic Fathers**

The most striking observation about discussion of Jewish-Christian controversy in the era of the Apostolic Fathers is its relative scarcity. Scouring through the pages of writings about the Christian message and the practice of the Christian faith in the churches produces a mere handful of references to the Jews, with page after page failing to turn up any hint of consciousness of a “Jewish problem.” The significance of this omission must not be underestimated. Many prominent Christian leaders such as Papias, reputed associate of the apostle John, apparently said nothing at all about the Jews. Others, whose writings are examined in more detail below, display a relatively benign attitude toward the Jews in the few references they do make to them. Gorday observes, for example, that “Jewish and Christian expositors of the Hebrew scriptures continued to wrestle with the full import of the texts and significant borrowing took place on the part of the Christians.” Furthermore, as these exegetes worked through the biblical texts and their significance, “both were responding to the need for an apologetic to the pagan world, and in creating that apologetic they tended to produce a united front on many

subjects.”<sup>1</sup> Christianity was, in its own eyes and in those of outside observers, a continuation of Jewish belief and practice.

Even the funerary art of Christians revealed their acceptance of, and dependence upon, the religious ideas and language of the Jews:

By the fourth century, catacombs contain as many as sixty paintings drawn from the Old Testament. Along with depictions of the good shepherd (*pastor bonus*) one finds, among others, such scenes as Moses striking the rock in the desert, the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, the sacrifice of Isaac, Noah in the ark during the flood, Jonah and the fish, and Daniel in the lions den.<sup>2</sup>

These visual displays do not merely demonstrate Jewish influence on the Christian mindset. They also show that Jews and Christians were occupied with the same ideas.

### *The Testament of Abraham*

*The Testament of Abraham*, of unknown authorship, was perhaps composed in the second century A.D. from sources going back as far as the second century B.C..

This work reflects an age when the Jewish and Christian movements were so close as to be virtually indistinguishable: “The tone of the work is perhaps rather Jewish than Christian, but as phrases and conceptions of a New Testament character appear in it, especially in the judgment scene, it is most probably to be assigned to a Jewish Christian, who for the substance of it drew partly on older legends, and partly on his own imagination.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Gorday, “Paul in Eusebius and Other Early Christian Literature,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 139-140.

<sup>2</sup> Gutmann, 270-287.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimony of Abraham*, ANF IX, 183.

## Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the end of the first century, was another of those reputed to be a hearer of the Apostle John. He was a willing, perhaps even an enthusiastic martyr at the hands of the Romans. Describing his journey to Rome in the charge of Roman soldiers, he says that he was “bound to ten leopards, I mean a band of soldiers.” In spite of descriptions of his own suffering and ordeals across the empire, there is no accusation that Jews were his persecutors. Ignatius names only the Romans and Satan himself as the source of his suffering.<sup>4</sup>

Ignatius does recognize a Jewish threat to the Church in his day. He warns against those who would call Christians back into Judaism: “It is absurd to speak of Christ Jesus and to Judaize. For Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, that so every tongue which believes might be gathered together to God.”<sup>5</sup>

Although others in this period focused on Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus, this perspective does not seem to have been in the forefront yet in the earliest Christian communities, as evidenced by the absence of the theme in the epistles of Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp. Typical of this approach is the record of Trajan’s interrogation of Ignatius in *The Martyrdom of Ignatius*:

Trajan said, “Do you mean him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?”  
Ignatius replied, “I mean him who crucified my sin, with him who was the

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<sup>4</sup> *IgnRom* 5, ANF I, 75.

<sup>5</sup> *IgnMag.* 10. ANF I, 63.

inventor of it, and who has condemned [and cast down] all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry him in their heart.”<sup>6</sup>

Here there is no vitriol against either Jewish or Roman involvement in the death of Christ, who gave himself up for crucifixion in order to provide salvation.

Throughout this literature, optimism persists about the place of the Jews, present and future. The church of this period included Jews along with Gentiles, as shown by the greeting of Ignatius to the church of Smyrna: “. . . to all his holy and faithful [followers], whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of his church.”<sup>7</sup> He instructs them to come to Christ, “. . . for he is a mediator between God and man for the peace of Israel.”<sup>8</sup> Israel’s restoration would be brought about by the one they rejected in his first coming, Jesus, the Christ.

The relative complacency with which Ignatius regarded the Jews may be related to his apparent conviction that the greatest threat to the Church at this time was not the Jews, but false teachers. Writing to Polycarp, he dismisses the spiritual significance of some particular heretics without disclosing who they were or what they proposed: “Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach strange doctrines, fill you with apprehension.”<sup>9</sup> His concern in many of his letters seems to be focused as much on the heretics’ insubordination as by the content of their teachings: “He that is within the altar

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<sup>6</sup> *MarIgn.* 2, ANF I, 129. For readability and clarity, this and subsequent citations from primary source collections have been altered moderately by removing archaisms and British spelling of some words. Nothing of substance has been modified in this process.

<sup>7</sup> *IgnSmy.* 1, ANF I, 86.

<sup>8</sup> *IgnSmy.* 7, ANF 8, 26.

<sup>9</sup> *IgnPoly.* 3, ANF I, 94.

is pure but he that is without is not pure. That is, he who does anything apart from the bishop, and presbytery, and deacons, such a man is not pure in his conscience.”<sup>10</sup>

In his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius addresses Gnostic intrusions into the faith: “There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh, true life in death, both of Mary and of God; First possible and then impossible, even Jesus Christ our Lord.” In this same letter, Ignatius commends the Ephesians for refusing to allow false doctrine in their assembly, and reminds them that “those that corrupt families shall not enter the kingdom of God,” especially “anyone who corrupts by wicked doctrine the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified.”<sup>11</sup> Ignatius had the opportunity to identify the Jews as the object of his warnings; in none of them does he actually do so. His primary concern was Gnostic doctrine, not Judaism.

Differences between the authentic works of Ignatius and those which are spurious are instructive about the developing attitude of Christians toward the Jews throughout the first four centuries A.D.. The Syriac versions of his letters to Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans include no reference to the Jews at all, consistent with the shorter Greek versions of the seven authentic letters. The longer, later versions of these epistles, along with other letters falsely ascribed to him, demonstrate that relationships between Christians and Jews were clearly changing for the worse.<sup>12</sup> They reveal a new eagerness to identify the Jews as “Christ-killers.” In the amplified version

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<sup>10</sup> *IgnTral.* 7, ANF I, 68.

<sup>11</sup> *IgnEph.* 7-9, 16, ANF I, 52-53, 56.

<sup>12</sup> *Epistles of Ignatius* (Syriac), ANF I, 97-105.

of his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, Ignatius is made to say, “The Word raised up again his own temple on the third day, when it has been destroyed by the Jews fighting against Christ.”<sup>13</sup> The spurious *Epistle to the Philipians* (at least late second century) observes:

Do not lightly esteem the festivals. . . . If anyone fasts on the Lord’s Day or on the Sabbath, except on the paschal Sabbath only, he is a murderer of Christ. . . . If any one celebrates the Passover along with the Jews, or receives the emblems of their feast, he is a partaker with those that killed the Lord and his apostles.<sup>14</sup>

By the third century, Ignatius’ *Epistle to Hero* asserts, “If anyone says that the Lord is a mere man, he is a Jew, a murderer of Christ,” displaying the fact that by that time, the Jews had been tagged with the “Christ-killer” label and had become enough of an anathema to the Christian community that to call someone a “Jew” was the worst possible insult and best possible way to brand a heretic as such.<sup>15</sup>

This explanation that the new order surpasses the old continues to strengthen over time, as asserted in the spurious letter of Ignatius to the Philadelphians, probably from the second or third century: “But the Gospel possesses something transcendent [above the former dispensation] viz., the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion and resurrection. For the beloved prophets announced him, but the Gospel is the perfection of immortality.”<sup>16</sup>

On this subject of heresy, we see again later influences on the longer versions of the letters of Ignatius. In the shorter (presumably original) letter to the Trallians, Ignatius deals harshly, but generically, with heresy:

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<sup>13</sup> *IgnSmy.* 2, ANF I, 87.

<sup>14</sup> *IgnPhlp.* 13-15, ANF I, 119.

<sup>15</sup> *IgnHero* 2, ANF I, 113.

<sup>16</sup> *IgnPhld.* 9, ANF I, 84.

I therefore, yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, entreat you that you use Christian nourishment only, and abstain from herbage of a different kind; I mean heresy. For those [that are given to this] mix up Jesus Christ with their own poison, speaking things which are unworthy of credit, like those who administer a deadly drug in sweet wine, which he who is ignorant of does greedily take, with a fatal pleasure, leading to his own death.

The longer version adds to this liberally, increasing the size of the passage more than two-fold. Included in this amplification is language that clearly alludes to Gnosticism and other Christological heresies:

They introduce God as a Being unknown; they suppose Christ to be unbegotten; and as to the Spirit, they do not admit that he exists. Some of them say that the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are but the same person, and that the creation is the work of God, not by Christ, but by some other strange power.

There is also, however, reference to topics which could involve the Jews:

For they speak of Christ, not that they may preach Christ, but that they may reject Christ; and they speak of the law not that they may establish the law, but that they may proclaim things contrary to it. For they alienate Christ from the Father, and the law from Christ. They also calumniate his being born of the Virgin; they are ashamed of his cross, they deny his passion, and they do not believe his resurrection.<sup>17</sup>

In the same way, note the succinct statement of Christology in the following passage from the shorter, earlier version: “He was also truly raised from the dead, his Father quickening him, even as after the same manner his Father will so raise up us who believe in him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life.” In contrast, the longer version amplifies the message to include specific anti-Gnostic language, but also specific, if not accusatory, reference to the role of the Jews and Romans in the death of Jesus:

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<sup>17</sup> *IgnTral.* 6, ANF I, 68.

He was crucified and died under Pontius Pilate. He really and not merely in appearance, was crucified, and died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. By those in heaven I mean such as are possessed of incorporeal natures; by those on earth, the Jews and Romans and such persons as were present at the time when the Lord was crucified; and by those under the earth, the multitude that arose along with the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

This progression towards anti-Jewish language is even more marked in the revisions made to Ignatius' letter to the Magnesians in the later versions. The earlier version records a simple reminder from Ignatius to "fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine." To this text, the longer version adds, among others, these pointed words: "to those who had fallen into the error of polytheism he made known the one and only true God, his Father, and underwent the passion, and endured the cross at the hands of the Christ-killing Jews, under Pontius Pilate the governor and Herod the king." Ignatius, through his later copyists, became more explicitly antagonistic toward pagans and Jews.

There are, in fact, places where Ignatius himself does directly address the question of the relation between Christianity and its parent religion. In these cases, the later revisionists did not need to add references to Judaism where there were none, but they still engaged in amplification to make the references that much more explicit. In the letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius exhorts his readers: "Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. For the most divine prophets lived according to Christ Jesus." Beginning with the second clause, the later version reads, "nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, and things in which the

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<sup>18</sup> *IgnTral.* 9, ANF I, 70.

Jews make their boast. 'Old things are passed away: behold, all things have become new.' For if we still live according to the Jewish law, and the circumcision of the flesh, we deny that we have received grace. . . ."<sup>19</sup> While still following the basic language of Ignatius, the later version is clearly more pointed in its condemnation of the Jews.

In another example, Ignatius explains that Jewish converts to the Christian faith "have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day." In place of this, the longer version reads:

Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness. . . . But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law not in relaxation of the body . . . the victory over death was obtained in Christ, whom the children of perdition, the enemies of the Savior, deny, "whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things," who are lovers of pleasure, and not lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." These make merchandise of Christ, corrupting his word, and giving up Jesus to sale: they are corrupters of women, and covetous of other men's possessions, swallowing up wealth insatiably; from whom may you be delivered by the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ!<sup>20</sup>

The earlier version observed a change in ritual from the old to the new. The later one prescribed a change in behavior, in quite extensive detail, provided an exegetical justification of this change, and villainized those who persisted in another way. Such an exposition also makes sense under the supposition that the intended audience of this later version consisted of Christians who were apparently in the habit of following Jewish ways. There was, in that later time, a movement afoot to merge Jewish and Christian practice and belief. While this phenomenon was not unknown in Ignatius'

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<sup>19</sup> *IgnMag.* 8, ANF I, 62.

<sup>20</sup> *IgnMag* 9, ANF I, 62-63.

day, later developments required a much more aggressive approach. Ignatius proclaimed, "It is absurd to speak of Christ Jesus, and to Judaize," but his later editors said: "Abide in Christ, that the stranger may not have dominion over you. It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. For where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism."<sup>21</sup> This later version demonstrates a fear that there are some within the Christian community who entertain sympathy with Judaism. The general concern about heresy in the letters of Ignatius has been transformed by his later copyists into a focused criticism of Judaism and Judaizers.

In addition to the authentic letters of Ignatius and the later revisions of those letters, there is also a body of pseudo-Ignatian literature which invokes the bishop's name in an attempt to arrest the spread of second, third, and fourth century heresy. These spurious letters exhibit an especially accusatory attitude toward the enemies of the Christian faith, notably the Gnostics and the Jews. In his letter to the Philadelphians, the author first attacks the Jews: "If any one preaches the one God of the law and the prophets, but denies Christ to be the Son of God, he is a liar, even as also is his father the devil, and is a Jew falsely so called, being possessed of mere carnal circumcision." He then goes on to denounce the Gnostics for their docetic view of Christ. The extent of his hatred for them is summarized in his indictment, "such an one has denied the faith, not less than the Jews who killed Christ."<sup>22</sup> The Jews, then, by this time have become a

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<sup>21</sup> *IgnMag.* 10, ANF I, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *IgnPhld* 6, ANF I, 82-83.

standard of anti-Christian wickedness according to which other groups' apostasy can be measured.

The spurious Ignatian *Letter to the Antiochians* also displays this aggressive attitude toward heresies. Its warnings against heresy are filled with proofs drawn from Moses and the prophets, showing both Christian dependence on the Hebrew scriptures and their concern to answer Jewish objections to the new faith. Its rhetoric is chiefly Christological, rejecting the Gnostic, Ebionite, and possibly Arian views of Jesus:

Whosoever, therefore, declares that there is but one God, only so as to take away the divinity of Christ, is a devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. He also that confesses Christ, yet not as the Son of the Maker of the world, but of some other unknown being, different from him who the law and the prophets have proclaimed, this man is an instrument of the devil. And he that rejects the incarnation, and is ashamed of the cross for which I am in bonds, this man is antichrist. Moreover, he who affirms Christ to be a mere man is accursed, according to the [declaration of the] prophet, since he puts not his trust in God, but in man.<sup>23</sup>

The language of this letter reveals a suspicion by its author that there is a Jewish root to these Christian heresies. His concern is not with Judaism *per se*, but with heresies which perpetuate the "Jewish error," primarily in their doctrine of Christ. He wants them to "reject every Jewish and Gentile error, and neither introduce a multiplicity of gods, nor yet deny Christ under the pretence of [maintaining] the unity of God."<sup>24</sup>

This association of Jews and heretics appears also in the spurious letter to the Philippians, dating from at least the late second century, and striking against the Gnostics: "He fights along with the Jews to a denial of the cross, and with the Gentiles

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<sup>23</sup> *IgnAnt.* 5, ANF I, 111.

<sup>24</sup> *IgnAnt.* 1, ANF I, 110.

to the calumniating of Mary, who are heretical in holding that Christ possessed a mere phantasmal body.” According to this pseudo-Ignatius, the related Jewish and Gentile heresies are manifestation of ongoing efforts of Satan.<sup>25</sup> To the Philadelphians, he warns, “But if any one preach the Jewish law unto you, listen not to him.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Polycarp**

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor at about this same time, enjoins Christians to “pray for . . . those that persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that ye may be perfect in him.”<sup>27</sup> He does not name the Jews (or anyone else) as his enemies, and apparently has no reason to focus on their opposition as unique or especially significant in any way.

Polycarp employed the Hebrew scriptures freely to support his Christian teachings, but appears to have intentionally drawn much more heavily on Christian writings. For example, in his epistle to the Philippians, he uses one citation each from Isaiah and Tobit, along with two from the Psalms, while citing the New Testament, directly or indirectly, 53 times.<sup>28</sup>

Although Polycarp had little to say in his letters about the Jews, he was not hesitant to speak out against those he perceived to be the Church’s chief enemy: heretics. To a much greater extent than in its relation to the Jews, the Church identified Christian heretics as a tremendous threat to the true faith. Polycarp demonstrates this

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<sup>25</sup> *IgnPhlp.* 3-4, 11, ANF I, 116, 119.

<sup>26</sup> *IgnPhld.* 6, ANF I, 82.

<sup>27</sup> *PolyPhlp* 12, ANF I, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *PolyPhlp.*, ANF I, 33-36.

with some keen warnings against those who teach false doctrine, asserting that “whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist.”<sup>29</sup>

The account of Polycarp’s death reveals that he experienced first-hand some of the consequences of the growing animosity between the two groups. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the author explicitly mentions the Jews as co-perpetrators of the murder of Polycarp: “The whole multitude both of the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, ‘This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods.’”<sup>30</sup> The pagans seem to have taken the lead in this crime, while the Jews made sure they were not left out of the process: “This, then, was carried into effect with greater speed than it was spoken, the multitudes immediately gathering together wood and faggots out of the shops and baths; the Jews especially, according to custom, eagerly assisting them in it.”<sup>31</sup> The pregnant phrase, “according to custom,” indicates that Jewish involvement in the persecution of Christians did not surprise this writer. While the Roman official was ultimately moved by Satan himself to thwart the Christians’ desires in this incident, he was also prompted to do so by the Jews: “This he said at the suggestion and urgent persuasion of the Jews . . . The centurion then seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *PolyPhlp.* 7, ANF I, 34.

<sup>30</sup> *Mar. Poly.* 12, ANF I, 41.

<sup>31</sup> *Mar. Poly.* 13, ANF I, 42.

<sup>32</sup> *Mar. Poly.* 17-18, 42-43.

Even in this account, however, it is important to notice that the words of Polycarp himself are devoid of any implication of the Jews. If anything, he seemed preoccupied with the pagans in the arena: “But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, ‘Away with the Atheists.’”<sup>33</sup> The narrator also deflects attention away from the Jews to the Roman governor: “For, having through patience overcome the unjust governor, and thus acquired the crown of immortality. . . .” Beyond pointing the blame elsewhere than the Jews, this phrase also shows how the death of Polycarp is portrayed as a triumphant victory of the saint, “thus acquired the crown of immortality,” rather than emphasizing the guilt of those who carried out his execution. This is reiterated shortly later: “He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King forever, to whom be glory, honor majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation to generation, Amen.”<sup>34</sup> Simon suggests that this picture of a cooperative involvement of the Jews with the pagan persecutors of Christians is deliberately created to draw a parallel between the end of the faithful martyrs and that of Jesus himself, in which the leaders of the Jews instigated the action of Pilate and the Roman soldiers.<sup>35</sup> Like the death of his Lord, Polycarp’s death was embraced by the church as the fulfillment of a divine initiative, rather than an occasion to vilify the Church’s enemies.

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<sup>33</sup> *Mar. Poly.* 9, ANF I, 41.

<sup>34</sup> *Mar. Poly.* 19, 21, ANF I, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Simon, 122.

## Clement of Rome

The general absence of anti-Jewish polemic is all the more significant because it occurs in the context of the treatment of subjects which could have (and later did) give rise to explicit criticism of the Jews. For example, Clement, the early bishop of Rome, writing his epistle to the Corinthians near the turn of the first century A.D., cites Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 to demonstrate that the Christ had to suffer, without using these texts to accuse the Jews of being the cause of this suffering. Instead, his use of them has an apologetic and pastoral aim: Christ's suffering and death were an undeniable fulfillment of the Scriptures, and were further a model of patience and endurance to be followed by all Christians.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, when Clement suggests that Moses used the rod of Aaron that budded and fruited "that there might be no sedition in Israel," he did so, not to assert that dissension within Israel during Moses' time was proof of Jewish sinfulness, but as an example of the similarity between Israel and members of Christian church in Corinth: "we are of the same family as they."<sup>37</sup> A little further on in the same work, he zeroes in on sedition in the Corinthian church: "through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, while danger is also brought upon yourselves."<sup>38</sup> He delivers a strong warning to Christians without implicating the Jews.

Clement claims "our father Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob" as examples of God's blessing on the humble.<sup>39</sup> Again, he instructs his readers to observe how "through envy,

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<sup>36</sup> *1 Clem* 16, ANF IX, 234.

<sup>37</sup> *1 Clem* 13, ANF I, 16.

<sup>38</sup> *1 Clem* 47, ANF I, 18.

<sup>39</sup> *1 Clem* 31, ANF I, 13.

also, our father Jacob fled from the face of Esau his brother,” thereby linking Christian origins to a Jewish past through the use of the possessive pronoun “our.” He then goes on to catalog the sufferings of Joseph, Moses, and David, not to blame the Jews, but to illustrate the destructive power of envy. He likewise reviews the persecutions suffered by Peter, Paul and others without ascribing them to anyone in particular. He proclaims, “Repent, O house of Israel, of your iniquity,” aiming this at “all his beloved,” not at Israel alone.<sup>40</sup> After reciting a litany of Old Testament Scriptures exhorting people to repentance and promising God’s forgiveness, he applies these texts to his Christian audience: “Therefore, let us yield obedience to his excellent and glorious will; and imploring his mercy and loving-kindness, while we forsake all fruitless labors, and strife, and envy, which leads to death, let us turn and have recourse to his compassions.”<sup>41</sup> Clement appropriates for the church, from the prophetic Scripture, the promises of God which were given to Israel.

Even explicitly Christian usages find their root in the Jewish scriptures. Clement renders Isaiah 9:17, “For thus says the Scripture in a certain place, ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.’” The Septuagint translates this verse as “I will give your rulers in peace, and your overseers in righteousness.”<sup>42</sup> Clement took this liberty with the text because he was confident that the Church was the legitimate heir of the rights and treasures of Israel.

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<sup>40</sup> *1 Clem* 4-6, ANF I, 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> *1 Clem.* 9, ANF IX, 231.

<sup>42</sup> *1 Clem.* 42, ANF I, 16.

In some places it becomes evident that there was a sincere, positive admiration and respect for the Jews among the early Christians. Notice the tone of these references from Clement:

For thus it is written “When the Most High divided the nations, when he scattered the sons of Adam, he fixed the bounds of the nations recording to the number of the angels of God, His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, and Israel the lot of his inheritance.” And in another place [the Scripture] says, “Behold, the Lord takes unto himself a nation out of the midst of the nations as a man takes the first-fruits of his threshing floor; and from that nation shall come forth the Most Holy.”<sup>43</sup>

Clement seems to be affirming, not contradicting, the special place of Israel among the nations. The people of Israel were God’s “people,” his “portion,” his “inheritance,” his “nation,” and his “first-fruits.” All of Israel’s tribes share in the glory and honor of God, and contributed to the development of that faith which now “justifies all men.” The priests of the Jews themselves are seen as a privileged class, for their work leads them to follow the laws of God.

### *The Two Ways, the Didache*

The first section of the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (the *Didache*), also reflected in *The Epistle of Barnabas* (see below), is *The Two Ways*. It has often been regarded as a Jewish tract which made its way into Christian circulation barely altered. Both of these works originated before A.D. 130 and enjoyed, especially in Alexandria, near-canonical status. They walk a fine line between dependence on Jewish religious language and sources on the one hand, and wariness toward the Jews on the other: “But

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<sup>43</sup> *I Clem.* 32, 39-40, ANF I, 12-13,16.

while adopting the material for their religion from Judean sources,” Dubnov comments, “they simultaneously argued against having any contact with them.”<sup>44</sup> The way that these authors use *The Two Ways* illustrates most prominently the first part of that observation: its general tone and topics are reminiscent of the Hebrew scriptures. More than that, its lines reflect specific quotations from the Jewish writings at every turn. The first way expounded, “The Way of Light,” presents a Christian moral code built on a reiteration and exposition of the Jewish Decalogue. In his presentation of this first way, Barnabas demonstrates a strong commitment to the law, “You shall not forsake the commandments of the Lord.” He goes on to describe the second way, “The Way of Darkness,” as transgression of the commandments. He apparently felt no need to condemn Jewish ways built on those same commandments.<sup>45</sup> In the brief portion of the *Didache* that includes this tract, there are at least eight direct quotations from Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Leviticus, Tobit, and Exodus, along with thirteen parallel passages from Christian gospels and epistles to assure their christianization.<sup>46</sup> These Christian citations do not obliterate the Jewish character of the text, but serve rather to affirm its basic message without contradiction.

This early Christian text builds explicitly on Jewish precedents for church offices: “The apostles further appointed: Let there be elders and deacons, like the Levites; and subdeacons, like those who carried the vessels of the court of the sanctuary of the Lord; and an overseer, who shall likewise be the Guide of all the people, like

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<sup>44</sup> Dubnov, 75.

<sup>45</sup> *Barn*, 19, ANF I, 148-149.

<sup>46</sup> *Did.* 1-5, ANF VII, 377-379.

Aaron, the head and chief of all the priests and Levites of the whole city.” The presence of “subdeacons” in this text, as well as the relatively complex array of church offices, suggest that third or fourth century conditions are reflected in the Syriac translation from which this citation is quoted.<sup>47</sup>

There was present, at this early time, concern about undue Jewish influence on the Church. The *Didache* exhorts, “But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but do you fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel, thus pray: Our Father . . .”<sup>48</sup> This critical response to Jewish practice is tempered by simultaneous dependence on Jewish traditions, for in the same section, the instruction, “Three times in the day thus pray,” reflects a tradition passed on to Christians by the Jews, as evidenced by the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>49</sup>

It is evident from this text that the early Christian Church was highly sensitive to infiltration by the Jews, although this sensitivity is no higher than that toward the pagans:

That whosoever loves the Jews, like Iscariot, who was their friend, or the pagans, who worship creatures instead of the Creator, should not enter in amongst them and minister. . . . That if anyone from the Jews or from the pagans come and join himself with them, and if after he has joined himself with them he turn and go back again to the side on which he stood before, and if he again return and come to them a second time, he should not be received again.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *SDid.* 5, ANF VIII, 668; see also *Ap. Con.* 8.12, 21, ANF VII, 490, 492.

<sup>48</sup> *Did.* 8, ANF VII, 379.

<sup>49</sup> Dan 6:10; Ps 55:17; Ac 3:1; 10:9; see ANF 7, 379, fn.

<sup>50</sup> *SDid.* 15-16, ANF VIII, 669.

There was clear antagonism toward the Jews by the Christians, but no more than that exhibited toward pagans; neither were they deemed to be irretrievably unable to gain admission. Prominent leaders of the Jews had left the synagogue for the Church, even if by stages and with great prodding: Among those “secretly confessing Christ” were Nicodemus and Gamaliel, along with “Judas, Levi, Peri, Joseph, Justus, sons of Hananias, and Caiaphas and Alexander the priests—they too used to come to the apostles by night, confessing Christ that he is the Son of God; but they were afraid of the people of their own nation, so that they did not disclose their mind toward the disciples.” The apostles then admonished them to confess openly, “for it is not acceptable before God, that, while ye are, *in secret*, with his worshippers, ye should go and associate with the murderers of his adorable Son.” These then openly confessed: “those who dared to crucify him do we renounce.” Further, they revealed that “even the priests of the people in secret confess Christ,” but concealed this to retain power.<sup>51</sup>

### *The Epistle of Barnabas*

*The Epistle of Barnabas*, written near the turn of the second century A.D., demonstrates that the Church was consciously trying to appropriate for itself the place of the Jews as God’s people. As he describes the prophetic messianic vision of Isaiah 53, Barnabas offers, “For it is written concerning him, partly with reference to Israel, and partly to us.” From this single passage he moves into a catalog of prophecies demonstrating that Jesus was the Christ, concluding, “. . . the prophet proclaimed,

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<sup>51</sup> *SDid.* 27, ANF VIII, 670.

‘Enter into the land flowing with milk and honey, and have dominion over it.’ . . . We, then, are they whom he has led into the good land.” He then seeks to systematically defend his appropriation of these texts: “But let us see if this people is the heir, or the former, and if the covenant belongs to us or to them.” He proceeds to make his case by arguing from the Hebrew scriptures with discussions of Jacob and Esau, Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses and the covenant, and the observation of the true Sabbath, in each case inevitably concluding that it was the Christians, not the Jews, who understood and obeyed the will of God as his people.<sup>52</sup>

Barnabas refrained from using Jewish failings and pertinent biblical prophecies to rebuke the Jews. Instead, he applied words of judgment, as well as words of promise, from the Jewish scriptures to the Church. As he looked into the harsh words of the prophets to an apostate nation of Israel, he implored Christians to repent and be vigilant, for: “Before we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak as being induced like a temple made with hands.”<sup>53</sup> The experience of the Jews was a warning to Christians: “. . . after so great signs and wonders were wrought in Israel, they were thus [at length] abandoned. Let us beware lest we be found [fulfilling that saying] as it is written, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen.’”<sup>54</sup>

Another important function of the Hebrew scriptures for the apostolic fathers was as an apologetic for the veracity of the Christian claims. The destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, for example, was hailed as the fulfillment of Old Testament

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<sup>52</sup> *Barn.* 5-6, 13, ANF I, 139-141, 145.

<sup>53</sup> *Barn.* 16, ANF I, 147.

<sup>54</sup> *Barn.* 4-5, ANF I, 138-140.

prophecies of God's judgment on the people of Israel, proof positive that Jesus was the Messiah, and assurance that the last days had arrived. In this vein, Barnabas declares, "Moreover, I will also tell you concerning the temple, how the wretched [Jews] wandering in error, trusted not in God Himself, but in the temple, as being the house of God."<sup>55</sup> In its context, this statement focused less on the wickedness of the Jews and more to use the destruction of their temple, and their assumed moral responsibility for this disaster, as confirmation that Christian claims for the messiahship of Jesus were true, in conformity to prophetic predictions of divine judgment on their persistent unfaithfulness.

Not content with their case for Christ based on fulfilled prophecy, Christian writers sought to more fully make all of the Hebrew scriptures their own. Doctrinal and practical foundations for the Christian faith were mined from every corner of the Jewish canon, even if exegetical gymnastics were required to make it happen. Barnabas found both baptism and the cross in the levitical dietary regulations. He also applied his allegorical method to the 318 men of Abraham's household, declaring with certainty that the underlying meaning of these biblical text pertained to events touching the incarnation of Christ:

For [the Scripture] says, "And Abraham circumcised ten, and eight, and three hundred men of his household." What, then was the knowledge given to him in this? Learn the eighteen men, and then the three hundred. The ten and the eight are thus denoted — Ten by I, and eight by H. You have [the initials of the Name of] Jesus. And because the cross was to express the grace [of our redemption] by

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<sup>55</sup> *Barn.* 16, ANF I, 147.

the letter T, he says also, "Three Hundred." He signifies, therefore, Jesus by two letters, and the cross by one.<sup>56</sup>

The apostolic fathers saw the incarnation of Christ as the fulfillment, and replacement, of the old sacrificial order. Barnabas rehearses God's disfavor with animal sacrifices with citations from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah: "He has therefore abolished these things, that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is without the yoke of necessity, might have a human oblation." He asserts that sacrifices and other ritual practices of the old covenant were intended to communicate some higher, spiritual purpose: for example, fasting was truly about social justice, as explained in Isaiah 58.<sup>57</sup>

### *The Shepherd of Hermas*

*The Shepherd of Hermas*, another Christian work from near the turn of the first century A.D., was acclaimed by some early church fathers and churches as canonical. The author prescribes a code of conduct for Christians that does not go far beyond a general ethical monotheism that would have been equally acceptable to the Jews, and appears to have been drawn directly from them. The core of this code is simple obedience to the law of God: ". . . work the works of God, remembering his commandments and promises which he promised, and believe that he will bring them to pass if his commandments are observed." The high regard for the law arises from a high regard for its giver:

First of all, believe that there is one God who created and finished all things, and made all things out of nothing. He alone is able to contain the whole, but he

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<sup>56</sup> *Barn.* 8-9, ANF I, 142-143.

<sup>57</sup> *Barn.* 2-3, ANF I, 138.

himself cannot be contained. Have faith therefore in him, and for him; and fearing him, exercise self-control. Keep these commands, and you will cast away from you all wickedness, and put on the strength of righteous, and live to God, if you keep this commandment.

The believer is to keep the commandments, not merely because to do so is pleasing to God, but because one's destiny and reward depends on it: "And if you do any good beyond what is commanded by God, you will gain for yourself more abundant glory and will be more honored by God than you would otherwise be." Obedience became the surest sign of true repentance, and was expected to result in obvious divine blessing: "Walk in my commands which I enjoin upon you and your repentance will be deep and pure and if you observe these things with your household, every affliction will depart from you." This approach to the law sounds much like that of the Jews who won the scorn of the apostle Paul in Romans:

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship with God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; . . . because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?<sup>58</sup>

Although Hermas concludes, ". . . a man cannot otherwise enter into the kingdom of God than by the name of his beloved Son,"<sup>59</sup> he also makes obedience to the law an essential attribute of the followers of Christ, resulting in a Christianity very compatible with Jewish beliefs and practice.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ro 2:17-21; 3:20-21.

<sup>59</sup> *Herm. Sim.* 9.12, ANF II, 48.

<sup>60</sup> *Herm. Sim.* 1, 5, 7; *Comm.* 1, ANF II, 31, 34, 39, 20.

*The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

Although some have placed the origin of *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* at the end of the second century B.C., during the time of John Hyrcanus, the document as it is known today most probably was composed some time between the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and the Bar Cochba uprising (therefore, c. A.D. 70-130). The work was probably the product of a Jewish convert who wished to appeal to his fellow Jews through this treatise that put a Christian appeal into the mouths of the fathers of Israel.<sup>61</sup> Because of this purpose, it is not surprising to find positive sentiments expressed about the Jews and the Jewish heritage that led up to Christ:

Therefore I command you to hearken to Levi, because he shall know the law of the Lord, and shall give ordinances for judgment and sacrifice for all Israel until the completion of the times of Christ . . .

Do therefore, my children observe the commandments of the Lord, and honor Judah and Levi; for from them shall arise unto you the Lamb of God, by grace saving all the Gentiles and Israel.<sup>62</sup>

The appearance of this Lamb of God is seen to be, at the same time, the occasion for the stumbling of the Jews and the inclusion of the Gentiles, for “. . . the veil of the temple shall be rent, and the Spirit of God shall ascend upon the Gentiles as fire poured forth.”<sup>63</sup>

The voice of Benjamin prophesies the sufferings of Jesus: “. . . the Most High shall send forth his salvation in the visitation of his only-begotten one. And he shall enter into the front of the temple, and there shall the Lord be treated with outrage, and

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<sup>61</sup> Intro., ANF VIII, 5.

<sup>62</sup> *12 Patr.* 1.6; 11.19, ANF VIII, 10, 35.

<sup>63</sup> *12 Patr.* 12, ANF VIII, 37.

he shall be lifted up upon a tree.”<sup>64</sup> Levi likewise sees into the future to indict his descendants:

Nevertheless your sons shall lay hands upon [the Son] to crucify him . . . and at last, as you suppose, you will slay him, not understanding his resurrection, wickedly taking on your own heads the innocent blood. Because of him shall your holy places be desolate, polluted even to the ground, and you shall have no place that is clean; but you shall be among the Gentiles a curse and a dispersion, until he shall again look upon you, and in pity shall take you to himself through faith and water.<sup>65</sup>

These atrocities of the Jews, of course, must result in their condemnation. The prophetic testimony of Levi foresaw “. . . the ungodliness of the chief priests who shall lay their hands upon the Savior of the world.” The wickedness of the Jews will “bring a curse upon our race for whom came the light of the world, which was given among you for the lighting up of every man. Him will you desire to slay, teaching commandments contrary to the ordinances of God.” A litany of the moral failures of the Old Testament priests demonstrates that those like the evil sons of Eli were typical of the entire Jewish priesthood.<sup>66</sup>

The prophecy envisions the curse which the nation will carry as well as the dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the world:

Therefore the temple which the Lord shall choose shall be desolate in uncleanness, and you shall be captives throughout all nations, and you shall be an abomination among them, and you shall receive reproach and everlasting shame from the righteous judgment of God. And all who see you shall flee from you. And were it not for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob our Fathers, not one from my seed should be left upon the earth.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *12 Patr.* 12.9, ANF VIII, 37.

<sup>65</sup> *12 Patr.* 3.4,16, ANF VIII, 13, 16.

<sup>66</sup> *12 Patr.* 3.14. ANF VIII, 15-16.

<sup>67</sup> *12 Patr.* 3, ANF VIII, 16.

In spite of this harsh language, the *Testaments* emphasize that salvation is yet open to the Jews. Jesus was the Christ, not merely for the nations, but also for the nation of Israel. With his advent, “the salvation of Israel shall come, until the appearing of the God of righteousness, that Jacob and all the Gentiles may rest in peace.”<sup>68</sup> Israel was central to the fulfillment of God’s promises, for the Messiah would arise from its midst: “For through Judah shall salvation arise unto Israel, and in him shall Jacob be blessed. For through his tribe shall God be seen dwelling among men on the earth, to save the race of Israel, and he shall gather together the righteous from the Gentiles.”<sup>69</sup>

At the inception of the eventual reign of Christ on earth, “the Lord shall judge Israel first, even for the wrong they did unto him; for when he appeared as a deliverer, God in the flesh, they believed him not.” Only after this “shall he judge all the Gentiles, as many as believed him not when he appeared upon earth.” The end result will be that “all Israel shall be gathered unto the Lord.”<sup>70</sup>

### Summary

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers are nearly silent regarding the Jews. The themes of these writers are so closely tied to their Jewish roots that at times they could pass for being Jewish in origin rather than Christian. The Jewish people were seen to hold a special place in the kingdom of God because from them the Christ arose. The Jewish scriptures pervade these pages because the early Christian writers recognized

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<sup>68</sup> *12 Patr.* 4.22-24, ANF VIII, 20-21.

<sup>69</sup> *12 Patr.* 3, 8, ANF VIII, 13-14, 28.

<sup>70</sup> *12 Patr.* 12.10, ANF 8, 37.

those writings as divine and claimed them as their own. The Christians continued Jewish practices of prayer and fasting, while making slight modifications in these practices. Sunday was observed in the tradition of the Jewish Sabbath, even as some Christians continued to observe the Sabbath itself as well. They upheld the law as a standard for conduct, and found in the law the principles which would define the offices of leadership in the Church. The Church Fathers claimed explicitly that the Church had taken the place of Israel and persistently expressed this claim by embracing as their own the writings and patriarchs of the Jews, as well as the promises of God made to them. The Church numbered many Jews within its membership and asserted clearly that the door of salvation was open to Jews, as well as Gentiles, who would recognize Jesus as the Christ.

When the Fathers talked about Jews in a negative vein, it was often from a defensive posture, attempting to fend off Judaizing influences which drew much of their power from the fact that the Church was still tied closely to its Jewish roots. Differences with the Jews were recognized as real, but less worrisome than the threats perceived from paganism and emerging Christian heresies. Accusations of Jewish sinfulness were ordinarily associated specifically with the priestly leadership of the Jews and their persistence in the sacrificial system that was now seen by the Christians as obsolete. In addition, the Jews were accused of persecuting Christ and his followers. Christians were admonished to see the spiritual significance of these persecutions and to learn from the historical disobedience of the Jews in order to avoid such a path themselves. The divine punishment inflicted on the Jews because of their sin was portrayed as proof that Jesus

was the Christ, in accordance with the biblical prophecies which had predicted these consequences in association with his advent.

That the moderate attitude toward the Jews exhibited in these writings would not persist is suggested by the fact that at least some of them were soon edited, with an anti-Jewish slant of a later generation, in order to enlist the support of the Fathers in a campaign against continued Jewish influence on the Church.

## CHAPTER III

### APOLOGISTS AND THEOLOGIANS (C. A.D. 130-260)

#### Early Apologists

##### Aristides

Christian apologists in the second century viewed the Jews as one, along with Christians, of the four segments of humanity. Aristides, among the earliest of this group, presents his defense of the Christian faith some time between A.D. 126-161. In it, he explains:

There are four classes of men in this world: Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians. . . . The Jews, again, trace the origin of their race from Abraham, who begat Isaac, of whom was born Jacob. And he begat twelve sons who immigrated from Syria to Egypt; and there they were called the nation of the Hebrews, by him who made their laws, and at length they were named Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Of these four classes of men, Aristides is most interested in confronting the Greeks. He points to paganism, rather than Judaism, as his main target, labeling its beliefs as “ridiculous and absurd and impious tales that the Greeks have introduced.”<sup>2</sup> In comparison, he is generous in his praise of the Jews. Addressing the emperor, he says:

Let us come now, O king, to the history of the Jews also, and see what opinion they have as to God. The Jews then say that God is one, the Creator of all, and omnipotent; and that it is not right that any other should be worshipped except this God alone. And herein they appear to approach the truth more than all the

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<sup>1</sup> Aristides, *Apol.* 2, ANF IX, 264.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.* 8, ANF IX, 269.

nations especially in that they worship God and not his works. And they imitate God by the philanthropy which prevails among them; for they have compassion on the poor, and they release the captive, and bury the dead, and do such things as these, which are acceptable before God and well-pleasing also to men . . .<sup>3</sup>

The Jews do not escape unscathed, however, for the point, after all, is to demonstrate that it is the Christians who are living in conformity to God's will. Because their religious observances are both ill-conceived and imperfectly observed, ". . . they too erred from true knowledge."<sup>4</sup> The sinfulness of the Jews became apparent through their persistent flirtation with idolatry and violence toward the messengers God sent to them. Simultaneously, Aristides reaffirms Jesus' Jewish lineage and asserts that his death was brought about at the instigation of the Jews: "This Jesus, then, was born of the race of the Hebrews. . . . But he himself was pierced by the Jews, and he died and was buried."<sup>5</sup> The guilt of the Jews comes more as a surprise than as a foregone conclusion: in light of their history as the people of God, their rejection of Christ had to be introduced by the significant phrase, "But even they":

But even they proved stubborn and ungrateful, and often served the idols of the nations, and put to death the prophets and just men who were sent to them. Then when the Son of God was pleased to come upon the earth, they received him with wanton violence and betrayed him into the hands of Pilate the Roman governor; and paying no respect to his good deeds and the countless miracles he wrought among them, they demanded a sentence of death by the cross. And they perished by their own transgression; for to this day they worship the one God Almighty, but not according to knowledge. For they deny that Christ is the Son of God; and they are much like the heathen, even although they may seem to make some approach to the truth from which they have removed themselves.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Apol.* 14, ANF IX, 275.

<sup>4</sup> *Apol.* 15 (Syriac), ANF IX, 276.

<sup>5</sup> *Apol.* 2 (Syriac), ANF IX, 265.

<sup>6</sup> *Apol.* 14, ANF IX, 276.

All of the language that proceeded up to this point was intended by Aristides to convince the reader of the inadequacy of the religious ways of barbarians, Greeks, and Jews. Hence, his next line is not surprising, “But the Christians, O king . . . ,” which he then uses to launch into a song of praise commending the exemplary lives of his fellow Christians, shown to be far superior to the other alternatives. He was less interested in denouncing Judaism than in promoting the virtues of his own faith. In light of this, his modern editor concludes, “Aristides has no trace of ill-feeling to the Jews.”<sup>7</sup>

### *The Epistle to Diognetus*

The early Christian apologists saw both Gentiles and Jews as bereft of true religion, the first because of ignorance, the second because of obstinacy. The anonymous *Epistle to Diognetus* (possibly addressed to Marcus Aurelius in the second century) reflects this perspective:

The Jews, then, if they abstain from the kind of service above described, and deem it proper to worship on God as being Lord of all, are right; but if they offer him worship in the way which we have described, they greatly err. For while the Gentiles, by offering such things to those that are destitute of sense and hearing, furnish an example of madness; they, on the other hand, by thinking to offer these things to God as if he needed them, might justly reckon it rather an act of folly than of divine worship. . . . But those who imagine that, by means of blood, and the smoke of sacrifices and burnt-offerings, they offer sacrifices [acceptable] to him, and that by such honors they show him respect, these, by supposing that they can give anything to him who stands in need of nothing, appear to me in no respect to differ from those who studiously confer the same honor on things destitute of sense and which therefore are unable to enjoy such honors.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Intro., *The Apology of Aristides*, ANF IX, 261.

<sup>8</sup> *Diog.* 3, ANF I, 26.

Although this narrative presents a fairly even-handed view of the shortcomings of both Jews and pagans, the apologist does not stop there. To a world which could easily confuse the two religions, he made it clear that Christians did not “hold to the superstition of the Jews.”<sup>9</sup> This is not to be understood with the modern, negative connotation of “superstition,” however. The meaning of this word is not irrational belief, but “religious ritual.” The author is merely stating the facts—Christians do not follow the same religious order that the Jews do. He does find that Jewish dietary law, observance of Sabbath and other holy days, and the practice of circumcision are irrational. Since the Jews are characterized by a “busy-body spirit and vain boasting,” it is evident that Christians follow a superior way, for they “properly abstain from the vanity and error common [to both Jews and Gentiles].”<sup>10</sup>

The contrast between this criticism of Judaism and the simultaneous claim that the ancient Jewish patriarchs were in fact the spiritual ancestors of the Christians is explained in *Diognetus* as the result of historical development:

As long then as the former time endured, he permitted us to be borne along by unruly impulses. . . . But when our wickedness had reached its height, and it had been clearly shown that its reward, punishment and death, was impending over us; and when the time had come which God had before appointed for manifesting his own kindness and power. . . . He himself took on him the burden of our iniquities.<sup>11</sup>

These perspectives of early second century Christianity were developed in the context of a persecuted minority. Regardless of how broad or how severe this hostility

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<sup>9</sup> *Diog.* 1, ANF I, 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Diog.* 4, ANF I, 26.

<sup>11</sup> *Diog.* 9, ANF I, 28.

might have been, it is clear that the Christians of this time perceived themselves to be in the crosshairs of more than one adversary:

They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified, they are reviled, and bless, they are insulted and repay the insult with honor, they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life, they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever punishment or harsh treatment this might refer to, it was apparently as likely to come from one place as another. The Jews are not singled out as instigators or especially heinous perpetrators of actions against Christians. They are just one of the groups, along with the Greeks, who might be the source of Christian hardships. Along with the Greeks, they are accused of pursuing this course of action against the Christians without any reasonable basis, “unable to assign any reason for their hatred,” but they are no more guilty than others of this offence. Speaking of the advent of Christ into the world, this same letter observes, “He, being despised by the people [of the Jews], was, when preached by the Apostles, believed on by the Gentiles.”<sup>13</sup> It is noteworthy that the modern editors had to supply the clause “of the Jews,” for however one might make the case that the Jews are implied in this phrase, the reality that must be dealt with is that Aristides intentionally omitted naming them as the antagonists of Christ.

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<sup>12</sup> *Diog.* 5, ANF I, 27.

<sup>13</sup> *Diog.* 10, ANF I, 29.

## Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr found his way to Christian profession by a path that led through Greek philosophy. From the time of his conversion around A.D. 130, to his death about the year A.D. 165, he personified the concept of Christian tolerance. His language was calculated to soften Jewish and pagan resentment toward the Christians and draw them into the Christian faith through rational persuasion and kindness. He sought divine truth everywhere—among philosophers, poets, and historians, in Greek civilization and in the Hebrew scriptures—and claimed it as his own: “Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians.”<sup>14</sup> His intellectual adversaries included pagans in general, Simon Magus, Marcion, and other heretics, persecuting Romans, and the Jews, although the tone of his arguments with the Jews (for example, in the *Dialogue with Trypho*) is much more conciliatory than that of his other apologetic literature.<sup>15</sup>

To the Greeks, Justin made an argument that their traditional religion was inferior to that which they could learn from the Hebrews. He encouraged them to “abandon the ancient delusion of your forefathers, and read the divine histories of the prophets, and ascertain from them the true religion.”<sup>16</sup>

Even those elements of Greek civilization which were worthwhile had been, in fact, borrowed from the Jews:

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<sup>14</sup> 2 *Apol.* 13, ANF I, 193.

<sup>15</sup> 1 *Apol.* 26, 54-58, 68, ANF I, 172, 181-2, 186.

<sup>16</sup> *Hort.* 35, ANF I, 287.

And Plato, too, when he says that form is the third original principle next to God and matter, has manifestly received this suggestion from no other source than from Moses.<sup>17</sup>

For Moses is more ancient than all the Greek writers. And whatever both philosophers and poets have said concerning the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things heavenly, or doctrines of the like kind, they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret such things.<sup>18</sup>

Justin defended Scripture as uniquely in possession of divine truth, and appropriated it, along with the best of Greek philosophy and culture, as essentially Christian. Far from deprecating Judaism, he embraced the Hebrew scriptures for the sake of their inherent value, and for their potential usefulness in his defense of Christianity, since from them he could glean prophetic passages whose fulfillment he found in Jesus: “There were then, among the Jews certain men who were prophets of God, through whom the prophetic Spirit published beforehand things that were to come to pass, ere ever they happened.”<sup>19</sup>

Justin so used the Hebrew scriptures because he believed they belonged to him and the Christian church. While given originally to the Jews, they had now been inherited by the Christian church: “For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us.”<sup>20</sup> Christians, rather than Jews, are the rightful heirs of the Scriptures because they are inclined to believe and obey them: “They are

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<sup>17</sup> *Hort.* 29, ANF I, 285.

<sup>18</sup> *I Apol.* 44, ANF I, 177.

<sup>19</sup> *I Apol.* 31, ANF I, 173.

<sup>20</sup> *Dial.* 82, ANF I, 240.

contained in your Scriptures, or rather not yours, but ours. For we believe them; but you, though you read them, do not catch the spirit that is in them.”<sup>21</sup>

Justin believed that there was a powerful apologetic value for the Christians in these books. After recounting the miraculous translation of the Septuagint and its circulation from Alexandria, he declares:

But if any of those who are wont to be forward in contradiction should say that these books do not belong to us, but to the Jews, and should assert that we in vain profess to have learned our religion from them, let him know, as he may from those very things which are written in these books, that not to them, but to us, does the doctrine of them refer. That the books relating to our religion are to this day preserved among the Hebrews, has been a work of Divine Providence on our behalf; for lest, by producing them out of the Church, we should give occasion to those who wish to slander us to charge us with fraud, we demand that they be produced from the synagogue of the Jews, that from the very books still preserved among them it might clearly and evidently appear, that the laws which were written by holy men for instruction pertain to us.<sup>22</sup>

The Christian Church was, for Justin, the rightful heir of God’s promises to the Jews because they were, in fact, the new Jews. There was only one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had declared himself God to the people of Israel, and now made himself known to all: “Nor do we think that there is one God for us, another for you, but that he alone is God who led your fathers out from Egypt with a strong hand and a high arm.” His old covenant with the nation of Israel had been supplanted by a new covenant, universal in scope: “For the law promulgated on Horeb is now old, and belongs to yourselves alone; but *this* is for all universally.” In order to remove any doubt about the implications of this line of thought, Justin discusses the teaching of Isaiah and Jeremiah about the new covenant for the nations, then declares outright, “For

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<sup>21</sup> *Dial.* 29, ANF I, 209.

<sup>22</sup> *Hort.* 13, ANF I, 279.

the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham . . . are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

On numerous occasions, Justin avoids implicating the Jews for those very things which other Christians would hold against them, beginning with the death of Christ, who, he repeatedly says, “was crucified under Pontius Pilate.”<sup>24</sup> While he does, in some passages (to be discussed below), make the Jews responsible for the death of Christ, he softens those accusations by frequently emphasizing instead that it is the Gentiles, not the Jews, who crucified Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Persecution of the Christians was most often attributed to the Roman government, not to the Jews.<sup>26</sup> As he discusses Christian worship on Sunday, as the first day of creation, and as resurrection day, he does not once bring up, for contrast or for criticism, Jewish observance of the Sabbath.<sup>27</sup>

Surveying biblical prophecies from Zechariah and Isaiah, he points to a future reconciliation of the Jews, gathered from the nations: “Tribe by tribe they shall mourn, and then they shall look on him whom they have pierced; and they shall say, ‘Why, O Lord, have you made us to err from your way? The glory which our fathers blessed, has for us been turned into shame.’” He concludes from these same prophecies that Jewish acceptance of Christian claims will be limited in scope: “. . . some few, of whom the Spirit of prophecy by Isaiah had predicted that they should be saved. . . . ‘Except the Lord had left us a seed, we should have been as Sodom and Gomorrah.’” Even in his

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<sup>23</sup> *Dial.* 11, ANF I, 199.

<sup>24</sup> *1 Apol* 13, ANF I, 166-167.

<sup>25</sup> *1 Apol* 42, ANF I, 177.

<sup>26</sup> *2 Apol*, ANF I, 188-193.

<sup>27</sup> *1 Apol* 67, ANF I, 186.

own day, Justin observed that Jewish Christians were no longer a significant element in the Christian church as they had been a hundred years before: “. . . knowing that the Christians from among the Gentiles are both more numerous and more true than those from among the Jews and the Samaritans.”<sup>28</sup> The reason that many of the Jews would be, excluded from salvation, according to Justin, is their animosity toward Christ “. . . if they do not repent. . . . But the Gentiles, who have believed on him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance along with the patriarchs and the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob . . .”<sup>29</sup>

The point here is not the “Jewishness” of the Jews, but the extent to which they indulge in anti-Christian behavior on the one hand, and whether, on the other hand, they have believed in Christ and repented of their sins. The Gentiles, who are said to be included in the inheritance of the “holy mountain,” are not shown to be there in place of the Jews, but together with them, along with the patriarchs, the prophets, and the just men descended from Jacob. Justin’s insistence that belief in Christ is the great dividing line between the just and the unjust, between the redeemed and the lost, causes him to respect and reach out to the Jews, not to denigrate them: “. . . since I fear the judgment of God, I do not state an untimely opinion concerning any one of your nation, as to whether or not some of them may be saved by the grace of the Lord of Sabaoth.”<sup>30</sup>

Justin displays in this passage a determination to avoid an offense toward any person considering the claims of the Christian faith, whether that person is a Jew or a

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<sup>28</sup> *1 Apol.* 52-53, ANF I, 180.

<sup>29</sup> *Dial.* 25-26, ANF I, 207.

<sup>30</sup> *Dial.* 64, ANF I, 229.

Gentile, as he acts the “very same to men of every nation” who are willing to consider these claims. The two most obvious characteristics of Justin shown here are his irenic spirit and his refusal to single out the Jews as being different from others. Both Jews and Gentiles have an open door that will lead them to Christ. Justin argues that the lesson of Melchizedek in Psalm 110 is that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised were blessed in this priest of the patriarchs. He explicitly includes the Jews in the blessings offered by Christ the priest “after the order of Melchizedek”: “Those too in circumcision who approach him, that is, believing him and seeking blessings from him, he will both receive and bless.”<sup>31</sup>

Although the *Dialogue with Trypho* is generally considered to be a literary device rather than a record of an actual interaction between a Christian and a Jew, there are in this work a number of places where the words of Trypho seem to reflect actual Jewish arguments or questions about the Christian faith or about Justin’s methods and reasoning. Justin dutifully records Trypho’s backhanded compliments regarding Justin’s presentation: “You do well; and though you repeat the same things at considerable length, be assured that I and my companions listen with pleasure.”<sup>32</sup> Trypho criticizes not just Justin’s conclusions, but his method as well. For example, he rebuts Justin’s views of the Sabbath by referring to the teachings of the Scriptures: “And Trypho said, ‘Why do you select and quote whatever you wish from the prophetic writings, but do not refer to those which expressly command the Sabbath to be observed? For Isaiah this

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<sup>31</sup> *Dial.* 33, ANF I, 211.

<sup>32</sup> *Dial.* 118, ANF I, 258.

speaks . . .”<sup>33</sup> When, in another case, he questions the pre-existence of Christ in light of the teaching of Isaiah 11, Justin concedes: “You have inquired most discreetly and most prudently, for truly there does seem to be a difficulty. . .”<sup>34</sup> In regard to the Christian teaching that the Hebrew scriptures leave room for the existence of a divine Son alongside the Father, Trypho is allowed an extended address, in which he limits the kinds of proofs he would find admissible.<sup>35</sup> Justin does not challenge Trypho’s contention that the previous arguments need to be “strengthened,” nor does he argue with the idea that the expressions referred to by the Jew may not be used as scriptural support for his Christian theology. Rather, he takes up Trypho’s challenge to provide something more, even if his acceptance of this challenge is stated somewhat condescendingly: “Pay attention, therefore, to what I shall record out of the holy Scriptures, which do not need to be expounded, but only listened to.”<sup>36</sup>

Justin also presents, from the mouth of Trypho, Jewish theological perspectives against the Christian faith. Trypho tells Justin that he would have been better off to remain in his Platonism, rather than to have become a Christian. He advises him to find his path to God within Judaism, abandoning his allegiance to a false Christ: “First be circumcised, then observe what ordinances have been enacted with respect to the Sabbath, and the feasts, and the new moons of God; and in a word, do all the things

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<sup>33</sup> *Dial.* 27, ANF I, 207.

<sup>34</sup> *Dial.* 86, ANF I, 243.

<sup>35</sup> *Dial.* 55, ANF I, 222.

<sup>36</sup> *Dial.* 55, ANF I, 222.

which have been written in the law: and then perhaps you shall obtain mercy from God.”<sup>37</sup>

The protests of Trypho provide specific direction for Justin’s apologetic for the Christian faith. Trypho points to the questionable practices of some Christian fringe groups, “I believe, however, that many of those who say that they confess Jesus, and are called Christians, eat meats offered to idols, and declare that they are by no means injured in consequence.” Justin does not dismiss this criticism as irrelevant, but takes up the broader question of the significance of Christian heretics. He uses the occasion to identify and explain the errors of Marcionites, Valentinans, Basilidians, Saturnilians, and others. Rather than being embarrassed by the existence of these groups and their damaging influence on the reputation of Christians, Justin seeks to score apologetic points by asserting that such groups were, in fact, predicted by Jesus, affirming his prophetic knowledge of the future.<sup>38</sup>

The point is that, even if this account is purely fictional, Justin has not resorted to constructing a Jewish “straw man” so that he can demolish Jewish arguments against Christianity. Instead, he seems to place in his adversary’s mouth some of the actual arguments that contemporary Jews must have used against the Christians. He was not merely trying to win debate points against the Jews. He was interested in hearing and responding to the actual objections which they had to the Christian faith, so that he could seek to remove these issues as obstacles which kept Jewish people from

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<sup>37</sup> *Dial.* 8, ANF I, 198-199.

<sup>38</sup> *Dial.* 35, ANF I, 212.

converting to Christ. A litany of these objections can be mined from Justin's *Dialogue*: Christians do not observe God's law regarding the Sabbath and circumcision, but misuse the Scriptures and miss the fact that the Christ will come in glory, not shame. They are divided in their beliefs and have failed to prove that Jesus is the Christ of the Scriptures, even allowing for the Christian interpretation of those Scriptures. Their belief in the Incarnation is both illogical and foolish. They fail to see that Jesus could not be the Christ because Elijah has not yet come and believe, without scriptural warrant, in "another God" besides the Maker. They assert Jesus' virgin birth without proof; they blaspheme God by causing him to share his glory with another and their savior is under a curse because he was hanged on a cross.<sup>39</sup> These were all serious charges against the Christians which Justin chose to include and answer rather than omit, displaying a desire to carry on a legitimate discourse with the Jews instead of merely condemning them.

Justin's emphasis on the openness of the Christian way to all people resulted in a very tolerant view of his adversaries. Addressing himself to Trypho, as representative of the Jews, he declares, "Wherefore we pray for you and for all other men who hate us; in order that you, having repented along with us, may not blaspheme him . . . but believing on him, may be saved in his second glorious advent, and may not be condemned to fire by him."<sup>40</sup> Even in the face of ill-treatment, he speaks of religious enemies as those who merely need to be won over: "whom we not only do not hate, but, as is proved, pity and

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<sup>39</sup> *Dial.* 10, 33, 79, 32, 35-36, 48, 39, 49-50, 65, 89, ANF I, 199, 210-212, 214, 219-220, 230, 238, 244.

<sup>40</sup> *Dial.* 35, ANF I, 212.

endeavor to lead to repentance.”<sup>41</sup> Although this is certainly not to be construed as an acceptance of other religions as equally valid or valuable, it was, for Justin, a dramatic turn in the direction of toleration compared to his former, non-Christian ways: “we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we may not lie nor deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ.”<sup>42</sup> Even when confronted with unjust persecution at the hands of the Jews, Justin declares, “Yet we do not hate you or those who, by your means, have conceived such prejudices against us; but we pray that even now all of you may repent and obtain mercy from God, the compassionate and long-suffering Father of all.”<sup>43</sup> This toleration of one’s enemies became for Justin another validating mark of Christianity as the true religion, which returned good for evil.<sup>44</sup>

The outcome of this enlightened conversation is, not surprisingly, marked by mutual respect and personal regard, just as the entire process had been. Trypho admits, “I have been particularly pleased with the conference,” while Justin concludes by praying for his opponents, saying, “I can wish no better thing for you, sirs, than this, that, recognizing in this way that intelligence is given to every man, you may be of the same opinion as ourselves, and believe that Jesus is the Christ of God.”<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to Justin’s portrayal of Christian tolerance is his accusation, elsewhere in the *Dialogue*, that the Jews have engaged in violent persecution: “you have

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<sup>41</sup> *1 Apol.* 57, ANF I, 182.

<sup>42</sup> *1 Apol.* 39, ANF I, 176.

<sup>43</sup> *Dial.* 108, ANF I, 253.

<sup>44</sup> *Dial.* 96, ANF I, 247.

<sup>45</sup> *Dial.* 142, ANF I, 270.

slain the Just One, and his prophets before him; and now you reject those who hope in him . . . cursing in your synagogues those that believe in Christ.”<sup>46</sup> In the *First Apology*, he cites the example of Bar Cochba, in the Jewish rebellion in the time of Hadrian, who, he says, “gave orders that Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they would deny Jesus Christ and utter blasphemy.” He asserts that this antagonism springs from Jewish jealousy against the Christians and their failure to properly understand the Scriptures, which “are also in the possession of all Jews throughout the world; but they, though they read, do not understand what is said, but count us as foes and enemies; and, like yourselves, they kill and punish us whenever they have the power, as you can well believe.”<sup>47</sup>

In the *First Apology*, Justin says of the persecutions of Jesus, “He endured all the sufferings which the devils instigated the senseless Jews to inflict upon him” as a result of their rejection of his claims of divinity.<sup>48</sup> This, then, is the crime above all other crimes for which the Jews would be held responsible: “But the highest pitch of your wickedness lies in this, that you hate the Righteous One, and slew him; and so treat those who have received from him all that they are and have, and who are pious, righteous, and humane . . . you have not accepted God’s Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Justin asserts to the Jews that their rejection of Christ also makes them guilty of rejecting their own God and the Scriptures in which they trust.

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<sup>46</sup> *Dial.* 16, ANF I, 202.

<sup>47</sup> *1 Apol* 36, ANF I, 175.

<sup>48</sup> *1 Apol* 63, ANF I, 284.

<sup>49</sup> *Dial.* 136, ANF I, 268.

Negative Jewish attitudes and actions toward Christians are not coincidental events with individual people, but are orchestrated by Jewish leaders from within the synagogue itself: “Assent, therefore, and pour no ridicule on the Son of God; obey not the Pharasaic teachers, and scoff not at the King of Israel, as the rulers of your synagogues teach you to do after your prayers.”<sup>50</sup> Justin declares to Trypho, “For you curse in your synagogues all those who are called from him Christians; and other nations effectively carry out the curse, putting to death those who simply confess themselves to be Christians.”<sup>51</sup> He accuses the Jews of intentional, systematic action against the Christians: “. . . at that time you selected and sent out from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up, and to publish those things which all they who know us not speak against us.”<sup>52</sup> To the extent that the words of Trypho in Justin’s *Dialogue* actually represent authentic Jewish sentiment toward Christians in the second century, there appears to have been some intentional Jewish engagement in vilification of the Christians:

And Trypho said, “Sir, it were good for us if we obeyed our teachers, who laid down a law that we should have no intercourse with any of you, and that we should not have even communication with you on these questions. For you utter many blasphemies, in that you seek to persuade us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud; then that he become man, was crucified, and ascended up to heaven, and comes again to earth, and ought to be worshipped.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Dial.* 137, ANF I, 268.

<sup>51</sup> *Dial.* 96, ANF I, 247.

<sup>52</sup> *Dial.* 17, 108, ANF I, 203, 253.

<sup>53</sup> *Dial.* 38, ANF I, 213.

According to Justin, Jewish apprehension was well deserved, for “daily some [of you] are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and quitting the path of error.”<sup>54</sup>

Justin accuses the Jews of blindly following rabbis who focus only on the legalistic trivia of Scripture and miss their real meaning.<sup>55</sup> When Trypho asks for a better explanation of the Christian teaching that God has a Son, Justin retorts that his proofs are such “as no one could find any objection to. They will appear strange to you, although you read them every day; so that even from this fact we understand that because of your wickedness, God has withdrawn from you the ability to discern the wisdom of his Scriptures.”<sup>56</sup>

The outcome of the Jews’ spiritual stubbornness is their inability to see the fulfillment of God’s promises right before their eyes. Justin distinguishes between the ritual law, which was intended only for the Jews of another time, and the moral law, which is for all people of all times. Simon points out that this distinction was also allowed by the Jews, who expected that the “God-fearers” who attached themselves to the synagogue would follow the “Noachic commandments,” that is, the moral laws, but that the ritual commandments were for the Jews only, as a special sign of God’s blessing upon them.<sup>57</sup> For Justin, however, the Jews were spiritually blinded so that they missed the lesson of their own Scriptures that the new covenant requires, not Sabbath and Passover observances, but a righteous life: fasting, for example, refers to social justice, not to a mere external ritual. Similarly, their shallow externalism is

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<sup>54</sup> *Dial.* 39, ANF I, 214.

<sup>55</sup> *Dial. Trypho* 112, ANF I, 255.

<sup>56</sup> *Dial.* 55, ANF I, 222.

<sup>57</sup> Simon, 164.

demonstrated by their obsession with ceremonial washings: “For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and lo! The body is pure. . . . But you have understood all things in a carnal sense . . .”<sup>58</sup> The obstinacy of the Jews has so blinded them spiritually that they are dependent on Christian messengers to illuminate them, so Justin admonishes them to “remain still more zealous hearers and investigators, despising the traditions of your teachers, since they are convicted by the Holy Spirit of inability to perceive the truths taught by God, and of preferring to teach their own doctrines.”<sup>59</sup>

Not only do they miss the plain meaning of the Scriptures, but, as evidenced by numerous examples drawn from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Psalms, the teachers of the Jews “have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, all by which this very man who was crucified is proved to have been set forth expressly as God, and man, and as being crucified, and as dying.”<sup>60</sup> Justin so poorly regarded the integrity of the Jews in their handling of the Scriptures that he believed that they would doctor the text of the Septuagint rather than admit to the Christian truths that were so apparent there. Since many of the texts cited by Justin are not present in modern versions of the Septuagint, modern observers note that it was most probably “Christian interpolations,” more than Jewish “repressions,” that accounted for these conflicts over the use of the Scriptures. Not surprisingly, from

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<sup>58</sup> *Dial.* 14, ANF I, 201.

<sup>59</sup> *Dial.* 38, ANF I, 213.

<sup>60</sup> *Dial.* 71, ANF I, 234.

the time that Christians began to use the Septuagint against the Jews, the Jews, in turn, began to question that translation's basic legitimacy.<sup>61</sup>

Even within the body of texts accepted by Jews and Christians alike, Justin found it useful to render certain passages irrelevant because they “were instituted by Moses on account of the hardness of your people's hearts.”<sup>62</sup> If a portion of the divine Scriptures did not fit the Christian assertions against the Jews, it could be dismissed as something that was only included in the first place because the Jews were so wicked. It was, therefore, certainly not intended by God to be applied to the Christians.

Further, Justin indulged in the allegorical use of the Scriptures against the Jews which wandered quite far from any historical, grammatical interpretation. He finds apologetic value, for example, in the line from Psalms, “For trouble is near, for there is none to help me. Many calves have compassed me; fat bulls have beset me round.” Since, according to Justin, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and teachers of the law acted like raucous calves and bulls when they resisted Jesus, this is proof positive for anyone with an open mind that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah.<sup>63</sup> That Gentiles and Jews alike would become followers of Christ was found by Justin in the prophecy of Zechariah:

Now, that the Spirit of prophecy, as well as the patriarch Jacob, mentioned both an ass and its foal, which would be used by him; and, further, that he, as I previously said, requested his disciples to bring both beasts; [this fact] was a prediction that you of the synagogue, along with the Gentiles, would believe in him. For as the unharnessed colt was a symbol of the Gentiles, even so the harnessed ass was a symbol of your nation.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Simon, 153-154.

<sup>62</sup> *Dial.* 67, ANF I, 231.

<sup>63</sup> *Dial.* 103, ANF I, 250.

<sup>64</sup> *Dial.* 53, 55, ANF I, 222.

Justin found license to engage in pointed allegorical use of the Scriptures from his underlying conviction that all of Scripture pointed forward to Christ, and that in Christ can be found the complete fulfillment of those Scriptures. His observations on fulfilled prophecy became a significant element in his apologetic method. Justin credited his own conversion to the power of these fulfilled prophecies, for he “had found testimonies concerning him published before he came and was born as man” and he saw the fulfillment in his own time of prophesied events: “the devastation of the land of the Jews, and men of every race persuaded by his teaching through the apostles . . .”<sup>65</sup>

His own story, however, was merely further apologetic ammunition against the real target of his work, the non-Christians. Specifically, he aims his arguments from fulfilled prophecy at the Jews, personified in Trypho: “But now, by means of the contents of those Scriptures esteemed holy and prophetic amongst you, I attempt to prove all [that I have adduced] in the hope that some one of you may be found to be of that remnant which has been left by the grace of the Lord of Sabaoth for the eternal salvation.” The expected response of the Jews was repentance, as shown by the conclusion of his criticism of Trypho’s interpretation of Daniel 7: “All this I have said to you in digression, in order that you at length may be persuaded of what has been declared against you by God, that you are foolish sons.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *1Apol.* 52-53, ANF I, 180.

<sup>66</sup> *Dial.* 32, ANF I, 210.

Justin argues that Jewish messianic prophecies were not fulfilled in David or any other king in his line, for these Scriptures are fulfilled wholly in Jesus Christ, and in no other. While he is certainly indicting the Jews for the part they played in the crucifixion of Christ, his emphasis is not on Jewish guilt, but on the fulfillment of prophecy through what, for him, was an incontestable historical reality: “And that all these things happened to Christ at the hands of the Jews, you can ascertain.” He perceived that Jewish involvement was a fact that could be simply asserted, not a disputed charge which required demonstration. The significant fact was not that the Jews were involved in the death of Christ, but why that was important—because it affirmed that in his life and death, Jesus completely fulfilled biblical prophecy. Indeed, even in these passages, Justin spreads the culpability for Christ’s death around as he attempts to build his case for the apologetic weight of prophecy fulfilled in Christ, saying that the Spirit “foretold the conspiracy which was formed against Christ by Herod the king of the Jews, and the Jews themselves, and Pilate, who was your governor among them, with his soldiers.”

The strength of the Jews’ resistance to Justin’s teaching about Christ was, in part, attributable to the recent memory of the failed Bar Cochba revolt. Trypho found it more plausible to link Psalm 72 to Solomon and Psalm 110 to Hezekiah than either text to Jesus as the Christ. His thinking must have been influenced by the fact that the human messiah of his own time had soured him, and his people, toward messianic interpretations of their Scriptures: “. . . temporary withdrawal of the Jews from

Messianism, for the latter manifestations of Messianism, on the occasion of the Bar Cochba revolt, had only involved Israel in disappointment.”<sup>67</sup>

Justin also castigated the Jews for stubborn refusal to repent of their evil ways: his expositions of Amos and Jeremiah are based on the supposition that the Jews of his own day are guilty of the same wickedness spoken against by the prophets.<sup>68</sup> They were guilty of that most basic offence against God, idolatry: “God, accommodating himself to that nation, enjoined them also to offer sacrifices, as if to his name, in order that you might not serve idols. Which precept, however, you have not observed; nay you sacrificed your children to demons.” He similarly took them to task for their failure to observe the Sabbath in the way that God intended.<sup>69</sup> These practices, along with circumcision, were included in the Jewish law, not because they reflected the will of God, but “on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart.”<sup>70</sup> In spite of their knowledge of the story of Jonah, and in spite of Christ’s warnings to them regarding the sign of Jonah, “. . . yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that he rose from the dead, but as I said before, you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world” to denigrate the Christian message and those who believe it.<sup>71</sup>

The consequence of Jewish persistence in rebellion against God was the devastation in which the nation currently lived in Justin’s time. Citing the prophecies of Isaiah, he wrote to the Romans:

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<sup>67</sup> Simon, 158-159.

<sup>68</sup> *Dial.* 22, ANF I, 205.

<sup>69</sup> *Dial.* 29, ANF I, 204.

<sup>70</sup> *Dial.* 19, ANF I, 203.

<sup>71</sup> *Dial.* 108, ANF I, 253.

That the land of the Jews, then, was to be laid waste, hear what was said by the Spirit of prophecy. . . . “Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.” . . . And you are convinced that Jerusalem has been laid waste, as was predicted . . . “Their land is desolate, their enemies consume it before them, and none of them shall dwell therein.” And that it is guarded by you lest any one dwell in it, and that death is decreed against a Jew apprehended entering it, you know very well.<sup>72</sup>

There was not a question of whether the Jews were hard-pressed, only a question of why. Justin appeals to his pagan audience to acknowledge the truth of the Christian gospel in light of its obvious validity in the face of these fulfilled prophecies. He suggested that the apparent void of political authority in the Jewish nation was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. According to the promises of Genesis 49, it was only after the appearance of Christ that the Romans “began to rule the Jews, and gained possession of all their territory.”<sup>73</sup> This disastrous condition was well deserved, because of the persistent disobedience of the Jews: “Accordingly, these things have happened to you in fairness and justice, for you have slain the Just One, and his prophets before him; and now you reject those who hope in him, and in him who sent him . . .”<sup>74</sup>

At the heart of Justin’s rejection of Jewish ways is his conviction that divine truth and salvation are found exclusively within the Christian church. As a result of this conviction, the Jews are seen as outside of the household of God, in spite of all the ways in which they have experienced the revelation of God, just as the Greeks remain outside in spite of the beauty of their philosophy and its frequent correlation to biblical truth.

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<sup>72</sup> *1 Apol.* 47, ANF I, 178.

<sup>73</sup> *Dial.* 31, ANF I, 173.

<sup>74</sup> *Dial.* 16, ANF I, 202.

Christianity, by virtue of this exclusive relationship with God, must of necessity be superior to Judaism:

Now Leah is your people and synagogue; but Rachel is our Church. And for these, and for the servants in both, Christ even now serves . . . even so it is necessary for us here to observe that there are two seeds of Judah, and two races, as there are two houses of Jacob; the one begotten by blood and flesh, the other by faith and the Spirit.<sup>75</sup>

This perspective did not rule out the salvation of the Jews, but directed that it must take place in the same way as that of the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ: “. . . those who are saved of your own nation are saved through this [man], and partake of his lot.”<sup>76</sup> Justin allows that one who believes in Christ and also observes the Jewish law can receive salvation. Although other Christians “do not venture to have any intercourse with or to extend hospitality to such persons,” Justin says, “I do not agree with them.”<sup>77</sup> His spiritual generosity did not extend so far as those who persist in following the law without believing in Christ, who “shall likewise not be saved, and especially those who have anathematized and do anathematize this very Christ in the synagogues, and everything by which they might obtain salvation and escape the vengeance of fire.”<sup>78</sup>

Significantly, not just Jewish belief, but opposition to Christ and his followers, is seen as the cause of the eternal damnation of these adversaries of Christianity. This, in turn, goes back to Justin’s foundational belief that, as much as for the Gentiles, salvation for the Jews was to be found in Christ alone, not through their physical descent from Abraham. It would be extended to “only those who in mind are

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<sup>75</sup> *Dial.* 134, ANF I, 267.

<sup>76</sup> *Dial.* 64, ANF I, 229.

<sup>77</sup> *Dial.* 47, ANF I, 218.

<sup>78</sup> *Dial.* 47, ANF I, 218.

assimilated to the faith of Abraham, and who have recognized all the mysteries. . . . But there is no other [way] than this, to become acquainted with this Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins; and for the rest, to live sinless lives.”<sup>79</sup> The bottom line, for Justin and his Jewish counterparts, was the question of the nature of Christ. Trypho did not question that Jesus lived, or taught, or did what the gospels claim for him. He could not, however, accept Justin’s affirmation of the deity of Christ or his explanation of the “suffering Messiah” that was so necessary to Christian doctrine and so abhorrent to Jewish belief.<sup>80</sup>

### Summary

The three apologists found in this section reveal that in middle of the second century, Christian worship and practice remained very closely tied to the Church’s Jewish roots. The Jews, because of their possession of divine truth, were seen to be superior to both Greeks and barbarians. Although Gentiles were now included in the people of God, they came into the Church along with Jews, not instead of them. The Church actively sought to convert Jews and reported that many were becoming Christians on a regular basis. The door to salvation was open for all, Jew and Gentile, who accept Jesus as the Christ of Jewish expectation. The Church thus supplants the old way, offering universally what had previously been confined to the nation of Israel.

To a lesser extent than pagans, Jews were seen as characterized by disobedience to God. Because of the Jews’ perpetual disobedience and persecution of God’s

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<sup>79</sup> *Dial.* 44, ANF I, 216-217.

<sup>80</sup> Simon, 160.

messengers, they were now unable to understand Scripture accurately, their land had been made desolate, and they were displaced by the Church as the true people of God. Second century Jews were accused of cursing the Christians in the synagogue, avoiding them in social interaction, persecuting them in the streets, and aggressively sending men out with a mission to resist the Church and its message. The tone had clearly changed.

### Other Voices

#### Tatian

In the middle of the second century, Tatian, the student of Justin Martyr (until his subsequent apostasy) directs an intentional Christian apologetic to the “Greeks,” representative of the educated, philosophical elites of the late Roman world. He sought to present Christianity as an intellectually responsible alternative to classical paganism. He was willing to indulge in sharp criticism of the Greek understanding of the world, asserting that “our institutions are marked by sober-mindedness, but that yours are in close affinity with madness.”<sup>81</sup> His attack on Greek philosophy and paganism did not stop short of branding it as inspired of Satan: “And such are you also, O Greeks, profuse in words, but with minds strangely warped; and you acknowledge the dominion of many rather than the rule of one, accustoming yourselves to follow demons as if they were mighty.”<sup>82</sup> He further implies that it is these Greeks who were responsible for the

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<sup>81</sup> *Greeks* 33, ANF II, 78.

<sup>82</sup> *Greeks* 14, ANF II, 71.

persecution endured by Christians: “For what reason, men of Greece, do you wish to bring the civil powers, as in a pugilistic encounter, into collision with us?”<sup>83</sup>

The significance of Tatian’s attack on the Greeks is twofold: first of all, it demonstrates that in the middle of the second century, paganism was considered by at least some of the Christian community to be a more serious threat to the church than Judaism, as testified to by the relative silence of these writers about Judaism, and their preoccupation with paganism. Secondly, it shows that Christian efforts against the Jews, in earlier and later times, were not isolated assaults indicative of a special Christian animosity toward the Jews, but were, instead, just one example of how Christian polemic was utilized for an apologetic purpose against a series of adversaries (the Jews, Greek philosophers, pagans, the Roman government, heretics, etc.) perceived to pose a threat to the Christian church.

In addition, Tatian is not truly silent regarding the Jews, for he enlists them as co-religionists with the Christians in order to support the latter’s case against the pagans. Using pagan witnesses, he claims Jewish heroes as his own, including Moses, Solomon, and people from the exile, in order to defend the antiquity of Christianity.<sup>84</sup> He boldly asserts against the Greeks that his (Jewish) philosophy is older than theirs: “. . . our philosophy is older than the systems of the Greeks. Moses and Homer shall be our limits; the one being the oldest of poets and historians, and the other the founder of

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<sup>83</sup> *Greeks* 4, ANF II, 66.

<sup>84</sup> *Greeks* 36-38, ANF II, 80.

all barbarian wisdom.”<sup>85</sup> He tells the story of his own spiritual journey in terms of a choice between paganism and Judaism, of course including in the latter system its manifestation in the Christian faith: “So, bidding farewell to the arrogance of the Romans and the idle talk of Athens, and all their ill-connected opinions, I embraced our barbaric philosophy.”<sup>86</sup>

Apparently, Tatian’s alliance with the Jews went only so far as it was useful to him in maintaining a stand against paganism, for Clement of Alexandria explains that, in his fall from orthodoxy, he went too far in distancing himself from the Jews doctrinally: “We agree with him in saying the same thing, but not in the sense he wishes, abrogating the law as if it belonged to another God.”<sup>87</sup>

### Athenagoras

The Athenian philosopher Athenagoras converted to Christianity in the last third of the second century. His *Apology*, addressed to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and his *Treatise on the Resurrection*, display no anti-Jewish bias. He is merciless in his ridicule of pagan poets, historians and philosophers, as he challenges what he perceives as the ridiculous nature of their beliefs about their many gods. While not going into detail about Christian teaching, he leaves no question about his commitment to the monotheism handed down to Christianity from Judaism: “. . . our doctrine acknowledges one God, the Maker of this universe, who is himself uncreated. . . .” He

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<sup>85</sup> *Greeks* 31, ANF II, 77.

<sup>86</sup> *Greeks* 35, ANF II, 80.

<sup>87</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12, ANF II, 82.

defends this Jewish-Christian monotheism with both philosophical and biblical arguments in a way that Jews, as well as Christians, would applaud.<sup>88</sup>

There are two issues on which Athenagoras might be expected to contradict or criticize the Jews: the resurrection and the question of sacrifices. However, in each case, his presentation of Christian belief is aimed at the pagan world, not at the Jews. When he argues for the resurrection of Christ, he makes the case for resurrection in general against Greek philosophy, using their own language and methods against them, without a hint of criticism of the Jews.<sup>89</sup> His rejection of sacrifice sounds confrontational enough: “And what have I to do with holocausts, which God does not stand in need of?—though indeed it does behoove us to offer a bloodless sacrifice and the service of our reason?” However, a study of the context of this citation reveals that he was indicting the sacrifices of the Romans, not those of the Jews. He, in fact, even employed the Jewish scriptures (Lev. 2:1) to make his point against the pagans.<sup>90</sup>

### **Theophilus of Antioch**

Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch from 168-c.181, wrote an apologetic treatise to Autolytus, a pagan critic of the new faith. This letter of Theophilus to Autolytus is another example of typical second century Christian apologetics. Much of the writing of Theophilus could be construed as a defense of the Jews as much as a defense of the Christians. The Hebrew scriptures, and not the truth of God found in nature (which he

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<sup>88</sup> Athenagoras, *Apology* 4-9, 14-30, ANF II, 131-133, 135-145.

<sup>89</sup> Athenagoras, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, ANF II, 149-162.

<sup>90</sup> Athenagoras, *Apology*. 13, ANF II, 135.

had previously sought) are the foundation of his Christian belief: “At the same time, I met with the sacred Scriptures of the holy prophets . . . I believe . . .”<sup>91</sup> Those very Scriptures, in fact, showed him the God he had sought in vain in natural revelation, for as he reviewed the teaching of Job and the Psalms regarding God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, he declared, “This is my God, the Lord of all . . .”<sup>92</sup>

Persistently quoting and defending the Hebrew scriptures, Theophilus asserts that Christians are preserved in the truth through their adherence to these Scriptures: “And all these things the Holy Spirit teaches us, who speaks through Moses and the rest of the prophets . . . we Christians alone have possessed the truth inasmuch as we are taught by the Holy Spirit, who spoke in the holy prophets . . .”<sup>93</sup> Included in his description of the “holy prophets” were “not one or two, but many, at various times and seasons among the Hebrews; and also among the Greeks the Sibyl.”<sup>94</sup> In his defense of the Jews he does not shy away from embracing the Greek prophetess who was perceived to have testified of the coming of Christ, for this did not denigrate, but rather affirmed the legitimacy of the multitude of the Hebrew prophets with whom the Sibyl agreed. There is here no distinction, such as would appear later, between Hebrews and Jews, for people as diverse in time and function as Moses and Solomon are alike referred to in support of the idea of the veracity of the Hebrew scriptures.

Against the accusations of Manetho, the Egyptian critic of the Jews, Theophilus upholds the integrity and moral reputation of the ancient Jews: “For our forefathers who

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<sup>91</sup> *Autol.* 1.14, ANF II, 93.

<sup>92</sup> *Autol.* 1.5-6, ANF II, 91.

<sup>93</sup> *Autol.* 2.30, 33 ANF II, 106-107.

<sup>94</sup> *Autol.* 2.9, ANF II, 97.

sojourned in Egypt were truly shepherds, but not lepers.”<sup>95</sup> He seeks to reconcile Jewish history with Egyptian, Greek, Persian, and Roman records in a way that demonstrates the antiquity of the Jewish writings, which he appropriates as his own: “. . . so that the Hebrews, who also are our ancestors, and from whom we have these sacred books which are older than all authors, as already said, are proved to be more ancient than the cities which were at that time renowned among the Egyptians.”<sup>96</sup> He repeats name by name the genealogical history of the Bible and affirms its veracity as proof that biblical (Jewish) religion and records pre-date those of any other people.<sup>97</sup> He speaks of “Abraham our Father,” and concludes that he has proven that Christianity’s “doctrine, is not recent, nor our tenets mythical and false, as some think, but very ancient and true.”<sup>98</sup>

Theophilus was not merely tying the Christian faith to Judaism for the sake of the antiquity of the latter. He was instead attempting to broaden that religion’s reach to include a wider scope than the people of the nation of Israel at any one time. He, therefore, referred to “Moses, our prophet and the servant of God”<sup>99</sup> who was not a prophet to Israel alone, for he “was made the minister [of the law] both to all the world, and chiefly to the Hebrews, who were also called Jews.”<sup>100</sup>

In addition to upholding Jewish scriptures and prophets as divinely inspired instruments for the entire world, Theophilus likewise presented the values of the Jewish moral code as universally applicable and consistent with that of the Christian gospel.

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<sup>95</sup> *Autol.* 21, ANF II, 117.

<sup>96</sup> *Autol.* 20, ANF II, 117.

<sup>97</sup> *Autol.* 3.24-25, ANF II, 118-119.

<sup>98</sup> *Autol.* 3.29, ANF II, 120.

<sup>99</sup> *Autol.* 3.28, ANF II, 116.

<sup>100</sup> *Autol.* 3.9, ANF II, 114.

His exposition on the virtues of hospitality, repentance, care of the poor, purity, treatment of one's enemies, and obedience to the good is permeated with citations from the Hebrew scriptures. He does not contrast this with Christian morality, but intentionally links the two, finding ties between those citations from the Hebrew Bible and others from the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and the epistles of the apostle Paul. His defense of Christians against moral accusations rests on the proposition that Christianity's moral code is derived from that of the Jewish scriptures.<sup>101</sup>

Theophilus does present a call for repentance to the Jews, drawing on the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Alongside these prophetic warnings, he lays the historical observation that they had gone unheeded: "He forewarned them that they should be delivered into subjection to all the kingdoms of the earth. And that this has already happened to them is manifest." This warning, however, is not limited to the Jews, for Theophilus goes on to apply it to all humanity: "Many therefore, yea rather, countless are the sayings in the Holy Scriptures regarding repentance, God being always desirous that the race of men turn from all their sins."<sup>102</sup> Theophilus was not trying to single out the Jews as transgressors of God's declared will, but was trying to use their experience as an inspiration for all people to obey the law of God.

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<sup>101</sup> *Autol.* 3.10-15, ANF, 114-115.

<sup>102</sup> *Autol.* 3.11, ANF II, 114.

## Early Liturgies

It is very difficult to date with certainty the liturgies of the early church, for they each bear marks of very early, perhaps even apostolic, composition, but at the same time appear to have been developed gradually over the first few centuries into their current form. The conservative nature of liturgical usage does suggest that the content of these liturgies may well preserve some of the attitudes and approaches of the earliest Church. Across the board, these liturgies exhibit dependence on Jewish scriptures, persons, and religious practices. In the *Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles*, the words of the prophet Isaiah echo through the Church's worship formula:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;  
 Full are the heavens and the earth of his glory.  
 Holy, holy, holy, are you, O Lord God Almighty;  
 The heavens and the earth are full of his glory and the nature of his essence  
 as they are glorious with the honor of His splendor;  
*as it is written*, The heaven and the earth are full of me, says the mighty Lord.  
 . . . Woe to me, woe to me, who has been astonished, because I am a man of  
 polluted lips, and dwell among a people of polluted lips,  
 and my eyes have seen the King, the mighty Lord.<sup>103</sup>

The *Liturgy of James* recalls God's acceptance of sacrifices in the old order, finding in them the basis for hope that God would "accept also from the hand of us sinners this incense for an odor of a sweet smell and for remission of our sins, and those of your people." In this liturgy, Christians approach God in the Eucharist in terms reminiscent of Jewish worship: "who has given to us an entrance into the Holy of Holies, through the sojourning among men of your only-begotten Son, our Lord, and

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<sup>103</sup> *Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles* 11, ANF VII, 564.

God, and Savior Jesus Christ, we supplicate and invoke your goodness, since we are fearful and trembling when about to stand at your holy altar.”<sup>104</sup> Later in the liturgy, the parade of Jewish saints is again recounted in relation to the offering of the Eucharist as a sacrifice: “. . . accept it, as you did accept the gifts of Abel, the sacrifices of Noah, the priestly offices of Moses and Aaron, the peace-offerings of Samuel, the repentance of David, the incense of Zacharias.” The sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist provides the assurance that the Christian can, then, approach the Holy God with confidence: “We therefore, being counted worthy to enter into the place of the tabernacle of your glory, and to be within the veil, and to behold the Holy of Holies, cast ourselves down before your goodness.”<sup>105</sup> Eternal bliss with God is expressed as being “in the bosom of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, our holy fathers,”<sup>106</sup> and the blessing of God on his people is articulated in words that once again evoke the story and the message of Isaiah the Jewish prophet: “The Lord will bless us, and make us worthy with the pure teaching of our fingers to take the live coal, and place it upon the mouths of the faithful for the purification and renewal of their souls and bodies, now and always.”<sup>107</sup>

As it describes the worship of early Christian assemblies, *The Liturgy of Mark* calls to mind the sights and smells of the Jewish temple worship: “The incense is offered to your name. Let it ascend, we implore you, from the hands of your poor and sinful servants to your heavenly altar for a sweet-smelling savor, and propitiation of all

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<sup>104</sup> *Liturgy of James* 5, 7, ANF VII, 537-538.

<sup>105</sup> *LitJas.* 26, ANF VII, 543.

<sup>106</sup> *LitJas.* 36, ANF VII, 546.

<sup>107</sup> *LitJas.* 42, 548, ANF VII, 548.

your people.” This liturgy goes on to recount the biblical message of creation, fall, and redemption, as expressed through Jewish law and prophets:

To you who have made the heaven, and all that is therein; the earth and all that is therein; . . . To you who after your own image and likeness, has made man, upon whom you did also bestow the joys of Paradise; and when he trespassed against you, you did neither neglect nor forsake him, good Lord, but did recall him by your law, instruct him by your prophets, restore and renew him by this awful, life-giving, and heavenly mystery.<sup>108</sup>

### Irenaeus

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, wrote extensively on issues of Christian doctrine throughout the second half of the second century A.D.. These writings demonstrate that, at least for the segment of the church represented by Irenaeus, Christianity was, at this time and place, relatively unconcerned with Judaism as a threat or rival, and was instead focused on the peril of Christian heresy. At the outset of the second book in his work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus surveys the first book and summarizes, “I proved also that there is one God, the Creator, and that he is not the fruit of any defect, not is there anything either above him, or after him.”<sup>109</sup> His concern was obviously not Judaism, which embraced the same God he did, but Gnosticism, which sought to separate the true God from the material world by means of a plethora of intermediate, semi-divine, beings.

Irenaeus’ primary purpose for writing was to present a comprehensible guide to Gnostic belief so that orthodox Christians could restore them to the true faith: “The

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<sup>108</sup> *The Liturgy of Mark* 2.11; 3.13, ANF VII, 554-555.

<sup>109</sup> *AgHer.* 2. Pref. 1; ANF I, 359.

man, however, who would undertake their conversion, must possess an accurate knowledge of their systems or schemes of doctrine.”<sup>110</sup> His main target was the arch-heretic, Marcion, who “advanced the most daring blasphemy against him who is proclaimed as God by the law and the prophets, declaring him to be the author of evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to himself.”<sup>111</sup>

Irenaeus reviled those who followed the teachings of Marcion and other Gnostic teachers, declaring that they “do live after the manner of swine and of dogs.”<sup>112</sup> The teachings of these false prophets were considered to be unworthy of consideration by anyone with sound judgment:

For who that has any intelligence, and possesses only a small proportion of truth, can tolerate them. . . . And who will tolerate the reminder of their vain talk, which they cunningly endeavor to accommodate to the parables, and have in this way plunged both themselves, and those who give credit to them, in the profoundest depths of impiety?<sup>113</sup>

These opinions are regarded as not merely irrational, but satanic: “These men, even as the Gentiles, have been sent forth by Satan to bring dishonor upon the Church. . . . They have also other modes of honoring these images, after the same manner of the Gentiles.”<sup>114</sup> Interestingly, Irenaeus connects irrationality and satanic influence to “the Gentiles.” He explicitly indicts Greek philosophy and Gnosticism under the banner of “the Gentiles.” In doing so, he embarks on a journey that will require him to side with the Jews against these Gentiles. In part, this approach is mandated by the fact that the

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<sup>110</sup> *AgHer.* 4. Pref. 2, ANF I, 462.

<sup>111</sup> *AgHer.* 1.27.2, ANF I, 352.

<sup>112</sup> *AgHer.* 5.8.2, 534.

<sup>113</sup> *AgHer.* 2.19.9, ANF I, 387.

<sup>114</sup> *AgHer.* 1.25.3,6, ANF I, 351.

Gnostic heretics sought to establish a non-Jewish Christianity, separating Jesus from the God of the Old Testament and the Christian faith from any Jewish influence.

Explaining the Gnostic system of Carpocrates, Irenaeus observes: “They further declare, that the soul of Jesus, although educated in the practices of the Jews, regarded these with contempt.”<sup>115</sup> The Gnostic teacher Saturninus taught that “the God of the Jews was one of the angels,” that “Christ came to destroy the God of the Jews,” and that Satan himself was “an angel, the enemy of the creators of the world, but especially of the God of the Jews.” This “God of the Jews,” among the creators of the world, actively promoted the interests of the Jews in the world, thereby provoking the opposition of other nations against them.<sup>116</sup> For all these reasons, the Gnostics looked with disfavor upon the Jews and anything Jewish. They sought to smear the religion of the Jews as a materialistic, inferior creed, to be left behind by the one who desired the true knowledge of God.

The followers of the Gnostics, as weak and vacillating as they were in their beliefs, were committed to the proposition that “they are no longer Jews, and that they are not yet Christians.”<sup>117</sup> They might not understand the intricacies of the doctrinal systems of their leaders, but these Gnostic lay people avoided at all costs the label of “Jew.”

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<sup>115</sup> *AgHer.* 1.25.1, ANF I, 350.

<sup>116</sup> *AgHer.* 1.24.2,4, ANF I, 349.

<sup>117</sup> *AgHer.* 1.24.6, ANF I, 350.

Ironically, the Ebionites, known for their continuation of Jewish practice and belief merged with an acknowledgement of Jesus, were also condemned by Irenaeus alongside the Gnostics, due to their Christology and use of a selective Christian canon:

Those who are called Ebionites agree that the world was made by God; but their opinions with respect to the Lord are similar to those of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. They use the Gospel according to Matthew only, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, maintaining that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetic writings, they endeavor to expound them in a somewhat singular manner: they practice circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs, which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.<sup>118</sup>

Although he rejected Ebionite doctrine and criticized what he saw as their excessive commitment to Jewish ways, Irenaeus did not react to this with Gnostic-like repudiation of the Jews. Instead, against the Gnostics, he embraced the God of the Jews, the creator of the world, as the true God, whose Christ he worshipped. Specifically against Marcion, the church, at a strategic turning point in its history, chose to align itself with the Jews against the anti-Jewish heresies. The development of its priesthood, its use of the Septuagint, its practice of discipline, habits of fasting, and observance of Sunday as a Christian Sabbath were all ways in which the Church was openly drawing on its Jewish background. Most of all, its acceptance of the Jewish scriptures was pivotal: “At exactly the time when events were combining to put the two religions apart, the Church by its affirmation of the value of the Old Testament was acknowledging more plainly than ever its debt to the Synagogue.”<sup>119</sup> Irenaeus proves that the God of Jesus is the creator and the God of the Jewish scriptures through passages from Genesis

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<sup>118</sup> *AgHer.* 1.26.2, ANF I, 352.

<sup>119</sup> Simon, 69.

and the Psalms alongside those from the gospels (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:9; 148:5; John 1:3).<sup>120</sup> He uses the Hebrew scriptures to defend the Jewish God and, implicitly, the validity of the Jewish religion. He also explicitly asserts that the religion of the Jews enjoys the presence of the power of God, not only in the centuries before Christ, but even up to the present day: “And for this reason do the Jews even now put demons to flight by means of this very adjuration, inasmuch as all beings fear the invocation of him who created them.”<sup>121</sup>

Irenaeus claims as his own the God of the Hebrew scriptures, combining the language of Jewish monotheism with the tenets of Christian faith, both set against the hated heresies:

Wherefore I do also call upon you, Lord God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob and Israel, who are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who, through the abundance of your mercy, has had a favor towards us, that we should know you, who has made heaven and earth, who rules over all, who is the only and the true God, above whom there is none other God; grant, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the governing power of the Holy Spirit; give to every reader of this book to know you, that you are God alone, to be strengthened in you, and to avoid every heretical, and godless, and impious doctrine.<sup>122</sup>

For Irenaeus, the reason that the Jewish scriptures are so highly compatible with the mission and message of Jesus is that the relationship between Jesus and the Scriptures did not begin with his advent on earth. Jesus, the Christ, the Son and Word of God, is intricately connected with the Scriptures both in terms of their origin and their content: “And the Word of God himself used to converse with the ante-Mosaic

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<sup>120</sup> *AgHer.* 2.2.5, ANF I, 362.

<sup>121</sup> *AgHer.* 2.6.2, ANF I, 365.

<sup>122</sup> *AgHer.* 3.6.4, ANF I, 419.

patriarchs, in accordance with his divinity and glory; but for those under the law he instituted a sacerdotal and liturgical service.”<sup>123</sup> This language asserts the existence and activity of a pre-incarnate Christ and imparts his validation of the Jewish rites of worship as being instituted by him. As he discusses John 5:46-47, where Jesus asserts that those who disbelieve him also disbelieve Moses, Irenaeus explains that this must be so “since the writings of Moses are the words of Christ.”<sup>124</sup> The law and the prophets speak of Jesus in advance because he is their content: “But the word of God is the superior above all, he who is loudly proclaimed in the law: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God;’ and ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart;’ and ‘Him shall you adore, and him alone shall thou serve.’”<sup>125</sup> Those who study the prophets of the Jews, says Irenaeus, “shall find that there was none other announced than our Lord, Jesus Christ.”<sup>126</sup>

Throughout his work, Irenaeus refrains from anti-Jewish rhetoric. Repeatedly, he refers to the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus “under Pontius Pilate,” without alluding to any role of the Jews.<sup>127</sup> Even when engaging in an exposition of Galatians 3, where Paul tackles the question, “Why then the law of works?,” Irenaeus does not impugn the place of the Jews in the plan of God.<sup>128</sup> Instead, he highlights Paul’s linkage of Jesus with his Jewish descent: “. . . from whom is Christ according to the flesh . . . made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law . . . God, who did by the

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<sup>123</sup> *AgHer.* 3.11.8, ANF I, 428-429.

<sup>124</sup> *AgHer.* 4.2.3, ANF I, 464.

<sup>125</sup> *AgHer.* 5.22.1, ANF I, 550.

<sup>126</sup> *AgHer.* 4.10.2, ANF I, 474.

<sup>127</sup> *AgHer.* 3.4.2; 5.12.5, ANF I, 417, 539.

<sup>128</sup> *AgHer.* 3.7.2, ANF I, 420.

prophets make promise of the Son . . . of the seed of David according to his birth from Mary.”<sup>129</sup>

While the Gnostics sought to separate Jesus from the Jews, Irenaeus tied him closely to them. He saw the Jews as those most likely, not least likely, to become followers of Jesus, “. . . in whom many believe who are of the circumcision, who do also hear Moses and the prophets announcing the coming of the Son of God.”<sup>130</sup> The opposite of “Christian,” for Irenaeus, is not “Jew,” but “Gnostic.” He asserted that Jews could be more easily brought to faith in Christ than Gentiles: “. . . the instruction of the former . . . was an easy task, because they could allege proofs from the Scriptures, and because they, who were in the habit of hearing Moses and the prophets, did also readily receive the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the life of God.”<sup>131</sup> The Jews had already been instructed in righteousness, unlike the Gentiles, who required instruction from Paul on how to live in a way that was pleasing to God. Those Gentiles who were converted to faith in Christ received divine blessings that were still linked inevitably to the Jews: “. . . a light for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”<sup>132</sup>

Irenaeus was insistent on showing that Jesus was a Jew who lived as a Jew, in order to refute the Gnostic claims that he had, in fact, come to destroy the Jewish ways. Arguing against them that Jesus had publicly ministered among the Jews for three years, not merely one, as they claimed, Irenaeus asserts that Jesus’ practice would have

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<sup>129</sup> *AgHer.* 3.16.3, ANF I, 441.

<sup>130</sup> *AgHer.* 4.2.4, ANF I, 464.

<sup>131</sup> *AgHer.* 4.24.1, ANF I, 495.

<sup>132</sup> *AgHer.* 3.10.4, ANF I, 425.

conformed to “the practice of the Jews from every land, and every year, that they should assemble at this period in Jerusalem, and there celebrate the feast of the Passover.”<sup>133</sup>

The significant point here is that Jesus had followed “the practice of the Jews,” and that this was a good thing. Irenaeus went out of his way to link Jesus in a positive way with a continuation of Jewish practices.

He goes on to also link the apostles of Jesus with “Jewishness.” Peter’s words and actions toward the Jews are thus presented as confirmation that the Christian faith, properly understood, required an understanding of Jesus within the context of Judaism, not in contradiction to it:

For Peter said, “You men of Israel, hear my words. . . . The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Son. . . . You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in your seed shall all the peoples of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son, sent him blessing you, that each may turn himself from his iniquities.” Peter, together with John, preached to them this plain message of glad tidings, that the promise which God made to the fathers had been fulfilled by Jesus . . . thus leading Israel into knowledge, and through Jesus preaching the resurrection of the dead, and showing, that whatever the prophets had proclaimed as to the suffering of Christ, these had God fulfilled.<sup>134</sup>

Irenaeus rejects the Gnostics’ claim that the apostles only spoke in such terms as an accommodation to their old beliefs, in order to help the Jews move beyond their limited conceptions of God to the more complete “secret knowledge” offered in Gnosticism. He refused to allow the Gnostics to claim Peter and the apostles as adherents of their twisted theology:

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<sup>133</sup> *AgHer.* 2.22.3, ANF I, 390.

<sup>134</sup> *AgHer.* 3.12.1-5, ANF I, 430-431.

For if Peter had known any such thing, he would have preached freely to the Gentiles, that the God the Jews was indeed one, but the God of the Christians another; and all of them, doubtless, being awe-struck because of the vision of the angel, would have believed whatever he told them. But it is evident from Peter's words that he did indeed still retain the God who was already known to them; but he also bare witness to them that Jesus Christ was the Son of God . . .<sup>135</sup>

Paul, like Peter, was an apostle of the same God of the Jews, not preaching another gospel or another god, but taking that same message of the one true God to the Gentiles.<sup>136</sup> The other apostles as well were friends of the Jewish law, not enemies to it: "Thus did the apostles, whom the Lord made witnesses of every action and of every doctrine . . . scrupulously act according to the dispensation of the Mosaic law, showing that it was from one and the same God"<sup>137</sup> Irenaeus records, but does not condemn, the reversion of Peter and Barnabas to the observance of Jewish ways (cf. Galatians 2:8). He was so thoroughly preoccupied with the dangers of Gnostic heresy that he saw Christian solidarity with Judaism to be essential to its survival.

One of the important ingredients in Irenaeus' method was his utilization of the Jewish scriptures to refute Gnostic teaching. He observes that the Gnostics indirectly admit that they lack the support of Scripture ". . . when they maintain that the Savior privately taught these same things not to all, but to certain only of his disciples who could comprehend them and who understood what was intended by him through means of arguments, enigmas, and parables."<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *AgHer.* 3.12.7, ANF I, 433.

<sup>136</sup> *AgHer.* 3.13.1, ANF I, 436.

<sup>137</sup> *AgHer.* 3.12.15, ANF I, 436.

<sup>138</sup> *AgHer.* 2.27.1-2, ANF I, 398-399.

Irenaeus much prefers the biblicism of the Jews to the philosophical and mystical speculation of the Gnostics. Throughout his writing, he employs phrases such as “we learn from Scripture . . . Scripture demonstrates that . . . we prove from Scripture . . . all the Scriptures loudly proclaim . . .” He is comfortable in a position of reliance upon the Jewish scriptures, and asserts that such reliance is superior to dependence on the teachings of the Gnostics: “For these men are not more to be depended on than the Scriptures; nor ought we to give up the declarations of the Lord, Moses, and the rest of the prophets, who have proclaimed the truth . . .”<sup>139</sup> Not content to merely allude to these authorities, he devotes his entire third book to a review of proofs from the Scriptures.<sup>140</sup> He advises his readers to pursue knowledge of the will of God through Scripture instead of a “secret knowledge” given covertly to the apostles and handed down through the Gnostics.<sup>141</sup> He indicts the Gnostics for their reliance on Greek philosophy, science, and speculation: “But if they had known the Scriptures, and been taught by the truth, they would have known, beyond doubt, that God is not as men are; and that his thoughts are not like the thoughts of men.”<sup>142</sup> Refusing to submit to the word of God in the Scripture, the Gnostics pervert the Scripture to their own use.

Irenaeus’ exposition pits the forced, fanciful application of the Gnostics against the plain, natural understanding of the Jews, with the implicit conclusion that the Jews were right and the Gnostics were wrong. He offers supporting evidence by pointing to the languages of the texts themselves, alluding to “the proper tongue of the Hebrews” in

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<sup>139</sup> *AgHer.* 2.30.6, ANF I, 405.

<sup>140</sup> *AgHer.* 2.35.4, ANF I, 13.

<sup>141</sup> *AgHer.* 3.1.1, ANF I, 414.

<sup>142</sup> *AgHer.* 2.13.3, ANF I, 374.

contrast to Greek, which for the Gnostics was “their own language.” Their knowledge and abuse of this language had allowed them to support their theology, for example, through a mathematical analysis of the word, “Jesus,” which, unsurprisingly, led to Gnostic conclusions about the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>143</sup>

In contrast, Irenaeus portrays the Scriptures rightly understood as foundational to Christian faith. Philip was able to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ in the desert because the man was prepared by his reading of the prophets.<sup>144</sup> Because the Christian church possessed the Scriptures, handed down to them by their spiritual ancestors, the Jews, Irenaeus could invite people to “flee to the Church, and be brought up in her bosom, and be nourished with the Lord’s Scriptures.”<sup>145</sup>

For all that can be said about Irenaeus’ friendly treatment of the Jews, it must be acknowledged that he also criticizes them. He observes that Jesus anticipated the coming clash in Matthew 10: “And that his disciples must suffer for his sake, he [implied when he] said to the Jews, ‘Behold I send you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify.’”<sup>146</sup> This criticism did not become for Irenaeus the basis of a general condemnation of the Jews, for it remained focused on the leaders of the Jews, not the Jewish people themselves. He observes, in contrast to the supportive Jewish crowds: “But to the envious wicked stewards, who circumvented those under them . . . did the Lord reply, ‘Have you never read . . . ?’ indicating that

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<sup>143</sup> *AgHer.* 2.24.2, ANF I, 393.

<sup>144</sup> *AgHer.* 4.23.2, ANF I, 495.

<sup>145</sup> *AgHer.* 5.20.2, ANF I, 548.

<sup>146</sup> *AgHer.* 3.18.5, ANF I, 447.

they were ignorant of the meaning of the Scripture and the dispensation of God.”<sup>147</sup> He especially singles out the Pharisees, “who did not admit the advent of his Son,”<sup>148</sup> for their resistance to God’s saving work in Jesus. They were alienated from God because they “departed from God, in not receiving his Word, but imagining that they could know the Father [apart] by himself, without the Word, that is, without the Son . . .”<sup>149</sup>

Because they held onto their traditions in place of the teaching of Christ, the leaders of the Jews missed the very meaning of those traditions. Ironically, his teaching did not appeal to them to abandon their law, but to truly adhere to it: “He thus teaches them that God desires obedience, which renders them secure, rather than sacrifices and holocausts, which avail them nothing toward righteousness; and [by this declaration] he prophesies the new covenant at the same time.”<sup>150</sup> Citing Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and David, Irenaeus argues that obedience and justice are, and always were, superior to ritual sacrifices: “From all these it is evident that God did not seek sacrifices and holocausts from them, but faith, and obedience, and righteousness, because of their salvation.”<sup>151</sup> The obvious implication of these teachings is that the sacrificial system ought to be abandoned, since its core meaning was always about obedience, and since it has now been made obsolete by the appearance of the Son of God who offers a new and better way, at least in part made evident through the observance of the Eucharist, through which: “My name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is

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<sup>147</sup> *AgHer.* 4.11.3, ANF I, 475.

<sup>148</sup> *AgHer.* 5.17.2, ANF I, 545.

<sup>149</sup> *AgHer.* 4.7.4, ANF I, 470.

<sup>150</sup> *AgHer.* 4.18.1, ANF I, 482.

<sup>151</sup> *AgHer.* 4.17.3, 483-484.

offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice.”<sup>152</sup> Irenaeus has not changed his mind about all the positive things he has asserted about the Jews and their religion, but he does conclude that that religion has now been replaced by one that is better, not in contradiction to it, but as its perfection, fulfillment, and completion: “These things, therefore, which were given for bondage, and for a sign to them, he cancelled by the new covenant of liberty. But he has increased and widened those laws which are natural, and noble, and common to all . . .”<sup>153</sup>

Irenaeus sees the relationship of the old and new covenants as one of unity and continuity, held together in the person of Jesus Christ, the maker of both covenants: “But one and the same householder produced both covenants, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke with both Abraham and Moses, and who has restored us anew to liberty, and has multiplied that grace which is from himself.”<sup>154</sup> The transition from one covenant to the other allows for gradual progress, and maintains the validity of the old while asserting the perfection of the new:

For the new covenant having been known and preached by the prophets, he who was to carry it out according to the good pleasure of the Father was also preached, having been revealed to men as God pleased; that they might always make progress through believing in him, and by means of the [successive] covenants, should gradually attain to perfect salvation. For there is one salvation and one God; but the precepts which form the man are numerous, and the steps which lead man to God are not a few.<sup>155</sup>

When all is said and done, the need for each person is to believe in God through his Son, Jesus, the Christ. This way is open to all, Jew and Gentile alike, but it is a choice

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<sup>152</sup> *AgHer.* 4.17.5, ANF I, 484.

<sup>153</sup> *AgHer.* 4.16.5, ANF I, 482.

<sup>154</sup> *AgHer.* 4.9.1, ANF I, 472.

<sup>155</sup> *AgHer.* 4.9.3, ANF I, 472-473.

that each one must make, with eternal consequences that follow: “When, however, they believe and are subject to God, and go on and keep his doctrine, they are sons of God; but when they have apostasized and fallen into transgression, they are ascribed to their chief, the devil.”<sup>156</sup>

Irenaeus describes this decision in the context of inclusion and acceptance. He portrays the invitation of God to Jew and Gentile as one of eager loving desire, as expressed in the person of Jesus himself:

And from this fact, that he exclaimed upon the cross, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,” the long-suffering, patience, compassion, and goodness of Christ are exhibited, since he both suffered, and did himself exculpate those who had maltreated him.<sup>157</sup>

Irenaeus is intentionally leaving the door open to anyone hearing the claims of the Christian faith, appealing to them on the basis of the last words of Jesus on the cross.

Interestingly, Irenaeus’ picture of the end of the present age remains devoid of negative references to the Jews. The unparalleled evil that will characterize that era is ascribed to the Antichrist and the tribulations he will inflict. The language used of his kingdom calls to mind the Roman empire. There is no allusion to the Jews as being in any way connected with his reign. On the other hand, the description of the blessed millennial kingdom that emerges in this time is permeated with strong, positive references to the Jews. The center of the Messiah’s kingdom will be a new Jerusalem, which will descend from heaven, but will be modeled after the former city. Those who will inhabit this city, “the children of Abraham,” are the saved of every nation, Jews and

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<sup>156</sup> *AgHer.* 4.41.3, ANF I, 525.

<sup>157</sup> *AgHer.* 3.18.5, ANF I, 447.

Gentiles, who are together “returning to the Land.”<sup>158</sup> Irenaeus can think of no better picture to describe the eschatological kingdom than that of a restored and perfected Israel, bringing together a people of God which unifies Jew and Gentile.

### *The Gospel of Peter*

An interesting contrast to the approach of Irenaeus, composed at about the same time that the Bishop of Lyons wrote, is the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*. This work was already considered heretical by the end of the second century, and was possibly related in some way to the Gnostic movement associated with Marcion. The editor of the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection observed that it is more like John than the Synoptists regarding both its chronology and its attitude toward the Jews and Pilate: “With regard to the last two points, the Petrine Gospel seems to present a later and more exaggerated form of the tendency perceptible in the Johannine, and fully worked out, in the *Acts of Pilate*, to blame the Jews and exculpate Pilate.” There are not a great number of references to the Jews in this document, but those that exist are instructive:

But of the Jews none washed his hands, neither Herod nor any one of his judges.

Then the Jews and the elders and the priests, perceiving what evil they had done to themselves, began to lament and say, “Woe for our sins: the judgment has drawn nigh, and the end of Jerusalem.”

Pilate answered and said, “I am pure from the blood of the Son of God; but it was you who determined this.” Then they all drew near and besought him and entreated him to command the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing of the things which they had seen: “For it is better,” say they, “for us to be guilty of the greatest sin before God, and not to fall into the hands of the people of the Jews

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<sup>158</sup> *AgHer.* 5.35, ANF I, 553.

and to be stoned.” Pilate therefore commanded the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing.<sup>159</sup>

In this document, Pilate is almost an innocent bystander. In contrast, the Jews are clearly presented as the instigators and perpetrators of the crimes against Jesus. The Gnostic author of this gospel puts into their mouths words admitting their guilt and accepting the responsibility for the death of Jesus. Their words further portray a group of people who were actually aware of Jesus’ true identity as the Son of God, but were yet unwilling to have this made known, for fear of their lives at the hands of the Jewish people. This perspective highlights the anti-Jewish tone of the Gnostic heresies: their rejection of the material world led them to a bias against the God of the Hebrew scriptures, to whom is ascribed the creation of this material order. To remain consistent, they had to further reject all of Jewish religion and find fault with the Jewish people. This is no signal that Christian attitudes toward the Jews in this period were similarly negative, for on the contrary, Gnostic heresy pushed Christians closer toward Judaism as allies. The same anti-materialist theology which caused Gnostics to reject the Scriptures and God of the Jews also caused them to reject the orthodox Christian belief in the advent of the Son of God in human flesh, since it also was tainted with sin according to the Gnostic view.

In response, Christians like Irenaeus defended the Jewish scriptures, the God of those Scriptures, and the legitimacy and goodness of the material order. In so doing, they maintained a kinship with the Jews. This did not obliterate the differences between

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<sup>159</sup> *Gospel of Peter* intro, 1, 2, 7, ANF IX, 7-8.

the two groups, and Christians continued to seek to persuade Jews that they could only come to fully know God by believing in Jesus as the Christ. However, the Christian pre-occupation with heresy during this period brought them to embrace rather than repudiate Jewish belief, and animosity between the two groups was generally muted or absent.

### **Hegesippus**

Near A.D. 170, Hegesippus wrote his *Commentaries on the Acts of the Church*, reflecting a view of Jewish-Christian developments from the mind of a Christian Jew. His record of the apostolic age presents a picture of significant Christian influence among the Jews, even within their upper levels of leadership: “So, when many even of the ruling class believed, there was a commotion among the Jews, and scribes, and Pharisees, who said, ‘A little more, and we shall have all the people looking for Jesus as the Christ.’” There was apparently such a perception of common ground between the Jewish and Christian leaders that the former truly expected that they could count on James to correct the belief of the crowds that Jesus was the Christ. When instead, he proclaimed Jesus as the ascended Son of God, he was stoned and martyred.<sup>160</sup> His violent end notwithstanding, this story asserts that at least some of the early Christian leaders maintained strong ties within the Jewish community and its leadership.

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<sup>160</sup> Hegesippus, *Commentary on the Acts of the Church*, ANF VIII, 763.

## Summary

The apologists of this section were clearly focused on the problem of heresy. This concern caused them to move closer toward the Jews, rather than away from them. Against Gnosticism, with its pagan philosophical roots, the apologists allied themselves with the one true God of the Jews, who was denigrated by Gnostic claims. The Jewish scriptures, of which Jesus Christ was both author and content, were seen as superior to secret revelation and reasoning, and became ammunition for Christian attacks on both heretics and pagans. The Christian liturgies of the period continued to display continuity with Jewish practices. Christian apologists defended Jewish history and morality, and made the case for ethical monotheism in a very Jewish tone. Jews were seen as closer to salvation than the Gentiles, although both must come to God only through Jesus. God's redemptive purposes were seen to seek their completion in a millennial restoration of Israel.

Jewish leaders receive the brunt of the apologists' criticism for their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. The apologists assert that the sacrificial system is not only obsolete, but that it was always inferior to the simple obedience that God preferred. The errors of the Jews in these ways are spiritual lessons for all men, who no less than the Jews, need to follow God with sincere obedience.

### Unprecedented Openness: Clement of Alexandria

At the end of the second century A.D., Clement traveled from his native Athens through Asia Minor and Syria to Egypt in search of learning and truth. After conversion to the Christian faith, he became a student of Pantaenus in Alexandria, and later

replaced him as the main teacher in this school. He addressed his apologetic writing to the pagan, Greek mind, but made frequent references to the Jews. These references exhibit his generally positive attitude toward them, but also demonstrate an awareness that, from apostolic times, there were within the Christian church “Hebrews, who were declining again from faith to the law,”<sup>161</sup> and that this apostasy demanded an apologetic response. He identified with the apostle Paul’s willingness to make concessions to the Jews in order to avoid causing an unnecessary offence to them, as shown by the apostle’s decision to circumcise Timothy to protect the faith of Christian Jews who still “understood more carnally” such points of the law.<sup>162</sup> Describing the plan of the fourth book of his *Stromata*, he demonstrates that he has both Jews and Greeks in mind as he writes: “After which sketch, the brief explanation of the Scriptures both against the Greeks and against the Jews will be presented . . . we must give an account of the physical doctrines of the Greeks and of the barbarians, respecting elementary principles, as far as their opinions have reached us.”<sup>163</sup> Both groups require careful attention and sympathetic understanding if one hopes to win them over to Christ: “‘For not only for the Hebrews and those that are under the law,’ according to the apostle, ‘is it right to become a Jew, but also a Greek for the sake of the Greeks, that we may gain all.’”<sup>164</sup>

One of the “objections alleged against us by Greeks and Jews” was the discord evident among Christian sects: the authority of Christianity as a whole was

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<sup>161</sup> *Strom.* 6.8, ANF II, 494.

<sup>162</sup> *Strom.* 6.15, ANF II, 509.

<sup>163</sup> *Strom.* 4.1, ANF II, 409.

<sup>164</sup> *Strom.* 1.2, ANF II, 303.

compromised by the claims of unique authority by each of the divergent groups.<sup>165</sup> As for Irenaeus, so for Clement the worst among these groups was the Gnostics. In response to the threat they represented, he developed his notion of the Christian as the “true Gnostic,” to whom alone the mysteries of God are revealed. Although the Gospel is proclaimed to all of every nation, “it is but for few to comprehend these things.”<sup>166</sup> As he uses this idea of the true Gnostic, he intentionally juxtaposed it against the claims of the heretical Gnostics. He thus refuted the Gnostic view that the God of the Hebrew scriptures was deficient in goodness: “. . . some rise up, saying that the Lord, by reason of the rod, and threatening, and fear, is not good; misapprehending, as appears, the Scripture which says, ‘And he that fears the Lord will turn to his heart,’ and most of all, oblivious of his love, in that for us he became man.”<sup>167</sup>

Again, countering the Gnostic classification of believers into a higher class, the illuminated, and a lower class, animal man, Clement quotes from Paul regarding the law as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, resulting in the equality of believers across racial, socio-economic, and gender lines: “Do you not hear that we are no longer under that law which was accompanied by fear. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>168</sup> In these encounters with Gnostic doctrine, Clement enhances the position of the Jew: in the first case, he is embracing the God of the Jews, affirming his goodness against the Gnostic. In the second case, he is not merely disagreeing with the Gnostics

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<sup>165</sup> *Strom.* 7.15, ANF II, 549.

<sup>166</sup> *Strom.* 5.10, ANF II, 459.

<sup>167</sup> *Instr.* 1.8, ANF II, 225.

<sup>168</sup> *Instr.* 1.6, ANF II, 217.

about the status of their “illuminated ones,” but is also asserting strongly that salvation in Christ is open to the Jews on an equal footing with all others.

Clement was one of the first Christian writers to explicitly utilize the terminology “Old Testament” and “New Testament” in reference to the Jewish and Christian scriptures respectively. As he does so, it is clear that he does not slander the Jewish scriptures by calling them “old,” as if they are obsolete upon the arrival of the new. Instead, the old and the new point to each other and the Christian finds them together in opposition to the teaching of the Gnostics: “. . . the precepts both of the Old and of the New Testaments are, then, superfluous, if one is saved by nature, as Valentinus would have it, and is a believer and an elect man by nature, as Basilides thinks . . .”<sup>169</sup>

Clement’s approach to the Greeks is interesting because in it he parallels his approach to the Jews, seeking agreement and common ground more than confrontation:

Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. . . . God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring “the Hellenic mind,” as the law, the Hebrews, “to Christ.”<sup>170</sup>

Clement is perhaps readier to attack Greek thought than Jewish, since it is, as observed above, his primary target. Quoting Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:22, he observes, “‘For the Hebrews seek signs,’ as the apostle says, ‘and the Greeks seek after wisdom.’” Although this citation seems to imply that both groups are being considered in the same

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<sup>169</sup> *Strom.* 5.1, 13, ANF II, 444-445, 464.

<sup>170</sup> *Strom.* 1.5, ANF II, 305.

light, he goes on to zero in only on the Greeks, engaging in an extended critique of Greek philosophy.<sup>171</sup> Like Justin, he subordinates Greek civilization to Jewish thought by making it dependent on the latter for its origin and inspiration: “For were we to go over their sayings, we should gather together directly such a quantity of notes, in showing that the whole of the Hellenic wisdom was derived from the barbarian philosophy.”<sup>172</sup>

The term “barbarian” is used here by Clement, not in a pejorative sense, but as his most usual form of reference to the Hebrew scriptures,<sup>173</sup> and is even applied at times to the Christian gospel.<sup>174</sup> He sees with great certainty the “the plagiarism of the Greeks from the barbarian philosophy,”<sup>175</sup> the “plagiarizing of the dogmas of the philosophers from the Hebrews.” With extensive proofs from Jewish, Greek, and Mesopotamian histories and chronicles, Clement establishes “the philosophy of the Hebrews . . . to be the most ancient of Wisdom.”<sup>176</sup>

Plato is described as “the philosopher who learned from the Hebrews.”<sup>177</sup> He actually teaches, contends Clement, the doctrine of the Trinity “somehow or other from the Hebrew scriptures.”<sup>178</sup> The “sources” of philosophical virtues “were communicated

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<sup>171</sup> *Strom.* 1.4, 304.

<sup>172</sup> *Strom.* 5.14, ANF II, 475.

<sup>173</sup> *Strom.* 5.9-10, ANF II, 457-458.

<sup>174</sup> *Strom.* 8.1, ANF II, 558.

<sup>175</sup> *Strom.* 5.14, ANF II, 465.

<sup>176</sup> *Strom.* 1.21, ANF II, 324.

<sup>177</sup> *Strom.* 1.1, ANF II, 502; cf. *Instr.* 2.1, ANF II, 242.

<sup>178</sup> *Strom.* 5.14, ANF II, 469.

by the Hebrews to the Greeks,”<sup>179</sup> then “adorned by Greek speech.” It is obvious “whence the true philosophy has its handles.”<sup>180</sup>

Supreme antiquity, highly esteemed in the ancient world, belonged to the Hebrews over the Greeks even in terms of their respective languages: “it is comparatively easy to perceive by how many generations the dialects that obtained among the Greeks are posterior to the language of the Hebrews.”<sup>181</sup> In light of this perspective, it is not surprising that Clement warns the Greeks not to be too tightly loyal to their Greek traditions: “Let us then avoid custom as we would a dangerous headland, or the threatening Charybdis, or the mythical sirens.”<sup>182</sup> It is ironic that Clement subscribed to the notion that philosophy could be a “stepping stone” to bring the Greeks to Christ, as the law was the same for the Jews, and yet denigrated those who held to that way: “. . . those who applied themselves to the philosophy of the Greeks shut their ears, voluntarily to the truth, despising the voice of barbarians” and fearing state persecution.<sup>183</sup>

Clement thus became an apologist, not just for the Christians, but for the Jews. He explains and defends the Mosaic dietary laws, justifying them with the observation that Egyptian and Greek writings and religious practices included extensive symbolism and mystical truth, so “it is proper that the barbarian philosophy, on which it is our

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<sup>179</sup> *Strom.* 6.11, ANF II, 502.

<sup>180</sup> *Strom.* 5.7, ANF II, 465.

<sup>181</sup> *Strom.* 6.15, ANF II, 510.

<sup>182</sup> *Exh.* 11, ANF II, 205.

<sup>183</sup> *Strom.* 6.8, ANF II, 495.

business to speak, should prophesy also obscurely and by symbols, as was evinced.”<sup>184</sup> He defends the Jewish worship of God as an immaterial Spirit by asserting the primacy of Hebrew worship over pagan imitations: “Therefore the wisest of the Egyptian priests decided that the temple of Athena should be hypaethral, just as the Hebrews constructed the temple without an image.”<sup>185</sup> Based on verses from the Epistle to the Hebrews, Clement claims that there had been additional divine revelation given to the Jews, “for there were certainly, among the Hebrews, some things delivered unwritten.”<sup>186</sup> He also credited them with the numerology schemes upon which he built his allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures.<sup>187</sup>

Clement spoke vigorously in defense of the Jewish law. He saw it as being of divine origin: “But among the Hebrews the prophets were moved by the power and inspiration of God.”<sup>188</sup> Far from being obsolete or unspiritual, “. . . the whole system of Moses is suited for the training of such as are capable of becoming good and noble men and for hunting out men like them; and this is the art of command.”<sup>189</sup> The religion based upon this law is in every way superior to that of the Greeks, to whom he said, “. . . for the laws that are consistent with truth, and your sentiments respecting God, you are indebted to the Hebrews.”<sup>190</sup> In contrast to the vain speculations of pagan polytheism and philosophy, even above the prophetic word of the Sibyl, is the word of

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<sup>184</sup> *Strom.* 5.8, ANF II, 456.

<sup>185</sup> *Strom.* 5.5, ANF II, 451.

<sup>186</sup> *Strom.* 5.10, ANF II, 459.

<sup>187</sup> *Strom.* 6.11, ANF II, 500.

<sup>188</sup> *Strom.* 1.21, ANF II, 331.

<sup>189</sup> *Strom.* 1.26, ANF II, 338.

<sup>190</sup> *Exh.* 6, ANF II, 192.

God revealed in the Hebrew scriptures. Before launching into an extended recitation of selections from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, and David, Clement asserts: “The divine Scriptures and institutions of wisdom form the short road to salvation.”<sup>191</sup> Quite simply, these Scriptures provide, for the Greek as well as for the Jew, a necessary pattern for daily living: “. . . the Greeks ought by the law and the prophets to learn to worship one God only, the only Sovereign.”<sup>192</sup> Citing the Ten Commandments, Clement quips, “These things are to be observed, and whatever else is commanded in reading the Bible.”<sup>193</sup>

Clement resists any tendencies to denigrate the Jewish law. He enlists the support of none other than Jesus himself, who upheld the place of the law “. . . by admonishing those who throw off the restraints of his law, that he may effect their release from the slavery, error, and captivity of the adversary.”<sup>194</sup>

Against echoes of Gnostic denigration of the God of the Old Testament, Clement asserts, “Let no one, then, run down the law, as if, on account of the penalty, it were not beautiful and good.”<sup>195</sup> He challenges the logic of those who deny the goodness of the law: “How, then, is the law still said to be not good by certain heresies. . . . For, enjoining what is to be done, it reprehended what ought not be done.”<sup>196</sup> He sees the positive value of negative consequences laid out by the law: “The commandment by menacing with fear, works love, not hatred. Therefore the law is

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<sup>191</sup> *Exh.* 8, ANF II, 194.

<sup>192</sup> *Strom* 6.18, ANF II, 519.

<sup>193</sup> *Instr.* 3.12, ANF II, 292.

<sup>194</sup> *Instr.* 1.8, ANF II, 226.

<sup>195</sup> *Strom.* 1.27, ANF II, 339.

<sup>196</sup> *Strom.* 2.7, ANF II, 355.

productive of the emotion of fear. ‘So that the law is holy,’ and in truth ‘spiritual,’ according to the apostle.”<sup>197</sup> Explaining that God’s discipline is a sign of his love, Clement claims the law as belonging to Christians as well as Jews. In four pages of a single chapter, he quotes forty-three times from the Jewish scriptures to make his case, thereby affirming the high regard in which he held the Scripture.<sup>198</sup> Earlier in the same work, he quotes approvingly from Genesis, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah all within the same three pages.<sup>199</sup> In order to describe the life of the righteous man, Clement refers to Ezekiel, not the Christian gospels or epistles, for his pattern: “These words contain a description of the conduct of Christians, a notable exhortation to the blessed life, which is the reward of a life of goodness—everlasting life.”<sup>200</sup>

In his treatment of Christian texts, Clement avoided any denigration of the Jews that might have been drawn from them. Speaking against false prophets, he quotes from John 8, “You are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father you will do . . . for he is a liar, and the father of it.” Even though the events of John 8 take place in the context of an altercation between Jesus and the religious leaders of the Jews, Clement does not make any allegations against the Jews of his day, contenting himself to apply the verse to the false teachers with whom he battled, who were, due to their anti-materialist rejection of the Hebrew scriptures, anti-Jewish at their core.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *Strom.* 2.3, ANF II, 411.

<sup>198</sup> *Instr.* 1.9, ANF II, 228-232.

<sup>199</sup> *Instr.* 1.5, ANF II, 212-215.

<sup>200</sup> *Instr.* 1.10, ANF II, 233.

<sup>201</sup> *Strom.* 1.17, ANF II, 319.

Clement recounts the story of Christ's passion in a positive light, rather than in a way that would have given him occasion to slander the Jews. He speaks only in a positive way about Jesus "riding into Jerusalem," emphasizing the triumphal aspect of that event instead of its significance as the "beginning of the end."<sup>202</sup> Similarly, Clement describes the story of the Passover, not in terms of Jewish atrocities against the Christ, but in terms of his voluntary, even eager, acceptance of his role as the divine/human fulfillment of the Passover: "Accordingly, in the years gone by, Jesus went to eat the Passover sacrificed by the Jews, keeping the feast. . . . And on the following day our Savior suffered, he who was the Passover, propitiously sacrificed by the Jews."<sup>203</sup> Rather than denigrating the Jews, Clement emphasizes that Jesus chose this path in order to secure salvation for all, thereby almost making the Jews cooperative partners in the redemptive plan of God.

Whether working in the Old or New Testament, Clement viewed both covenants as part of the same whole. He appropriated the Hebrew scriptures for the Christian church, finding them to be "our Scripture" through an exposition of Psalm 78 that is more assertion than demonstration.<sup>204</sup> He made the church part of Israel because he viewed the two peoples as essentially one. The "tree of truth" and the family of God, which had consisted of Israel alone before the advent of Christ, is now made up of people from four different sources: those who were "normal" Gentiles, philosophers and Jews (each being prepared for Christ by philosophy and the law, respectively), heretics,

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<sup>202</sup> *Exh. 11*, ANF II, 206.

<sup>203</sup> *Passover*, ANF II, 581.

<sup>204</sup> *Strom. 5.4*, ANF II, 450.

and the true Christian Gnostics.<sup>205</sup> Quoting from 1 Peter, he asserts, “We have become a consecrated offering to God for Christ’s sake: we are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people, who once were not a people, but are now the people of God.”<sup>206</sup> The Christian church looks to the Jewish patriarchs as its spiritual ancestors and claims Israel’s inheritance as its own:

... and if we are the seed of Abraham, then we must also believe through hearing. For we are Israelites, who are convinced not by signs, but by hearing. ... And if the same mansions are promised by prophecy to us and to the patriarchs, the God of both the covenants is shown to be one. Accordingly it is added, more clearly, “You have inherited the covenant of Israel,” speaking to those called from among the nations.<sup>207</sup>

The Church, then, becomes Israel, and Clement’s interpretation of the Scripture of Israel becomes ecclesiology: “Such David describes the Church: ‘The queen stood on your right hand, enveloped in a golden robe, variegated.’”<sup>208</sup> The Ten Commandments become the handbook of true Christian Gnosticism,<sup>209</sup> and God’s goodness to his people Israel becomes Christian salvation: “How good is God to Israel, to such as are upright in heart!”<sup>210</sup> Even Clement’s eternity is pictured in terms of a heavenly Jerusalem, confirmed by such weighty biblical authorities as Plato and the Stoics: “But I shall pray the Spirit of Christ to wing me to my Jerusalem. For the Stoics say that heaven is

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<sup>205</sup> *Strom.* 6.15, ANF II, 507.

<sup>206</sup> *Exh.* 4, ANF II, 189.

<sup>207</sup> *Strom.* 2.6, ANF II, 354.

<sup>208</sup> *Strom.* 6.11, ANF II, 500.

<sup>209</sup> *Strom.* 6.16, ANF II, 511-515.

<sup>210</sup> *Instr.* 1.1, ANF II, 209.

properly a city, but places here on earth are not cities; for they are called so, but are not.

... And we know Plato's city placed as a pattern in heaven."<sup>211</sup>

As a result, Clement's approach to interpreting the Scripture hinges on a very tight connection between his Old and New Testaments. The message that was hidden in the former has now been made known, and has been amplified and completed by the latter:

So that, on the one hand, then, are the mysteries which were hid till the time of the apostles, and were delivered by them as they received from the Lord, and, concealed in the Old Testament, were manifested to the saints. And, on the other hand, there is, "the riches of the glory of the mystery in the Gentiles," which is faith and hope in Christ.<sup>212</sup>

Describing the writings of the apostle Paul, he observes that they "depend on the Old Testament, breathing and speaking of them. For faith in Christ and the knowledge of the Gospel are the explanation and fulfillment of the law . . ." <sup>213</sup> Clement does not oppose the old to the new, but finds running through them both a very practical revelation of God's will for faith and life: "However, both the laws served the Word for the instruction of humanity, both that given by Moses and that by the apostles."<sup>214</sup>

Like other Christians of his era, Clement wandered occasionally into allegory in order to find practical application of the Jewish law to Christian living. He considers biblical texts regarding priests, Levites, Melchizedek, Job, and the levitical standards for ritual impurity, asserts that Gnostic interpretations which spiritualize the passages are to be rejected, and then, through some deft spiritualizing allegory of his own,

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<sup>211</sup> *Strom.* 4.26, ANF II, 441.

<sup>212</sup> *Strom.* 5.10, ANF II, 458-459.

<sup>213</sup> *Strom.* 4.21, ANF II, 434.

<sup>214</sup> *Instr.* 3.12, ANF II, 294.

concludes that the issue has to do with questions of belief and conversion in humanity in general, not Israel.<sup>215</sup> Regarding the levitical regulations for sacrifices and for discerning which animals may be eaten, he concludes, “Now those that ruminates, but do not part the hoof, indicate the majority of the Jews, who have indeed the oracles of God, but have not faith, and the step which, resting on the truth, conveys to the Father by the Son.”<sup>216</sup>

Clement cannot be convicted of using prophetic denunciations of Israel’s rebelliousness to unfairly indict the Jews of his own day. Instead, he mined these passages for their value in serving as a warning to all people, especially Christians. As he considers the history of Israel’s sins, he cautions: “And let us babes, hearing of the sins of others, keep from similar transgressions, through dread of the threatening, that we may not have to undergo like sufferings.”<sup>217</sup> When he quotes Jesus’ words, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children, as a hen her chickens,” he applies this message to the place of peace in the life of the Christian, with no reference to the Jews.<sup>218</sup> In the same way, he applies to all of humanity, and not to the Jews alone or especially, Jesus’ use of these words from Isaiah: “‘For this reason,’ says the Lord, ‘I speak to them in parables: because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not, and do not understand.’”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Strom.* 4.25, ANF II, 438.

<sup>216</sup> *Strom.* 7.18, ANF II, 555.

<sup>217</sup> *Instr.* 1.7, ANF II, 224.

<sup>218</sup> *Strom.* 1.5, ANF II, 305.

<sup>219</sup> *Strom.* 1.1, ANF II, 299.

In spite of his tolerant view of the Jews and their religion, Clement still found fault with them. Paul's rebuke of the boasting Jew in Romans 2:17-20 was well-deserved, according to Clement, because, although they possess the truth, they do not live by it.<sup>220</sup> Commenting on Romans 10:2-3, where Paul asserts that the Jews seek their own righteousness instead of the righteousness of God, Clement concludes that both their understanding and their motivation were deficient: "For they did not know and do the will of the law; but what they supposed, that they thought the law wished. And they did not believe the law as prophesying, but the bare word; and they followed through fear, not through disposition and faith."<sup>221</sup> They had learned to follow the law in a way that kept hidden to them its true spiritual meaning: "The Jews had frugality enjoined on them by the law in the most systematic manner. For the Instructor, by Moses, deprived them of the use of innumerable things, adding reasons—the spiritual ones hidden; the carnal ones apparent, to which indeed they have trusted."<sup>222</sup>

They also missed the fact that the law was always intended to be temporary, since it was implemented through the human agency of Moses: "Now the law is ancient grace given through Moses by the Word. For this reason also the Scripture says, 'The law was given through Moses, not by Moses, but by the Word, and through Moses his servant. For this reason it was only temporary; but eternal grace and truth were by Jesus Christ.'"<sup>223</sup> The incarnation of Christ was the ultimate proof that the law was necessarily inadequate to bring salvation: "If then the law of Moses had been sufficient

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<sup>220</sup> *Strom.* 1.27, ANF II, 340.

<sup>221</sup> *Strom.* 2.9, ANF II, 357.

<sup>222</sup> *Instr.* 2.1, ANF II, 242.

<sup>223</sup> *Instr.* 1.7, ANF II, 224.

to confer eternal life, it were to no purpose for the Savior himself to come and suffer for us, accomplishing the course of human life from his birth to his cross.”<sup>224</sup> This makes it plain that the Jews had received in part what Jesus Christ brought in full:

Formerly the old people had an old covenant, and the law disciplined the people with fear, and the Word was an angel; but to the fresh and new people has also been given a new covenant, and the Word has appeared, and fear is turned to love, and that mystic angel is born—Jesus. For this same Instructor said then, “You shall fear the Lord God”; but to us he has addressed the exhortation, “You shall love the Lord your God.”<sup>225</sup>

The law was good, in that it pointed people to Christ, although the Jewish teachers of the law had missed this: “And for this reason we rightly do not sacrifice to God, who, needing nothing, supplies all men with all things; but we glorify him who gave himself in sacrifice for us.”<sup>226</sup>

The fault with the Jews was not chiefly that they were wrong, but that their religion was incomplete, not having accepted the revelation of God in Christ that would have brought it to maturity. Clement used the picture of physical maturity to assert this:

[The Jews] are under fear and sins; but [God] has conferred manhood on those who are under faith, by calling them sons, in contradistinction from the children that are under the law: “For you are no more a servant,” he says, “but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.” What, then, is lacking to the son after inheritance? For this reason the expression, “When I was a child,” may be elegantly expounded thus: that is, when I was a Jew (for he was a Hebrew by extraction) I thought as a child, when I followed the law; but after becoming a man, I no longer entertain the sentiments of a child, that is, of the law, but of a man, that is, of Christ, whom alone the Scripture calls man, as we have said before. “I put away childish things.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *RichMan* 8, ANF II, 593.

<sup>225</sup> *Instr.* 1.7, ANF II, 224.

<sup>226</sup> *Strom.* 7.3, ANF II, 526-527.

<sup>227</sup> *Instr.* 6, ANF II, 217-218.

The Jews are as children while, in contrast, Christians are mature adults. No one faults a child for being a child, but it is expected that they will become adults, and if they do not, their development is considered incomplete. The Jews are not singled out in this regard, for all of mankind needed to pass through spiritual childhood and adolescence in order to grow to readiness for spiritual adulthood in Christ: “But as the proclamation [of the Gospel] has come now at the fit time, so also at the fit time were the law and the prophets given to the barbarians, and philosophy to the Greeks, to fit their ears for the Gospel.”<sup>228</sup> The Jews, brought up in the law, needed to complete their righteousness by the acquisition of faith, while the Greeks, “righteous according to philosophy,” needed to add faith and abandon their idolatrous ways.<sup>229</sup> So Clement regarded the religion of the Jews as incomplete and immature, albeit one step ahead of the non-Jews, those who did not have the advantage of being under the law.

Clement indicts the Jews for their rebelliousness throughout their history. He says of the Jews of Moses’ time: “And when having senselessly filled themselves, they senselessly played; on that account the law was given them, and terror ensued for the prevention of transgressions and for the promotion of right actions.”<sup>230</sup> He accused the Jews of spiritual blindness, which, along with carnality, prevented them from seeing Christ in their own Scriptures: “‘For unto this day the same veil remains on many in the reading of the Old Testament,’ not being uncovered by turning to the Lord. . . . Whence also he applied the name ‘brood of vipers’ to the voluptuous, who serve the belly and

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<sup>228</sup> *Strom.* 6.6, ANF II, 490.

<sup>229</sup> *Strom.* 6.14, ANF II, 505.

<sup>230</sup> *Instr.* 1.11, ANF II, 234.

the pudenda, and cut off one another's head for the sake of worldly pleasures."<sup>231</sup> It is significant to note in this passage, however, that Clement applies this indictment to humanity in general, including, but not limited to, the Jews: his point was not to slander the Jews, but to demonstrate the reality and power of human concupiscence.

Similarly, after accusing the Gentiles of refusing God's word to them (chapters 8-9), Clement inserts a discussion of the Jews' forty years of wandering in the wilderness under Moses:

And, indeed, the old Hebrew wanderers in the desert received typically the end of the threatening; for they are said not to have entered into the rest, because of unbelief, till, having followed the successor of Moses, they learned by experience, though late, that they could not be saved otherwise than by believing on Jesus.

Having alluded to this Jewish experience, he goes on to indict the Gentiles, not the Jews, of rebellion against God, urging all to come to repentance (chapters 9-10) through this same "successor of Moses," Joshua, or more properly, his namesake, Jesus.

When he cites Isaiah 1:3, "The ox, it is said, knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel has not known me," Clement applies the text, not to Israel, to whom the prophecy was originally addressed, but to Gentiles who need to repent.<sup>232</sup> His condemnations of Jewish disobedience and unbelief are based on the supposition that the Jews are not unique among the nations for some special propensity to evil, but that they are typical of all humanity, so that everyone, Jew and Gentile, can learn from the lessons of Israel's failings in the Scriptures.

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<sup>231</sup> *Strom.* 4.16, ANF II, 427.

<sup>232</sup> *Exh.* 9, ANF II, 196-197.

Clement observes Jewish waywardness in the manner of their reception of Jesus, God's Christ. Their rebelliousness was evident in their readiness to find fault with Jesus: "But that it was wine which was drunk by the Lord, he tells us again, when he spoke concerning himself, reproaching the Jews for their hardness of heart: 'For the Son of man,' he says, 'came, and they say, Behold a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans.'"<sup>233</sup> He gives them a backhanded compliment for unwittingly looking to Jesus as their king, saying that Jesus was "shown to be a king, as such hailed by unsophisticated children and by the unbelieving and ignorant Jews, and heralded by the prophets."<sup>234</sup>

Clement's judgment against the Jews is focused on their leaders. He indicts the Pharisees explicitly for their illicit love of power as he sees Jesus condemn their "love of glory, saying, 'Woe to you, Pharisees.' For you love the chief seat in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets."<sup>235</sup> They were not guilty of excessive commitment to the law, but of disloyalty to it: ". . . the Pharisees revolted from the law, by introducing human teachings, the cause of these being not the Teacher, but those who choose to disobey."<sup>236</sup>

It is apparent throughout the writings of Clement that his purpose toward the Jews was to win back those who had wandered from faith in Christ, and to persuade other, non-believing, Jews that they, too, could find the fulfillment of their hope in God in the person of Jesus Christ. Even when reaching out to the Greeks, he utilizes the

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<sup>233</sup> *Instr.* 2.2, ANF II, 246.

<sup>234</sup> *Strom.* 2.5, ANF II, 351.

<sup>235</sup> *Instr.* 3.12, ANF II, 293.

<sup>236</sup> *Strom.* 6.7, ANF II, 494.

Hebrew scriptures, in order to make his appeal of interest to the Jews: “In addition, it will in my opinion form an appropriate sequel to defend those tenets, on account of which the Greeks assail us, making use of a few Scriptures, if perchance the Jew also may listen and be able quietly to turn from what he has believed to him on whom he has not believed.”<sup>237</sup>

Clement exhibits a universalistic spirit toward the pervasive presence of God and spiritual truth among all nations: “Similar, then, to the Hebrew enigmas in respect to concealment, are those of the Egyptians also.”<sup>238</sup> He reads a passage like Psalm 29:3, “The Lord is on many waters” to mean that God is active among the peoples of the world through “not the different covenants alone, but the modes of teaching, those among the Greek and among the Barbarians, conducing to righteousness.”<sup>239</sup>

Universally acknowledged human virtues, such as gentleness, are regarded as embodiments of the Christian gospel.<sup>240</sup> At the same time that he, with the apostle Paul, included Gentiles among the people of God, he does not contest the fact that God is still, also, the God of the Jews: “‘Is he the God of the Jews only, and not also of the Gentiles? Yes, also of the Gentiles: if indeed he is one God,’ exclaims the noble apostle.”<sup>241</sup>

Jews and Gentiles are brought together into one body: “For it follows that there is one unchangeable gift of salvation given by one God, through one Lord, benefiting in

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<sup>237</sup> *Strom.* 2.1, ANF II, 347.

<sup>238</sup> *Strom.* 5.7, ANF II, 454.

<sup>239</sup> *Strom.* 6.8, ANF II, 495.

<sup>240</sup> *Strom.* 5.5, ANF II, 451.

<sup>241</sup> *Strom.* 5.3, ANF II, 449.

many ways. For which cause the middle wall which separated the Greek from the Jews is taken away, in order that there might be a peculiar people. And so both meet in one unity of faith.” The God of Christians is “the only God of both Greeks and barbarians, or rather of the whole race of men.” Those who follow him are, Jews and Gentiles alike, one “peculiar people of righteousness.”<sup>242</sup> Christ and his Church are undivided by human distinctions: “And the one whole Christ is not divided; ‘there is neither barbarian, nor Jew, nor Greek, neither male nor female, but a new man,’ transformed by God’s Holy Spirit.”<sup>243</sup>

Clement defined the people of God, not by race or ethnicity, but in terms of “true Christian Gnosticism”: “And ‘the generation of those that seek him’ is the elect race, devoted to inquiry after knowledge.”<sup>244</sup> The voice of Jesus goes forth to all people without distinction: “Hear, you myriad tribes, rather whoever among men are endowed with reason, both barbarians and Greeks, I call on the whole race of men, whose Creator I am, by the will of the Father.”<sup>245</sup> People of the truth, those “endowed with reason,” are those who truly know the Father, regardless of race or tribe: “One righteous man, then, differs not, as righteous, from another righteous man, whether he be of the Law or a Greek. For God is not only Lord of the Jews, but of all men, and more nearly the Father of those who know him,” whether they followed the law or not.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> *Strom.* 6.13, 17, ANF II, 504-505, 518.

<sup>243</sup> *Exh.* 11, ANF II, 203.

<sup>244</sup> *Strom.* 7.10, ANF II, 539.

<sup>245</sup> *Exh.* 11, ANF II, 205.

<sup>246</sup> *Strom.* 6.6, ANF II, 491.

Ultimately, this is a matter of divine grace, not of human initiative: “But in proportion to the adaptation possessed by each, he has dispensed his beneficence both to Greeks and barbarians, even to those of them that were predestinated, and in due time called, the faithful and elect. . . . For by a different process of advancement, both Greek and barbarian, he leads to the perfection which is by faith.”<sup>247</sup> He embraced Jews, Gentiles, and the Church all together as peoples under God: “from the Hellenic training, and also from that of the law, are gathered into the one race of the saved people those who accept faith.”<sup>248</sup> It is divine mercy, not human worthiness, that causes grace to prevail in the salvation of mankind, for God uses even the disobedience of one people, the Jews, to bring about the eventual reconciliation of all people: “Then the goodness of God is shown also in their case. For the apostle says, ‘But through their transgression salvation is come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy; and to willingness to repent.’”<sup>249</sup>

Clement maintains that this divine initiative in salvation maintains its universalistic character even after death, for he claims that in Hades, Jews and Greeks alike will hear the preaching of the Gospel so that all those who die in sin “should be saved, each one according to his individual knowledge.” This preaching is conducted on two levels, by the Lord himself and by his apostles, “so that he should bring to repentance those belonging to the Hebrews, and they the Gentiles.” To both groups, this opportunity after death demonstrates that “God’s punishments are saving and

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<sup>247</sup> *Strom.* 7.2, ANF II, 524, 526.

<sup>248</sup> *Strom.* 6.5, ANF II, 489-490.

<sup>249</sup> *Strom.* 2.9, ANF II, 357.

disciplinary, leading to conversion, and choosing rather the repentance than the death of a sinner,” since people freed of their bodies can now perceive the truth more clearly.<sup>250</sup>

The three ways all acknowledge the same God, but only the Christians have arrived at a complete and adequate manner of worshipping him: “It is time, then, for us to say that the pious Christian alone is rich and wise, and of noble birth, and thus call and believe him to be God’s image, and also his likeness, having become righteous and holy and wise by Jesus Christ, and so far already like God.”<sup>251</sup> To support this conclusion, Clement quotes from *The Preaching of Peter*:

Know then that there is one God . . . then he adds: “worship this God not as the Greeks” . . . the Greeks worshipped the same God as we, but that they had not learned by perfect knowledge that which was delivered by the Son. . . . Neither worship as the Jews; for they, thinking that they only know God, do not know him, adoring as they do angels and archangels, the month and the moon. . . . So that do you also, learning holily and righteously what we deliver to you; keep them, worshipping God in a new way, by Christ. . . . He made a new covenant with us; for what belonged to the Greeks and Jews is old. But we, who worship him in a new way, in the third form, are Christians. For clearly, as I think, he showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new and spiritual way by us.

Clement concludes, “Wherefore Peter says, that the Lord said to the apostles, ‘if any one of Israel, then, wishes to repent and by my name to believe in God, his sins shall be forgiven him, after twelve years. Go forth into the world, that no one may say, we have not heard.’”<sup>252</sup> It is unclear why this apocryphal Peter asserts that there would be an interval of twelve years between repentance and forgiveness for a Jew, and even more puzzling why Clement cites this source without comment on this obscure idea. It

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<sup>250</sup> *Strom.* 6.6, ANF II, 490.

<sup>251</sup> *Exh.* 11, ANF II, 206.

<sup>252</sup> *Strom.* 6.5, ANF II, 490.

is not likely that he concurred with the view, since everything he wrote in his own writings asserted the equality of the Jews and the Gentiles, if not the superiority of the Jewish position. While Jews are clearly regarded as less mature, in comparison to Christians, they are just as surely viewed as higher than the Gentiles. Borrowing from Plato, Clement suggests that in the spiritual realm there are three qualities of humanity: “. . . that of the Jews, the silver; that of the Greeks, the third; and that of the Christians, with whom has been mingled the regal gold, the Holy Spirit, the golden.”<sup>253</sup>

### Summary

Clement saw the same faults in the Jews that his predecessors did. Although possessing the law, they did not live by it. Rather than seeing it as the temporary guide it was intended to be, they clung to it due to their carnality and spiritual blindness. The law, good as it was, had been made obsolete by the coming of Christ, and Judaism stood in need of completion through the Christian Church. The leaders of the Jews opposed this process, and led the Jewish people to reject, rather than receive, Jesus as the Christ.

However, Clement added nothing new to these charges and spent very little time discussing them. Acknowledging that there was a movement back toward Judaism in his day, he sought common ground with the Jews, just as he did with the Greeks. Writing primarily to the Greeks, he always kept the Jews in mind. Anything of value in Greek philosophy he credited to the Jews, and he became their chief apologist as he defended their Scripture and their practices. He upheld the Jewish law rather than

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<sup>253</sup> *Strom.* 5.14, ANF II, 467.

denigrating it, allying himself with it against the anti-Jewish claims of Gnosticism. He explicitly appropriated the Scripture for the Christians, applying both its promises and its warnings to them instead of using prophetic passages to bash the Jews. His clear purpose was to seek to hold Jewish Christians in the Church and to win the conversion of those Jews who had not yet acknowledged Jesus as the Christ. To appeal to both groups, he sought to make Christianity more palatable by reasserting its compatibility with its Jewish roots. While building his case for the superiority of Christianity, he maintained a universalistic spirit and presented a picture of the Christian Church as a place inhabited by Jew and Gentile alike, drawn together into one body by the grace of God.

#### A Harsh Voice: Tertullian

Tertullian was a contemporary of Clement, born c. A.D. 160 in Carthage. Many of his works are preoccupied with topics other than the place of the Jews or Christian relationships with them. There is no mention of the Jews in either *Ad Martyras* or *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*.<sup>254</sup> In the entire work *Against Praxeas*, he refers only twice to the Jews, once to interact with them about an interpretation of their Scriptures, and in the second instance, to cite John 5:19-27, which credits to the Jews a conspiracy to kill Jesus. While this is in itself a significant repetition of a serious charge, it could be easily overlooked in a work that multiplies accusations against pagans and heretics.<sup>255</sup> His suspicions against the Jews, though real, were less acute than those he held toward

<sup>254</sup> *Ad Martyras*, ANF III, 693-696; *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, ANF III, 699-706.

<sup>255</sup> *Against Praxeas* 12, ANF III, 606.

those other groups. When he treats the amazing patience of Christ toward his persecutors, he addresses the issue of patience in general terms, not even suggesting a hint that any Jews were involved in any aspect of his suffering.<sup>256</sup> When Tertullian relates the story of Stephen in the same work, he tells the reader, “Stephen is stoned, and prays for pardon to his foes”; he does not even mention the Jewish identity of those foes.<sup>257</sup> Appealing to the Romans to exempt Christians from pagan sacrifices, he explains, “You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice. . . . We therefore sacrifice for the emperor’s safety, but to our God and his, and after the manner God has enjoined, in simple prayer.”<sup>258</sup> He takes the time to explain what he means by spiritual sacrifice, and why pagan sacrifices are unacceptable, but does not indulge in any negative reference to the Jewish sacrificial system. His audience in these works is in each case someone other than the Jews, and he contents himself to remain focused on his primary audience.

As with other Christian writers of this period, Tertullian seems much more interested in attacking paganism than Judaism. He condescendingly dismisses the seriousness of the former: “Enough has been said in these remarks to confute the charge of treason against your religion; for we cannot be held to do harm to that which has no existence.”<sup>259</sup> He accuses Socrates, perhaps the greatest representative of pagan learning, of lacking any connection to the real truth: “For by whom has truth ever been

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<sup>256</sup> *Of Patience* 3, ANF III, 708.

<sup>257</sup> *Of Patience* 14, ANF III, 716.

<sup>258</sup> *To Scapula* 2, ANF III, 105-106.

<sup>259</sup> *TApol.* 27, ANF III, 40-41.

discovered without God? By whom has God ever been found without Christ?”<sup>260</sup> He uses remarks about Christian womanhood to find reason to accuse paganism as a whole with very unflattering generalizations:

For if any modesty can be believed (to exist) in Gentiles, it is plain that it must be imperfect and undisciplined to such a degree that, although it be actively tenacious of itself in the mind up to a certain point, it yet allows itself to relax into licentious extravagances of attire; just in accordance with Gentile perversity in craving after that of which it carefully shuns the effect.<sup>261</sup>

That the Gentiles are at their core a very wicked people, more wicked than the Jews, is evident in his observation that “to exhibit impatience at all losses is the Gentiles’ business.”<sup>262</sup> More than any specific sin, he means to assert that wickedness permeates the human condition. Regarding the Roman nation, he writes:

First of all, as undutiful to him, because when it knew him in part, it not only did not seek after him, but even invented other gods of its own to worship; and further, because, as the result of their willing ignorance of the Teacher of righteousness, the Judge and Avenger of sin, all vices and crimes grew and flourished.<sup>263</sup>

The Gentiles are also held responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross. In spite of the fact that Tertullian explicitly indicts the Jews for their part in the suffering and death of Jesus, he also makes clear that they acted in concert with the Gentiles, who thus share in the blame for this heinous act. Speaking of Christ’s crown of thorns, he exhorts, “Be you too crowned, as he was; you have full permission. Yet even that crown of insolent ungodliness was not of any decree of the Jewish people. It was a device of

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<sup>260</sup> *Treatise on the Soul* 1, ANF III, 181.

<sup>261</sup> *On the Apparel of Women* 2.1, ANF IV, 18.

<sup>262</sup> *Of Patience* 7, ANF III, 712.

<sup>263</sup> *TApol* 40, ANF III, 48.

the Roman soldiers.”<sup>264</sup> The leaders of each group of people likewise shared in their responsibility for the decisions and conspiracies that led to Christ’s condemnation: “For in the person of Pilate ‘the heathen raged,’ and in the person of Israel ‘the people imagined vain things’; ‘the kings of the earth’ in Herod, and the rulers in Annas and Caiaphas, were gathered together ‘against the Lord, and against his anointed.’”<sup>265</sup>

Tertullian seems to want to exonerate Pilate in some texts: the Jews “extorted a sentence giving him up to them to be crucified,” and, in spite of “all these things Pilate did to Christ,” at the end of the story, the Roman governor was “now in fact a Christian in his own convictions.”<sup>266</sup> Yet, the influence of pagan religion on the Christian faith was deemed to be even worse than the offense committed by the Jews: “Idol-artificers are chosen even into the ecclesiastical order. Oh wickedness! Once did the Jews lay hands on Christ; these mangle his body daily!”<sup>267</sup>

When Tertullian does address the question of the Jews, or deal with issues directly related to them, he often affirms, rather than denigrates, their place before God. He counters the idea that belief in Jesus must separate the Christian from the Jews: “But we are neither ashamed of Christ—for we rejoice to be counted his disciples, and in his name to suffer—nor do we differ from the Jews concerning God.”<sup>268</sup> Against Marcion’s assertion that the Jewish scriptures declare another god besides the Father of Jesus, he states: “But the Christian verity has distinctly declared this principle, ‘God is not, if he

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<sup>264</sup> *The Chaplet* 9, ANF III, 98.

<sup>265</sup> *TRes.* 20, ANF III, 559.

<sup>266</sup> *TApol* 21, ANF III, 35.

<sup>267</sup> *On Idolatry* 7, ANF III, 64.

<sup>268</sup> *TApol* 21, ANF III, 34.

is not one.”<sup>269</sup> It is difficult to imagine a Jewish statement of monotheism that declared this belief any better. His explanation for the offensiveness of Christian doctrine to the pagans could have been equally applied to the tenets of Jewish religion: “We give offense by proclaiming that there is one God, to whom the name of God alone belongs, from whom all things come, and who is Lord of the whole universe.”<sup>270</sup>

When he refers to pagan accusations that Christians and Jews worship an ass, he does not try to distinguish Christians from the Jews, but responds with a blistering attack on the beliefs and practices of paganism, and defends both Judaism and Christianity by refuting the charges of Tacitus, not avoiding “our close connection with the Jewish religion” and the fact that “Christianity is nearly allied to Judaism.” His defense of the Jews along with Christians on this charge is no less enthusiastic for the fact that an individual Jew, Onocoetes, had portrayed himself as a Christian in an ass’ head in order to deflect the charge away from the Jews toward the Christians.<sup>271</sup> He takes the side of the Jews against Egyptian assertions that the Jews had stolen gold and silver from them: he responds that this was not robbery, but just compensation, perhaps even inadequate, for Jewish labor during their Egyptian bondage. He similarly serves as apologist for the Jews regarding criticism over their observance of the Sabbath and charges of idolatry arising from the incident of the bronze serpent in the wilderness.<sup>272</sup> His reference to the Jews as a “swarm (of emigrants) who descended upon Egypt conjures up an unflattering picture, but the next phrase, “the race from which Christians

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<sup>269</sup> *AgMarc.* 1.3, ANF III, 273.

<sup>270</sup> *On the Soul’s Testimony* 2, ANF III, 176.

<sup>271</sup> *Ad Nationes* 1.14, ANF III, 123.

<sup>272</sup> *AgMarc.* 2.20, ANF III, 313.

sprung,” puts the Jews in a positive light through their connection with the Christians.<sup>273</sup> He attempts to minimize differences between the Christians and the Jews, explaining that “the Jews, too, were well aware that Christ was coming, as those to whom the prophets spoke. No, even now his advent is expected by them, nor is there any other contention between them and us, than that they believe the advent has not yet occurred.”<sup>274</sup>

Frequently, Tertullian makes reference to the sins of the Jews, not for the purpose of condemning them, but in order to appeal to Christians to live in a way that is pleasing to God. He rebukes Christians who were indulging in pagan festivals and holidays by reminding them, “The Holy Spirit upbraids the Jews with their holy-days. ‘Your Sabbaths, and new moons, and ceremonies,’ says he, ‘my soul hates.’”<sup>275</sup>

Against Christians who had wandered into heresy, he invoked the history of Israel’s indulgence in idolatry as a corrective warning.<sup>276</sup> His point was not to use the language of the prophets against the Jews, but to apply that same language to Christians in order to avoid the sins of that people from whom the Christian faith had sprung. He draws this practice from apostolic example, claiming that Paul himself used the same method, as he taught regarding the law and the Spirit: “For albeit he may appear to be partly disputing from the standpoint of Judaism, yet it is to us that he is directing the integrity and plenitude of the rules of discipline.”<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> *TApol* 40, ANF III, 48.

<sup>274</sup> *TApol* 11, ANF III, 35.

<sup>275</sup> *On Idolatry* 14, ANF III, 70.

<sup>276</sup> *Scorpiace* 3, ANF III, 636.

<sup>277</sup> *Mod.* 17, ANF IV, 93.

Tertullian alludes to the grumbling of Israel, “the first people,” throughout their desert experience, but does not, as might be expected, use this to assert that ingratitude, or some similar vice, was essential to the character of the Jews. Instead, he points to this story as a warning for Christians, “Psychics,” to encourage behavior pleasing to God. As he looks for positive examples of the proper kind of living, specifically in regard to the practice of fasting, he points to none other than Jewish people and the Jewish scriptures: Elijah, Samuel, Hezekiah, et al.<sup>278</sup>

He relates the story from the gospels in which the Jews take upon themselves the guilt of the blood of Christ: “Accordingly, all the synagogue of Israel did slay him, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss him, ‘His blood be upon us, and upon our children; and, ‘If you dismiss him, you are not a friend of Caesar;’ in order that all things ought be fulfilled which had been written of him.”<sup>279</sup> He is using this incident, not to indict the Jews of his day for the words of their ancestors, but to demonstrate two things: that in every detail of his life, suffering, and death, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies concerning him from the Jewish scriptures, and that the Jews themselves unwittingly sought redemption in Christ as their Passover, asking for his blood to be upon them as the blood of the Passover lamb was over the households of those who looked to it for their salvation. Tertullian did continue to hold this self-inflicted curse against the Jews,<sup>280</sup> but its power was limited in scope to those who continued to withstand the message of Christ, for he continually invited the Jews to turn to Christ for salvation,

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<sup>278</sup> *On Fasting* 5-7, ANF IV, 104-106.

<sup>279</sup> *Jews* 8, ANF III, 160.

<sup>280</sup> *AgMarc.* 2.15, ANF III, 309.

which would be impossible if their fathers' curse actually was being held against them by God.

These examples point to the fact that Tertullian saw the Jews, not as a singularly evil people to be despised, but as a seminal people whose history could yield lessons for righteous living for all people: "When God admonishes the Israelites of their duty or sharply reproves them he has surely a reference to all men."<sup>281</sup> In their waywardness, the Jews represent all of wayward humanity: "Now, both the people (of Israel) by their transgression of his law, and the whole race of mankind by their neglect of natural duty, had both sinned and rebelled against the Creator." In their need for salvation through Christ, they represent all of humanity who also have an inclination to seek their salvation in themselves rather than in God: "'Because the Jews require signs,' who ought to have already made up their minds about God, 'and the Greeks seek after wisdom,' who rely upon their own wisdom, and not upon God's."<sup>282</sup>

He treats the question of Jewish origins in a very matter of fact manner: "... the seed of the Chaldeans is led out into Egypt; subsequently, when transferred thence it becomes the Jewish race."<sup>283</sup> Jewish practices are treated with some ambivalence, representing as they do a position above that of the pagan, but incomplete in comparison to the Christian: "A Jewish fast, at all events, is universally celebrated; while, neglecting the temples, throughout all the shore, in every open place, they

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<sup>281</sup> *The Shows* 3, ANF III, 80-81.

<sup>282</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.5, ANF III, 438-439.

<sup>283</sup> *On the Pallium* 2, ANF IV, 7.

continue long to send prayer up to heaven. And, albeit by the dress and ornamentation of mourning they disgrace the duty, still they do affect a faith in abstinence.”<sup>284</sup>

His allegiance to the Hebrew scriptures is unwavering. He holds up these writings as used by God to reveal himself and evoke belief: “Whoever gives ear will find God in them; whoever takes pain to understand, will be compelled to believe.” He asserts that the Jews of these writings are “a people dear to God for their fathers’ sake.” He invokes the authority of their ancient origin and language, “Now in ancient times the people we call Jews bore the name of Hebrews, and so both their writings and their speech were Hebrew,” thereby explaining why the Septuagint’s translation of these writings into Greek was necessary. He says of these Scriptures, “Their high antiquity, first of all, claims authority for these writings,” compared to Roman religious writings, which “are less ancient than the work of a single prophet, in whom you have the thesaurus of the entire Jewish religion, and therefore too of ours.” Like other Christian writers of his era, Tertullian claims these Jewish writings for the Christian church: “. . . we point to the majesty of our Scriptures.”<sup>285</sup> Hebrew scriptures were, for Tertullian, Christian scriptures, since Christians had, in fact, become part of the Jewish nation. He defended the texts accordingly: “. . . the Scriptures are of God, whether belonging to Christians or to the Jews, into whose olive tree we have been grafted . . .”<sup>286</sup> The essential core of old and new covenants were the same, for their

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<sup>284</sup> *On Fasting* 16, ANF IV, 113.

<sup>285</sup> *TApol.* 18-20, ANF III, 32-33.

<sup>286</sup> *On the Soul’s Testimony* 5, ANF III, 178.

origin was in the same God: “Turning now to the law, which is properly ours—that is, to the Gospel . . .”<sup>287</sup>

The Hebrew scriptures formed the basis of Tertullian’s arguments against second marriages,<sup>288</sup> idolatry,<sup>289</sup> and Christian participation in secular entertainment.<sup>290</sup> Hebrew and Christian texts are employed to warn against the Christian use of military crowns<sup>291</sup> and the perils of sexual sins.<sup>292</sup>

Even Tertullian’s Christology is drawn from the Jewish scriptures. He quotes from Leviticus, Isaiah, Psalms, Daniel, Zechariah to prove that the Christ must come first as a lowly servant.<sup>293</sup> All of his claims for Jesus, his arguments for who he is and what he does, are founded on the “Jewishness” of Jesus, his place in the line of David through Mary, and his ultimate lineage from Abraham.<sup>294</sup> Against Marcion, he asserts that even Luke’s Gospel and Paul’s letters, the few Christian texts that the heretical teacher accepted, were supportive of, and not contradictory to, the Old Testament.<sup>295</sup>

His interpretation of Isaiah 1:6, “the suffering servant,” pointed to fulfillment in Jesus as the Christ, while Jewish interpretation suggested that the Scripture referred to the prophet himself. Tertullian refused to bow to Jewish interpretations of Psalm 110 which found the fulfillment of messianic promises in Solomon, “a temporal king, to wit,

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<sup>287</sup> *On Monogamy* 8, ANF IV, 65.

<sup>288</sup> *On Exhortation to Chastity* 7, ANF IV, 54.

<sup>289</sup> *On Idolatry* 4, ANF III, 62-63.

<sup>290</sup> *The Shows* 18-19, ANF III, 87.

<sup>291</sup> *The Chaplet*, ANF III, 94-103.

<sup>292</sup> *On Modesty* 18, ANF IV, 94-95.

<sup>293</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.7, ANF III, 326-327.

<sup>294</sup> *Flesh* 21.22, ANF III, 539-540.

<sup>295</sup> *AgMarc.* 5, ANF III, 429-474.

who reigned over Israel alone,” or Hezekiah. He insisted that these texts could only be properly understood as referring to Jesus: “It is necessary for me to lay claim to those Scriptures which the Jews endeavor to deprive us of, and to show that they sustain my view.”<sup>296</sup>

He engages in calculations of the years of Persian, Greek, and Roman rule over the Jews to demonstrate that Jesus alone could be the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel,<sup>297</sup> thus linking the advent of the Christ with the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in a way that would never win the acceptance of Jewish interpreters. Both Tertullian and the Jews, however, agreed on the principle that prophetic discourse declared future events as if they had already occurred. Commenting on Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our own image, and after our own likeness,” he questions, “or was it to the angels that he spoke, as the Jews interpret the passage, because these also acknowledge not the Son?”<sup>298</sup> Tertullian’s treatment of these texts suggests that he was aware of, and was interacting with, the Jewish interpretation.<sup>299</sup>

Tertullian’s high respect for the Jewish scriptures did not prevent him from understanding them in a way that went beyond Judaism. He stipulates that divine revelation pre-dated Moses, so that “the volume of Moses does not at all initiate the knowledge of the Creator, but from the first gives out that it is to be traced from Paradise and Adam, not from Egypt and Moses.”<sup>300</sup> The fact that there was this “law

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<sup>296</sup> *Jews* 14, ANF III, 173; *AgMarc.* 3.20, 5.9, ANF III, 338, 448.

<sup>297</sup> *Jews* 8, ANF III, 159-160

<sup>298</sup> *Against Praxeas* 12, ANF III, 606.

<sup>299</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.5, ANF III, 324.

<sup>300</sup> *AgMarc.* 1.10, ANF III, 278.

before the law” meant for Tertullian that the Mosaic law was but one stage in the overall plan of God for humanity, and that it would, and ought to, give way to the gospel as the succeeding stage: “. . . just as ‘the law was given through Moses’ at a definite time, so it should be believed to have been temporarily observed and kept.”<sup>301</sup>

This view of biblical revelation left room for the progression of doctrine from Judaism to Christianity. While upholding the place of the Jews as God’s people, he also maintained that they were the lesser partner to the Church. Commenting on Paul’s discussion of 1 Corinthians 15:41, he observes:

In like manner does he take examples from the heavenly bodies: “There is one glory of the sun” (that is, of Christ), “and another glory of the moon” (that is, of the Church), “and another glory of the stars” (in other words, of the seed of Abraham). “For one star differs from another star in glory: so there are bodies terrestrial as well as celestial” (Jews, that is, as well as Christians).<sup>302</sup>

Because Judaism was a transitory stage in God’s plan, and because the Jews proved themselves unworthy of the special divine favor they received, “God would, out of every nation, and people, and country, choose for himself more faithful worshippers, upon whom he would bestow his grace, and that indeed in ampler measure, in keeping with the enlarged capacities of a nobler dispensation.”<sup>303</sup> The new order, marked by spirituality, would replace the old order, marked by carnality. Because Sabbath observance, circumcision, and sacrifices had been shown to be transitory: “. . . there was to supervene a time whereat the precepts of the ancient law and of the old

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<sup>301</sup> *Jews* 2, ANF III, 153.

<sup>302</sup> *TRes.* 52, ANF III, 585-586

<sup>303</sup> *TApol.* 21, ANF III, 34.

ceremonies would cease; and the promise of the new law, and the promise of the New Testament, supervene . . .”<sup>304</sup>

For example, Tertullian introduces the Lord’s Prayer as a new prayer, fit for the new people of God. This was, he said, just one instance of a general principle he saw at work throughout the transition from the old dispensation to the new:

Besides, whatever had been in bygone days, has either been quite changed, as circumcision; or else supplemented, as the rest of the law; or else fulfilled, as prophecy; or else perfected, as faith itself. For the new grace of God has renewed all things from carnal unto spiritual, by superinducing the Gospel, the obliterater of the whole ancient bygone system . . .<sup>305</sup>

For Tertullian, especially in his later Montanist years, this progression of revelation did not end with the formation of the Christian canon. He asserts, “When first the Gospel thundered and shook the old system to its base, when dispute was being held on the question of retaining or not the law,” the Holy Spirit was the one who determined the rule of faith.<sup>306</sup> God revealed himself differently, and progressively more completely, in each stage of human history:

So, too, righteousness—for the God of righteousness and of creation is the same—was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced, through the law and the prophets, to infancy; from that stage it passed, through the Gospel, to the fervor of youth: now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity.<sup>307</sup>

Because the old covenant was being displaced and expanded in the new, the Scriptures of the old covenant had to be interpreted with an eye that discerned the foreshadowing of the new within the old. This method of interpretation would have to

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<sup>304</sup> *Jews* 6, ANF III, 157.

<sup>305</sup> *Prayer* 1, ANF III, 681.

<sup>306</sup> *On Modesty* 12, ANF IV, 85.

<sup>307</sup> *On the Veiling of Virgins* 1, ANF IV, 28.

be able to identify the promises pointing to Christ, for example. It would also have to see past the “carnality” of the Jews to the spiritual message which God had intended for them. In order to satisfy these requirements, Tertullian turned to allegory. This was certainly not a unique Christian practice, nor was it new. Philo and other Hellenistic Jews had perfected this method as they attempted to make the religion of the Jews more palatable to the Hellenistic mind. Tertullian and other early Christians, however, found it particularly useful as they sought to explain the message of the Christian faith through the words of the Jewish scriptures. He occasionally argued against this method, when it was used by his opponents against him. For example, they claim that Ezekiel 37 is a prophetic declaration of the desolation and dispersion that the Jewish nation would experience at the hands of the Gentiles, and an accompanying hope for restoration, while Tertullian insists that this passage had to do with the sufferings and subsequent resurrection of Christ.<sup>308</sup> The point is that Tertullian does not challenge the legitimacy of allegorical interpretation. He merely asserts that his allegorical understanding is superior to theirs.

In defense of his allegorical handling of Scripture, he asserts its potential for ascertaining the spiritual sense of the texts, rather than being confined to their literal, carnal meaning, as used by the Jews: “In this way the Jews lose heavenly blessings, by confining their hopes to earthly ones, being ignorant of the promise of heavenly bread. . . . On exactly the same principle, they consider the special soil of Judea to be that very holy land, which ought rather to be interpreted of the Lord’s flesh. . . . For ‘he is not a

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<sup>308</sup> *TRes.* 30, ANF III, 566-567.

Jew which is one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly.” Arguing against a literal understanding of prophetic predictions of the revitalization of Israel, Tertullian insists that an allegorical application of these texts to Christians is not only reasonable, it is necessary in light of the spiritual condition of the Jews: “For how can words of this kind of exhortation and invitation be suitable for that Jerusalem which killed the prophets, and stoned those that were sent to them, and at last crucified its very Lord?”<sup>309</sup> That the promises of national resurgence actually point to Christian fulfillment is so evident to Tertullian that he believes it is something which needs only be asserted rather than proven: “As for the restoration of Judea, however, which even the Jews themselves, induced by the names of places and countries, hope for just as it is described, it would be tedious to state at length how the figurative interpretation is spiritually applicable to Christ and His Church, and to the character and fruits thereof.”<sup>310</sup>

Allegorical interpretation is often used to delineate the relationship between the Jews, the Gentiles. Describing the ministry of Christ from Isaiah 53, Tertullian says, he “broke not the bruised reed—that is, the shattered faith of the Jews—nor quenched the smoking flax—that is, the freshly-kindled ardor of the Gentiles.”<sup>311</sup> In Isaiah 2, all nations are seen to come and say, “Come, ascend unto the mount of the Lord, and unto the house of the God of *Jacob*,’ not of Esau, the former son, but of *Jacob*, the second, that is, of *our* ‘people,’ whose mount is Christ.”<sup>312</sup> Tertullian asserts that this dichotomy between Jacob and Esau, as signifying Israel and the Church respectively, is essential to

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<sup>309</sup> *TRes.* 26, ANF III, 564.

<sup>310</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.25, ANF III, 342.

<sup>311</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.17, ANF III, 336.

<sup>312</sup> *Jews* 3, ANF III, 154.

understanding the Scriptures properly.<sup>313</sup> Even the role of the apostle Paul in facilitating the transition from Judaism to Christianity is foreseen in Isaiah 3:3, “And was it not Paul himself who was there foretold, destined ‘to be taken away from Judah’—that is, from Judaism—for the erection of Christianity, in order ‘to lay that only foundation, which is Christ.’”<sup>314</sup>

Tertullian’s use of allegory was not limited to the Jewish scriptures, for he applied the same type of interpretation to the words of Christ and the apostles. Commenting on Jesus’ words, “these are my mother and my brothers” from Luke 8, he suggests that there is an alternative explanation for these words, other than understanding them as literally applying to the disciples and Jesus’ earthly family:

But there is also another view of the case: in the abjured mother there is a figure of the synagogue, as well as of the Jews in the unbelieving brethren. In their person Israel remained outside, while the new disciples who kept close to Christ within, hearing and believing, represented the Church, which he called mother in a preferable sense and a worthier brotherhood, with the repudiation of the carnal relationship.<sup>315</sup>

He is not saying that Israel is sinful, but “carnal,” “of the flesh.” He conceded to the Jews the physical line from Abraham, but asserted that the spiritual line was superior, and that it belonged to the Church.

Tertullian understood the Jews to be the primary, if not the exclusive,<sup>316</sup> target of Jesus’ teaching in the parables: “But since it was to the Jews that he spoke in parables, it was not then to all men . . . he addressed a particular class when he spoke to

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<sup>313</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.25, ANF III, 343.

<sup>314</sup> *AgMarc.* 5,6, ANF III, 442.

<sup>315</sup> *Flesh* 7, ANF III, 529.

<sup>316</sup> *On Modesty* 9, ANF IV, 84.

the Jews.”<sup>317</sup> Tertullian sees Jesus’ teaching pre-occupied with his relationship to the Jews, as he discloses in his treatment of Luke 16:9:

But how we are to understand, “Make to yourselves friends of mammon,” let the previous parable teach you. The saying was addressed to the Jewish people; inasmuch as, having managed ill the business of the Lord which had been entrusted to them, they ought to have provided for themselves out of the men of mammon, which we then were, friends rather than enemies, and to have delivered us from the dues of sins which kept us from God, if they bestowed the blessing upon us, for the reason given by the Lord, that when grace began to depart from them, they, betaking themselves to our faith, might be admitted into everlasting habitations.<sup>318</sup>

Tertullian also leans heavily on the Jewish scriptures for apologetic reasons, finding in them innumerable prophecies which found their fulfillment in Jesus, thereby providing incontestable verification that he was the Christ. He finds especially that the death of Christ could be demonstrated from the Jewish prophets: “Now, if the hardness of your heart shall persist in rejecting and deriding all these interpretations, we will prove that it may suffice that the *death* of the Christ had been prophesied.”<sup>319</sup> His contest with the Jews depended on his ability to demonstrate the congruity of Jewish prophetic writings with events that would come to happen only after the advent of Christ: “. . . on the ground of that agreement of Scriptures, which has enabled us to speak out, in opposition to the Jews.”<sup>320</sup> Tertullian saw around him, in the political and geographical realities which confronted the Jews, the actualization of the prophetic warnings in the Jewish scriptures regarding the consequences of Jewish unfaithfulness: “Glance at Palestine. Where Jordan’s river is the arbiter of boundaries, (behold) a vast

<sup>317</sup> *TRes.* 33, ANF III, 568-569.

<sup>318</sup> *De Fuga in Persecutione* 13, ANF IV, 124.

<sup>319</sup> *Jews* 10, ANF III, 166.

<sup>320</sup> *Jews* 11, ANF III, 168.

waste, and a bereaved region, and bootless land!”<sup>321</sup> This was not the result of the normal course of human events, but the consequence of divine intervention, and was predicted by the prophets of that God who brought it about. Daniel, for example, declares that “after the passion of the Christ the city had to be exterminated.”<sup>322</sup> The historical fact that the Gentiles were brought in and the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed served as further proof to the Jews that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ.<sup>323</sup>

The conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian church rather than Judaism was in itself proof that Christianity was right, since this, too, had been foretold by the prophets: “By thus departing from Judaism itself, when they exchanged the obligations and burdens of the law for the liberty of the gospel, they were fulfilling the psalm, ‘Let us burst their bonds asunder.’”<sup>324</sup> Prophecy and history came together in such profound agreement that it should have become clear to everyone that the Christian faith was authentic and true, “. . . the sense of the Scriptures harmonizing with the issue of events and of the order of the times.”<sup>325</sup>

Similarly, the perceived spiritual bankruptcy in Judaism in Tertullian’s day was seen to be vindication of the Christian gospel, for it was evident to him that “after this time the Spirit of the Creator never breathed among *them*.”<sup>326</sup> The Jews’ rejection of Jesus as the Christ was seen as the final chapter of their long history of rebellion against God. Because they had turned their back on him, their religious system now continued

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<sup>321</sup> *On the Pallium* 2, ANF IV, 6.

<sup>322</sup> *Jews* 8, ANF III, 158-159.

<sup>323</sup> *Jews* 12-13, ANF III, 168-172.

<sup>324</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.22, ANF III, 340.

<sup>325</sup> *Jews* 13, ANF III, 171-172.

<sup>326</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.8, ANF III, 446; cf. *AgMarc.* 3.23, ANF III, 341.

without his presence or blessing: “by not receiving Christ, the ‘fount of water of life,’ they have begun to have ‘worn-out tanks,’ that is, synagogues for the use of the ‘dispersions of the Gentiles,’ in which the Holy Spirit no longer lingers.”<sup>327</sup>

... ever since we Gentiles, with our breast doubly enlightened through Christ’s truth, cast forth (let the Jews see it) our idols, what follows has likewise been fulfilled. . . . For thenceforth God’s grace desisted (from working) among them. . . . And because they had committed these crimes, and had failed to understand that Christ “was to be found” in “the time of their visitation,” their land has been made “desert, and their cities utterly burnt with fire . . .”<sup>328</sup>

Tertullian was convinced that this litany of fulfillments of biblical prophecies demonstrated that “the whole Mosaic system was a figure of Christ, of whom the Jews indeed were ignorant, but who is known to us Christians.” He turns to the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:7-18) for an explanation of this failure on the part of the Jews to recognize Christ at the center of their own Scriptures: “Of Israel he says, ‘Even unto this day the same veil is upon their heart;’ showing that the veil which was on the face of Moses was a figure of the veil which is on the heart of the nation still; because even now Moses is not seen by them in heart, just as he was not then seen by them in eye.”<sup>329</sup> They seem unable to comprehend the person of Jesus Christ, “him whose nativity and passion alike the Jews have failed to acknowledge.”<sup>330</sup> This spiritual blindness has alienated them from their heavenly Father: “This is the reproach that is brought against Israel, to which the Spirit attests heaven and earth, saying, ‘I have begotten sons, and

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<sup>327</sup> *Jews*, ANF III, 170.

<sup>328</sup> *Jews* 13, ANF III, 171.

<sup>329</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.11, ANF III, 453.

<sup>330</sup> *Jews* 13, ANF III, 171.

they have not recognized me.”<sup>331</sup> It has also caused the name of God to be slandered among the nations: “He says by Isaiah to the Jews, who were the instigators of hatred against him: ‘Because of you, my name is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles.’”<sup>332</sup>

There must have been Jewish arguments current in Tertullian’s time that sought to explain messianic prophecies as pointing to someone other than Jesus, for Tertullian takes great pains to make the case that these prophecies could only be fulfilled in Jesus as the Christ.<sup>333</sup> Solomon, Darius, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, and the Romans: each is considered and rejected as possible fulfillments of biblical messianic prophecy, for each reigned only over their respective kingdom: “For who could have reigned over all nations but Christ, God’s Son, who was ever announced as destined to reign over all to eternity?” While the rule of each of the others mentioned was limited by time and space, “Christ’s Name is extending everywhere, believed everywhere, worshipped by all the above-enumerated nations, reigning everywhere, adored everywhere, conferred equally everywhere upon all.”<sup>334</sup> He argues against Marcion that the obvious desolation of Israel in the present day did not mean that Israel and its lesser god had been cast aside, but that the Jewish scriptures were, in fact, a reliable word from God, as evidenced by their prediction of this very state of events. What is remarkable is not that Tertullian would make this claim about the extent of Jewish desolation, but that it was so easy to take it for granted, as a way to appeal to heretics, pagans, and Jews alike.

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<sup>331</sup> *Prayer 2*, ANF III, 682.

<sup>332</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.14, ANF III, 367.

<sup>333</sup> *Jews 14*, ANF III, 173.

<sup>334</sup> *Jews 7*, ANF III, 158.

Tertullian unreservedly relies on Jewish practice and examples regarding prayer. Describing the Christian practice of corporate prayer, he observes that some Christians employ Jewish texts and Hebrew words as they pray, and that those who do so are regarded as among the most pious: “The more diligent in prayer are wont to subjoin in their prayers the ‘Hallelujah,’ and such kind of psalms, in the closes of which the company respond.”<sup>335</sup> The Christians followed Jewish customs regarding times for prayer, going before God at the third, sixth, and ninth hours because these times were considered by the Scriptures “to have been more solemn than the rest.” Although these times of prayer can also be seen in the lives of the apostles in the Christian scriptures, the original practice found its precedence in the Jewish scriptures, specifically in the Psalms and the lives of prophets like Daniel.<sup>336</sup> When Tertullian presses his case for the veiling of women in prayer, he alludes to the example of Rebecca, who demonstrated in her attitude toward Isaac the foundational principle behind the modesty of women in prayer: “And Rebecca is example enough for us, who, when her betrothed had been pointed out, veiled herself for marriage merely on recognition of him.” He further bases his argument on the precedent set by Jewish women, who go into prayer being veiled: “Among the Jews, so usual is it for their women to have the head veiled, that they may thereby be recognized. I ask in this instance for the law.”<sup>337</sup> Any fear he may have had of excessive legalism or undue Judaic influence was easily overwhelmed by his

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<sup>335</sup> *Prayer 27*, ANF III, 690.

<sup>336</sup> *Prayer 25*, ANF III, 689-690.

<sup>337</sup> *Prayer 22*, ANF III, 688; *The Chaplet 4*, ANF III, 95.

conviction in this case that following the Jews' example was the prudent and righteous course.

When Tertullian appeals to the Romans for leniency toward the Christians, he espouses a liberal tolerance toward people of differing religious perspectives:

However, it is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion—to which free-will and not force should lead us—the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice.<sup>338</sup>

Of course, Tertullian was not in a position to compel anyone to accept Christianity, but the vehemence of his apologetic writings often suggests something other than tolerance as his primary characteristic. He is more noted for sharp lines of distinction than sympathetic dialogue: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?"<sup>339</sup> The tone of his language against his adversaries causes even the sympathetic modern editor of his writings to concede, "we must often regret the forensic violence of his retort."<sup>340</sup> His sharp style is clearly seen in his description of Marcion:

Marcion was born there, fouler than any Scythian, more roving than the wagon-life of the Sarmation, more inhuman than the Massagete, more audacious than an Amazon, darker than the cloud (of Pontus), colder than its winter, more brittle than its ice, more deceitful than the Ister, more craggy than the Caucasus. . . . Almighty God is mangled by Marcion's blasphemies . . . [which] gnawed the Gospels to pieces . . .<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> *To Scapula* 2, ANF III, 105.

<sup>339</sup> *PHer.* 7, ANF III, 246.

<sup>340</sup> Peter Holmes, tr., intro to *AgMarc.*, ANF III, 269.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.* 1.2, ANF III, 272.

As he applies his lawyer's training to the art of apologetics, Tertullian perfects the harsh style in which he engages his adversaries. The tone and approach of his writing could hardly be more different from the irenic Clement of Alexandria than they actually are. His language is also, however, a reminder that the discourse of his day was in general more antagonistic than that of modern times.

Another element in Tertullian's sometimes abrasive style is his certainty that he speaks from a position of privilege as a prophet with an inside track to understanding the divine will. The fact that others, within and outside of Christianity, reject him and resist his teaching only serves to assure him that he is, in fact, in the place of the prophets: ". . . while we, of course, who have succeeded to, and occupy, the room of the prophets, at the present day sustain in the world that treatment which the prophets always suffered on account of divine religion: for some they stoned, some they banished; more, however, they delivered to mortal slaughter, a fact which they cannot deny."<sup>342</sup>

Tertullian's interactions with Marcionism and other heresies inevitably provoke strong statements for and against the Jews. From the perspective of the Marcionites, the apostles and church fathers were "false apostles and Judaizing gossellers," for they did not follow Marcion's rejection of the Jews, their Scriptures, and their God, as he "separated the New Testament from the Old."<sup>343</sup> Tertullian recognized that there was a need to affirm, with the Jews, the validity of the Jewish scriptures against the heretic's

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<sup>342</sup> *Jews* 13, ANF III, 170.

<sup>343</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.19, ANF III, 470; *PHer.* 30, ANF III, 257.

rejection of those texts: “For it is certain that the whole aim at which he has strenuously labored even in the drawing up of his *Antitheses*, centers in this, that he may establish a diversity between the Old and the New Testaments.”<sup>344</sup> Tertullian’s work against Marcion is, in its essence, an apologetic for the Creator God of the Hebrew scriptures. It is continually favorable in its treatments of the Jews against the teachings of Marcion, so much so that the modern translator concludes that the work “might almost be designated *A Treatise on the Connection between the Jewish and the Christian scriptures*.”<sup>345</sup>

Tertullian asserts strongly against Marcion that when the apostle Paul denigrated the values of his Judaistic upbringing, “it was not the God of the Jews, but their stupid obduracy, which he repudiates.”<sup>346</sup> While Paul did argue against the idea that believers in Christ had to also submit themselves to the Jewish law, he also “preached that God and that Christ whose law he was excluding all the while.”<sup>347</sup> When Marcion recollected Paul’s confession that he had been used by the devil when he persecuted Christ and the church, Tertullian retorted that this meant only that the devil had instigated this persecution, not that the God of Paul’s former Jewish religion was, in fact, the devil.<sup>348</sup> Tertullian’s language against the Jews, like that he employed against Greek philosophy and Christian heresy, could sometimes be quite severe, but he rejected out of hand the vehement anti-Judaism of Marcion.

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<sup>344</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.6, ANF III, 351.

<sup>345</sup> *Intro, AgMarc.*, ANF III, 270.

<sup>346</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.20, ANF 3, 473.

<sup>347</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.3, ANF III, 434.

<sup>348</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.17, ANF III, 466.

Against the heretics, Tertullian argued for the continuity of divine revelation between the old and the new covenants. Discussing the Pauline concept of the “inward” and “outward” Jew, he defends the legitimacy of the Jews as the people of God, reminding his readers that Paul identified himself with these people: “. . . the apostle would have preferred not to mention a Jew at all, unless he were a servant of the God of the Jews.”<sup>349</sup> The letter to the Galatians, “the epistle which we also allow to be the most decisive against Judaism,” must not be construed as speaking against the God of the law, as Marcion would have it: “Since, however, the same God was declared in the gospel which had always been so well known in the law, the only change being in the dispensation, the sole point of the question to be discussed was, whether the law of the Creator ought by the gospel to be excluded in the Christ of the Creator?”<sup>350</sup>

Tertullian continually asserts his alliance with the Jews against Christian heretics. Against the Monarchians, he finds the messianic hope of the Jews to be a friend of orthodox Christian Christology, “. . . for to this day the Jews expect not the Father himself, but the Christ of God, it being nowhere said, that the Father will come as the Christ. . . . In this character, too, was he believed on by his disciples, and rejected by the Jews.”<sup>351</sup> He argues against Marcion’s teaching about divorce, insisting that Jesus upheld the mosaic injunctions on the subject: “In very deed his teaching is not contrary to Moses, whose precept he partially defends, I will not say confirms.”<sup>352</sup> He maintained, in contradiction to Marcion, that “Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath:

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<sup>349</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.13, ANF III, 458.

<sup>350</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.2, ANF III, 431.

<sup>351</sup> *AgPrax.* 22, 24, ANF III, 618, 620.

<sup>352</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.34, ANF III, 405.

he kept the law thereof, . . . intimating by facts, ‘I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.’”<sup>353</sup> He defends Jewish ritual against Marcion’s criticisms: “But he should see herein a careful provision on God’s part, which showed his wish to bind to his own religion a people who were prone to idolatry and transgression by that kind of services wherein consisted the superstition of that period, that he might call them away therefrom, while requesting that no sin should be committed in making idols.” He saw the Hebrew scriptures, not just as an accommodation to an ancient people not yet ready for a fuller word from God in Christ, but as a revelation of God to which all people ought to submit: “It was not in severity that its author promulgated this law, but in the interest of the highest benevolence . . . it simply bound a man to God, so that no one ought to find fault with it, except him who does not choose to serve God.”<sup>354</sup>

The Marcionites, who are condemned by Tertullian because of their extreme denigration of the Jewish scriptures, further incur the apologist’s wrath because they “join the Jews in denying that their Christ has come.”<sup>355</sup> In book three of his *Five Books Against Marcion*, he suspends his usual alliance with the Jews against Marcion in order to accuse both of missing the tight connection between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the person of Jesus.<sup>356</sup> The Marcionites follow a Christ not predicted in the “evil Old Testament”; this ironically aligns them with the Jews, who deny that he is the fulfillment of those Jewish scriptures: “. . . and thus they are obliged to make

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<sup>353</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.12, ANF III, 363-364.

<sup>354</sup> *AgMarc.* 2.18-19, ANF III, 312.

<sup>355</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.13, ANF III, 341.

<sup>356</sup> *AgMarc.* 3, ANF III, 321-344.

common cause with Jewish error, and construct their arguments with its assistance.”<sup>357</sup> As a result of their view of Christ, Marcion “acquits of all guilt the murderers of God!” (here Tertullian indicts the entire human race, not just the Jews) since he denied that the crucified Jesus was, in fact, the divine Christ.<sup>358</sup> He sees this agreement between Jews and heretics as doomed to failure, since sooner or later the contradictory conclusions of the two groups will set them at odds: “Our heretic must now cease to borrow poison from the Jew—‘the asp,’ as the adage runs, ‘from the viper.’”<sup>359</sup> Tertullian wants the Jews to learn from him what they have missed from the Scriptures: that “Jesus,” by the meaning of his name and by the power of his actions, was the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Jewish scriptures regarding the Christ: “. . . the fact was not known to the Jews, from whom wisdom was taken away.” To the heretics, who likewise, due to their denigration of the Jewish scriptures, also missed this same point, he advises: “Learn it then here, with the Jews also who are partakers of your heresy.”<sup>360</sup>

There were heretics outside of Judaism who Tertullian denounced because he deemed them to be excessively influenced by Judaism. In Mithraism, Marcionite Gnosticism and other heresies, he observed an affinity with Judaism, not through their doctrine, but their temper: “Is it not clear to us that the devil imitated the well-known moroseness of the Jewish law?”<sup>361</sup> These movements were not new to his day, since Paul’s letter to the Galatians addressed the issue of false teachers in the apostolic age,

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<sup>357</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.6, ANF III, 325.

<sup>358</sup> *Flesh* 5, ANF III, 525.

<sup>359</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.8, ANF III, 327.

<sup>360</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.16, ANF III, 334.

<sup>361</sup> *PHer.* 40, ANF III, 263.

when, “. . . if false apostles also crept in, their character too showed itself in their insisting upon circumcision and the Jewish ceremonies.”<sup>362</sup> Those false teachers sought to “perpetuate the teaching of the law; because he [Paul] blames them for maintaining circumcision, and observing times, and days, and months, and years, according to those Jewish ceremonies which they ought to have known were now abrogated.” Tertullian then appeals to Jewish prophets to denounce these rituals of the Jews, asserting that their true significance was to be found in the spiritual dedication of their hearts.<sup>363</sup> He asserts further that they erred by pressing for the ongoing legal authority of the regulations of the Old Testament: “. . . for *those* the apostle unteaches, suppressing the continuance of the Old Testament which has been buried in Christ, and establishing that of the New.”<sup>364</sup>

He consistently opposes those who would subordinate the Christian gospel to the Jewish law: “In addition, there is likewise Blastus, who would latently introduce Judaism. For he says the Passover is not to be kept otherwise than according to the law of Moses, on the fourteenth day of the month. But who would fail to see that evangelical grace is eschewed if he recalls Christ to the law?”<sup>365</sup> He concluded that Christian heresies which attempted to enforce Jewish regulations upon Christians had as their ultimate aim the absorption of the Church back into Judaism. Incorrectly attributing the doctrine of the Ebionites to a teacher by the name of Ebion, Tertullian claims that this person “sets forth likewise the law as *binding*, of course for the purpose

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<sup>362</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.3, ANF III, 348.

<sup>363</sup> *AgMarc.* 1.20, ANF III, 285.

<sup>364</sup> *On Fasting* 14, ANF IV, 112.

<sup>365</sup> *Against All Heresies* 8, ANF III, 654.

of excluding the gospel and vindicating Judaism.”<sup>366</sup> He acknowledges that some among the Jews make a case against Christian claims for the virgin birth: “Then, again, Jewish cavilers, in order to disconcert us, boldly pretend that Scripture does not hold that a virgin, but only a young woman, is to conceive and bring forth.” He answers this argument with an extended explanation based on Scripture and reason.<sup>367</sup>

To the Jews themselves, Tertullian appealed on the basis of the incompleteness, not the fallacy, of their religion. Following the example of Paul, he seeks to accommodate Jewish sensitivities when he can, rather than causing an unnecessary offense: he observes that the apostle was “leading certain ‘shaven men’ into the temple on account of the observant watchfulness of the Jews—he who chastises the Galatians when they desire to live in (observance of) the law.”<sup>368</sup>

He seems to assert that there is some kind of connection between the Jews themselves and the Judaizers within the Christian community, as if there was an intentional conspiracy between the two groups against the church. In the face of this threat, he answers from Isaiah 2:4 that this type of Jewish apostasy was prophesied by the prophets of the Jews themselves, and that Christ himself would eventually refute them: “‘And he shall judge among the nations,’ even concerning their error. ‘And these shall rebuke a large nation,’ that of the Jews themselves and their proselytes.”<sup>369</sup>

He also attacked them directly on the charge of perpetual disobedience to God. From the time of their lapse into idolatry with the golden calf incident at the time of

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<sup>366</sup> *Agaisnt All Heresies* 3, ANF III, 651-652.

<sup>367</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.13, ANF III, 331.

<sup>368</sup> *On Monogamy* 14, ANF IV, 70.

<sup>369</sup> *AgMarc.* 3.21, ANF III, 339.

Moses, to the time of the second golden calf episode under Jeroboam at the time of the divided kingdom, and beyond, it “is proved that they have ever been depicted, out of the volume of the divine Scriptures, as guilty of the crime of idolatry.” He argues that it is impossible that Christ had them in mind as the “elder brother” of the Prodigal Son:

For when has the Jew not been a transgressor of the law; hearing with the ear, and not hearing; holding in hatred him who reproves in the gates, and in scorn holy speech? So, too, it will be no speech of the Father to the Jew: “You are always with me, and all mine are yours.” For the Jews are pronounced “apostate sons, begotten indeed and raised on high, but who have not understood the Lord, and who have quite forsaken the Lord, and have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel.”<sup>370</sup>

In his *Apology*, Tertullian presents a litany of charges against the Jews that summarize his view of their guilt before God, focusing in their jealous rejection of Jesus:

But the Jews were so exasperated by his teaching, by which their rulers and chiefs were convicted of the truth, chiefly because so many turned aside to him, that at last they brought him before Pontius Pilate, at that time Roman governor of Syria; and, by the violence of their outcries against him, extorted a sentence giving him up to them to be crucified.<sup>371</sup>

The pattern of Jewish disobedience to God has not only marred their past, but continues to be evident: “And accordingly the Jew at the present day, no less than the younger son, having squandered God’s substance, is a beggar in alien territory, serving even until now its princes, that is, the princes of this world.”<sup>372</sup> This history has relegated them to inferior status in terms of their relationship with God:

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<sup>370</sup> *Mod. 8*, ANF IV, 82.

<sup>371</sup> *TApol. 21*, ANF III, 35.

<sup>372</sup> *Mod. 8*, ANF IV, 82.

... the *prior* and “greater” people—that is, the Jewish—must necessarily serve the “less”; and the “less” people—that is, the Christian—overcome the “greater.” For, withal, according to the memorial records of the divine Scriptures, the *people* of the Jews, that is the more ancient, quite forsook God, and did degrading service to idols, and abandoning the Divinity, was surrendered to images.<sup>373</sup>

The central point of his message to the Jews is the same as that which he addressed to Greeks and Romans, that Jesus is the Christ, that he was a man, but also more than a man, and that through him alone can one find salvation: “We say, and before all men we say, and torn and bleeding under your tortures, we cry out, ‘We worship God through Christ.’”<sup>374</sup> Because the Jews had, for the most part, rejected Jesus as their Messiah and the Son of God, they had thus added to their perpetual disobedience the supreme act of rebellion, and deserved, therefore, the judgment of God as a consequence:

But how deeply they have sinned, puffed up to their fall with a false trust in their noble ancestors, turning from God’s way into a way of sheer impiety, though they themselves should refuse to admit it, their present national ruin would afford sufficient proof. Scattered abroad, a race of wanderers, exiles from their own land and clime, they roam over the whole world without either a human or a heavenly king, not possessing so much as a simple footstep in their native county.<sup>375</sup>

Israel “forgot his Lord and God, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods,’” and the result, says Tertullian, is that “we, who ‘were not the people of God’ in days bygone, have been made his people, by accepting the new law above mentioned, as the new circumcision before foretold.”<sup>376</sup> The waywardness of the Jews has made room for the

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<sup>373</sup> *Jews* 1, ANF III, 151-152.

<sup>374</sup> *TApol* 21, ANF III, 36.

<sup>375</sup> *TApol* 21, ANF III, 34.

<sup>376</sup> *Jews* 3, ANF III, 153-155.

repentance of the Gentiles: “. . . seeing that he has thus adopted the Gentiles while the Jews make sport of his patience!”<sup>377</sup> As a result, the privileged position the Jews had enjoyed has been forfeited, so that they are now on the same level as everyone else: the instructions of Jesus to the apostles in Matthew 10:5, “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles . . . (but only to Israel),” has now been set aside: “But to us the way of the Gentiles is also open. . . . So we preach throughout all the world; nay, no special care even for Israel has been laid upon us, save as also we are bound to preach to all nations.”<sup>378</sup>

The way of salvation is not now closed to Israel, but they must come to God like everyone else. They now are under the cloud of spiritual ruin, “from which ruin none will be freed but he who shall have been frontally sealed with the passion of the Christ whom you have rejected.”<sup>379</sup> There is only one door to God, and that is through Christ, but that door is open to the Jew as well as to the Gentile, “for they who out of Judaism believe in Christ, ever since their believing in him, do, whenever they shall wish to say Emmanuel, signify that God is with us.”<sup>380</sup> The work of Christ was the same for Jew and Gentile, “‘that he might reconcile both unto God’ (even the God whom both races had offended—both Jew and Gentile).”<sup>381</sup> There is here no special animosity toward the Jews; no racial or national obstacles are placed in their way. Tertullian merely voices a warning that only in Jesus Christ, whom they have rejected, can the Jews find the

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<sup>377</sup> *Mod.* 10, ANF IV, 84.

<sup>378</sup> *De Fuga in Persecutione* 5, ANF IV, 119.

<sup>379</sup> *Jews* 11, ANF III, 167-168.

<sup>380</sup> *Jews* 9, ANF III, 161.

<sup>381</sup> *AgMarc.* 5.17, ANF III, 466.

remedy to their spiritually desperate condition. He acknowledges that many Jews have, in fact, come to Christ, beginning with the Pentecost crowd from many nations in Acts 2.<sup>382</sup>

Throughout Tertullian's works it is evident that during the period when he emerges as a father of the church at the turn of the third century, the question of the Jews has begun to take on a greater sense of significance and urgency. It also appears that Jews and Christians were talking about each other and to each other with greater frequency and sharper animosity. He records that the Jews call Christians "Nazarenes" after Jesus and his hometown.<sup>383</sup> In addition to his attempts to enter into discourse with the Jews on several key points already mentioned, Tertullian reports that "it happened very recently a dispute was held between a Christian and a Jewish proselyte," which went on for an entire day before ending in confusion and hostility.

He purposed to improve on this process through his work, *An Answer to the Jews*.<sup>384</sup> Not only was it true, as noted above, that Tertullian challenged Jewish interpretations of their Scriptures, it also happened the other way around. For example, he explains that the Jews approached the prophecies of Isaiah with an intention to refute the messianic interpretation accorded to these prophecies by the Christians:

"Accordingly the Jews say: let us challenge that prediction of Isaiah, and let us institute a comparison whether, in the case of the Christ who is already come, there be applicable to him, firstly, the name which Isaiah foretold, and (secondly) the signs of it which he

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<sup>382</sup> *Jews* 7, ANF III, 158.

<sup>383</sup> *AgMarc.* 4.8, ANF III, 354.

<sup>384</sup> *Jews* 1, ANF III, 150.

announced of him.” From the Scriptures, the Jews were arguing “that the passion of the cross was not predicted with reference to Christ, and urging, besides, that it is not credible that God should have exposed his own Son to that kind of death.”<sup>385</sup> Why, the Jews asked, did the Christ not attract the loyalty of his own people and the world, and bring in the messianic kingdom prophesied in the Scriptures? To meet this question, Tertullian presented an extensive survey of the Scriptures, asserting that these Jewish texts predicted, in fact, not a single coming, but two, the first in shame, and the second in glory: “Which evidences of ignobility suit the First Advent, just as those of sublimity do the Second.”<sup>386</sup>

Tertullian is not clear about the notion of a national restoration of Israel. In his exposition of the parable of the Prodigal Son, he declines to follow a contemporary Christian interpretation which posits that the elder son is the Christian and the younger son is the Jew. Those who followed this interpretation suggested that this scheme makes sense “for it will be fitting for the Christian to rejoice and not to grieve at the restoration of Israel; if it be true, (as it is), that the whole of our hope is intimately united with the remaining expectation of Israel.”<sup>387</sup> It is unclear whether Tertullian rejected this view merely because he preferred his own interpretation, or because he was unwilling to entertain the idea of a general conversion of Israel.

He similarly introduces an interpretation of the resurrection passage in 1 Corinthians as the view of someone else:

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<sup>385</sup> *Jews* 9, 11, ANF III, 161-164.

<sup>386</sup> *Jews* 14, ANF III, 172.

<sup>387</sup> *Mod.* 8, ANF IV, 82.

But inasmuch as this corruptible (that is, the flesh) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (that is, the blood) must put on immortality, by the change which is to follow the resurrection, it will, for the best of reasons, happen that flesh and blood, after that change and investiture, will become able to inherit the kingdom of God—but not without the resurrection. Some will have it, that by the phrase “flesh and blood,” because of its rite of circumcision, Judaism is meant . . .<sup>388</sup>

It is again unclear whether Tertullian himself agreed with this suggested interpretation, for he neither affirms nor contradicts it. The possibility remains that Tertullian expected a national conversion of Israel in a final restoration.

### Summary

In spite of his reputation, Tertullian delivers a much more positive approach to the Jews than might be expected. He certainly exhibits a sharp tone, but this is no more venomous toward the Jews than toward other adversaries, such as pagans and heretics. Accordingly, while he clearly accuses the Jews of general sinfulness and responsibility for the death of Christ, he makes the same charges against the pagans. Like other early Christian sources, he notes a pattern of the Jews’ rebelliousness to God, ascribes to them an inferior spiritual condition, and finds their present desolate condition to be a fitting consequence of their offense. Compared to the size of his entire extant work, however, Tertullian’s words about the Jews are few in number, though often potent.

Like Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian is focused much more on the threat from heresy than on that of the Jews. While Marcion accuses the Church of being too Jewish, Tertullian affirms the basic continuity of the Old and New

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<sup>388</sup> *TRes.* 50, ANF III, 584.

Testaments, and points out that Christ upheld the Sabbath and other Jewish practice, since he came “not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.” He further cited Jewish support against the Monarchians, demonstrating from the Scripture the distinctness of the Christ from the Father. When he did link the Jews with heresy, it was not due to their beliefs, but because they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ for whom they waited, and for the moral degeneracy which necessarily, in his view, resulted from that refusal.

He interacts with Jewish arguments, responding to their criticism of Christian beliefs regarding the virgin birth, the necessity of the cross, messianic prophecy, and the proper use of allegory. Tertullian exhibits tremendous dependence on Jewish prayer practices and the Scripture, which he upholds as the Word of God. He asserts the mutual dependence of the Old and New Testaments, and appropriates for the Church both the promises and warnings given to the Jews. In claiming these writings for Christians, he asserts that one can only properly understand their meaning when the law and the prophets are seen to find their fulfillment in the advent of Christ and the rise of the new Israel, the Church.

It is clear from Tertullian’s writings that in his day, Christians and Jews were each still making the claim that they, and not the other, were the legitimate heir to the spiritual inheritance of Israel as the people of God. Tertullian sought to further the Christian case by asserting that the Mosaic law had been a temporary arrangement, now displaced by the new Christian order, and that the Jews, because of their persistent disobedience, were no longer worthy of the place of privilege they had long held. Judaism was incomplete and needed the fulfillment that was to be found in Christ.

## Origen

Working as a Christian teacher, exegete, and theologian in the first third of the third century A.D., Origen of Alexandria exerted a significant influence on the Church in his own times which would continue long after his death. In spite of the cloud of heresy that hung over him both during and after his life, he was one of the most influential fathers in the history of the early church, admired especially by the likes of his pupil Gregory Thaumaturgus and the church historian Eusebius. In his work, *Against Celsus*, Origen tackles the relation of Christianity and the Jews head-on, as he answers the criticisms of the pagan cynic against the new faith and its predecessor. While it may be true that the pagan Celsus was influenced by Jewish arguments against the Christians,<sup>389</sup> Origen clearly identifies Celsus as an opponent of both religions, and not as a representative of the Jews. He believes that Celsus' objective is to tie the two faiths together in order to destroy them both, and he sees his responsibility "to make an effort to refute the charges brought against the doctrine of the Jews by Celsus, who thinks that he will be able to move easily to establish the falsity of Christianity, if, by assailing its origin in Judaism, he can show that the latter also is untrue."<sup>390</sup>

He derides the weight of his opponents' arguments: ". . . such language becomes a buffoon, and not even one who is writing in a serious tone. . . . It were indeed to be desired, that all the accusers of Christianity were equally ignorant with Celsus."<sup>391</sup>

Celsus chose to place his words in the mouth of a Jew, but Origen refuses to get caught

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<sup>389</sup> Dubnov, 141.

<sup>390</sup> *AgCelsus* 1.22, ANF IV, 405.

<sup>391</sup> *AgCelsus* 1.37, 49, ANF IV, 412, 418.

up in a Jewish-Christian squabble, choosing to answer with a defense built on the solidarity of the two, rather than distinguishing between them. He says that Celsus' work, *True Discourse*, is "full of charges against Jews and Christians" as a result of the pagan's "hatred and dislike of Jewish and Christian doctrine."<sup>392</sup> He introduces his work with the words, ". . . the following is what we have to say partly in answer to the Greeks, and partly to the Jews," but the answer that follows speaks chiefly to the cynical Greek philosopher, often taking for granted the agreement of Jews and Christians against him.<sup>393</sup>

After some introductory interactions with Celsus' fictitious Jew in books one and two, only one of the remaining eight books (book five) deals with the Jews in any depth, and that book is an explicit defense of the Jews against Celsus' attack. When he refutes Celsus, he builds his arguments almost entirely on the Jewish scriptures, asserting divine truth as found both in the law and in the prophets, and pointing to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment, not the abrogation of the old covenant. At the beginning of his seventh book, Origen surveys his work to that point: "In the six former books we have endeavored, reverend brother Ambrosius, according to our ability to meet the charges brought by Celsus against the Christians." In spite of the attention he has given to the Jews (especially books one, two, and five), Origen points out that it is the pagan, and

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<sup>392</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.47, ANF IV, 519.

<sup>393</sup> *AgCelsus* 59, ANF IV, 422.

not the Jew, who is the object of his arguments. He sees the Jews as his allies, not his foes: to attack the Jew is to attack the Christian.<sup>394</sup>

Origen often challenges Celsus' presentation of the Jewish position, claiming that the pagan has misrepresented what Jews actually believe. Referring to Celsus' fictional dialogue between Jesus and a Jew, he asserts that he can "show that he does not maintain, throughout the discussion, the consistency due to the character of a Jew."<sup>395</sup> At one point, he relates, "the Jew makes another silly remark," not at all denigrating the Jews, but Celsus, who "has here put in the mouth of a Jew an objection which a Jew would not have made."<sup>396</sup> He refutes Celsus' charge that Jews worship angels and engage in sorcery, as handed down to them from Moses: ". . . he views as Jewish errors what are no errors at all."<sup>397</sup> He answers Celsus' assertion that the Jews believe in the Logos as the Son of God by saying that he "never heard anyone expressing his approval" of such an idea.<sup>398</sup> When Celsus has the Jew in his dialogue question the authenticity of the supernatural elements in the story of Jesus' baptism by John, Origen objects, "such a statement is not appropriately placed in the mouth of a Jew."<sup>399</sup> Similarly, he rejects Celsus' entire portrayal of this Jew who scorns all the miraculous elements of Jesus' life, protesting that the Jews themselves believe in miracles through the teachings of their own Scriptures.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> *AgCelsus* 7.1, ANF IV, 611.

<sup>395</sup> *AgCelsus* 28, ANF IV, 408.

<sup>396</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.18, ANF IV, 439.

<sup>397</sup> *AgCelsus* 26, ANF IV, 407.

<sup>398</sup> *AgCelsus* 31, ANF IV, 444.

<sup>399</sup> *AgCelsus* 48, ANF IV, 417.

<sup>400</sup> *AgCelsus* 43-44, ANF IV, 414-415.

Origen states that his opponent equally despises Christians and Jews, with whom he is loathe to even hold conversation. Celsus is quoted as saying that “such statements would be more endurable if made by worms and frogs than by Christians and Jews who quarrel with one another!”<sup>401</sup> and intends to insult the Christians by identifying them with the Jews: “The Jews accordingly, and these (clearly meaning the Christians), have the same God.” Rather than taking the bait, Origen embraces this charge and concurs that the same God does, in fact, rule over both Jews and Christians.<sup>402</sup> On another occasion, Celsus charges that Christians seek another God than that of the Jews when Jesus’ teachings contradict those of Moses, but Origen’s response remains the same: “. . . we know of only one and the same God, whom the Jews also worshipped of old time, and still profess to worship as God.”<sup>403</sup>

He praises the Jews as a superior people, “the race of God,”<sup>404</sup> in opposition to Celsus’ slanders: “And although Celsus will not admit it, the Jews nevertheless are possessed of a wisdom superior not only to that of the multitude, but also of those who have the appearance of philosophers.”<sup>405</sup> Origen accepts the dictum of the apostle Paul in Romans 2 that the Jew has a priority over the Gentile in the judgment of God, which passes “on the Jew first, and on the Greek: but glory, and honor, and peace to every one that works good; to the Jew first, and to the Greek.”<sup>406</sup> Moses and Josephus are used to demonstrate that the Jews, and by association the Christians, possess a claim to

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<sup>401</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.30-31, ANF IV, 510.

<sup>402</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.59, ANF IV, 569.

<sup>403</sup> *AgCelsus* 6.29, ANF IV, 586.

<sup>404</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.13, ANF IV, 362.

<sup>405</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.43, ANF IV, 562.

<sup>406</sup> *De Princ.* 3.1.6, ANF IV, 306.

antiquity that surpasses such claims made by other nations, and therefore imparts to the Jews a superior authority.<sup>407</sup> He argues against Celsus' claim that the Jews descended from a group of Egyptians who had revolted against and abandoned their people.<sup>408</sup>

It is apparent that Origen engaged in an ongoing discussion with the Jewish community of his time and place regarding the text and meaning of the Jewish scriptures, a process characterized by Dubnov as "friendly."<sup>409</sup> Origen read carefully and evaluated the works of individual translators and interpreters. This kind of interaction was apparently not unique to Origen. Relating the story of Rabbi Abbahu, Simon concludes, ". . . the Christian communities, until quite late in the early Church period, were in the habit of consulting the rabbis on questions of biblical exegesis," resulting in almost daily meetings for Palestinian rabbis.<sup>410</sup>

Origen frequently refers to his personal dealings with the Jews in a way that demonstrates a certain level of respect for their learning. He claims that he has "conferred with many Jews who professed to be learned men."<sup>411</sup> His interaction with the Jewish teachers afforded him a working knowledge of Hebrew, upon which he relied for his biblical exposition, as illustrated in his discussion of Jesus' teaching about marriage in the Gospel of Matthew: "But we have also observed this in the Hebrew; for man is indicated by the word 'is,' but male by the word 'zachar,' and again woman by

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<sup>407</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.11, ANF IV, 501.

<sup>408</sup> *AgCelsus* 3.5-6, ANF IV, 466-467.

<sup>409</sup> Dubnov, 142.

<sup>410</sup> Simon, 184-185.

<sup>411</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.31, ANF IV, 444.

the word ‘essa,’ but female by the word ‘agkeba.’”<sup>412</sup> His knowledge about Palestinian geography,<sup>413</sup> the practice of “Corban” in Matthew 15:4,<sup>414</sup> and the identity of places mentioned in the gospels such as Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergasa, had come about because he had “been at pains to learn from the Hebrews . . .”<sup>415</sup> He persistently looked for clues to the meaning of the Scriptures in the language, history, and religion of the Jews.

Origen relates that his “Hebrew master also used to say that those two seraphim in Isaiah, which are described as having each six wings and calling to one another, and saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts,’ were to be understood of the only-begotten Son of God and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>416</sup> It is unclear whether this “Hebrew master” had been converted to Christian faith, or if he was, in fact, still unconvinced that Jesus was this Son of God of which he spoke. Origen does point out throughout his writings that “a great multitude of them acknowledged Christ, and believed him to be the object of prophecy, while others did not believe in him.”<sup>417</sup>

As he attempts to reconcile the differences between Greek and Hebrew versions of Susanna, Origen reveals his high regard for the Jewish translator, Aquila, and his propensity to examine and compare the textual evidence used by Jews and Christians:

For so Aquila, following the Hebrew reading, gives it, who has obtained the credit among the Jews of having interpreted the Scriptures with no ordinary care, and whose version is most commonly used by those who do not know Hebrew, as the one which has been most successful. . . . And in many other of

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<sup>412</sup> *CMatt* 14.16, ANF IX, 506.

<sup>413</sup> *CMatt* 11.16, ANF IX, 444.

<sup>414</sup> *CMatt*. 11.9, ANF IX, 438.

<sup>415</sup> *CJohn* 6.24, ANF IX, 371.

<sup>416</sup> *De Princ.* 1.3.4, ANF IV, 253.

<sup>417</sup> *AgCelsus* 3.27-28, ANF IV, 474-475.

the sacred books I found sometimes more in our copies than in the Hebrew, sometimes less.<sup>418</sup>

With sharp sarcasm, he discusses the difference between Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Scriptures: “. . . when we notice such things, we are forthwith to reject as spurious the copies in use in our Churches, and enjoin the brotherhood to put away the sacred books current among them, and to coax the Jews, and persuade them to give us copies which shall be untampered with, and free from forgery!”<sup>419</sup> While he believes that God’s beneficent providence would guarantee that his children would never lack a faithful copy of his word, Origen still, by these words, acknowledges that the Jews did, in fact, possess manuscripts that in some cases offered the Church a better version of the biblical text. His own practice confirms this perspective. In his letter to Africanus, he acknowledges repeatedly his debt to Jewish assistance as he studied the Scriptures:

On this point, however, I am still in doubt; because, when I was considering this passage (for I myself saw this difficulty), I consulted not a few Jews about it. . . . Moreover, I remember hearing from a learned Hebrew . . . with whom I had intercourse on many subjects. . . . And I knew another Hebrew, who told about these elders such traditions as the following . . .<sup>420</sup>

He was equally capable of challenging the motivation of the Jewish interpreters with whom he was familiar. Explaining why the Susanna story included in the Greek version of Daniel was missing from the Hebrew text, he asserts that the Jewish scribes “hid from the knowledge of the people as many of the passages which contained any

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<sup>418</sup> *LAfr.* 2, ANF IV, 386.

<sup>419</sup> *LAfr.* 4, ANF IV, 387.

<sup>420</sup> *LAfr.* 6-8, ANF IV, 388.

scandal against the elders, rulers, and judges, as they could, some of which have been preserved in the canonical writings.” He backs up his theory by recounting Jewish violence against their own prophets, and atrocities against Jesus and the apostles, as recorded in the New Testaments, concluding: “What I have said is, I think, sufficient to prove that it would be nothing wonderful if this history were true, and the licentious and cruel attack was actually made on Susanna by those who were at that time elders, and written down by the wisdom of the Spirit, but removed by these rulers of Sodom, as the Spirit would call them.”<sup>421</sup>

In spite of this bold accusation, Origen also attempts to reconcile differences between Greek and Hebrew versions of the Susanna story by technical explanations.<sup>422</sup> Later, he supports his own cynicism about the apocryphal books of *Tobias* and *Judith* by appealing to these same Jewish authorities, reminding his readers that these are books which “the Jews do not use. They are not even found in the Hebrew Apocrypha, as I learned from the Jews themselves.”<sup>423</sup> Whatever suspicions he had about their motivation in handling the text of *Susanna* did not stop him from appealing to their usage of these other books in a positive way. His point was not to argue with the Jews about which books ought to be recognized as canonical, but to support a practice “which is found in every Church of Christ.”<sup>424</sup>

Interestingly, Origen’s correspondent on these matters, Julius Africanus, came to a different conclusion from Origen on the place of *Susanna* in the canon. More

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<sup>421</sup> *LAfr.* 9, ANF IV, 388.

<sup>422</sup> *LAfr.* 12, ANF IV, 391.

<sup>423</sup> *LAfr.* 13, ANF IV, 391.

<sup>424</sup> *LAfr.* 2, ANF IV, 386.

significantly, his reason for rejecting the book's legitimacy is his sensitivity to the weight of Jewish judgment: "But a more fatal objection is, that this section, along with the other two at the end of it, is not contained in the Daniel received among the Jews."<sup>425</sup> This Christian historian and writer places Jewish history at the center of his attention, "examining carefully the affairs of the Hebrews, and touching more cursorily on those of the Greeks."<sup>426</sup> He cites Jewish works to support his historical assertions, for example: "as is narrated in Esdra the Hebrew historian."<sup>427</sup>

Origen makes a special point of emphasizing the Jewish roots of Jesus, the Gospel story, and the writers of the Christian scriptures: "For Matthew, writing for the Hebrews who looked for him who was to come of the line of Abraham and of David, says: 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.'"<sup>428</sup> This linkage was not just accidental, for Matthew specifically wrote his gospel to reach a Jewish audience, "those, namely, of the circumcision who believed,"<sup>429</sup> and "... he composed it in the Hebrew tongue and published it for the converts from Judaism."<sup>430</sup>

Origen defends the teachings of the Jewish scriptures as his own. Celsus, mocking the account of the creation of woman from man in Genesis 2, claims "the more modest among Jews and Christians are ashamed of these things, and endeavor to give them somehow an allegorical interpretation." Origen responds with a defense of the

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<sup>425</sup> *LOrig.* 2, ANF IV, 385.

<sup>426</sup> *Chron.* 13.1, ANF VI, 133.

<sup>427</sup> *Chron.* 13.2, ANF VI, 133.

<sup>428</sup> *CJohn*, 6, ANF IX, 299.

<sup>429</sup> *CJohn* 6.17, ANF IX, 366.

<sup>430</sup> *CMatt.* 1, ANF IX, 412.

Jewish-Christian account, comparing it favorably to those of the Greeks, which he characterizes as the perfect picture of absurdity: “It is not the Jews, then, who have composed incredible and insipid stories regarding the birth of man from the earth, but these ‘inspired’ men of Celsus, Hesiod and his other ‘innumerable’ companions.”<sup>431</sup> Origen affirms the veracity of the biblical account of the flood, “which effected a purification of the earth, according to the accounts both of Jews and Christians.”<sup>432</sup> He defends the authenticity of Jewish genealogies,<sup>433</sup> and refutes Celsus’ criticism of the Jews’ origins as grounded in the trickery of “jugglers and deceivers.” He upholds their ancestry from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, maintaining that the Hebrews are distinct from other peoples, and possess a history that is prior to those who derive their own stories from them.<sup>434</sup>

Against the doctrines of polytheism and its multiple deities distributed across the peoples of the world, Origen asserts “. . . we shall answer that the law of Moses knows that these latter have been apportioned by God among all the nations under heaven, but not amongst those who were selected by God as his chosen people above all the nations of the earth.” He then goes on to defend the faith of this “chosen people,” not at all referring to the Christians, but to the Jews.<sup>435</sup> When Celsus mocks the concept of a god who is distinct from the heavenly bodies, Origen defends this Jewish belief as it is supported by the Creator’s laws against idolatry, and insists that there is no distinction

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<sup>431</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.36, 39, ANF IV, 513-514.

<sup>432</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.21, ANF IV, 505.

<sup>433</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.35, ANF IV, 513

<sup>434</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.33-34, ANF IV, 511-512.

<sup>435</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.10, ANF IV, 547.

between Christians and Jews on this issue: “But the Jews . . . will not maintain that either the heaven or the angels are God.”<sup>436</sup> Celsus tries to assert that Jewish laws, which mark them as a “peculiar people,” prove that they are just like other nations, each watched over by its own divine being who gave them each their distinctive laws. Origen responds on behalf of the Jews that the polytheistic answer is illogical and inconsistent, and that only the providence of the one true God of the Jews is an adequate explanation.<sup>437</sup> Over and over, he puts Jews and Christians on the same side against the polytheistic ideas of paganism, not disputing that the two groups agree on this point. Instead, he provides a common defense, answering on behalf of the Jews as his allies.<sup>438</sup>

In the work of Origen, Jews and Christians stand together against the idolatrous sacrifices of the pagans.<sup>439</sup> He mocks Celsus’ high estimation of divination, claiming to his side not only the Jews, but also many of the Greeks: “Nay, so far as Celsus can make it appear, the birds possess grander and more divine ideas than, I do not say we Christians do, or than the Jews, who use the same Scriptures with ourselves, but even than are possessed by the theologians among the Greeks, for they were only human beings.”<sup>440</sup>

Origen uses the reputation of the Jews to secure respect as well for the Christians. He defends Christianity against the charge that its many heretical offshoots belie its claims to truth by pointing to the different views of sects within Judaism

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<sup>436</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.6, ANF IV, 545.

<sup>437</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.25-29, ANF IV, 553-556.

<sup>438</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.77, 5.4, ANF IV, 531, 544.

<sup>439</sup> *AgCelsus* 8.31, ANF IV, 650.

<sup>440</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.89, ANF IV, 537.

regarding the interpretation and acceptance of Moses and the prophets: “And so neither are the sacred books of Moses and the prophets to be condemned on account of the heresies in Judaism.” Because of the close relation of the two faiths, a close examination of these variant beliefs could yield significant benefit: “. . . so I would say that the wisest Christian was he who had carefully studied the heresies both of Judaism and Christianity.”<sup>441</sup> Having apparently engaged in such a study himself, he does not take the occasion to criticize Judaism proper. While maintaining high respect for the wider Jewish faith, he focuses on the shortcomings of these individual sects, such as the Samaritans and Sadducees.<sup>442</sup> His concern over the Sadducees is due, at least in part, to his conviction that they lend support to some Christian heretics who, like them, deny the resurrection: “And there are many among the heterodox who, because of their unbelief in regard to the resurrection of the dead, are imbued with the leaven of the Sadducees.”<sup>443</sup>

Like other Christian teachers, Origen appears to view the Jews as a lower level threat to the Christian faith than the heretics. He recognizes an urgent need to confront false teaching within the church: “As for those who make up a mythology about the aeons and arrange them in syzygies (yokes or pairs), and who consider the Logos and Life to have been emitted by Intellect and Truth, it may not be beside the point to state the following difficulties.”<sup>444</sup> He rejects the dualism of the Marcionites, who asserted that the God of the Old Testament was a lesser deity, “the Demiurge, whom the Jews

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<sup>441</sup> *AgCelsus* 3.12-13, ANF IV, 469.

<sup>442</sup> *AgCelsus* 48-49, ANF IV, 418.

<sup>443</sup> *CMatt.* 12.5, ANF IX, 453.

<sup>444</sup> *CJohn* 2.19, ANF IX, 337.

worship.”<sup>445</sup> “The heretics drew a distinction for purposes of their own between the just and the good. They did not make the matter very clear, but they considered that the demiurge was just, while the Father of Christ was good.”<sup>446</sup> While these heretics drove a huge wedge between the Jews and the church, as the first worshipped a God of justice, and the second a God of “compassion and piety,” Origen holds that both Christians and Jews worship the same God, that his goodness shines through even in the Mosaic law: he defends the God of the Jews as his own.<sup>447</sup> He upholds the religion of the Jews as valid, and refutes “those who think that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a different God from him who gave the answerers of the law to Moses, or commissioned the prophets, who is the God of our father, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”<sup>448</sup>

Origen views the Scriptures as texts imbued with a mystical meaning, a spiritual sense, that is deeper than the words themselves or their literal, historical aspect. This allegorical interpretation is, for Origen, a Christian exercise, for only when led by the Spirit of God, given in Christ, is one enabled to see this meaning with new, spiritual vision. In contrast to this spiritual interpretation, Jews and heretics use the Scriptures in a naïve manner, a “view proper to old wives or Jews,” restricted by physical and material understanding. Christians who do not exercise due caution in handling the Scriptures “shall be seen to be doing what those of the heresies do, who fail to maintain the unity of the narrative of Scripture from beginning to end.”<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.8, ANF IV, 356.

<sup>446</sup> *CJohn* 1.40, ANF IX, 318.

<sup>447</sup> *De Princ.* 2.5.1, ANF IV, 278.

<sup>448</sup> *De Princ.* 2.4.1, ANF IV, 275.

<sup>449</sup> *CJohn* 10.26, ANF IX, 406.

There were, in Origen's day, Christians who remained tied, to some extent, to Judaism. Using the language of Jesus about the "leaven" of the Pharisees and Sadducees versus the "living bread" of Jesus, Origen suggests "we might seasonably apply the saying to those who, along with the Christian way of life, prefer to live as the Jews, materially."<sup>450</sup> He did not see this as a large group: "But the number of believers is small who belong to Israel according to the flesh; one might venture to assert that they would not nearly make up the number of a hundred and forty-four thousand."<sup>451</sup> These "Ebionites" adhere to Judaic regulations of diet and, together with the Jews, accuse Christians of transgressing the law on this account.<sup>452</sup> Celsus argues that "those who have been converted from Judaism to Christianity . . . have forsaken the law of their fathers, in consequence of their minds being led captive by Jesus," but Origen counters that "the Jewish converts have not departed the law of their fathers, inasmuch as they live according to its prescriptions, receiving their very name from the poverty of the law," referring to the Ebionities.<sup>453</sup> In addition, Origen points out that non-Ebionite Christians still remain tied to the law to some extent because "the beginning of the Gospel is connected with the Jewish writings." From this basic reliance on the law "it does not follow that every believer, whether a convert from heathenism or from Judaism, must yield a literal obedience to the law of Moses."<sup>454</sup> While believing that the Ebionites were wrong to "suppose that the Savior came specially to the 'carnal'

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<sup>450</sup> *CMatt.* 12.5, ANF IX, 453.

<sup>451</sup> *CJohn* 2, ANF IX, 298.

<sup>452</sup> *CMatt.* 11.12, ANF IX, 440.

<sup>453</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.1, ANF IV, 429

<sup>454</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.3-4, ANF IV, 430-431.

Israelites,”<sup>455</sup> Origen still defended them as within the Christian faith, including them in his position of solidarity with the Jews against the attacks of Celsus.

The foundation of Origen’s respect for the Jews and their religion is his high regard for their Scripture: “all the Scripture is the one perfect and harmonized instrument of God, which from different sounds gives forth one saving voice to those willing to learn.”<sup>456</sup> The Jews enjoyed their privileged position before God because they had been blessed with the light of his revelation through the prophets, “who were enlightened as far as was necessary for their prophetic work by the Spirit of God . . .”<sup>457</sup>

This process of divine revelation brought about the existence of the Jewish scriptures, at least in part, for Origen, as the result of the exemplary lives of those individual Jewish people deemed worthy to receive it: “. . . we regard with reverent awe the Jewish prophets: for we see that the noble, earnest, and devout lives of those men were worthy of the inspiration of the Divine Spirit.”<sup>458</sup> The writings of “the prophets of the Jews” are “reckoned among ours” by Origen, so that he can refer to Moses and other figures from the Jewish scriptures as “*our* wise men.”<sup>459</sup> The works of Deuteronomy, John, and the Psalms are equally “our own Scriptures.”<sup>460</sup> Using Jesus’ parable of the treasure hidden in the field, Origen asserts that the Christian church has received this legacy from the Jews, if they would but receive it: “And, having hidden it, he goes away, working and devising how he shall buy the field, or the Scriptures, that he may

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<sup>455</sup> *De Princ.* 4.22, ANF IV, 371.

<sup>456</sup> *CMatt.* 2, ANF IX, 413.

<sup>457</sup> *AgCelsus* 6.4, ANF IV, 612.

<sup>458</sup> *AgCelsus* 6.7, ANF IV, 614.

<sup>459</sup> *AgCelsus* 6.4, ANF IV, 574.

<sup>460</sup> *De Princ.* 1.1.1, ANF IV, 242.

make them his own possession, receiving from the people of God the oracles of God with which the Jews were first entrusted.”<sup>461</sup>

For Origen, the power of the Scripture as evidence for the truth of Christianity was supreme. He defended Judaism by pointing to the obvious providence of God in the life of the nation through prophecy and miracle, as recorded in the Jewish scriptures. This defense of the Jews extended to the Christians by their spiritual association with Israel, but also because those same Jewish scriptures were seen to be dramatically fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>462</sup> Celsus saw the Christians’ claims weakened by their restrictive association with the Jews: “. . . do you not think that you have made the Son of God more ridiculous in sending him to the Jews?” For Origen, however, this was not an unfortunate coincidence, but a necessary connection brought about through the wisdom of divine providence: “. . . it was necessary that he who was the subject of prophecy should make his appearance among those who had become acquainted with the doctrine of one God, and who had perused the writings of his prophets, and who had come to know the announcement of Christ.”<sup>463</sup> The power of fulfilled prophecy could only be known by those who were aware of the prophecy. The fact that many of the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ was especially offensive because his claims came “not from our own conjectures, but because we believe the prophecies circulated among the Jews.”<sup>464</sup> He takes Celsus to task because his fictional Jew does not know about the messianic prophecies from the Jewish scriptures, and yet responds

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<sup>461</sup> *CMatt.* 10.6, ANF IX, 416.

<sup>462</sup> *AgCelsus* 3.2-3, ANF IV, 465-466.

<sup>463</sup> *AgCelsus* 6.78, ANF IV, 609.

<sup>464</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.9, ANF IV, 433.

as if he did: “And these arguments I employ as against a Jew who believes in prophecy.”<sup>465</sup>

The result of this high view of the Jewish scriptures is that Origen turned to them consistently as he built and supported his arguments. His writings are permeated with lines such as “. . . let the declarations of holy Scripture, as far as possible, first be adduced . . . mentioned in Scripture . . . but it will be worthwhile to prove this from Scripture . . . let us see whether we can find in holy Scripture any indications properly applicable.” In each case, he is referring to Jewish, not Christian, writings.<sup>466</sup> When he is explaining the meaning of the term “opposing powers” in *De Principiis*, he quotes from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Job (“Such, meanwhile, are the statements made in the Old Testament”), before beginning to survey the teachings of the New Testament.<sup>467</sup> He found the teaching of the testaments to be in agreement, not opposition. For example, they speak in unison “that it does not depend on ourselves to keep the commandments and to be saved.”<sup>468</sup>

Origen also appropriated the God of the Jews for the Christians: “Now the multitudes seeing these things, glorified the God of Israel, and glorify him in the persuasion that it is the same God, who is the Father of him who healed these previously mentioned, and the God of Israel. For he is not the God of the Jews only, but

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<sup>465</sup> *AgCelsus* 1.34, ANF IV, 411.

<sup>466</sup> *De Princ.* 1.7, ANF IV, 262-264.

<sup>467</sup> *De Princ.* 3.2.1, ANF IV, 329.

<sup>468</sup> *De Princ.* 3.1.7, ANF IV, 306-307.

also of the Gentiles.”<sup>469</sup> The God of Israel, his Scriptures, and his Christ are all tied together indivisibly by Origen, quoting from John 5, as well as Jeremiah and Isaiah: “For if they had believed Moses and the prophets they would have believed Christ, who showed that when men believed Moses and the prophets, belief in Christ logically followed, and that when men did not believe Christ they did not believe Moses.”<sup>470</sup>

As he made use of the Jewish scriptures, and claimed the Jewish God as his own, Origen did so with the conviction that the old ways had been supplanted by a new way, the covenant of God with all humanity through Jesus Christ. This fulfilled the promises of God to the Jews, and did not negate them: “. . . we, who belong to the Church, do not transgress the law, but have escaped the mythologizings of the Jews, and have our minds chastened and educated by the mystical contemplation of the law and the prophets.”<sup>471</sup>

The gospel of Christ was embedded in the religion and Scriptures of the Jews because, from the beginning, God intended that at the right time these promises would be expanded beyond the nation of the Jews: “. . . how Moses or the prophets both spoke and performed all they did through being filled with the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>472</sup> There was a parallel between “Moses, the first legislator of the Hebrew nation,” and Jesus Christ, “the Author and Chief of the Christian religious system.”<sup>473</sup> More than that, Christ was active in the old covenant as he would be active in the new. In Isaiah 49, the prophet is

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<sup>469</sup> *CMatt.* 11.18, ANF IX, 448.

<sup>470</sup> *CMatt.* 10.18, ANF IX, 425.

<sup>471</sup> *AgCelsus* 6, ANF IV, 432.

<sup>472</sup> *De Princ.*, pref. 1. ANF IV, 239.

<sup>473</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.1, ANF IV, 349.

speaking of the Christ, claiming that God “called his servant by the God of all things, and Israel, and Light of the Gentiles.”<sup>474</sup> The sacrificial lamb of the old covenant would become the “Lamb of God” in the new,<sup>475</sup> and true believers under the old covenant recognized the Christ who was to come to bring in the new: “Their religion was sanctified and made acceptable to God by their knowledge and faith and expectation of Christ.”<sup>476</sup> Jesus Christ completes all the expectations of the old and ushers in the new:

Hence he is a great High-Priest, since he restores all things to his Father’s kingdom, and arranges that whatever defects exist in each part of creation shall be filled up so as to be all of the glory of the Father. . . . When he has put under his feet the opposing power, and is alone in presence of his Father, then he is Jacob and Israel; and thus as we are made light by him, we are made Jacob since he is called Jacob, and Israel since he is called Israel.<sup>477</sup>

The life of the apostle Paul provided a good example of the way in which the Christian was to replace the old, incomplete way of Judaism with the new, fuller way of Christianity, while at the same time, maintaining the proper sensitivity to the people of the old covenant, the Jews:

Was it impious to abstain from corporeal circumcision, and from literal Sabbath, and literal festivals, and literal new moons, and from clean and unclean meats, and to turn the mind to the good and true and spiritual law of God, while at the same time he who was an ambassador for Christ knew how to become to the Jews as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and to those who are under the law, as under the law, that he might gain those who are under the law?<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> *CJohn* 1.36, ANF IX, 316.

<sup>475</sup> *CJohn* 1.1-6, 37, ANF IX, 297-299, 316-317.

<sup>476</sup> *CJohn* 2.28, ANF IX, 343.

<sup>477</sup> *CJohn* 1.40, ANF IX, 319.

<sup>478</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.7, ANF IV, 432.

Christians were, therefore, warranted to apply the Jewish scriptures to their lives and the life of the Christian church. For example, church office holders could find precedent for their position in the instructions given for the religious leaders of the Jews:

But those who devote themselves to the divine word and have no other employment but the service of God may not unnaturally, allowing for the difference of occupation in the two cases, be called our levites and priests. And those who fulfill a more distinguished office than their kinsmen will perhaps be high-priests, according to the order of Aaron, not that of Melchizidek.<sup>479</sup>

It is only a small step from this type of application to an allegorical method of interpreting Scripture, as a consequence of this assimilation of Jewish religion into Christian usage. Since Christians have been enabled to ascertain the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, they are better able than the Jews to speak to the intended meaning of the texts: "And as respects the law of Moses itself, we are in a position to make a better defense of it than the Jew is, because we have been taught by Jesus to have a more intelligent apprehension of the writings of the law."<sup>480</sup> Origen observes that "the Jews, who live according to the Law of Moses," may not "know how to receive the secret meaning of the law, which is conveyed in obscure language."<sup>481</sup> They had not, after all, received the same fullness of revelation regarding "these heavenly things of which the shadow was present to the Jews on earth."<sup>482</sup> To the Christian, however, a deeper knowledge is available: "But if anyone ascends to the Gospel of Christ Jesus which teaches that the law is spiritual, he will seek also the spiritual understanding of this

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<sup>479</sup> *CJohn* 3, ANF IX, 298.

<sup>480</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.76, ANF IV, 462.

<sup>481</sup> *AgCelsus* 5.6, ANF IV, 545.

<sup>482</sup> *CJohn* 10.12, ANF IX, 389.

law.”<sup>483</sup> The rightly perceived meaning is not merely true, but is spiritual and heavenly, in contrast to the literal, material, earthly understanding of the Jews: “But when we read either in the Old Testament or in the New of the anger of God, we do not take such expressions literally, but seek in them a spiritual meaning, that we may think of God as he deserves to be thought of.”<sup>484</sup> So, rules for marriage applied to the relationship between Christ and his church,<sup>485</sup> the tribes of Israel are made to represent the Christian Church,<sup>486</sup> and prohibitions against “unclean meats” are, spiritually understood, warnings against improperly indulgent speech.<sup>487</sup>

This allegorical method was applied to the teachings of Jesus as well as to the Jewish law. Origen asserts that, in the parable of the net, the net represents Scripture and the varied kinds of fish which are caught are Gentiles from every nation. Further: “. . . the kingdom of heaven is likened unto the variegated texture of a net, with reference to the Old and the New Scripture which is woven of thoughts of all kinds and greatly varied. . . . And the texture of the net has been completed in the Gospels, and in the words of Christ through the Apostles.”<sup>488</sup>

The triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week becomes a lesson on the relation and interpretation of the Jewish and Christian scriptures: “Now Jesus is the word of God which goes into the soul that is called Jerusalem, riding on the ass freed by the disciples from its bonds. That is to say, on the

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<sup>483</sup> *CMatt.* 14.18, ANF IX, 507.

<sup>484</sup> *De Princ.* 2.4.4, ANF IV, 278.

<sup>485</sup> *CMatt.* 14.18, ANF IX, 507.

<sup>486</sup> *CJohn* 1, ANF IX, 297.

<sup>487</sup> *CJohn* 10.12, ANF IX, 389.

<sup>488</sup> *CMatt* 10.12, ANF IX, 420

simple language of the Old Testament. . . . But he also rides in the young colt, the New Testament.”<sup>489</sup>

Origen’s allegorical method of interpreting the Scriptures proves especially useful when he finds in Christ’s cleansing of the temple the reasons that the Christian church has supplanted Judaism as the new people of God:

. . . we may regard these occurrences as a symbol of the fact that the service of that temple was not any longer to be carried on by the priests in the way of material sacrifices, and that the time was coming when the law could no longer be observed, however much the Jews according to the flesh desired it. . . . But it may also be the case that the natural temple is the soul skilled in reason, which, because of its inborn reason, is higher than the body. . . . Thus the occurrence in our passage, if it really took place, was not second in point of the power it exhibits to any even of the most marvelous works Christ wrought, and claimed no less by its divine character the faith of the beholders.<sup>490</sup>

What is perhaps most remarkable about this passage is the occurrence of the phrase, “if it really took place,” with its implication that Origen entertained the idea that this account had been included in the gospel, not because it related an event that had actually transpired, but in order to communicate the announcement that the demise of Judaism was inevitable in light of the advent of Christ.

He expresses similar sentiments about biblical prophecies which catalog the hardships of the nation of Israel:

Nay, the narratives of the events which are said to have happened either to the nation of Israel, or to Jerusalem, or to Judea, when assailed by this or that nation, cannot in many instances be understood as having actually occurred, and are much more appropriate to those nations of each who inhabit that heaven

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<sup>489</sup> *CJohn* 10.18, ANF IX, 396-397.

<sup>490</sup> *CJohn* 10.16, ANF IX, 394-395.

which is said to pass away, or who even now are supposed to be inhabitants of it.<sup>491</sup>

The law was never intended for literal observance. Its meaning, which was primarily figurative and spiritual, was obscured by too much attention given to the surface details, which were only shadows of the underlying spiritual realities: “But the interpretation is ‘spiritual,’ when one is able to show of what heavenly things the Jews ‘according to the flesh’ served as an example and a shadow, and of what future blessings the law contains a shadow.”<sup>492</sup> Origen demonstrates this by asserting that Moses’ description of various animals was obviously not in accord with natural facts about these animals. Rather than calling into question his own understanding of Moses’ account, Origen concludes that “many of the laws manifest the irrationality, and others the impossibility, of their literal observance.” His conclusion about the nature of the Mosaic writings was extended to the gospels as well, for both were to be read figuratively and spiritually, rather than literally.<sup>493</sup>

The supplanting of Judaism by Christianity was not the result of unforeseen human events which necessitated a change in the plan of God. Jesus Christ, the Savior and Son of God, ruled in the former religion with the intent to bring that faith to complete fruition in the successive one: “. . . who by his manifold wisdom and miracles established Judaism first, and Christianity afterwards.”<sup>494</sup> This was necessary and desirable, for the law had only possessed a shadow of those heavenly blessings which

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<sup>491</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.23, ANF IV, 373.

<sup>492</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.13, ANF IV, 361.

<sup>493</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.17-18, ANF IV, 366-367.

<sup>494</sup> *AgCelsus* 3.14, ANF IV, 470.

the Christian faith would offer as a reward to all: “In which land I believe there exist the true and living forms of that worship which Moses handed down under the shadow of the law; of which it is said, that ‘they serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things’—those, viz., who were in subjection of the law.”<sup>495</sup> The law and religion of the Jews was good, but never intended to remain unaltered when Christ appeared:

But since nothing belonging to human nature is permanent, this polity also must gradually be corrupted and changed. And Providence, having remodeled their venerable system where it needed to be changed, so as to adapt it to men of all countries, gave to believers of all nations, in place of the Jews, the venerable religion of Jesus.<sup>496</sup>

This “venerable religion of Jesus” was not opposed to Judaism. It only expanded and illuminated the blessings of God that religion had enjoyed. In the words of Paul from 2 Corinthians 3, Origen exulted, “The light, moreover, which was contained in the law of Moses, but which had been concealed by a veil, shone forth at the advent of Jesus, the veil being taken away, and those blessings, the shadow of which was contained in the letter, coming forth gradually to the knowledge (of men).”<sup>497</sup> The new religion did not propose another place to succeed Jerusalem. In the words of Jesus from John 4, spiritual worship of God would be confined “neither in Jerusalem nor on this mountain,” but would take place “in spirit and in truth.”<sup>498</sup>

Together, Judaism and Christianity stood in contrast to the vanity of pagan observances. While the religion of the Jews was completed and fulfilled, albeit quite radically in some regards, the superstitions of paganism were completely overthrown:

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<sup>495</sup> *De Princ.* 3.6.8, ANF III, 348.

<sup>496</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.32, ANF IV, 511.

<sup>497</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.6, ANF IV, 354.

<sup>498</sup> *De Princ.* 1.1.4, ANF IV, 243.

Jesus “devoted himself to the teaching of new opinions, introducing among men a doctrine which not only subverted the customs of the Jews, while preserving due respect for their prophets, but which especially overturned the established observances of the Greeks regarding the Divinity.”<sup>499</sup> Origen points out to Celsus, in the face of the latter’s criticism that Christians were merely disloyal Jews who had abandoned the faith of their ancestors, that in fact the new religion had won over multitudes of those who shared that writer’s pagan beliefs: “. . . all Greece, and the barbarous part of our world, contains innumerable zealots, who have deserted the laws of their fathers and the established gods, for the observance of the laws of Moses and the discipleship of the words of Jesus Christ . . . the worship that is through Jesus.”<sup>500</sup>

Origen did find fault with the Jews. He charges them with guilt for the death of John the Baptist in the context of their failure to receive prophecy as an authoritative word from God: “. . . prophecy is despised when it is brought forward in a charger instead of meat. But the Jews have not the head of prophecy, inasmuch as they disown the crown of prophecy, Christ Jesus; and the prophet is beheaded.”<sup>501</sup> The consequence of this sin was the cessation of revelation to them: “The law and the prophets were until John, after whom the grace of prophecy ceased from among the Jews . . . and when the last of the prophets was unlawfully killed by Herod, the king of the Jews was deprived of the power of putting to death.” As a consequence, Pilate’s role in the crucifixion of Christ arose. This was, in Origen’s view, both the fulfillment of Gen 49.10 and the

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<sup>499</sup> *AgCelsus* 29, ANF IV, 408.

<sup>500</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.1, ANF IV, 350.

<sup>501</sup> *CMatt.* 10.22, ANF IX, 429.

providence of God at work, arranging to strip the Jewish rulers of this authority for the protection of the early Christians.<sup>502</sup>

Because he believed that Christianity was the culmination of all that was good in Judaism, Origen denigrated those Jews who did not believe in Jesus as the Christ. To be a Jew was to be material and carnal.<sup>503</sup> The reason that the Jews did not accept Christ was ultimately because they were merely “going through the motions” in their religious observances: “And after this, wishing to refute completely from the words of the prophets all these traditions of the elders among the Jews, he brought before them a saying from Isaiah, which in the exact words is as follows: ‘And the Lord said, This people draws nigh to me with their mouth.’”<sup>504</sup> For all his positive comments about the Jews, Origen still is able to say that this response did not surprise him, for “the unbelief of the Jews with regard to Jesus was in keeping with what is related of this people from the beginning.”<sup>505</sup> Even the disciples of Jesus were unable to understand the true meaning of the law apart from the explanations of Jesus, since they had “been born and brought up among the Jews.”<sup>506</sup>

Origen makes an interesting distinction in his indictment of the Jews for their poor spiritual condition. He asserts that in the story of John the Baptist, the villains were not the Jewish people, or even the Jewish leaders in general, but the Pharisees. He suggests that the Jewish priests and Levites actually inquired sincerely of John “with

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<sup>502</sup> *CMatt.* 10.21, ANF IX, 428.

<sup>503</sup> *CJohn* 10.14, ANF IX, 391.

<sup>504</sup> *CMatt.* 11.11, ANF IX, 439.

<sup>505</sup> *AgCelsus* 75, ANF IV, 461.

<sup>506</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.2, ANF IV, 430.

gentleness and willingness to learn.” They exhibit, Origen says, “the character of true and careful servants of God.” In contrast, those sent by the Pharisees come “with arrogant and unsympathetic words,” clearly seeking to impede John’s work. The Pharisees themselves demonstrate their cynical hypocrisy:

The Pharisees, addressed by John, as we saw before, with his “offspring of vipers,” etc., came to the baptism, without believing in him, probably because they feared the multitudes, and, with their accustomed hypocrisy towards them, deemed it right to undergo the washing, so as not to appear hostile to those who did so. Their belief was then that he derived his baptism from men, and not from heaven, but, on account of the multitude, lest they should be stoned, they are afraid to say what they think.<sup>507</sup>

The consequence of the Jewish rejection of Christ was their subsequent rejection by God. Because they had refused his revelation in Christ, no additional revelation would be given to them: “For which reason, now, we may also see of a truth that all the doctrines of the Jews of the present day are mere trifles and fables, since they have not the light that proceeds from the knowledge of the Scriptures; whereas those of the Christians are the truth.”<sup>508</sup>

He also makes reference to the physical and political desolation of Israel as the consequence of their role in the suffering and death of Christ:

And what was more unseemly than the fact, that they all said in his case, “Crucify him, crucify him,” and “Away with such a fellow from the earth”? And can this be freed from the charge of unseemliness, “His blood be upon us, and upon our children”? Wherefore, when he was avenged, Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and its desolation was near, and their house was taken away from it, and “the daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and as a besieged city.”

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<sup>507</sup> *CJohn* 6.5.13-14, ANF IX, 354, 365.

<sup>508</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.5, ANF IV, 431-432.

The reality of this desolation of the Jewish nation was a powerful apologetic argument for Origen. Both political and religious authority had been stripped from them, and this is seen as a direct fulfillment of Genesis 49.<sup>509</sup>

Although Christ came first to the Jews, they spurned him, have abandoned God and have joined themselves to the devil: “for what was more unseemly than the circumstance that, when it was proposed to them to release one at the feast they asked for the release of Barabbas the robber, and the condemnation of Jesus? [This signifies that Israel has spurned the Christ as her husband] . . . and going away has become joined to another man, to whom she has subjected herself, whether we should call the husband Barabbas the robber, who is figuratively the devil, or some evil power.”<sup>510</sup>

Celsus misses the point when he focuses on Jesus’ execution by Pilate: “And yet he [Celsus] does not know that it was not so much Pilate that condemned him (who knew that ‘for envy the Jews had delivered him’), as the Jewish nation, which has been condemned by God, and rent in pieces, and dispersed over the whole earth.”<sup>511</sup>

Although Josephus should have concluded that the destruction of Jerusalem was due to the Jews’ rejection and torture of Jesus, he did not miss the fact of their guilt. He attributed that fall instead to their execution of James the Just, the brother of Jesus.<sup>512</sup>

Origen’s condemnation of the Jews for their role in the death of Jesus did not blind him to the idea that Jesus brought this end upon himself to bring salvation to all:

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<sup>509</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.3, ANF IV, 351.

<sup>510</sup> *CMatt.* 14.19, ANF IX, 508.

<sup>511</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.34, ANF IV, 445.

<sup>512</sup> *AgCelsus* 47, ANF IV, 416; see also Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.2.

“ . . . he who was crucified yesterday or the day before underwent this death voluntarily on behalf of the human race.”<sup>513</sup>

Origen concedes that there are Jews who take issue with his perspectives, and he sometimes tries to anticipate their objections. Regarding Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce, he suggests, “But perhaps some Jewish man of those who dare to oppose the teaching of our Savior will say . . .”<sup>514</sup> Of those who believe in “transcorporation” he observes: “These thinkers will also point out that some of the Jews assented to this doctrine when they spoke about the Savior as if he was one of the old prophets, and had risen not from the tomb but from his birth.”<sup>515</sup> There was still the charge, recorded as early as the gospel records themselves, that Jesus did his miracles by the power of sorcery. Origen honors the sincerity of this question with an answer, “for it is written in your law . . .,” pointing his Jewish critics to the example of Moses, whose miracles were accepted by them as genuine.<sup>516</sup> He seems to recognize in these questions authentic Jewish objections, which he seeks to answer, in contrast to the misrepresentations of the Jewish position by Celsus, which he ignores or scorns. Active discourse between Jews and Christians seems to have been in good health in this era, as attested to by Origen’s reference to the treatise, *Controversy between Jason and Papiscus regarding Christ*, “a work in which a Christian is described as conversing with a Jew on the subject of the Jewish scriptures, and proving that the predictions regarding

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<sup>513</sup> *AgCelsus* 31, ANF IV, 409.

<sup>514</sup> *CMatt.* 14.24, ANF IX, 510.

<sup>515</sup> *CJohn* 6.7, ANF IX, 354.

<sup>516</sup> *AgCelsus* 2.52-53, ANF IV, 452.

Christ fitly apply to Jesus; although the other disputant maintains the discussion in no ignoble style, and in a manner not unbecoming the character of a Jew.”<sup>517</sup>

Origen emphasized the importance of Christian application of the Jewish scriptures. In one of his many references to 2 Corinthians 3:15-17, which speaks of Israel being veiled so that they did not see Christ in the law of Moses, he makes the point that as “we” turn to the Lord, the veil is lifted. He does not turn the verses back to the Jews to upbraid them for rejecting Christ. Instead, he applies them to Christians without any mention of, or attack on, the Jews.<sup>518</sup>

The loss of the Jews in their rejection of Christ turned out to be gain for the Gentiles: “. . . the Savior came to gather together the lost sheep of Israel; but many of the Israelites not having yielded to his teaching, those from the Gentiles were called.”<sup>519</sup> This was in conformity to the plan of God, who “sent our Lord Jesus Christ to call in the first place Israel to himself, and in the second place the Gentiles, after the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel.”<sup>520</sup>

In his consideration of Matthew 14:13, “Now when Jesus heard it he withdrew thence in a boat to a desert place apart,” Origen concludes that the allegorical, “mystical meaning” speaks of the extension of God’s kingdom beyond the Jewish nation: “He withdraws to the place which had been barren of God among the Gentiles, in order that the Word of God, when the kingdom was taken from the Jews and ‘given to a nation

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<sup>517</sup> *AgCelsus* 4.52, ANF IV, 521.

<sup>518</sup> *De Princ.* 1.1.2, ANF IV, 242.

<sup>519</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.23, ANF IV, 372-373.

<sup>520</sup> *De Princ.* Pref, 4, ANF IV, 240.

bringing forth the fruits thereof,' might be among the Gentiles," so that the new people of God would be greater in number and better than those of Israel.<sup>521</sup>

After the ascension of Christ, the apostles followed the same trend, "for they did that which had been commanded them in Judea and Jerusalem; but since a prophet has no honor in his own country, when the Jews did not receive the Word, they went away to the Gentiles,"<sup>522</sup> where they found an eager reception.<sup>523</sup> From among the Gentiles a new Israel emerges, one which will honor God and his Christ:

And perhaps those who are now Israelites, not having lived worthily of their descent, will be deprived of their rank, being changed, as it were, from vessels of honor into those of dishonor; and many of the present Egyptians and Idumeans who came near to Israel, when they shall have borne fruit to a larger extent, shall enter into the church of the Lord, being no longer accounted Egyptians and Idumeans, but becoming Israelites.<sup>524</sup>

Origen's ancient translator, Rufinus, was, according to the modern editor, "justly chargeable with altering many of Origen's expressions, in order to bring his doctrine on certain points more into harmony with the orthodox views of the time . . . he often took great liberties with his author."<sup>525</sup> This apparently happened not just for the sake of refining some of Origen's riskier theological perspectives, but also in order to make them more clearly anti-Jewish. Where Origen says that "some from among the Jews" crucified Jesus because they did not see him as the Christ for whom they were waiting, Rufinus merely translates that "the Jews" did so. Origen specifies that "both the hardened in heart, and the ignorant persons belonging to the circumcision, have not

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<sup>521</sup> *CMatt.* 10.23, ANF IX, 429.

<sup>522</sup> *CMatt* 10.18, ANF IX, 426.

<sup>523</sup> *CMatt.* 10.17, ANF IX, 425.

<sup>524</sup> *De Princ.* 3.1.21, ANF IV, 327.

<sup>525</sup> *De Princ.* Intro, ANF IV, 231, 233.

believed on our Savior, thinking that they are following the language of the prophecies respecting him.” Rufinus broadens the accusations to include all of Israel: “The Jews, in fine, owing to the hardness of their heart, and from a desire to appear wise in their own eyes, have not believed in our Lord and Savior, judging that those statements which were uttered respecting him ought to be understood literally.”<sup>526</sup>

Modern critics are perhaps too harsh in their judgment of Origen’s response to the Jews. Avi-Yonah suggests that the dispute between Origen and Celsus was typical of Christian discourse of the time, in which “they praised ancient Judaism highly when addressing the Gentiles, but when disputing with their Jewish contemporaries they abused them as much as they could.”<sup>527</sup> The review above should place Origen in a more favorable light, showing, as it does, a consistently generous, if not a modern ecumenical, tolerance.

### Summary

Origen’s response to Celsus’ attack was clearly a repudiation of paganism rather than a confrontation with Judaism. Origen took up the cause of Jew and Christian together, attacking pagan accounts of human origins as well as their system of sacrifices, while asserting the legitimacy of that of the Jews. He defended Judaism against false accusations, affirmed the veracity of biblical accounts of Jewish origins, and asserted that the Jews, above all other nations, held a position of privilege before God. He pointed out to his pagan critic that those who became Christians coming out of

<sup>526</sup> *De Princ.* 4.1.8, ANF IV, 356.

<sup>527</sup> Avi-Yonah, 151.

paganism had to abandon their old faith completely, while those who came from Judaism to the Church were merely finding the fulfillment of theirs.

He upheld the Jewish scriptures as inspired by God and claimed them as his own. He did not focus on the prophets' denunciation of Jewish sin, but applied both their judgments and promises to Christians. Origen asserted that Christians could better understand these writings than the Jews, whose carnal, superficial approach kept them from discerning the true, spiritual meaning. In his own use of the Scriptures, he employed the art of allegorical interpretation in an unprecedented manner in order to find this underlying spiritual truth.

Origen was regularly in contact with the Jews, especially those who could assist him to better understand Scripture through the knowledge of Hebrew language and customs. Conversely, he sought to provide answers for sincere Jewish objections to Christian faith, and claimed that many Jews in his day were converted to the Church.

Heresies were viewed by Origen as a greater threat to the Church than Judaism. Marcionite Gnosticism was seen to be in error largely on the basis of its anti-Jewish stance. Against Marcion, Origen embraced the God and scriptures of the Jews. The Judaizing inclinations of the Ebionites were defended by Origen as a legitimate strain of true Christianity, and other Christians' dependence on Judaism was openly affirmed. The only negative connection that Origen made between the Jews and the heretics was his assertion that both were flawed by their superficial exegesis of Scripture which caused them to miss the spiritual truth open to Christians through a proper use of allegory.

Because they had refused to recognize Jesus as the Christ, unconverted Jews were seen to be spiritually blind and stubborn in their resistance to God. Their unbelief is tied to that of their ancestors, whose persistent disobedience was amply confirmed by their own prophets. To them is attributed responsibility for the death of John the Baptist and other prophets, as well as the persecution and crucifixion of Jesus himself. As a consequence of their rebelliousness, the Jews experienced the loss of any further divine revelation, and continued to be subjected to total political and material desolation.

As God deservedly rejected the Jews, the Gentiles were brought into the new people of God, the Church. The law and the prophets of Israel were fulfilled, not negated, in Christ and this new people. The Jews were not so much wrong as immature, so the supplanting of Israel by the Church was a process of perfecting that which was incomplete under the old way. This development from the old to the new was initiated by the providence of God, who had, through Christ himself, initiated the old covenant, administered it over the nation of Israel, and brought it to its fulfillment with the introduction of the new covenant in Christ.

## Others

### **Julius Africanus**

Near the middle of the third century A.D., Julius Africanus had come to Alexandria to study in its famous catechetical school. He became a great chronographer of the church, on whom Eusebius and other early church fathers depended greatly for his work of reconciling biblical and secular historical timetables. He is dumbfounded that anyone who treats Jewish prophetic writings seriously (as he himself obviously

did), could possibly fail to see in these writings compelling evidence that Jesus was the promised Christ. In the middle of mathematical calculations of the weeks and years pointing to the advent of Christ from biblical prophecy, he exclaims, “But I am amazed that the Jews deny that the Lord has yet come, and that the followers of Marcion refuse to admit that his coming was predicted in the prophecies when the Scriptures display the matter so openly to our view.”<sup>528</sup>

Because Africanus is so insistent on articulating a Christianity that is inextricably tied to its Jewish roots, it seems hard to believe that any anti-Jewish remarks attributed to him are authentic. In the *Narrative of Events Happening in Persia on the Birth of Christ*, he observes “Judea has seen its bloom, and this country is fading. To Gentiles and aliens, salvation is come; to the wretched, relief is ministered abundantly.” In the voice of the Magi, he says to the Jews in Jerusalem, “For the Christ, the Son of the Most High, is born, and he is the subverter of your law and synagogues.” He reports that the Jewish leaders then tried to bribe the Magi to keep this news to themselves lest a revolt rise up against them.<sup>529</sup> Because these words are so contradictory with the tone of his other writings, it is not surprising that the authenticity of this text is doubted by modern historians. For a variety of reasons, it is not thought to be the work of the third century chronologist, but by a later writer using his name.

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<sup>528</sup> *Chron.* 18.4, ANF VI, 137.

<sup>529</sup> *Narr.*, ANF VI, p. 129.

### Dionysius of Alexandria

Origen's student, Dionysius, led the church at Alexandria as bishop c. A.D. 247-265, and also headed the famous Christian school in that city. He continued his master's emphases on the relation of the Christians to their Jewish heritage. He rejects those who would make too great a break with the ways of the Jews: "... there are unquestionably some teachers, who hold that the law and the prophets are of no importance, and who decline to follow the Gospels, and who depreciate the epistles of the apostles."<sup>530</sup> Dionysius clearly does not place himself in this group, for he links the integrity of the books of the Old and New Testament books. The Jewish scriptures are not replaced by the revelation of the new covenant, although their true meaning is only perceived when the legalistic, superficial meaning of the law is set aside in favor of the spiritual meaning which fulfilled it: "'A time to keep, and a time to cast away.' A time to keep the Scripture against the unworthy, and a time to put it forth for the worthy. Or, again: Before the incarnation it was a time to keep the letter of the law; but it was a time to cast it away when the truth came in its flower."<sup>531</sup> While the Jews might hold the Scriptures only to an incomplete degree, this deficiency was subject to remedy through instruction that built on what they already knew. Heretical Christians, on the other hand, were nearly beyond hope of restoration, due to their participation in Greek religion, philosophy, and science. Without the foundation of Scripture and centuries of

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<sup>530</sup> *From the Two Books in the Promises* 1.1, ANF VI, 81.

<sup>531</sup> *A Commentary on the Beginning of Ecclesiastes* 3.6, ANF VI, 114.

redemptive history, their chance of reconciliation with God and the orthodox Church was much more remote than that of the Jews.<sup>532</sup>

### Gregory Thaumaturgus

Gregory of Neocaesarea in Asia Minor (known as *Thaumaturgus*, wonder-worker), was converted to Christianity under Origen, and is believed to have studied under the famous Christian teacher from c. 231-238. His writings are entirely devoid of anti-Jewish sentiment. His *Declaration of Faith* is an exposition of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, emphasizing especially the divinity of the Son, and is completely lacking any reference to the Jews, good or bad. In *A Metaphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes*, Gregory carefully analyzes and comments on the meaning of this book from the Jewish scriptures and attributes it to Solomon.<sup>533</sup> In his *Canonical Epistle*, Gregory relates that as a result of Achan's sin, "trouble then lighted on all the congregation of Israel," directly quoting from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua to explore the significance of this event.<sup>534</sup> Gregory's *Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen* implies only good things of the Jews as it describes, in reflection upon Psalm 139, the destruction of Jerusalem: "We read that enemies once assailed a great and sacred city, in which the worship of God was observed, and dragged away its inhabitants, both pagans and prophets into their own country, which was Babylon. . . .

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<sup>532</sup> *From the Books of Nature 1-5*, ANFVI, 84-91.

<sup>533</sup> *A Metaphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes 1*, ANF VI, 9.

<sup>534</sup> *Canonical Epistle 3*, ANF VI, 19.

Like one of these I verily seem to myself to be.”<sup>535</sup> Rather than cast guilt or condemnation on the Jews in their suffering and exile, he identified with them, asserting his place among them, and appropriating for himself God’s message to them.

*The Four Homilies* attributed to Gregory also assert a connection between the old and new covenants, but in a much different manner, one which explicitly rules the Jews out of God’s favor because of persistent rebelliousness. In light of this sharp contrast, it is not surprising that this literature is generally regarded as spurious, probably originating from post-Nicene times.<sup>536</sup> In the second homily, Mary sings a song which affirms the covenant given to Abraham and the fulfillment of this covenant in Jesus. However, her exaltation over the work of Jesus clearly bears an anti-Jewish message:

“He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” In these terms is intimated in brief the extrusion of the Jews and the admission of the Gentiles. For the elders of the Jews and the scribes in the law, and those who were richly privileged with other prerogatives, because they used their riches ill and their power lawlessly, were cast down by him from every seat, whether of prophecy or of priesthood, whether of legislature or of doctrine, and were stripped of all their ancestral wealth, and of their sacrifices and multitudinous festivals, and of all the honorable privileges of the Kingdom. Spoiled of all these boons, as naked fugitives they were cast out into captivity. And in their stead the humble were exalted, namely, the Gentile peoples who hungered after righteousness.<sup>537</sup>

The point here is clearly to establish that the Gentiles now possessed the place formerly held by the Jews in God’s program. The people of God were no longer to be identified with the physical descendents of Israel, who have lost their favored position:

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<sup>535</sup> *The Oration and Panegyric Addressed to Origen 16*. ANF VI, 37.

<sup>536</sup> *Four Homilies*, ANF VI, 58-71; see ed. Note, p. 71.

<sup>537</sup> *Four Homilies 2*, ANF VI, 64-65.

“For the Christ who was born of the Virgin, and who is our God, has given over the whole inheritance of divine blessings to the Gentiles. ‘He has helped his servant Israel.’ Not any Israel in general, indeed, but his servant, who in very deed maintains the true nobility of Israel.”<sup>538</sup> The wrong-headedness of the Jews placed them against the will of God, who acted in his Son to confront their error: God the Father, “to correct the erroneous imagination of the Jews,” opened the heavens and declared Jesus to be his Son at the time of his baptism.<sup>539</sup>

Probably from this same time, and perhaps from the same pseudo-Gregory, comes a reference to “the unbelief of the Jews, who, supposing the Word of God to be but a human son, have refused to acknowledge him as the Son of God.” This assertion is less severe than the tone found above, and is, in fact, followed by a defense of the doctrine of the Trinity that is supported as much by citations from Jewish scriptures as from Christian writings. The teachings of the Jewish scriptures are not to be discarded, but are to be reinterpreted in light of the teachings of the New Testament, which alone provides a complete understanding of these matters.<sup>540</sup>

### **Asterius Urbanus**

Near the year 230, Asterius Urbanus speaks out against the Montanists and claims that their authenticity as true followers of Christ is in doubt because their relationship with the Jews has always been just a little too comfortable:

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<sup>538</sup> *Four Homilies 2*, ANF VI, 65.

<sup>539</sup> *Four Homilies 4*, ANF VI, 71.

<sup>540</sup> *A Sectional Confession of Faith 4*, ANF VI, 41.

Wherefore . . . let them answer us in the name of God, and tell us, O friends, whether there is any one among those who began to speak from Montanus and the women onward that was persecuted by the Jews or put to death by the wicked? There is not one. Not even one of them is there who was seized and crucified for the name of Christ. No; certainly not. Neither assuredly was there one of these women who was ever scourged in the synagogues of the Jews, or stoned. No; never anywhere.<sup>541</sup>

Apparently, in Urbanas' mind, and presumably in the thinking of his readers, no true Christian could escape conflict with the Jews. If someone did enjoy freedom from Jewish persecution, it must signal that they were, in fact, no true Christian at all.

### **Hippolytus**

In the early to mid-third century A.D., Hippolytus was probably a presbyter in the church of Rome, and possibly later became a bishop in a nearby see. There are numerous varying accounts of his life, potentially linking him to persons such as Origen, Irenaeus, Novatian, and Pope Zephyrinus. He was apparently of eastern origin, and had earned a reputation for his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures. Many of the writings we have in his name relate his teaching second-hand with phrases such as, "when Hippolytus dictated these words," "Hippolytus accordingly replied," for example. Others are of doubtful authenticity: the modern editor of the notes on the Pentateuch observes, "that these are spurious is now generally agreed."<sup>542</sup> The fragments themselves were found in a fourth century collection of ancient texts with those of Symmachus, Aquila, Apollinaris, Eusebius, and others. In the middle of Hippolytus' commentary on the Psalms, there is a discussion of variant readings of the

<sup>541</sup> *The Extant Writings of Asterius Urbanas* 3, ANF VII, 336.

<sup>542</sup> S.D.F. Salmond, ed., tr., *The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus*, ANF V, 194, f.n.

Hebrew texts that makes reference to Theodotian, Symmachus, and Aquila. Since all of these lived well after the time of Hippolytus, the comments have been ascribed to his fourth century editor. Since this editor appears to frequently mix his own words with those of Hippolytus, it becomes difficult to discern at times which voice is actually speaking.

The works of Hippolytus are notable for what they do and do not say about Christian relations with the Jews. The question must be posed whether “anti-Jewish” remarks, which occasionally punctuate the texts, have been added to Hippolytus’ original work for the sake of addressing Jewish-Christian problems which had arisen by the fourth century that were as yet not an issue in the early third. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that the anti-Jewish remarks stick out conspicuously from their contexts, as if they were added later by someone in the fourth century who wished to invoke the authority of the earlier bishop. Aside from these isolated references, the villains in these works are Egyptians and Babylonians, not the Jews. Christ is shown completing and fulfilling the Jewish scriptures, not displacing them. The Church joins God’s people Israel; it does not displace them.<sup>543</sup>

Much of Hippolytus’ writing assumes a continuation of the Jewish law, or at least draws from it in a positive way. The true God is the Creator of the world, in agreement with the Jews and against the Gnostics. He believes in angels and “a sovereign Spirit that always continues beside God.” He adheres to a high moral code of human behavior. He speaks highly of the Jewish ceremonial law: “the superiority of

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<sup>543</sup> *Commentary on the Book of Daniel 1-5*, ANF V, 177-191.

their ritualism” and their offerings “in obedience to his commandments.” He affirms that they yet believe that a messiah was coming, one other than Jesus.<sup>544</sup> He demonstrates a close, personal knowledge of Jewish customs, sects, and opinions, and seems especially admiring of the Essenes, who are “filled with mutual love, and being temperate. And they turn away from every act of inordinate desire, being averse to hearing of things of the sort.” He applauds their communal sharing, persistent prayer, excitement over “the readings of the law and prophets,” and praise of God. While Hippolytus’ review of the Pharisees is much less enthusiastic, and he pans the Sadducees due to their rejection, born of “self-love,” of the doctrine of the resurrection, his high marks for the Essenes point to a fairly open attitude toward the Jews overall.<sup>545</sup> This is confirmed by his description of the Jews as the foundation of all true religion, in contrast to heresies built on Greek and other pagan philosophies: “It is then possible for those who are disposed to investigate the subject industriously, to perceive how clearly has been demonstrated the existence of a nation of worshippers of the true God, more ancient than all the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Greeks.”<sup>546</sup>

It is clear from this that Hippolytus viewed the Jewish religion as being above that of other nations, and that this preference was tied to his judgment against heretical groups. After attacking Chaldean, Greek, and Egyptian astronomy, numerology, astrology, and other attempts at knowledge, he indicts the heretics for drawing on this false knowledge to build their theological systems. He contrasts the plain sense of the

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<sup>544</sup> *Refut.* 9.25, ANF V, 138.

<sup>545</sup> *Refut.* 9.12-24, ANF V, 133-137.

<sup>546</sup> *Refut.* 10.26, ANF V, 149.

Scriptures, as written and understood by the Jews, with the Gnostic use of the Hebrew language and its characters in an allegorical, mystical manner more akin to sorcery than to biblical interpretation.<sup>547</sup>

In Book Five of his *Refutations*, he repudiates Gnostic theology, with all its mystical talk of *aeons* and allegorical use of the Jewish scriptures, while never even mentioning the Jews. He refutes heretical ideas without trying to fault the Jews for the heretics' appropriation of their beliefs. On the contrary, the Jewish scriptures, as understood by the Jews, are invoked to challenge the Gnostic teachings, as Hippolytus insists that the Jewish historical connection to their Scriptures cannot be violated.<sup>548</sup>

The Ebionites are held up as examples of Christians who continue to follow Jewish law in the pattern set by Jesus, who was justified by following the law and showed us thereby how to become Christs.<sup>549</sup> It seems possible from his tone that Hippolytus discusses this group, not for the sake of refuting their ideas, but in order to prove that Christians do not radically divorce themselves from the law, and are to be seen standing with the Jews, over against the naturalistic paganism of the nations who “. . . busied themselves concerning the substance of existing things, being astonished at the magnitude of creation, and supposing that it constituted the Deity, each speculator selecting in preference a different portion of the world; failing, however, to discern the God and maker of these.” He dismantles the claims of pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicureans, and Academics, then moves on to the Indian

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<sup>547</sup> *Refut.* 4, ANF V, 35, 42.

<sup>548</sup> *Refut.* 5, ANF V, 47-73; see also books 6-10, ANF V, 74-153.

<sup>549</sup> *Refut.* 7.22, ANF V, 114.

“Brachmans” and the Druids, along with Hesiod. He builds this all into an argument against the heretics without a single negative word toward the Jews.<sup>550</sup>

Hippolytus does presume that the Scriptures of the Jews were inspired by God, not for the nation of Israel, but for the Church. Prophetic passages are interpreted from this perspective, putting the Church in the middle of the prophets’ message, as illustrated in his approach to the prophecy of Isaiah 1:7: “For it is not of the Jews that he spoke this word of old, nor of the city of Zion, but of the Church. For all the prophets have declared Zion to be the bride brought from the nations.”<sup>551</sup>

Although he scorns the Gnostics for their use of allegory, Hippolytus is not shy about employing the method himself, as hinted at above. Hippolytus could creatively turn the Scriptures of the Jews into a handbook of Christian belief. For example, he finds the death of Christ at the hands of the Jews in Genesis 49:16-20:

Dan shall judge his people, as himself also one tribe in Israel. And let Dan become a serpent by the way, lying on the path, stinging the horse’s heel; and the horseman shall fall backward, waiting for the salvation of the Lord. Gad – a robber’s troop shall rob him; and he shall spoil it at the heels. Asher – his bread shall be fat, and he shall furnish dainties to princes. . . . The Lord is represented to us as a horseman; and the “heel” points us to the “last times.” And his “falling” denotes his death; as it is written in the Gospel: “Behold, this (child) is set for the fall and rising again of many.” We take the “robber” to be the traitor. Nor was there any other traitor to the Lord save the (Jewish) people. “Shall rob him,” i.e., shall plot against him.<sup>552</sup>

Hippolytus’ allegorical interpretation of Genesis 49:27, “Benjamin is a ravening wolf; in the morning he shall devour still, and till evening he apportions food,” finds in the

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<sup>550</sup> *Refut.* 1.23, ANF V, 23.

<sup>551</sup> *Discourse on the End of the World* 3, ANF V, 243.

<sup>552</sup> *CPent*, on Gen 49:16-20, ANF V, 165-166.

text the hostility of the Benjamite Saul (Paul) toward Jesus, also typified in the animosity of King Saul, also of Benjamin, toward David, who was, in turn, “a type of the Lord.”<sup>553</sup>

The patriarchs provide a plethora of spiritual connections. Each figure in the story is capable of multiple points of significance, and in a unique twist of allegorical association, Israel (Jacob) becomes a figure of Christ and the Church, so that the physical nation of Israel descended from him is instead associated with the wayward older brother, Esau, and the devil:

Isaac conveys a figure of God the father; Rebecca of the Holy Spirit; Esau of the first people and the devil; Jacob of the Church or of Christ. . . . The devil, who previously exhibited the fratricidal Jews by anticipation in Cain, makes the most manifest disclosure of them now in Esau, showing also the time of the murder: “Let the days,” says he, “of the morning for my father come on, that I may slay my brother. . . .” As therefore Jacob, to escape his brother’s evil design, proceeds to Mesopotamia, so Christ, too, constrained by the unbelief of the Jews, goes into Galilee, to take from thence to himself a bride from the Gentiles, his church.<sup>554</sup>

As seen above, the allegorical method of Hippolytus was easily used to score apologetic points against the Jews. Because this method started with a conclusion (in this case, the guilt of the Jews), and read this meaning back into the biblical text, its potential was unlimited. By this means, the positive blessings of Jacob on his children (for Joseph and Judah, e.g.), found in Genesis 49, could be set aside for the Church, while his harsh judgments (against Reuben, e.g.) could be directed towards the nation of

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<sup>553</sup> *CPent*, on Gen 49:27, ANF V, 168.

<sup>554</sup> *CPent*, on Num 18, ANF V, 168-169.

the Jews.<sup>555</sup> In spite of this negative use, it is to be noted from this passage that Israel, for all its disobedience and rebelliousness, is still the child of God, and that there is yet hope for restoration and salvation. Another text is more explicit in its description of the Jews as a persistently wicked people, asserting that Moses foresaw their rejection of Christ: “At all times they showed themselves enemies and betrayers of the truth, and were found to be haters of God and not lovers of him; and such they shall be then when they find opportunity: for, rousing themselves against the servants of God, they will seek to obtain vengeance by the hand of a mortal man.”<sup>556</sup>

There remains in the writings of Hippolytus an ambiguity in his treatment of the Jews. Commenting on Proverbs 9:1, he says, “And the phrase, ‘She has killed her beasts,’ denotes the prophets and martyrs who in every city and country are slain like sheep every day by the unbelieving . . .”<sup>557</sup> He applies this text to the Christians of his day who are facing persecution, but he leaves unclear who their persecutors are, with no explicit mention of the Jews. He seems to infer that, even in their rejection of Christ, their main offense was not malicious intent, but misunderstanding. Commenting on Proverbs 1:3, “to understand the difficulties of words,” he observes: “. . . things spoken in strange language by the Holy Spirit become intelligible to those who have their hearts right with God.” The ancient editor of this fragment then concludes, “These things he understands of the people of the Jews, and their guilt in the blood of Christ, for they

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<sup>555</sup> *CPent*, on Gen 49:3, ANF V, 164.

<sup>556</sup> *Treatise on Christ and the Antichrist* 58, ANF V, 216.

<sup>557</sup> *CProv*, on 9:1, ANF V, 175.

thought that he had his conversation (citizenship) on earth only.”<sup>558</sup> This is another example of the pattern noted earlier in which the more subtle, indirect, and moderate writings of Hippolytus become more pointed and more specifically applied to the Jews in their transmission into later periods of the history of the Church. Similarly, the *Discourse on the End of the World* is another work that is widely regarded as being composed in Hippolytus’ name in later times. It boldly ties Christ’s “blessed passion on the cross” to “the insults which he bore at the hands of the Jews,”<sup>559</sup> specifically “the leading parties among the Jews, the scribes, in truth, and the Pharisees.”<sup>560</sup>

Hippolytus indirectly indicts the Jews for complicity in the thievery of Callistus, alleged to have stolen funds from the Church. His account of this incident implies that he viewed the Jews as a willing and sympathetic audience for anyone who is at odds with the Church: “Now pretending that he was repairing as it were to his creditors, he hurried on their Sabbath-day to the synagogue of the Jews, who were congregated, and took his stand, and created a disturbance among them.”<sup>561</sup>

Hippolytus observes that “James, the son of Alphaeus [actually it was James the Just, the half-brother of Jesus and first bishop of Jerusalem], when preaching in Jerusalem, was stoned to death by the Jews, and was buried there beside the temple.”<sup>562</sup> Yet, the significance of this crime is mitigated by the fact that the deaths of the other eleven apostles and Paul are ascribed to the Romans or other Gentiles.

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<sup>558</sup> *CProv*, on 1:3, ANF V, 172.

<sup>559</sup> *Discourse on the End of the World* 1, ANF V, 242.

<sup>560</sup> *CPent.*, on Gen 49:21-26, ANF V, 166-167.

<sup>561</sup> *Refut.* 9.7, ANF V, 129.

<sup>562</sup> *On the Twelve Apostles* 9, ANF V, 254-255.

Hippolytus mentions the Jews' role in the death of Jesus almost in passing, more as an assumed fact than as a charge of wrongdoing. After commending the Jewish religion for its messianic hope, ceremonial law, and offerings, Hippolytus concedes, "And (yet there can be little doubt but) having been already amongst us, the Jews are troubled; and that they are ashamed to confess that he has come, since they have with their own hands put him to death, because they were stung with indignation in being convicted by himself of not having obeyed the laws."<sup>563</sup> Arguing against the Quartodecimans, he attempts to use their close adherence to the law against them by associating this practice to the Jews who, he asserts, have killed Christ: "They do not, however, attend to this (fact), that the legal enactment was made for Jews, who in times to come should kill the real Passover."<sup>564</sup>

The sufferings of Christ are, for Hippolytus, a necessary demonstration of the full humanity of Christ. The role of the Jews in these sufferings, therefore, is but one small contributing factor among many: his trials included perils both physical and spiritual, with angelic support and demonic opposition, onslaughts from both within his circle of followers and from the outside, from the political realm and the religious, from the Jews and from the Gentiles:

When he came into the world, he was manifested as God and man. And it is easy to perceive the man in him, when he hungers and shows exhaustion, and is weary and thirsty, and withdraws in fear, and is in prayer and in grief, and sleeps on a boat's pillow, and entreats the removal of the cup of suffering, and sweats in agony, and is strengthened by an angel, and betrayed by a Judas, and mocked by Caiaphas, and set at naught by Herod, and scourged by Pilate, and derided by

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<sup>563</sup> *Refut.* 9.14, ANF V, 135.

<sup>564</sup> *Refut.* 8.11, ANF V, 123.

the soldiers, and nailed to the tree by the Jews, and with a cry commits his spirit to his father, and drops his head and gives up the ghost, and has his side pierced with a spear, and is wrapped in linen and laid in a tomb, and is raised by the Father on the third day.<sup>565</sup>

In his *Expository Treatise Against the Jews*, Hippolytus challenges Jewish claims against Christ: “Many a time do you boast yourself, in that you did condemn Jesus of Nazareth to death, and gave him vinegar and gall to drink and you vaunt yourself because of this.” He appeals to Psalm 49 as proof that David had prophesied that the Jews would make themselves enemies of Christ through their opposition to him, while the Gentiles’ opposition would give way in the face of divine forgiveness of their guilt. Through David, Christ declares: “But as for me, in my prayer unto you, O Lord, I said, Father, forgive them, namely the Gentiles, because it is the time for favor with Gentiles.”<sup>566</sup>

This anti-Jewish slant brings into question whether this treatise, the authenticity of which has been doubted for many reasons, truly represents the thought of Hippolytus about the Jews. If he actually held these sentiments toward the Jews, why didn’t they appear in his other works, such as the *Refutation, Against Noetus*, and others, when these also gave rise to occasions to implicate the Jews, yet Hippolytus failed to do so in those cases? It seems not only possible, but probable, that the explanation lies in the fact that those earlier works actually came from the hand of Hippolytus himself, while the later works originated from a pseudo-Hippolytus who held much more hostile views toward the Jews.

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<sup>565</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, on Psalm 2, ANF V, 170.

<sup>566</sup> *AgJews*, 1-2, ANF V, 219-220.

In his *End Times*, Hippolytus asserts that the end of this present age would come with the rise of the Antichrist. As one who sets himself against everything associated with God and with his Christ, this Antichrist naturally “will love the nation of the Jews,” who also are regarded as being perpetual enemies of Christ:

And above all others shall the nation of the Hebrews be dear to the tyrant himself, while they say one to another, ‘Is there found indeed to our generation such a man, so good and just?’ That shall be the way with the race of the Jews preeminently. . . . And after that he will build the temple in Jerusalem, and will restore it again speedily and give it over to the Jews.<sup>567</sup>

It is the waywardness against the truth and spiritual blindness of the Jews that will make them especially susceptible to the Antichrist and his efforts against God. For the Jews who persist in their rejection of Jesus as the Christ, Hippolytus sees that they are destined to eternal damnation: “. . . and there shall be none to help them or to pity them, because they repented not neither turned aside from the wicked way. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment with the demons and the accuser.”<sup>568</sup>

In addition to their fate of eternal judgment at the hands of God, the Jews not only will experience punishment in this world, but, in fact, already have, as is evident to everyone who sees their present predicament in the light of biblical prophecy:

What then? Are not these things come to pass? Are not the things announced by you fulfilled? Is not their country, Judea, desolate? Is not the holy place burned with fire? Are not their walls cast down? Are not their cities destroyed? Their land, do not strangers devour it? Do not the Romans rule the country? And indeed these impious people hated you, and did saw you asunder, and they crucified Christ.<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> *Discourse on the End of the World* 23-25, ANF V, 248.

<sup>568</sup> *Discourse on the End of the World* 40, ANF V, 252.

<sup>569</sup> *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 30, ANF V, 210.

As it does in other regards, the potentially spurious *Treatise Against the Jews* goes beyond the other works of Hippolytus in its vilification of the Jews. This work begins with a direct complaint against the Jews for their treatment of the Christ, and attributes to this evil “the misery which has now got hold of you,” consisting of spiritual darkness and perpetual servitude under the wrath of God:

And then hear what follows: “let their eyes be darkened, that they see not.” And surely you have been darkened in the eyes of your soul with darkness utter and everlasting . . . Furthermore, hear this yet more serious word: “And their back do you bend always;” that means, in order that they may be slaves to the nations, not four hundred and thirty years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but bend them to servitude, he says, “always” . . . And whereas you did pour out his blood in indignation, hear what their recompense shall be: “Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your wrathful anger take hold of them”; and, “Let their habitation be desolate,” to wit, their celebrated temple.

While the entire history of Israel is filled with incidents of the ongoing rebelliousness of the nation against God, it was their rejection of Christ which had earned for them the tragic state of desolation in which they found themselves. Their past sins, including the worship of the golden calf, persistent idolatry, and immorality, do not account for their present misery, “for in all these transgressions they always found pardon open to them and benignity; but it was because they killed the Son of their Benefactor, for he is coeternal with the Father. . . . Wherefore . . . ‘let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. . . .’”<sup>570</sup>

In a fragment on Psalm 59, also suspected of not being authentic, Hippolytus explains that the Jews are oppressed and decimated to stand as a testimony, a warning,

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<sup>570</sup> *AgJews* 5-7, ANF V, 220.

regarding the righteousness of God, and to be the recipient of an ongoing testimony of the legitimacy of the claims of Christ, as represented by his Church:

For they are scattered throughout the whole earth, in servitude everywhere, and engaging in the lowest and most servile occupation, and doing any unseemly work for hunger's sake. . . . Therefore "scatter" them everywhere on earth, where my Church is to be established, in order that when they see the Church founded by me, they may be roused to emulate it in piety. And these things did the Savior also on their behalf.<sup>571</sup>

This fragment actually presents reason to consider that it might be authentic. The descriptions of the conditions of the Jews do sound more consistent with the mid-second century rather than the late third or early fourth. The concluding statement holds out hope that the Jews might, in fact, turn to Christ in repentance, and asserts that Christ was continuing to act on behalf of the Jews, seeking to turn them to himself. These mildly positive sentiments are consistent with earlier attitudes of the Christian community, but appear to be relatively absent from the later times.

However the writings of Hippolytus are viewed, it is clear that by his time there was a clear dichotomy between the interests of the Church and those of the Jews. The Church was seen as an institution apart from, and opposed to the Jews, whose apostasy from the truth had, in fact, made way for the rise of the Gentile Church. Commenting on Proverbs 30:21-23, Hippolytus asserts that the Jews had wrongfully thrown aside the Lord who might save them, and had then, in turn, been displaced by the Gentiles:

" . . . the Church of the Gentiles, which, though itself a slave and stranger to the promises, cast out free-born and lordly synagogue, and became the wife and bride of

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<sup>571</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, on Ps 59:11, ANF V, 202.

Christ.”<sup>572</sup> This displacement of the synagogue by the Church was, however, not to remain as an everlasting separation between the two, for Hippolytus’ vision was for an eventual merging of the two into one united body of Christ. Commenting on Genesis 49:12-15, “Zebulun shall dwell by the sea, and he shall extend to Sidon,” he asserts that Jacob prophetically “confirmed that just as if he had said that in the future Israel would mingle with the Gentiles, the two peoples being brought together into one fold and under the hand of one chief Shepherd, the good (Shepherd) by nature, that is, Christ.”<sup>573</sup>

### **Clementine Literature**

The *Recognitions of Clement* and the *Clementine Homilies* are of unknown authorship and date. They are almost certainly not authentic writings of the well-known bishop of Rome to whom they are ascribed. Dates of origin have been proposed from the first to the fourth centuries. At least parts of these writings pre-dated Origen, for he quotes from them. Their overall tone suggests that they may well have been composed early in the third century. There is in this corpus a generally favorable attitude toward the Jews. Speaking of the early history of the human race in the time of Noah, “Clement” observes, “Until that time the Hebrew language, which had been given by God to men, bore sole sway.” The writer embraces Jewish history as his own, speaking of those like “Abraham, from whom our Hebrew nation is derived.”<sup>574</sup> The apostle Peter is described as one who continued to live in the Jewish ways of his upbringing: “And

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<sup>572</sup> *CProv*, on Prov. 30:21-23, ANF V, 174-175.

<sup>573</sup> *CPent*, on Gen. 49:12-15, ANF V, 165.

<sup>574</sup> *Recog.* 1.30,32, ANF VIII, 85-86.

thus, having taken food and given thanks to God after the manner of the Hebrews, as there was yet some portion of the day remaining, he ordered us to question him on any matters that we pleased.”<sup>575</sup> Barnabas, the companion of Paul, also was portrayed as a Jew in practice, while still a Christian. After being in Rome for a time, “he has hastened his departure, saying that he must by all means celebrate at a Judea a festal day of his religion which was approaching.”<sup>576</sup> James, the brother of Jesus, is held up as both the premier authority in the Church and the one who was most closely associated with the “Jewish” Church: “Wherefore, above all, remember to shun apostle or teacher or prophet who does not first accurately compare his preaching with that of James, who was called the brother of my Lord, and to whom was entrusted to administer the church of the Hebrews in Jerusalem.”<sup>577</sup> Clement himself is presented as a convert to a distinctively Jewish form of Christian faith, in the words of the hostile witness, Appion: “This is Clement, of whose noble birth and liberal education I have told you; for he, being related to the family of Tiberius Caesar, and equipped with all Grecian learning, has been seduced by a certain barbarian named Peter to speak and act after the manner of the Jews.” Clement does not deny this accusation, but instead defends his allegiance to Jewish ways.<sup>578</sup>

Jews are regarded favorably in comparison to Gentiles. Jesus’ welcome of the Canaanite woman and healing of her daughter was regarded as possible only under the assumption that the woman must first have become a Jew: “For she being a Gentile, and

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<sup>575</sup> *Recog.* 5.36, ANF VIII, 152.

<sup>576</sup> *Recog.* 1.10, ANF VIII, p. 80.

<sup>577</sup> *CHom.* 11.35, ANF VIII, 291.

<sup>578</sup> *CHom.* 4.6, ANF VIII, 253.

remaining in the same course of life, he would not have healed had she remained a Gentile, on account of its not being lawful to heal her as a Gentile.”<sup>579</sup> Clement commends Peter on his “Jewishness” as avoidance of Gentile ways: “. . . you were instructed by your father according to the fashion of the Hebrews and in observances of your own law, and were never polluted by the studies of Greek learning . . . I shall speak, therefore, because you order me, not by way of teaching you, but of making public what foolish opinions the Gentiles entertain of the gods.”<sup>580</sup> Although Jewish circumcision is spoken of negatively, it is for the purpose of demonstrating the fallacy of Gentile ways, for: “. . . many others have imitated the circumcision of the Jews for the service of their impiety.”<sup>581</sup> The author notes the Jewish practice of circumcision in contrast to their Gentile neighbors, but not to criticize the practice. It is referred to in order to demonstrate the fallacy of the theory of “Genesis” in which the births and behavior of people are deemed to be controlled by the stars.<sup>582</sup>

Like many of the Christian writers of this period, this “Clement” is preoccupied with the danger of heresy. Simon Magus is portrayed as the leader of a quasi-Christian Gnosticism which pitted itself against Judaism. A follower of Simon is said to be “unwilling to see his own sons, because they are Jews.”<sup>583</sup> Simon taught that there were many gods: “One of these was chosen by lot that he might be the god of the Jews. But it

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<sup>579</sup> *CHom.* 2.19, ANF VIII, 232.

<sup>580</sup> *Recog.* 10.15, ANF VIII, 196.

<sup>581</sup> *Recog.* 8.53, ANF VIII, 179.

<sup>582</sup> *Recog.* 9.28, ANF VIII, 189.

<sup>583</sup> *Recog.* 10.64, ANF VIII, 209.

is not of him that I speak, but of that God who is also his God, whom even the Jews themselves did not know. For he is not their God, but the God of those who know him.”

Peter answers Simon, “. . . there is only one God, even the God of the Jews, who is the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who is also the God of all those whom you call gods.”<sup>584</sup> Again to Simon, Peter asserts, “The Scripture, in calling the God of the Jews great and true, and executing judgment, marked out the others as small, and not true.”<sup>585</sup> In an obscure reference, he invokes the support of the Jews in refuting the doctrinal contentions of the Gnostics: “You say that all confess the existence of evil, which is verily false; for, first of all, the whole Hebrew nation denies its existence.”<sup>586</sup> Although it is not clear why Peter ascribes this view to the Jews, it is evident that the assertion was meant to demonstrate that Christian rejection of Gnosticism was strengthened by Jewish agreement that the heretics’ beliefs were ill-founded. Peter also challenges Simon to confine himself to the Jewish scriptures in his attempt to defend his beliefs: “This God whom you assert to be incomprehensible and unknown to all, can you prove his existence from the Scriptures of the Jews, which are held to be of authority, or from some others of which we are all ignorant, or from the Greek authors, or from your own writings?” Simon himself was forced to acknowledge the wide influence of the Jewish scriptures, whatever fault he found in them: “whether anyone

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<sup>584</sup> *Recog.* 2.39-40, ANF VIII, 108.

<sup>585</sup> *CHom.* 16.7, ANF VIII, 314.

<sup>586</sup> *Recog.* 3.16, ANF VIII, 118.

wishes to bring forward truth, or anyone to bring forward falsehood, no assertion will be received without this law.”<sup>587</sup>

In spite of Simon’s attempts to persuade him otherwise, Peter maintains his loyalty to the orthodox Christian view that the God of the Christians is the God of the Jews: “How, then, have you dared to say that there is any other God besides him who is the God of the Jews? . . . Thus that judgment is supported by the Scripture on every side, that he who created the world is the true and only God.”<sup>588</sup> His stubbornness in holding to this belief is grounded in his confidence in the Scriptures of the Jews. Relying on the teaching of Deuteronomy 13:1-3, he asserts that “even if some true prophet should arise, who should perform signs and miracles, but should wish to persuade us to worship other gods, beside the God of the Jews, we should never be able to believe him.”<sup>589</sup> In the preaching of Peter recorded by Clement, this link between the Jews and the one true God gave them an advantage over non-Jews in their access to God through the ministry of Jesus Christ: “For he alone is the true God, who is the God of the Jews; and for this reason our Lord Jesus Christ did not teach them that they must inquire after God, for him they know well already. . . .”<sup>590</sup>

The Jews had, in fact, been under the care and control of Jesus Christ, who is the one who had made the world and revealed himself to Abraham and his children. Because they had already known him, the Jews needed merely to submit themselves to the will of “my Master, who first of all commanded the Hebrew nation, who he knew to

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<sup>587</sup> *Recog.* 2.38-39, ANF VIII, 107-108.

<sup>588</sup> *Recog.* 2.43, ANF VIII, 109.

<sup>589</sup> *Recog.* 2.45, ANF VIII, 110.

<sup>590</sup> *Recog.* 2.46, ANF VIII, 110.

have the knowledge of God, and that it is he who made the world, not that they should inquire about him whom they knew, but that, knowing him, they should investigate his will and his righteousness.”<sup>591</sup>

Although the pre-incarnate Christ had been their sovereign, the Jews had served him through a religious system which still indulged their spiritual immaturity. Periodic desolations and captivities were sent their way “that by these things they might be taught that a people who offer sacrifices are driven away and delivered up into the hands of the enemy. . . . But it fell out that very few understand this.”<sup>592</sup>

The Mosaic law was a concession to a people who had been irretrievably infected with Egyptian religious influence, as evidenced by their addiction to the sacrificial system. Rather than eliminating it therefore, God sought to purify this impulse through regulation, planning thereby to prepare the Jews for a better way yet to come: “He allowed them indeed to sacrifice, but permitted it to be done only to God, that by any means he might cut off one half of the deeply ingrained evil, leaving the other half to be corrected by another, and at a future time [by the Christ].”<sup>593</sup> This revelation of God through Moses, compromised as it was, was sufficient to bring the Jews to God. From this perspective, the law was to the Jews what the Gospel was to the Gentiles.

However, the Jews did not find God through this means, and by this failure, they demonstrated the need for a completion of their incomplete way: “the people of the

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<sup>591</sup> *Recog.* 3.20, ANF VIII, 119.

<sup>592</sup> *Recog.* 1.37, ANF VIII, 87.

<sup>593</sup> *Recog.* 1.36, ANF VIII, 87.

Hebrews, who were instructed out of the law, did not know him; but the people of the Gentiles have acknowledged Jesus, and venerate him.”<sup>594</sup> Because the Mosaic law was incomplete, Jesus had to come, to bring both Jews and Gentiles into a true knowledge of God. Therefore, his ministry had a supplanting aspect to it, as he replaced one inferior rite after another with a better way. For example, he instituted baptism for the remission of sins in place of the prior sacrificial system: “For it is Jesus who has put out, by the grace of baptism, that fire which the priest kindled for sins; for, from the time when he appeared, the chrism has ceased, by which the priesthood or the prophetic or the kingly office was conferred.”<sup>595</sup>

Clement envisions a Church that includes both Jews and Gentiles, united in faith in Jesus Christ. Each person, the Jew and the Gentile, brings something from God to draw him into this fellowship:

But he who is of the Gentiles, and who has it of God to believe Moses, ought also to have it of his own purpose to love Jesus also. And again, the Hebrew, who has it of God to believe Moses, ought to have it also of his own purpose to believe in Jesus; so that each of them, having in himself something of the divine gift, and something of his own exertion, may be perfect by both.<sup>596</sup>

This Church is made up of people who are totally committed to a life of faith and obedience, regardless of national origin: “For in God’s estimation he is not a Jew who is called a Jew among men (nor is he a Gentile that is called a Gentile), but he who, believing in God, fulfills his law and does his will, though he be not circumcised.”<sup>597</sup>

The inclusion of the uncircumcised does not exclude the circumcised, for Clement

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<sup>594</sup> *Recog.* 4.5, ANF VIII, 135-136.

<sup>595</sup> *Recog.* 1.39, ANF VIII, 88.

<sup>596</sup> *Recog.* 4.5, ANF VIII, 136.

<sup>597</sup> *Recog.* 5.34, ANF VIII, 151.

suggests regarding the Jew who turns to Christ: “The one who believes in Christ and is baptized in his name ‘shall be kept unhurt from the destruction of war which impends over the unbelieving nation and the place itself. . . .’”<sup>598</sup>

Although it would be natural to expect that the Jews, with their advantages as a people inheriting the promises of God in the law, would go first into the new messianic kingdom, ahead of the Gentiles, the opposite, in fact, had occurred. As foreseen by their own prophets, the Jews had, as a nation, rejected their Savior, and the Gentiles were, in large numbers, receiving him: “The Jews, therefore, have erred concerning the first coming of the Lord; and on this point only there is disagreement betwixt us and them.”<sup>599</sup>

Clement records the preaching of Peter against Jewish opposition: Peter points out that the Jewish high priest criticized baptism as a cheap and recent substitute for sacrifices; the Sadducees, he reports, are “in a rage” over Christian claims for Jesus’ resurrection; the Samaritans, regarded as just one of the Jewish sects, oppose the doctrine of the resurrection, deny that Jesus is the Prophet foretold by the Scriptures, and cling to Mt. Gerizim over Jesus; the Jewish scribe attributes Jesus’ miracles to sorcery; the Pharisee denies that Jesus is greater than Moses and the prophets; and Caiaphas ridicules the teachings of Jesus, along with his upstart, uneducated fishermen disciples.<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> *Recog.* 1.39, ANF VIII, 88.

<sup>599</sup> *Recog.* 1.50, ANF VIII, 90.

<sup>600</sup> *Recog.* 1.55-62, ANF VIII, 92-93.

Moreover, the Jews had not only refused Jesus as their own Christ, but they also became active opponents of his Church wherever it appeared: “. . . all the unbelieving Jews are stirred up with boundless rage against us, fearing lest haply he against whom they have sinned should be he.”<sup>601</sup> It is evident that in this era, in the middle of the first half of the third century, Christians perceived Jews as their persecutors and, at the same time, as potential converts. The words put into the mouth of Peter by this pseudo-Clement acknowledge that there are Jews who seek to resist and even persecute the Church of Christ, to which they ought to belong, and that there is yet hope that through teaching, persuasion, and correction, some of these Jews might enter the Church.

This pseudo-Clementine body of writing also includes the *Epistle of Peter to James*, probably written by the middle of the third century, though perhaps as late as a century later. In this work, it is the Gentiles rather than the Jews who are presented as the real danger to the emerging Church. In opposition to those like Paul who would seek to tear the Church too far away from its Jewish roots, Peter and James insist on the permanence of the Mosaic law for Christians as much as for Jews:

. . . in order to the dissolution of the law; as though I also myself were of such a mind, but did not freely proclaim it, which God forbid! For such a thing were to act in opposition to the law of God which was spoken by Moses, as was borne witness to by our Lord in respect of its eternal continuance; for thus he spoke: “The heavens and the earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.”<sup>602</sup>

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<sup>601</sup> *Recog.* 1.53, ANF VIII, 91.

<sup>602</sup> *Epistle of Peter to James* 1.2, ANF VIII, 215.

## Summary

These Fathers continue to demonstrate a high regard for the Jews. They explicitly affirm the value of Jewish ceremony, language, and history, and praise Jewish piety and moral conduct. The Gnostics are repudiated for their aversion to Judaism, while the Ebionites are commended for their continuity with the old covenant. Against the Gnostics, the Christians embrace the history of the Jews without scorn, and worship the God of the Jews as the only true God. Pagan views of human origins are rejected, and Gentiles are seen to come to Christianity through Judaism. The Jewish scriptures are the focus of these Fathers' attention, and are held to be the highest form of divine revelation.

The Christian faith is an outgrowth of Judaism. The Old Testament finds its fulfillment in the New, for the prophets of the old covenant predicted the coming of the Christ in a way that clearly pointed to Jesus. Jews have an easier path into the Church because of their knowledge of God through the scriptures. The Gentiles join the Jews in the family of God rather than displacing them. However, this change is the result of the rebellion of the Jews, who are a spiritually immature people whose temporary, incomplete religion calls out for fulfillment in Christ. Jews and Gentiles are together in the one Church, and will jointly inherit the future kingdom of God, but it is now Gentiles who have preeminence, since most Jews have rejected Jesus. The Jewish scriptures belong to the Church, for God had always intended it to be so, even when he gave them to Israel. At the same time, the Fathers asserted that the Jews were the objects of the prophets' denunciations and warnings, while Christians were the rightful heirs of the divine promises declared by those same prophets.

With new vigor, the Jews are accused of killing Christ, and are seen as future allies of the Antichrist, whose purposes and disdain for Christ they share. Their persistent waywardness might have been overlooked, but the total destruction which everyone saw in their land demonstrated that their persecution of Christ had certainly brought God's wrath. The law is seen as a concession to their low spiritual condition and to the lingering influence of their past association with Egyptian idolatry.

These writings show that this period saw an intensification of the conflict between the Jews and the Christians, as their respective interests grew to be at odds with each other. The Montanists, suspected of being too close to the Jews, are singled out as unusual among Christians because they had not suffered persecution at the hands of the Jews, implying that such persecution was to be expected by "normal" Christians. Quartodecimans are warned that their beliefs lean too heavily on Jewish practices. Jews are suspected of instigating internal problems within the Church, and are said to boast about their role in the death of Jesus. Allegorical interpretation is employed with an agenda: to repudiate and humiliate the Jews with their own Scripture. *The Epistle of Peter to James* is a testimony to the growing tension between the Jews and the Christians, for its extreme pro-law approach appears to be a reaction against the anti-Jewish fervor that seemed to be boiling up everywhere else. Although many of the themes remained the same as in earlier periods, it appears that in the third century Church, Christian attitudes toward the Jews had taken a real step in a negative direction.

## CHAPTER IV

### A TIME OF INCREASING CONFLICT (C. A.D. 250-350)

#### Cyprian

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, was one of the first Latin fathers in the history of the church. He led the church in Carthage from about 248-258 A.D.. His epistles consist of discussions of persecution, heresy, schism, church order, and the sacraments, with almost no reference to the Jews. There is not even a hint of a "Jewish problem" in his other works, *On the Public Show*, *On the Glory of Martyrdom*, *Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity*, and *Exhortation to Repentance*. The *Life* written in his name is similarly unconcerned with the subject. The record of the Seventh Council of Carthage of 258 A.D., led by Cyprian, likewise has nothing in it regarding the Jews. Even his work, *Against the Jews*, which by its title indicates some hostility toward the Jews, is deemed by some to be a relatively moderate approach, compared, for example, to Tertullian.<sup>1</sup>

To the contrary, the works alluded to above are full of demonstrations that Cyprian leaned heavily on the Jewish background of the Christian faith. The work *Exhortation to Repentance* is filled with direct quotations from the Jewish scriptures. *On the Public Shows* attacks the immoral ways of society, presumably on the basis of

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<sup>1</sup> Dubnov, 147.

their deviation from biblical morality as expressed in the Jewish scriptures. Book Three of *Against the Jews* is chiefly made up of instructions for moral living and charity, principles taken from, and explained by, the Jewish as much as the Christian scriptures. Christians are to live like “Jews,” not like Gentiles, for as Jeremiah declares, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Walk not according to the way of the Gentiles.’”<sup>2</sup> Cyprian’s epistles quote extensively from the Hebrew Bible and, more than that, reveal a way of thinking, a mind-set, that is heavily influenced by a Jewish religious background. Pagan idolatry is denounced through an exposition of the Jewish law and prophets. Jewish heroes, including Mattathias, Elijah, and Daniel, are held up as examples of faithfulness.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian priesthood finds its pattern in the levitical order, “which plan and rule is now maintained in respect of the clergy.” Principles of church order and government, addressing such questions as false teachers, pastoral discipline, and lapsed bishops, are drawn from Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Exodus, and Leviticus. Christian regulations aimed at maintaining a pure clergy are tied directly to the mandates of the Jewish scriptures:

. . . which very thing, too, we observe to come from divine authority, that the priest should be chosen in the presence of the people under the eyes of all, and should be approved worthy and suitable by public judgment and testimony; as in the book of Numbers the Lord commanded Moses, saying, “Take Aaron your brother, and Eleazer his son, and place them in the mount. . . . And this is subsequently observed, according to divine instruction, in the Acts of the Apostles, when Peter speaks to the people of ordaining an apostle in the place of Judas. “Peter,” it says, “stood up in the midst of the disciples, and the multitude was in one place.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *CypJews* 3.34, ANF V, 544.

<sup>3</sup> *Epistles* 39.5; 61.1; 63.1-2; 65; 67.8, ANF V, 318, 357, 364, 367, 372; *Treatises* 5-6, ANF V, 459, 465-469.

<sup>4</sup> *Spain* 3-4, ANF V, 370.

In his work, *On the Lord's Prayer*, Cyprian draws heavily on Jewish scriptures and the practices of prayer drawn from them by the Jews. Hannah, Elijah, the three Hebrew youths in exile, and others are held up as examples of prayer to follow. He mixes teachings and precedents from both the old and new dispensations in order to provide instructions for prayer for everyone, Christian, Jew, and Gentile alike:

And in discharging the duties of prayer, we find that the three children with Daniel, being strong in faith and victorious in captivity, observed the third, sixth, and ninth hour, as it were, for a sacrament of the Trinity, which in the last times had to be manifested. . . . These things were of old Sacraments, in that anciently righteous men prayed in this manner. For upon the disciples at the third hour the Holy Spirit descended, who fulfilled the grace of the Lord's promise. Moreover, at the sixth hour, Peter, going up onto the house-top, was instructed as well by the sign as by the word of God admonishing him to receive all to the grace of salvation, whereas he was previously doubtful of the receiving of the Gentiles to baptism. And from the sixth hour to the ninth, the Lord, being crucified, washed away our sins by his blood; and that he might redeem and quicken us, he then accomplished his victory by his passion. But for us, beloved brethren, besides the hours of prayer observed of old, both the times and the sacraments have now increased in number. For we must also pray in the morning, that the Lord's resurrection may be celebrated by morning prayer. And this formerly the Holy Spirit pointed out in the Psalms. . . . Also at the sunsetting and at the decline of day, of necessity we must pray again. . . . But if in the Holy Scriptures the true sun and the true day is Christ, there is no hour excepted for Christians wherein God ought not frequently and always to be worshipped. . . . Let not us, then who are in Christ—that is, always in the light—cease from praying even during night. Thus the widow Anna, without intermission praying and watching, persevered . . .<sup>5</sup>

He also demonstrates a desire to see the Jews included in the Christian church, and speaks highly of their spiritual legacy, as he expresses it in the words of Paul in Romans 9:3-5:

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<sup>5</sup> *LPrayer* 34-36, ANF V, 456-457.

I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren and my kindred according to the flesh: who are Israelites: whose are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the appointment of the law, and the service (of God), and the promises; whose are the fathers, of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for evermore.<sup>6</sup>

When he argues that the prophecies of the Jews have been fulfilled in Christ, his catalog of quotations from Jewish and Christian scriptures present a case for Jesus as the Messiah that sounds more like an attempt to invite and persuade than to reproach and condemn. Quoting from Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, he sets forth his motivation for making this case: “Because the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”<sup>7</sup>

Cyprian claimed the Jewish scriptures for the Christian Church in various ways. He saw in the Jews’ experience a figure of the Church’s salvation, “In Exodus the Jewish people, prefigured as a shadow and image of us, when, with God for their guardian and avenger, they had escaped the most severe slavery of Pharaoh and of Egypt – that is, of the devil and the world.” He also saw in the Scriptures as a warning to the Church to respond properly to God: “[Because they were] faithless and ungrateful in respect of God, [they] murmur[ed] against Moses . . . when they ought rather to have trusted and believed in God.”<sup>8</sup> Jew and Christian were found side by side in the Scriptures, for example, in the two wives of Jacob: “the elder Leah, with weak eyes, a

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<sup>6</sup> *CypJews* 2.6, ANF V, 518.

<sup>7</sup> *CypJews* 2.1, ANF V, 516.

<sup>8</sup> *Exhortation to Martyrdom, Addressed to Fortunatus* 7, ANF V, 500.

type of the synagogue; the younger the beautiful Rachel, a type of the Church.” Hannah also, as another commendable woman of the old covenant, was seen to pre-figure the Church.<sup>9</sup>

Cyprian found reason to accuse the Jews from the Scriptures, old and new. In his *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, he lists twenty-four charges against the Jews, followed by itemized catalogs, “Testimonies,” of texts, primarily from the Jewish scriptures, to demonstrate that these Christian judgments against Israel were merely the confirmation of prophetic biblical declarations against them. Without reviewing the biblical support he offers, it is productive to include the list of twenty-four charges in order to understand his basic approach to the Jews:

1. That the Jews have fallen under the heavy wrath of God, because they have departed from the Lord, and have followed idols.
2. Also because they did not believe the prophets, and put them to death.
3. That it was previously foretold that they would neither know the Lord, nor understand nor receive him.
4. That the Jews would not understand the Holy Scriptures, but that they would be intelligible in the last times, after Christ had come.
5. That the Jews could understand nothing of the Scriptures unless they first believed on Christ.
6. That they would lose Jerusalem, and leave the land which they had received.
7. That they would also lose the Light of the Lord.
8. That the first circumcision of the flesh was made void, and a second circumcision of the spirit was promised instead.
9. That the former law, which was given by Moses, was about to cease.
10. That a new law was to be given.
11. That another dispensation and a new covenant was to be given.

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<sup>9</sup> *CypJews* 1.20, ANF V, 512-513.

12. That the old baptism was to cease, and a new one was to begin.
13. That the old yoke was to be made void, and a new yoke was to be given.
14. That the old pastors were to cease, and new ones to begin.
15. That Christ should be God's house and temple, and that the old temple should pass away, and a new one should begin.
16. That the old sacrifice should be made void, and a new one should be celebrated.
17. That the old priesthood should cease, and a new priest should come who should be for ever.
18. That another prophet, such as Moses, was promised, to wit, who should give a new testament, and who was rather to be listened to.
19. That two peoples were foretold, the elder and the younger; that is, the ancient people of the Jews, and the new one which should be of us.
20. That the Church, which had previously been barren, should have more sons from among the Gentiles than the synagogue had had before.
21. That the Gentiles should rather believe in Christ.
22. That the Jews should lose the bread and the cup of Christ, and all his grace; while we should receive them, and that the new name of Christians should be blessed in the earth.
23. That rather the Gentiles than the Jews should attain to the kingdom of heaven.
24. That by this alone the Jews could obtain pardon of their sins, if they wash away the blood of Christ slain in his baptism, and, passing over into the Church, should obey his precepts.<sup>10</sup>

It seems apparent from this list that Cyprian is writing more *about* the Jews than *against* them. He is describing the plan for the Church, which obviously displaces the Jews, but from his perspective, this is more a matter of stating *what is*, rather than making a case for *why it is*. Many of the items on the list are taken directly from the Jewish prophets themselves, as they spoke out about the spiritual bankruptcy of the people in their days. It might reasonably be expected that the Jews would agree with

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<sup>10</sup> *CypJews* (Heads of the First Book) 1-24, ANF V, 507-508.

Cyprian's assessment of their guilt before God as a result of their disobedience, for this is the theme of much of the prophetic discourse in their Scriptures. They would not, clearly, concur with Cyprian's conclusion that this desolation was permanent, or that the Christian Church had a rightful place as the successors to the Jews as God's people.

In this light, it is interesting that disparaging comments about the Jews in other places in Cyprian's writings are less about the Jews and more about Christians learning from the historical lessons that might be drawn from the experience of the Jews. He asserts from Numbers 17:10 that the Jews have always grumbled against God: "... the people of the Jews in this matter always offended, that they constantly murmured against God, as the Lord God bears witness in the book of Numbers, saying, 'Let their murmuring cease from me, and they shall not die.'"<sup>11</sup> This, in turn, was applied to the Christians as a warning against complaining and ingratitude toward God.

Often, Cyprian applies the lessons from the Jews to the heretics of his own day. His consideration of the story of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was not applied to contemporary Jews, but to heretics who professed to be Christians.<sup>12</sup> Heretics were also his target when he referred to the Pharisees in Luke 16:14, "Some suchlike we see now in the Church, whose closed ears and darkened hearts admit no light from spiritual and saving warnings, of whom we need not wonder that they condemn the servant in his discourses, when we see the Lord himself despised by such."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *On the Mortality* 11, ANF V, 471.

<sup>12</sup> *On the Unity of the Church* 18-19, ANF V, 427.

<sup>13</sup> *On Works and Alms* 12, ANF V, 479.

Cyprian certainly viewed the Jews as a potential source of persecution: “Samuel the priest was despised by the Jewish people on account of his age, as you are now.”<sup>14</sup> He does not, however, single them out, for they were but one of several threats that the Church must endure: “For both Gentiles and Jews threaten, and heretics and all those, of whose hearts and minds the devil has taken possession, daily attest their venomous madness with furious voice. . . . It makes no difference who delivers up or who rages.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, Cyprian’s references to “the persecutions both of Jews or Gentiles, and heretics”<sup>16</sup> are intended to find fault with any who were being hostile toward the Church, whoever they might be. In their hostility, they were calling to mind the animosity shown against Christ by the Jews of his day.

He viewed the Jews as a people whose religion consisted of merely external observances, rather than spiritual realities. Bishop Firmilian may be presumed to speak for Cyprian when he writes to the latter speaking of Christians who were sympathetic to heretics. He instructs, “For it follows that they must be asked by us, when they defend heretics, whether their baptism is carnal or spiritual. For if it is carnal, they differ in no respect from the baptism of the Jews, which they use in such a manner that in it, as if in a common and vulgar laver, only external filth is washed away.” They were left with only empty, external ritual because, instead of seeking the truth in Christ, they adhered to “most ancient custom . . . remaining in their old usage, and forsaking the way of

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<sup>14</sup> *To Rogantius, Concerning the Deacon Who Contended with the Bishop* 1, ANF V, 365-366; *To Cornelius, Concerning Fortunatus and Felicissimus, or Against the Heretics* 4, ANF V, 340.

<sup>15</sup> *To Cornelius* 2, ANF V, 339.

<sup>16</sup> *On the Advantage of Patience* 21, ANF V, 490.

truth.”<sup>17</sup> The point here is not to attack the Jews, but to appeal to Christians to get beyond the external rites of religion to its spiritual heart. In contrast to the Jews, who “were alienated from God, as those on whose account ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles,’” he appeals to Christians to live for the glory of God, encouraging them to become “dear to God” through “conformity to discipline.”<sup>18</sup> He exhorted his readers to follow the ways of God, and not men, again citing the example of the Jews as a negative warning:

For we ought not to be forgetful what the Lord spoke to the Jews by Isaiah the prophet, rebuking, and indignant that they had despised the divine precepts and followed human doctrines. “This people,” he says, honors me with their lips, but their heart is widely removed from me; but in vain do they worship me, teaching the doctrines and commandments of men.” This also the Lord repeats in the Gospel, and says, “You reject the commandment of God, that you may establish your own tradition.” Having which things before our eyes, and solicitously and religiously considering them, we ought in the ordinations of priests to choose none but unstained and upright ministers . . .<sup>19</sup>

The assumed present deprivation and desolation of the Jews was a powerful lesson to be invoked as a way to motivate Christians to remain loyal to their calling. The fate of the Jews is most often rehearsed by Cyprian, not against the Jews themselves, but as a reason for Christians to avoid the end realized by that former people:

But there is need of continual prayer and supplication, that we fall not away from the heavenly kingdom, as the Jews, to whom this promise had first been given, fell away; even as the Lord sets forth and proves. . . . He shows that the Jews were previously children of the kingdom, so long as they continued also to be children of God; but after the name of Father ceased to be recognized among

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<sup>17</sup> *Firmilian, to Cyprian, Against the Letter of Stephen* 74.13, 19, ANF V, 393, 395.

<sup>18</sup> *To Rogantius*, ANF V, 283-285.

<sup>19</sup> *Spain 2*, ANF V, 370

them, the kingdom also ceased; and therefore we Christians, who in our prayer begin to call God our Father, pray also that God's kingdom may come to us.<sup>20</sup>

This use of Jewish history to challenge Christian experience is not different in nature from the applications which Cyprian's Jewish contemporaries might have made from the same Scriptures. The fact that Cyprian and the Church considered themselves to be the "new Israel" entitled them, in their minds, to make such use of "their" Scriptures.

Of course, Cyprian believed that the supreme sin of the Jews was their rejection of Christ. They had the opportunity to hear him teach and see his miracles, yet they chose to disbelieve him: "Did not the Jews perish for this reason, that they chose rather to envy Christ than to believe him? Disparaging those great works which he did, they were deceived by blinding jealousy, and could not even open the eyes of their heart to the knowledge of divine things."<sup>21</sup> Rather than believe, they found pernicious alternatives to explain what they had seen:

Therefore when Christ Jesus, in accordance with what had been previously foretold by the prophets, drove out from men the demons by his word, and by the command of his voice nerved up the paralytics, cleansed the leprous, enlightened the blind, gave power of movement to the lame, raised the dead again, compelled the elements to obey him as servants, the winds to serve him, the seas to obey him, the lower regions to yield to him; the Jews, who had believed him man only from the humility of his flesh and body, regarded him as a sorcerer for the authority of his power.<sup>22</sup>

Jewish instigation of the death of Jesus had secured for them the condemnation of God. No longer would he be their God, and no longer could they, as do the Christians with the warrant of the instruction of Jesus, call him their Father:

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<sup>20</sup> *LPrayer* 13, ANF V, 451

<sup>21</sup> *On Jealousy and Envy* 5, ANF V, 492.

<sup>22</sup> *Vanity* 13, ANF V, 468.

. . . these cannot now call God their Father, since the Lord confounds and confutes them, saying, "You are born of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. . . . In repudiation of these, we Christians, when we pray, say Our Father; because he has begun to be ours, and has ceased to be the Father of the Jews, who have forsaken him."<sup>23</sup>

As terrible as was the violent end of Jesus, as horrible as was the crime of the Jewish leaders against him, this was all predicted in the Jewish scriptures. Cyprian finds his biblical support from the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*, a Hellenistic Jewish writing from near the end of the second century B.C.. This work upholds the highest view of the Mosaic law and repudiates those who are unfaithful to it. The book's depiction of the simple, honest servant of God is applied by Cyprian to Jesus as *the Son of God*. Cyprian explains that the Jews' rejection and execution of Christ was the fulfillment of their very own Scriptures:

In the *Wisdom of Solomon*: "Let us lay hold of the righteous, because he is disagreeable to us, and is contrary to our works, and reproaches us with our transgressions of the law. He professes that he has the knowledge of God, and calls himself the Son of God; he has become for us an exposure of our thoughts; he is grievous unto us even to look upon, because his life is unlike to others, and his ways are changed. We are esteemed by him as frivolous, and he restrains himself from our ways, as if from uncleanness; and he extols the last end of the righteous, and boasts that he has God for his Father. Let us see, then, if his words are true, and let us try what will come to him. Let us interrogate him with reproach and torture, that we may know his reverence and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a most shameful death. These things they considered, and erred. For their maliciousness has blinded them, and they knew not the sacraments of God." Also in *Isaiah*: "See how the righteous perish, and no man understands; and righteous men are taken away, and no man regards. For the righteous man is taken away from the face of unrighteousness, and his burial shall be in peace." Concerning this very thing it was before foretold in *Exodus*: "You shall not slay the innocent and the righteous." Also in the *Gospel*: "Judas,

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<sup>23</sup> *LPrayer* 10, ANF V, 450.

led by penitence, said to the priests and elders, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”<sup>24</sup>

The fall of the Jews was so tragic because they had fallen from such a height. They were the people of God, blessed by him with unparalleled knowledge of himself and unequalled material and political prosperity until, “subsequently becoming neglectful of discipline, proud, and puffed up with confidence in their fathers, they despised the divine precepts, and lost the favor conferred upon them.”<sup>25</sup> At the foundation of their wickedness was the impatience of the Jews. Not willing to wait on God’s timing, they sought out the easy, quick way to what they wanted, in spite of how this might violate the righteous demands of God:

Why were the Jewish people faithless and ungrateful in respect of the divine benefits? Was it not the crime of impatience, that they first departed from God? Not being able to bear the delays of Moses conferring with God, they dared to ask for profane gods, that they might call the head of an ox and an earthen image leaders of their march; nor did they ever desist from their impatience, until, impatient always of docility and of divine admonition, they put to death their prophets and all the righteous men, and plunged even into the crime of the crucifixion and bloodshedding of the Lord. Moreover, impatience always makes heretics in the Church, and, after the likeness of the Jews, drives them in opposition to the peace and charity of Christ as rebels, to hostile and raging hatred.<sup>26</sup>

As they had rejected the prophets, they rejected Christ. As they rejected Christ, they rejected his followers, as in the case of Stephen, “slain by the Jews with violence and stoning.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, even here, Cyprian’s focus was on the heretics of his own day, rather

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<sup>24</sup> *CypJews* 2.14, ANF V, 521.

<sup>25</sup> *Vanity* 10, ANF V, 468.

<sup>26</sup> *On the Advantage of Patience* 19, ANF V, 489.

<sup>27</sup> *On the Advantage of Patience* 16, ANF V, 488.

than on the Jews themselves, who merely served as the negative precedent with which Cyprian could compare his contemporary opponents.

The judgment of God upon Israel's sin was continued spiritual blindness. Because they disobeyed and grumbled throughout their history, they became incapable of seeing the truth that Jesus was the Christ. Because they would not accept Jesus as Christ, God abandoned them to their waywardness: "But that the people of the Jews could not understand this, was the dessert of their sins. They were so punished by their blindness of wisdom and intelligence, that they who were unworthy of life, had life before their eyes, and saw it not."<sup>28</sup>

Cyprian believed that, through their disobedience and rejection of Christ, the Jews opened the way to salvation to the Gentiles, "worshippers much better in obedience and stronger in faith, who would draw from the divine gift that mercy which the Jews had received and lost by despising their religious ordinances."<sup>29</sup> The kingdom of God had passed from a single people, the Jews, to a new people, not excluding the Jews, but made up of those from every nation:

For the vineyard of the Lord was the house of Israel; but Christ, when teaching and showing that the people of the Gentiles should succeed them, and that by the merit of faith we should subsequently attain to the place which the Jews had lost, of water made wine; that is, he showed that at the marriage of Christ and the Church, as the Jews failed, the people of the nations should rather flow together and assemble.<sup>30</sup>

The loss of the Jews became the gain of the Gentile Church:

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<sup>28</sup> *Vanity 12*, ANF V, 468.

<sup>29</sup> *Vanity 11*, ANF V, 468.

<sup>30</sup> *To Caecilius, on the Sacrament of the Cup of the Lord 12*, ANF V, 361.

I have endeavored to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God's favor, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.<sup>31</sup>

This new people of God did not exclude the Jews, to whom the same way of salvation in Jesus Christ is open as to the Gentiles: "Moreover, it is again predicted and foretold before, that the Jews, if they should thirst and seek after Christ, should drink with us, that is, attain the grace of baptism."<sup>32</sup>

For the Jew, as for the Gentile, it is Christ alone who can save. Apart from his death and resurrection, no one can enter salvation, as pre-figured in the Passover event of the exodus from Egypt: "As then when Egypt was smitten, the Jewish people could not escape except by the blood and the sign of the lamb; so also, when the world shall begin to be desolated and smitten, whoever is found in the blood and the sign of Christ alone shall escape."<sup>33</sup> God the Father, the source of salvation, has made it plain in the Gospels that his salvation and the forgiveness of sins will only be extended to individuals through the name of Christ "that it might be shown to the Jews, who boasted as to their having the Father, that the Father would profit them nothing, unless they believed on the Son whom he had sent."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *CypJews 12, intro, ANF V, 507.*

<sup>32</sup> *To Caecilius, ANF V, 360.*

<sup>33</sup> *Address to Demetrianus 22, ANF V, 464.*

<sup>34</sup> *To Jubianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics 17, ANF V, 383.*

## Summary

Although most of Cyprian's works are devoid of references to the Jews, his tract *Against the Jews* reveals important information about the nature of Christian views toward the Jews in the third century. Many of his other works contribute to an understanding of those views through their obvious dependence on the Jews for their Scripture, moral standards, opposition to pagan idolatry, and their times and manner of prayer. Additionally, the authority and responsibilities of the Christian priesthood are seen to arise from the levitical regulations of the Jews.

Cyprian claims the Scripture as his own and finds in the biblical account of Jewish history basic principles of Christian living. He does not refrain from finding condemnations of the Jews in the Scriptures, but is just as likely to connect disobedience of Jews in the past with Christian heretics of his own time.

He lists the offenses of the Jews in twenty-four points, systematically articulating the charges that had been offered by other Christians over several generations. In his view, the Jews were guilty of formalism, preferring compliance with external regulations to true spiritual intimacy with God. Their rejection of Jesus arose from their jealousy of him, which led them to accuse him of sorcery rather than acknowledge that he was the Christ. They are accused of persecuting the Christians, becoming partners in this crime with Gentiles, heretics, and others.

As a result of their sin, and the spiritual blindness that followed, the Jews had now been rejected and the door was opened to the Gentiles. Physical Israel was now displaced by the Church as the people of God. The old law had ceased, replaced by the new way. The Jews were unable to properly understand Scripture, which yields its

meaning only to those spiritually in tune with God. The Jews were now destined to live in desolation, their land ravaged as a consequence of their rejection of God's law and his Christ.

Cyprian maintains the hope that Israel will again be restored to fellowship with God, and expresses his own strong personal desire to persuade the Jews to turn to Jesus as the Christ. Only in this way can they find the grace of God, who will extend forgiveness to them as they repent of their sin through baptism and obedience.

### **The Apostolic Constitutions**

Although they purport to reveal the instructions of the apostles themselves, the *Apostolic Constitutions* are better understood to reveal the life of the church in the second through fourth centuries. They reflect a Christianity that was very comfortable with its Jewish roots. While some modern scholars conclude that the document reflects conditions in the Church in the late fourth century, there are numerous signs that earlier Christianity can be seen from its pages. Bousset, for example, counters that five chapters of the seventh book of the *Constitutions* are actually of Jewish origin, only lightly retouched by their Christian editor.<sup>35</sup> It is not unreasonable to suggest that it reveals the practices and beliefs of the Church in the third century.

Jesus, the founder of the faith, is presented in the context of his Jewish origin and orientation. He "... was, according to the prophecies which were foretold concerning him by himself, of the seed of David and Abraham, of the tribe of

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<sup>35</sup> In Simon, 53-56.

Judah... he lived holily, and taught according to the law. . .”<sup>36</sup> The reading of the Jewish scriptures was prominent in the order of worship in Christian assemblies, preceding that of the Gospels, Acts, and epistles:

In the middle, let the reader stand upon some high place: let him read the books of Moses, of Joshua the son of Nun, of the judges, and of the kings and of the chronicles, and those written after the return from the captivity; and besides these, the books of Job and of Solomon, and of the sixteen prophets. But when there have been two lessons severally read, let some other person sing the hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses.<sup>37</sup>

Those who were unable to attend the assembly were similarly instructed to devote themselves to the Scriptures, which included the Jewish writings along with Christian ones: “. . . if you stay at home, read the books of the law, of the kings, with the prophets; sing the hymns of David; and peruse diligently the Gospel, which is the completion of the other.”<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the *Apostolic Constitutions*, quotations are cited incessantly on every subject from the Jewish scriptures. Instructions for godly living were taken directly from the Ten Commandments, which were then harmonized with the teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels.<sup>39</sup> Warnings for and about women were taken directly from the book of Proverbs.<sup>40</sup> Examples of repentance, including David, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and the Ninevites, are drawn from the Jewish writings.<sup>41</sup> The question of admitting younger men into Christian bishoprics seeks its answer from the Jews as well,

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<sup>36</sup> *ApConst.* 8.12.2, ANF VII, 489.

<sup>37</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.57, ANF II, 421.

<sup>38</sup> *ApConst.* 1.2.5, ANF VII, 393.

<sup>39</sup> *ApConst.* 1.1.1-2; 1.2.1-4, ANF VII, 392-393; cf. 7, ANF VII, 465-478.

<sup>40</sup> *ApConst.* 1.2.7; 1.3.8-10, ANF VII, 393-395.

<sup>41</sup> *ApConst.* 2.3.22, ANF VII, 406.

looking to the precedence of young Jewish kings, such as Solomon and Josiah, who confirmed the validity of their ascension by ruling well.<sup>42</sup> The singular value of the Jewish scriptures was clear: it alone, and not any pagan religious writings, could be relied upon to protect the faith of the Christian:

Abstain from all the heathen books. For what do you have to do with such foreign discourses, or laws, or false prophets, which subvert the faith of the unstable? For what defect do you find in the law of God, that you should have recourse to those heathenish fables? For if you have a mind to read history, you have the books of the Kings; if books of wisdom or poetry, you have those of the Prophets, of Job and the Proverbs, in which you will find greater depth of sagacity than in all the heathen poets and sophisters, because these are the words of the Lord, the only wise God. If you desire something to sing, you have the Psalms; if the origin of things, you have Genesis; if laws and statutes, you have the glorious law of the Lord God. Do therefore utterly abstain from all strange and diabolical books.<sup>43</sup>

The Jewish scriptures belong to the Church because the Church consists of “spiritual Jews,” the “true Israel.” The name, history, and God of the Jews have now been inherited by the Church:

But Israel, your Church on earth, taken out of the Gentiles, emulating the heavenly powers and night and day, with a full heart and a willing soul sings, ‘The chariot of God is ten thousand fold thousands of them that rejoice: the Lord is among them in Sinai, in the holy place’ . . . For by him you have brought home the Gentiles to yourself for a peculiar people, the true Israel, beloved of God, and seeing God. For you, O Lord, brought our fathers out of the land of Egypt.<sup>44</sup>

The Church claims not only the promises and blessings of God to Israel, but also the prophetic judgments. Rebukes spoken to Israel, in the prophets and by Christ in the gospels, are used to castigate Christian offences rather than those of the Jews: “How can

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<sup>42</sup> *ApConst.* 2.1.1, ANF VII, 396.

<sup>43</sup> *ApConst.* 1.6, ANF VII, 393.

<sup>44</sup> *ApConst.* 7.2.35-36, ANF VII, 473-474.

such a one even now avoid hearing that word of the Lord, 'The Gentiles are justified more than you?' . . . How, therefore, will any one make his apology who has despised or absented himself from the church of God?"<sup>45</sup>

The Christian's use of the Jewish scriptures did, however, require discernment, for these writings did not apply to Christians in the same way as to the Jews:

No, when you read the law, think not yourself bound to observe the additional precepts; though not all of them, yet some of them. Read those barely for the sake of history, in order to the knowledge of them, and to glorify God that he has delivered you from such great and so many bonds. . . for our Savior came for no other reason but that he might deliver those that were obnoxious thereto from the wrath which was reserved for them, that he might fulfill the law and the prophets, and that he might abrogate or change those secondary bonds which were superadded to the rest of the law.<sup>46</sup>

Certain texts were applied to contemporary problems in the Church as if this was their originally intended purpose. Christian bishops are warned of their need to exercise spiritual discipline toward wayward saints by allusion to Saul and Eli in the Jewish scriptures, who each failed in the charges entrusted to them: "But he who does not consider these things will, contrary to justice, spare him who deserves punishment; as Saul spared Agag, and Eli his sons, 'who knew not the Lord.' Such a one profanes his own dignity, and that Church of God which is in his parish." An assumed claim for the continuing validity of the Jewish scriptures for Christian use is reinforced by the fact that this allusion is followed by references to Jereboam, Corah, Uzza, Achan, Gehazi, and Naaman. Each of these cases simply underscores the consequences of persistent

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<sup>45</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.60, ANF VII, 423.

<sup>46</sup> *ApConst.* 1.6, ANF VII, 393.

waywardness and the importance of discipline.<sup>47</sup> The implication of these citations from the Jewish scriptures is that Christian bishops would consider them authoritative texts which should determine their actions in certain contemporary situations.

The terminology used for Christian clergy directly links them to their Jewish counterparts: “For these,” it says, referring to the bishops, “are your high priests, as the presbyters are your priests, and your present deacons instead of your levites; as are also your readers, your singers, your pastors, your deaconesses, your widows, your virgins, and your orphans: but he who is above all these is the High Priest.”<sup>48</sup>

Observance of the Sabbath seems also to have been perpetuated in the Christian Church, albeit alongside the celebration of Sunday as the day of Christ’s resurrection from the dead: “I Peter and Paul do make the following constitutions. Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day and the Lord’s day let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety.”<sup>49</sup> Christians are encouraged to worship daily, “but principally on the Sabbath-day. And on the day of our Lord’s resurrection, which is the Lord’s day, meet more diligently. . . .”<sup>50</sup> There was an awareness of both a connectedness to the Jewish observances and a need to assert the priority of Christian practices: “But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord’s day festival, because the former is the memorial of creation, and the later of the resurrection. But there is only one Sabbath to be observed

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<sup>47</sup> *ApConst.* 2.3.10, ANF VII, 399.

<sup>48</sup> *ApConst.* 2.4.25, ANF VII, 410.

<sup>49</sup> *ApConst.* 8.4.33, ANF VII, 495.

<sup>50</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.59, ANF VII, 423.

by you in the whole year, which is that of our Lord's burial on which men ought to keep a fast, but not a festival."<sup>51</sup>

Fasting was another observance that drew heavily on Jewish precedent while also making distinctions between Jewish and Christian observance. Instructions begin with thoughts from the Gospels, but conclude with references to the essential role played by the Jewish scriptures:

From the even till cock-crowing keep awake, and assemble together in the church, watch and pray, and entreat God; reading, when you sit up all night, the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, until cock-crowing and baptizing your catechumens, and reading the Gospel with fear and trembling, and speaking to the people such things as tend to their salvation: put an end to your sorrow, and beseech God that Israel may be converted, and that he will allow them place of repentance, and the remission of their impiety. . .<sup>52</sup>

As they thus sought the conversion of the Jews, Christians also established their religious practices with an eye to explicitly distinguishing themselves from the Jews in some respects: "But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days of the week. But do you either fast the entire five days, or on the fourth day of the week, and on the day of the Preparation . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Some Jewish practices were supplanted, rather than assimilated, by the Church. After rehearsing the events of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, the instruction is given, "Now be circumcised in your flesh, but let the circumcision which is of the heart by the Spirit suffice for the faithful; for he says, 'Be ye circumcised to your God, and be circumcised in the foreskin of your heart.'" Circumcision was spiritualized in a manner

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<sup>51</sup> *ApConst.* 7.2.23, ANF VII, 469.

<sup>52</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.18-19, ANF VII, 447.

<sup>53</sup> *ApConst.* 7.2.23, ANF VII, 469.

that made it obsolete, whereas fasting and Sabbath-keeping were modified in ways that preserved their basic observance by the Church.

Sacrifices were likewise made obsolete as a result of their displacement by Jesus Christ. They had been abused by the Jews and had thus lost their ability to effect reconciliation with God. Christ did not remove them by denigrating them, but fulfilled them in such a way as to make them obsolete. Together, circumcision and the sacrificial system were evaluated in this light: "Yet he so abrogated them as that he first fulfilled them. For he was both circumcised, and sprinkled, and offered sacrifices and whole burnt-offerings, and made use of the rest of their customs."<sup>54</sup>

Other regulations of the Jewish law were seen to be in competition with Christian practices, such as prayer, Bible reading, and the Eucharist, that offered true connection with God in worship, in contrast to the external and legalistic practices of the Jews drawn from their law:

Now if any persons keep to the Jewish customs and observances concerning the natural emission and nocturnal pollutions, and the lawful conjugal acts, let them tell us whether in those hours or days, when they undergo any such thing, they observe not to pray, or to touch a Bible, or to partake of the Eucharist? And if they own it to be so it is plain they are void of the Holy Spirit, which always continues with the faithful. . .<sup>55</sup>

The keeping of Easter as a continuation of the Jewish Passover caused the Church to affirm the history of the Jews and to rely on them for the calculations which would determine the date of the commemoration of Christ's suffering and death. Confusion over how to figure this date could be avoided by conceding to the Jews that

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<sup>54</sup> *ApConst.* 6.4.22, ANF VII, 460.

<sup>55</sup> *ApConst.* 6.25.27, ANF VII, 462.

their traditional way of determining the date was valid. At the same time, the observance of this feast was the cause of grief, as the Church contemplated the fate of the Jews. The memory of their complicity in the death of Christ was reason for Christians to separate themselves from Jewish Passover assemblies and ultimately to feel free to dissent from the Jewish calculations for Passover observance that might further confuse the use of this feast for Christian purposes: “But no longer be careful to keep the feast with the Jews, for we have now no communion with them; for they have been led astray in regard to the calculation itself, which they think they accomplish perfectly, that they may be led astray on every hand, and be fenced off from the truth.”<sup>56</sup> While lay Christians involved in this error were to be “suspended,” ordained leaders of the Church who followed the Jews too closely were in danger of being stripped of their office and its attendant benefits:

If any bishop, or any other of the clergy, fasts with the Jews, or keeps the festivals with them, or accepts of one presents from their festivals, as unleavened bread or some such thing, let him be deprived; but if he be one of the laity, let him be suspended. . . . If any Christian carries oil into a heathen temple, or into a synagogue of the Jews, or lights up lamps in their festivals, let him be suspended.<sup>57</sup>

It appears from the citation above that Christian clergy, as well as Christian laity, were inclined to follow the Jews too closely, out of their desire to maintain proper continuity with their parent faith.

Consistently throughout this discussion, the *Constitutions* assert that the new covenant in Christ is a continuation and completion of the old order, not a new and

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<sup>56</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.17, ANF VII, 447 (italics in ANE translation).

<sup>57</sup> *ApConst.* 5.47.70-71, ANF VII, 504.

unconnected covenant which stands apart from God's covenant with the Jews. Christ's displacement of circumcision and the sacrifices did not contradict the writings of the prophets. To the contrary, these very writings predicted and confirmed the work that he would do, as evidenced by citations from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and 1 Samuel. The process foreseen by these prophets involved, not merely the replacement of one order with another of the same kind and quality, but the advancement from an earlier, inferior order to a final, complete, and mature system, broader and more spiritual in its nature:

He who had commanded to honor our parents, was himself subject to them. He who had commanded to keep the Sabbath, by resting thereon for the sake of meditating on the laws, has now commanded us to consider of the law of creation, and of providence every day, and to return thanks to God. He abrogated circumcision when he had himself fulfilled it. . . . Instead of a bloody sacrifice, he has appointed that reasonable and unbloody mystical one of his body and blood, which is performed to represent the death of the Lord by symbols. Instead of the divine service confined to one place, he has commanded and appointed that he should be glorified from sunrising to sunsetting in every place of his dominion. He did not therefore take away the law from us, but the bonds.<sup>58</sup>

The sharpness of these contrasts that are drawn between Jews and Christians suggests that there continued to be blurriness in the lines between the two faiths which required clarification through this kind of direct discussion.

Because of the potential danger from "Judaizing" elements in the Church, Judaism was feared and anathematized along with the pagans and the Christian heretics: "For you have delivered us from the impiety of polytheism, and from the heresy of the murderers of Christ," by which is meant the Jews.<sup>59</sup> In the voice of Paul, Christians

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<sup>58</sup> *ApConst.* 6.4.23, ANF VII, 461.

<sup>59</sup> *ApConst.* 7.2.38, ANF VII, 475.

hear: “Let him that follows the Gentile customs, or Jewish fables, either reform, or let him be rejected.”<sup>60</sup> The wide presence of heresies is presented as a persistent threat to the truth,<sup>61</sup> and those who would consider leaving the Church were severely warned, regardless of their intended destination:

Endeavor therefore never to leave the Church of God; but if any one overlooks it, and goes either into a polluted temple of the heathens, or into a synagogue of the Jews or heretics, what apology will such a one make to God in the day of judgment, who has forsaken the oracles of the living God, and the living and quickening oracles, such as are able to deliver from eternal punishment, and has gone into an house of demons, or into a synagogue of the murderers of Christ or a congregation of the wicked?”<sup>62</sup>

Christian clergy, especially, are warned against compromising admission requirements into the Church. Any leniency in this area could lead to ecclesiastical and spiritual disaster. The leader who would admit into the Church those who are not in agreement with the Church’s beliefs “will disperse your flock and betray it to be devoured by wolves, that is, by demons and wicked men or rather not men, but wild beast in the shape of men – by the heathen, by the Jew, and by the atheistic heretics.”<sup>63</sup>

The Jewish threat, as real as it is, is perceived as somewhat less dangerous than that of the “atheistical heretics,” perhaps a reference to those quasi-Christians whose atheism consisted of their denial of the deity of Christ. Christian leaders are warned of this supreme danger: “Above all things, O bishop, avoid the sad and dangerous and most atheistical heresies, eschewing them as fire that burns those that come near to it.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *ApConst.* 8.4.32, ANF VII, 495.

<sup>61</sup> *ApConst.* 6.2.6, ANF VII, 450.

<sup>62</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.61, 423.

<sup>63</sup> *ApConst.* 2.3.21, ANF VII, 405.

<sup>64</sup> *ApConst.* 6.1.1, ANF VII, 450.

The high degree of this threat is highlighted by comparison to both Jewish and Gentile counterparts: “Eschew the atheistical heretics, who are past repentance, and separate them from the faithful, and excommunicate them from the Church of God . . . for these are enemies to the Church . . . who are both more wicked than the Jews and more atheistical than the Gentiles.”<sup>65</sup>

The gravity of the peril of false teachers is used to exhort Christians to avoid entanglement with the ways of the world and the devil, and although the Jews are included among those who ought to be avoided, the warning is clearly aimed primarily at groups other than the Jews, whose Scriptures, after all, are used to point out the dangers of Gentile ways:

Take heed, therefore, not to join yourselves in your worship with those that perish, which is the assembly of the Gentiles, to your deceit and destruction. For there is no fellowship between God and the devil; for he that assembles himself with those that favor the things of the devil, will be esteemed one of them, and will inherit a woe. Avoid also indecent spectacles: I mean the theatres and the pomps of the heathens; their enchantments, observation of omens, soothsayings purgations, divination, observation of birds; their necromancies and invocations. . . So that it is the duty of a believer to avoid the assemblies of the ungodly, of the heathen, and of the Jews, and of the rest of the heretics.<sup>66</sup>

The Jews are indicted in the *Constitutions* for their general waywardness from God’s ways. The purpose of the law, in fact, was found in its role as an antidote to their sinfulness: “He bound them for the hardness of their hearts, that by sacrificing, and resting, and purifying themselves, and by similar observances, they might come to the

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<sup>65</sup> *ApConst.* 6.3.18, ANF VII, 457.

<sup>66</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.62, ANF II, 424.

knowledge of God, who ordained these things for them.”<sup>67</sup> The Jews themselves admitted to their faithless ways, as Ezekiel records their refusal of the doctrine of the resurrection: “This resurrection was not believed by the Jews, when of old, they said, ‘Our bones are withered, and we are gone.’” Further, even their religious observances are characterized by unbelief, for they “do not confess to God (having unjustly occasioned the suffering on the cross), so as to be saved on their repentance. . .”<sup>68</sup>

As mentioned in the excerpt above, the *Constitutions* hold the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus. The observance of the Christian fast commemorated this crime: “In these days, therefore, he was taken from us by the Jews, falsely so named and fastened to the cross, and ‘was numbered among the transgressors.’”<sup>69</sup> This perspective is consistent with its view that conspiracy in wrongdoing is a trait observable in the Jews throughout their history. It was almost to be expected that the nation who had rejected God’s prophets throughout the centuries would also turn against God’s Son when he appeared to them:

But they, being uneasy on account of their own covenants, have not only left the vineyard uncultivated, but have also killed the stewards of the Lord of the vineyard, one with stones, another with the sword; one they sawed asunder, another they slew in the holy place, “between the temple and the altar;” nay, at last they “cast the Heir himself out of the vineyard, and slew him.” And by them he was rejected as an unprofitable stone, but by you was received as the corner-stone.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of Jesus’ love for them, the Jews refused to believe in him, and are to be grieved over for their tragic choice: “You ought therefore to bewail over them because

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<sup>67</sup> *ApConst.* 6.4.20, ANF VII, 459.

<sup>68</sup> *ApConst.* 2.7.60, ANF VII, 423.

<sup>69</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.18, ANF VII, 447.

<sup>70</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.17, ANF VII, 446.

when the lord came they did not believe on him, but rejected his doctrine, judging themselves unworthy of salvation.”<sup>71</sup> They had every reason to believe in Jesus, but refused to do so. This stubbornness, however, was not unique to them, as it had also been exhibited in other people: “For neither did the Egyptians believe in God, when Moses had done so many signs and wonders; nor did the multitude of the Jews believe in Christ, as they believed Moses, who yet had healed every sickness and every disease among them.”<sup>72</sup> Violence as the expression of unbelief did not end with the death of Jesus, but became a true part of Jewish identity, for Stephen “was stoned to death by the Jews, the murderers of the Lord.”<sup>73</sup>

The consequence of Israel’s general rebelliousness, and specifically of their rejection of Christ, was that spiritual blindness was imposed upon them:

For blindness is cast upon them, by reason of the wickedness of their mind, because when they saw Jesus they did not believe him to be the Christ of God, who was before all ages begotten of him, his only-begotten Son, God the Word, whom they did not own through their unbelief, neither on account of his mighty works, nor yet on account of the prophecies which were written concerning him.

Their refusal to believe in Christ, and God’s subsequent abandonment of them, has led to the development that the kingdom, which had been theirs, has now been given to the Gentiles:

Wherefore knowledge was taken from them, because seeing they overlooked, and hearing they heard not. But to you, the converted of the Gentiles, is the kingdom given, because you who knew not God, have believed by preaching, and “have known him, or rather are known of him,” through Jesus, the Savior and Redeemer of those that hope in him.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.15, ANF VII, 445.

<sup>72</sup> *ApConst.* 8.1.1, ANF VII, 479.

<sup>73</sup> *ApConst.* 8.5.46, ANF VII, 500.

<sup>74</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.16-17, ANF VII, 446.

There was in the history of the Jewish people a recurrence of the cycle of divine blessing, disobedience, punishment, and restoration: “You did adorn Aaron and his posterity with the priesthood, and did punish the Hebrews when they sinned, and receive them again when they returned to you.”<sup>75</sup> This cycle, though perhaps discouraging in retrospect, gives hope for the future that God will again restore his wayward people Israel: “. . . put an end to your sorrow, and beseech God that Israel may be converted, and that he will allow them place of repentance, and the remission of their impiety.”<sup>76</sup> Jesus “suffered not only persecution and stripes, reproach and mockery, but also crucifixion, that he might save the penitent, both Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>77</sup> The apostles “preached both to Jews and Gentiles, that he is the Christ of God.” Jews, along with Gentiles, have open to them a door to restoration with God. Yet, it is plain that at the end of the age, at Christ’s return, they will, as a nation have reason to grieve rather than to hope: “And then shall they see the beloved Son of God whom they pierced; and when they know him, they shall mourn for themselves, tribe by tribe and their wives apart.”<sup>78</sup>

### Summary

The Jewish influence on the Christian Church continues in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Jesus’ Jewish lineage is emphasized, Jewish Passover calculations are used to determine the date for the observance of Easter, and Jewish Sabbath and fasting

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<sup>75</sup> *ApConst.* 8.2.12, ANF VII, 489.

<sup>76</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.19, ANF VII, 447.

<sup>77</sup> *ApConst.* 5.1.5, ANF VII, 438.

<sup>78</sup> *ApConst.* 5.3.19-20, ANF VII, 448.

practices are still followed to some extent. The law is upheld in public and private use, and is considered authoritative for both personal conduct and ecclesiastical policy. The stern warnings of the Jewish prophets confront waywardness in both Christians and Jews.

The Church has inherited the name, history, and God of Israel. Its leaders' responsibilities are governed by regulations laid down in the law for Jewish priests and levites. As the old covenant is seen to have given way, it is not contradicted by the new covenant, for the latter builds on and completes the former. Yet, there is tension between Christian disciplines and some Jewish observances. In addition, sacrifices and the rite of circumcision have been spiritualized, so their literal observance has become obsolete.

Among religious perils to Christians, Judaism and paganism are seen as less dangerous than the "atheistical" heresy promulgated by splinter Christian groups. The possibility of apostasy to Judaism is, however, regarded as very real and very deadly. Christians are to distance themselves from those who follow the Jews too closely. There is a clear assertion of the many contrasts between the old covenant and the new, with the advantages of the new stated sharply to show the obsolescence of the Jewish ways.

The law is seen to have been given by God to the Jews to control their persistent bent toward wickedness. Throughout their history, they have exhibited a pattern of planning and carrying out evil. This pattern found its culmination in their conspiracy against Jesus, resulting in his crucifixion. The succeeding generations of Jews following Jesus' death have persisted in their ancestors' ways by continuing to refuse to believe in Jesus in spite of all his miracles and acts of compassion toward them.

As a result, they have been stricken with spiritual blindness which keeps them from understanding the Scripture and turning to God. While Jesus died to bring salvation to them, and the apostles committed themselves to the proclamation of that good news, the largest part of the Jewish nation will, at Christ's return in glory, have to lament the fact that they never responded to his grace.

### **On the Eve of the Constantinian Era**

#### **Novatian**

Novatian, known best for his later schism with the Church of Rome, wrote works on the Christian faith early in his career, in the years prior to A.D. 250. In these works, which were not rejected by the church in spite of the eventual apostasy of their author, Novatian closely links Jesus and the Christian faith to Jewish writings and faith. The coming of Jesus as the Christ "we read of as having been promised in the Old Testament, and we observe to be manifested in the New, fulfilling the shadows and figures of all the sacraments, with the presence of the truth embodied." He then goes on to support this assertion by citing twenty references from the Jewish scriptures, including Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Hosea, and the Psalms.<sup>79</sup> It is clear in his writing that Novatian's argument is aimed, not at the Jews, but at Christian heretics, with their "Christ feigned and colored up from old wives' fables." He takes on both the docetics, who denied the full humanity of Jesus, and others who denied the full deity of

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<sup>79</sup> Novatian, *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* 9, ANF V, 618-619.

Jesus.<sup>80</sup> His attack on the latter inevitably involves the Jews, who by their own profession, shared the view that Jesus was not, and could not be, divine. Reviewing the gospel accounts of Jewish response to Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, Novatian observes that "at those words of the Lord the Jewish ignorance had been aroused, so that hastily they ran to take up stones."<sup>81</sup> When Jesus the Christ "shows himself to be God," the Jews refuse to acknowledge this, thereby proving themselves to be the forerunners of the Christian heretics:

For the Jews, ignorant and untaught in the matter of this very descent of his, made these heretics their successors, seeing that to them it is said, "You know not where I come, and where I go: you judge after the flesh." As much they as the Jews, holding that the carnal birth of Christ was the only one, believed that Christ was nothing else but man; . . . this Christ here laid more stress on the one aspect of his sole divinity, because the Jewish blindness contemplated in Christ the aspect alone of the flesh.<sup>82</sup>

The point here is not to lambaste the Jews but to steer Christians clear of error regarding the true nature of Christ, error which was shared by Jews and heretics alike:

I urge you on that, treading under foot and rejecting as well the sacrilegious calumnies of heretics as also the idle fables of Jews, you may hold the sole word and teaching of Christ, so as worthily to claim for yourselves the authority of his name. But how perverse are the Jews, and remote from the understanding of their law, I have fully shown, as I believe, in two former letters.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of the name of the work from which this excerpt is taken (*On the Jewish Meats*), Novatian was not writing against the Jews. He was, quite apparently, writing against those who would revert to Jewish ways from within the Christian camp. The "idle fables of the Jews" are of interest to him only in so far as they are linked with "the

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<sup>80</sup> *Trinity* 10-14, ANF V, 619-624.

<sup>81</sup> *Trinity* 27, ANF V, 638.

<sup>82</sup> *Trinity* 15, ANF V, 624.

<sup>83</sup> Novatian, *On the Jewish Meats* 1, ANF V, 645.

sacrilegious calumnies of heretics.” His prior letters concerning circumcision and the Sabbath identify two areas where the Church claimed Jewish rites had been supplanted by Christian ones. These were also, significantly, areas in which Judaizers appealed to orthodox Christians in an attempt to get them to conform more closely to the Jewish law. That these Judaizing efforts, and not Jewish belief itself, were in Novatian’s mind as he wrote these lines, is clear: the reason he wrote in this present work against Jewish dietary laws was because these laws were being used to assert the spiritual superiority of Jewish ways over those of Christians. Novatian was not setting out to dismantle Judaism, but to defend Christianity from attack by those who would have it more closely aligned to the Jews.

The anonymous *Treatise against the Heretic Novatian* comes from about the same period of time and bears no direct teaching about Jewish-Christian relations. However, in its treatment of the Jewish scriptures, it demonstrates that the Church of this time did appropriate for itself the biblical revelation to Israel. Prophetic indictments of Israel’s sin were interpreted as direct instructions to the Church, rather than employed as ammunition against the Jews:

[Christ says,] “Turn you, and return from your impieties, and your iniquities shall not be to you for a punishment. Cast away from you all your impieties which you have committed against me; and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. And why do you deliver yourselves over to death, O house of Israel . . .” Let us entreat God with full atonements; let us humble ourselves, that we may be exalted.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Anonymous, *Against the Heretic Novatian* 17, ANF V, 663.

An anonymous treatise on baptism also emerges from this time period. In this work, the Jews are invoked as an ally, however unwitting or even resistant, to orthodox Christian belief against those who deny the eternal existence of Christ:

... even they themselves thought that such and so great a one would without death endure to eternity, and would possess the Kingdom of Israel, and of the whole world for ever, and that it would not be destroyed. . . . And again, this also was the speech of the Jews, in contradiction against him . . . and they said, “we have heard out of the law that Christ abides forever: and how do you say that the Son of man must be lifted up?”<sup>85</sup>

This author recognized that the majority of the Jewish nation did not receive Jesus as their Christ, but maintained that the door into the Christian Church was still open to them through baptism, along with those from the Gentiles who were given faith: “And thus men of both of these kinds, that is, Jews and Gentiles, fully belonging as they ought are in like manner baptized.”<sup>86</sup> The next line in this treatise excludes heretics from the faith, showing again that the Church was more concerned with the danger of heresy than with relations with the Jews, and that while the door to believing Jews remained open, there were significant obstacles kept in place to bar the admission of those entangled with heresy. In its battle with heretics, the Church saw itself allied with the Jews against these most pernicious enemies.

### Commodian

In the middle of the third century, the Christian poet Commodian writes against both Jews and Gentiles in his *Carmen apologeticum adversus judaeos et gentes* and

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<sup>85</sup> Anonymous, *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 9, ANF V, 672.

<sup>86</sup> Anonymous, *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 12, ANF V, 674.

*Instructiones adversus gentium deos*. These writings have been described as a “torrent of abuse in verse” toward the Jews.<sup>87</sup> To a pagan convert to Judaism, Commodian asks derisively, “What! Are you half a Jew? Will you be half profane? From there you shall not when dead escape the wrath of Christ. You yourself blindly wander, and foolishly go in among the blind. And thus the blind lead the blind into the ditch.” To the Jews themselves, Commodian exclaims, “There is not an unbelieving people such as yours. O evil men!”<sup>88</sup> The Jews were plainly despicable to him, although pagans fared no better:

The Scripture says that the Lord was angry with the Jews. Their sons, refreshed with food, rose up to play. Now, therefore, why do we follow these circumcised men? In what respect they perished, we ought to beware; the greatest part of you, surrendered to luxuries, obey them. . . . Are you not ashamed without restraint to lament your son, like the Gentiles? You tear your face, you beat your breast, you take off your garments; and do you not fear the Lord, whose kingdom you desire to behold? . . . What less than Gentiles are you?<sup>89</sup>

Like other Christian writers of his time, Commodian put forward the idea of a Jewish Antichrist, and warned against too close relations between Christians and Jews. The significance of these usages was, however, tempered by the fact that pagans as well as Jews received such treatment from his hand. His aim was less to denigrate the Jews or the Gentiles, and more to use them as the convenient monsters at hand to scare the Christians into proper obedience and conformity to the ways of faith.

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<sup>87</sup> Dubnov, 147.

<sup>88</sup> *The Instructions of Commodianus* 37, 40, ANF IV, 210.

<sup>89</sup> *The Instructions of Commodianus* 58, 73, ANF IV, 214, 217.

*The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*

At about this same time (c. A.D. 270), *The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* recorded the conversion and exploits of faith of the two Christian women named in the title. The story is set in the time of Nero and the apostle Paul. Xanthippe is converted through the preaching of Paul, who has just come to her home city in Spain after leaving Rome. Upon her baptism, Xanthippe addresses her Savior, Jesus:

You that had your hands fixed with nails and your side pierced with the spear, you star out of Jacob and lion's whelp out of Judah, you rod out of Jesse, and man and God out of Mary, you invisible God in the bosom of the Father, and that can not be looked upon by cherubim, and are mocked in Israel, glory be to you, who did appear on the earth and was taken by the people, hung upon the tree.<sup>90</sup>

There is clearly negative sentiment here toward the Jews, for it was among them that Christ was "mocked in Israel." The overall tone of the passage is, however, quite moderate, for it is not explicitly the Jews, nor even their leaders, who are said to have crucified Jesus, but in a very generic sense, merely "the people." In addition, the writer highlights the Jewish connections of Jesus, the "star out of Jacob and lion's whelp out of Judah, you rod out of Jesse, and man and God out of Mary," in a positive manner that overshadows the subtle criticism of the Jews for their participation in Christ's suffering. When Polyxena, the second heroine of the story, is baptized, it is in the company of "Rebecca, of the tribe of Israel," to whom the apostle Andrew says, "God will care for you also, daughter, as well as for this stranger. Therefore, receive now baptism, and be as of one people, glorifying God always." To both women he implores, "Be zealous

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<sup>90</sup> *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 14, ANF IX, 209.

daughters, to be of good repute before God by living well in a strange land, and separate not from each other.” Unity of Gentile and Jew in the body of Christ is the emphasis in this account. If anything, the Jews, in the person of Rebecca, are accorded a place of privilege over the Gentiles, who are regarded, in the person of Polyxena, as “strangers.” Of Greece, where these events are said to transpire, Polyxena observes, “For the men of this country will not hear at all concerning Christ, being full of impiety and filled with wickedness.” There is no corresponding statement of hopelessness expressed regarding the Jews.<sup>91</sup>

### *The Gospel of Nicodemus*

*The Gospel of Nicodemus* is best treated as also originating in this same time frame. Although it may have its origin in a Hebrew original as early as the end of the second century, its final form shows signs of completion as late as the early fifth century, thereby providing another window into the development in Christian approach to the Jews over that period of time. The writer recounts the events of the original gospels, emphasizing the refusal of the Jewish leaders to acknowledge the significance of the events which they could not deny had taken place. The soldiers who had been guarding the tomb of Jesus are reported to have returned to their superiors as believers in the resurrection of this one whom they now regarded as the Messiah: “At these words the Jews were afraid, and said to the soldiers: See that you tell this story to nobody, or all will believe in Jesus. And for this reason they gave them also much money.” When

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<sup>91</sup> *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* 29-32, ANF IX, 214-215.

the soldiers protested that Pilate would have their heads if he discovered that they received this bribe, “the Jews said: take it; and we pledge ourselves that we shall speak to Pilate in your defense.” The Sanhedrin, including Annas, Caiaphas, and “all the teachers,” interviewed Joseph of Arimathea, to whom also Jesus is said to have appeared, along with others who testified to seeing the resurrected Jesus. In spite of this testimony, these Jewish leaders persist in their rejection of Jesus. Their motivation seems not to have been that they did not believe his claims, but that they were afraid to submit to those claims out of fear of losing their status and authority.<sup>92</sup> Rather than responding in faith themselves, they, who had seized and threatened Joseph for originally asking for the body of Jesus,<sup>93</sup> now attempted to silence those whose testimony would lend credence to the claims of Jesus. In response to their actions, “Mary Magdalene said, weeping: Hear, O peoples, tribes, and tongues, and learn to what death the lawless Jews have delivered him who did turn to them ten thousand good deeds.”<sup>94</sup>

### *The Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddeus*

*The Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddeus* was probably written by a Jewish Christian near the middle of the third century. In it, the writer refers to a letter to Jesus purportedly written by Abgar, governor of Edessa, “about the days of the Passion and the plots of the Jews.” He pled with Jesus to visit, having heard of his miraculous

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<sup>92</sup> *Gospel of Nicodemus* 1.16; (2<sup>nd</sup> Greek version 13-15), ANF VIII, 425, 432-433.

<sup>93</sup> *Gospel of Nicodemus* 1.12, ANF VIII, 421.

<sup>94</sup> *Gospel of Nicodemus* (2<sup>nd</sup> Greek version 11), ANF VIII, 431.

healings, “and on this account I entreat your goodness to come even to us, and escape from the plottings of the wicked Jews, which through envy set in motion against you.”<sup>95</sup>

### **Malchion**

Near the year A.D. 270, Malchion, a priest from Antioch, became the chief defender of orthodoxy at the Synod of Antioch against the teachings of Paul of Samosata. He wrote a letter in the name of the synod to warn the leaders of the church throughout the Roman world of this man’s errors. In it he says nothing about the Jews. This is especially remarkable given the nature of Paul’s error. Paul had embraced a monarchian view of God which denied the notion of three divine persons. According to Paul, there is but one God, who inspired the man Jesus, and filled him with *logos*, wisdom.<sup>96</sup> Such a view could certainly have been represented as a compromise to Judaism, and Paul’s relationship with Zenobia, the Jewish queen of Palmyra, might well have served as the cause of his heresy, yet no such charge was made.

### **Alexandrian Writers**

Around the year A.D. 270, Anatolius of Alexandria became the bishop of the church in Laodicea. His writings exhibit a continued close connection between the Church and the writings and practices of Judaism. He does speak of a comparative superiority of Christianity over Judaism, for he believed that the Jews were yet blinded under the “veil of the Mosaic law,” while Christians were able “with unveiled face to

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<sup>95</sup> *Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddeus*, ANF VIII, 558.

<sup>96</sup> Malchion, *Epistle Against Paul of Samosata*, ANF VI, 168-172.

behold even as in a glass Christ himself and the doctrines and sufferings of Christ.”<sup>97</sup> However, he still drew on Jewish sources without animosity, quoting from “the books of the Hebrews and the Greeks” and reminding his readers that such esteemed men as Isidore, Jerome, and Clement were steeped in the knowledge of these books. He quotes from the Jewish scriptures alongside the Christian Gospels: he arrays Matthew, Mark, and Luke with Exodus and Leviticus. To support his evaluation of the proper date for the observance of Passover, he appeals to Jewish practice: “Nor is this an opinion confined to ourselves alone. For it was also known to the Jews of old and before Christ, and it was most carefully observed by them.”<sup>98</sup> This Jewish precedent, confirmed by an examination of the Scriptures, particularly Leviticus, was important enough to him to cause him to resist the practice of Rome, which demanded Sunday observance. He defends the Quartodecimans, claiming that they add nothing of an extraneous kind, but keeping through all things the rule of faith.”<sup>99</sup>

In the last third of the third century, Pierus of Alexandria is said to have been preoccupied with subjects related to Jews and Judaism: “And also in the book in the Passover (Easter) and on Hosea, he treats both of the cherubim made by Moses, and of the pillar of Jacob.”<sup>100</sup> Nothing more is provided to reveal how this Christian writer treated his Jewish topics, but the implication is that, like other Christians of the time, he read Jewish precedents as his own spiritual possession.

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<sup>97</sup> Anatolius, *Paschal Canon* 5, ANF VI, 147.

<sup>98</sup> *Paschal Canon* 1, 3, 4, ANF VI, 146-148.

<sup>99</sup> *Paschal Canon* 10, ANF VI, 149.

<sup>100</sup> *Writings of Pierus*, ANF VI, 157.

At the same time, Theonas of Alexandria wrote a letter which also has no explicit mention of the Jews. Although there are questions about the authenticity of this letter, it is still worth citing. If authentic, it illustrates how the Church continued at that date to uphold the Jewish scriptures as the inspired Word of God, even as more basic, more foundational, than the Christian Gospels and epistles:

The divine Scriptures, which with marvelous care and most liberal expenditure, Ptolemy Philadelphus caused to be translated into our language; and sometimes, too, the Gospel and the Apostle will be lauded for their divine oracles. . . . Let no day pass by without reading some portion of the sacred Scriptures. . . . And never cast off the habit of reading in the Holy Scriptures, for nothing feeds the soul and enriches the mind so well as those sacred studies do.<sup>101</sup>

From about the same time and place, Phileas, who would later become a martyr himself, writes letters which focus on the issues of persecution and episcopal practices. Martyrs are said to have been faithful to God in the face of polytheistic paganism: “For they knew the sentence declared for us of old by the Holy Scriptures: ‘He that sacrifices to other gods,’ it is said, ‘shall be utterly destroyed.’ And again, ‘You shall have no other gods before me.’”<sup>102</sup> This language sounds as much like Jewish apologetic as Christian, as monotheism is demanded and nowhere in the letter is Judaism criticized.

In the early fourth century, Alexander of Alexandria became the chief rival of Arius, not only in Alexandria, but throughout the Christian world. Interestingly, he contends with his Arian opponents by accusing them of acting too Jewish:

For since they call in question all pious and apostolical doctrine, after the manner of the Jews, they have constructed a workshop for contending against Christ, denying the Godhead of our Savior and preaching that he is only the

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<sup>101</sup> Theonas, *To Lucianus, the Chief Chamberlain* 7, 9, ANF VI, 160-161.

<sup>102</sup> Phileas, *Epistle to the People of Thumis* 3, ANF VI, 163.

equal of all others . . . they back up the impious opinion concerning Christ, which is held by the Jews and Greeks.<sup>103</sup>

Alexander is generally silent about the Jews, but when he does speak of them, it is with clear and sharp rebuke. He accuses them of ingratitude, violence, and ignorance toward the one whose goodness and divinity should have been evident to them:

Behold, you sons of men, behold what recompense Israel made unto him! She slew her Benefactor, returning evil for good, affliction for joy, death for life. They slew by nailing to the tree him who had brought to life their dead, had healed their maimed, had made their lepers clean, and given light to their blind. Behold, you sons of men! Behold all you people, these new wonders! They suspended him on the tree, who stretches out the earth; they transfixed him with nails who laid firm the foundation of the world; they circumscribed him who circumscribed the heavens; they bound him who absolves sinners; they gave him vinegar to drink who has made them to drink of righteousness; they fed him with gall who has offered to them the Bread of Life; they caused corruption to come upon his hands and feet who healed their hands and feet; they violently closed his eyes who restored sight to them; they gave him over to the tomb, who raised their dead to life both in the time before his Passion and also while he was hanging on the tree. . . . Yet the entire people, as unconscious of the mystery, exulted over Christ in derision; although the earth was rocking, the mountains, the valleys, and the sea were shaken, and every creature of God was smitten with confusion.<sup>104</sup>

### Other Minor Works

The *Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God* is probably of fourth century composition. In this tract there is no mistaking the anti-Jewish stance of its author. The prosecution of Mary is seen as the result of predetermined Jewish hostility against Christ's mother, carried out with zeal by angry Jews who coerced a reluctant Roman official to act against his will: "The priests of the

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<sup>103</sup> Alexander of Alexandria, *Epistle to Alexander, Bishop of the City of Constantinople 1*, ANFVI, 291.

<sup>104</sup> Alexander of Alexandria, *On the Soul and Body and the Passion of the Lord 5*, ANF VI, 301.

Jews . . . being moved with the heaviest hatred, and again with frivolous reasoning, having made an assembly . . . go to the procurator, crying out and saying: ‘The nation of the Jews has been ruined by this woman; chase her from Bethlehem and the province of Jerusalem.’”

Even with this strong language, however, the author does not see the Jews as beyond inclusion into the Church, when drawn by divine revelation and when accompanied by the necessary faith and repentance. When the story is told of Mary’s ascension, it is recorded that a “noble Jew,” Jephonias, tried to touch her, and as a result, had his hands cut off by an angel’s fiery sword. In response, those Jews who witnessed the event could not help but be convinced of the certainty of the Church’s claims about Christ: “And at this miracle which had come to pass all the people of the Jews who behold it cried out: verily, he that was brought forth by you is the true God, O mother of God, ever-virgin Mary.”<sup>105</sup>

Victorinus lived in the region now known as Austria at the end of the third century. His allegorical comments on the book of Revelation illustrate his view of the Jews. Asserting that the “six wings” of the angelic beings of Revelation 4:8 represent the books of the Old Testament, Victorinus explains:

For the Catholic Church holds those things which were both before predicted and afterwards accomplished. . . . But to heretics who do not avail themselves of the prophetic testimony . . . they do not fly, because they are of the earth. And to the Jews who do not receive the announcement of the New Testament there are present wings, but they do not fly, that is, they bring a vain prophesying to men, not adjusting facts to their words.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary*, ANF VIII, 591.

<sup>106</sup> Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, on Rev. 4:8, ANF VII, 349.

In other words, the Jews have a step up on the heretics in their possession of the Scriptures, but they are still a step short of the full knowledge of God that could be available to them through faith in Christ and admission to his Church. Victorinus optimistically envisions that many Jews will, indeed, take that step, as foreseen in the prophecy of Malachi that Elijah would come “to recall the Jews to the faith of the people that succeed them.’ And to that end he shows, as we have said, that the number of those that shall believe, of the Jews and of the nations, is a great multitude which no man was able to number.”<sup>107</sup> At the same time, the Jews as a whole will remain apart from Christ, thereby making themselves vulnerable to the seductions of the Antichrist, found in the person of a resuscitated Nero:

Him, therefore, when raised up, God will send as a worthy King, but worthy in such a way as the Jews merited. And since he is to have another name, he shall also appoint another name, that so the Jews may receive him as if he were the Christ. . . . Finally, also, he will recall the saints not to the worship of idols, but to undertake circumcision, and if he is able, to seduce any; for he shall so conduct himself as to be called Christ by them.<sup>108</sup>

Arnobius was a notable Christian apologist who wrote primarily against paganism during the rule of Diocletian. His writings demonstrate that his concern was with paganism more than Judaism as a potential rival to the Christian faith. He attacks the pagans’ polytheism, loose morals, inadequate ethical foundation, corrupt philosophy, inability to answer the challenge of death, ritual efforts to placate the gods, and doctrine of human nature. His arguments are not only not anti-Jewish; they

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<sup>107</sup> *Apoc.*, on Rev. 7:2, ANF VII, 352.

<sup>108</sup> *Apoc.*, on Rev. 17:11, ANF VII, 358.

constitute an apologetic for monotheism with which any Jew could have agreed. Although he does not tackle the “Jewish problem,” his development of a systematic attack on paganism signals a new offensive apologetic approach by the Church of the early fourth century which would, in later times and other places, express itself against the Jews. Arnobius, however, does appear to have been quite uninformed about the Jews. His writings are devoid of any review of the history of the people of Israel. He does not seem to have understood the sacrifices of the old covenant. He apparently mixed up the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees regarding their understanding of the form of God.<sup>109</sup> All of this points to a high degree of ignorance of Jewish ways. In light of the fact that other authors of the same period exhibited a broader knowledge of and concern about the Jews, it must be considered that perhaps geography played a role here: is it possible that Latin African Christianity had less reason than the eastern Greek church to be worried about Jewish intrusions into the Church or influence upon it?

In approximately 309 A.D., Pamphilus, the mentor of the church historian Eusebius, completed a commentary on the book of *Acts*. He follows the movement of the early church, as outlined chapter by chapter in *Acts*, without editorial comments beyond the language of the book itself. Perhaps the lone exception to this is his comment on *Acts* 8, in which he sees “the rising and slanderous information of the Jews

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<sup>109</sup> Arnobius, *The Seven Books of Arnobius Against the Heathen* 3.12. ANF VI, 467; see also, Hamilton Bryce, Hugh Campbell, eds., intro. to Arnobius, ANF VI, 409.

against Stephen.” Even here, however, the narrative is merely descriptive of their activity, without conclusions drawn regarding the character of the Jews.<sup>110</sup>

### Methodius

Methodius of Olympus (died A.D. 311) was an opponent of the teachings of Origen, whose approach to the Jewish scriptures is typical of much Christian writing of this time. Much of his writing ignores the question of the Jews. For example, his work *Concerning Free Will* is entirely silent on the subject.<sup>111</sup> He does, however, use the Jewish scriptures extensively, often employing extravagant allegory. In this style, Hezekiah’s plaster of figs becomes “the fruit of the Spirit,”<sup>112</sup> and Simeon and Anna become symbols of Israel and the Church: “. . . for by the old man was represented the people of Israel, and the law now waxing old. . . . The old man, indeed, as personating the law, seeks dismissal; but the widow, as personating the Church, brought her joyous confessions of faith.”<sup>113</sup> The typology of the Old Testament was consciously planned by God to foreshadow the spiritual meaning of the New, for example with the tabernacle: “The Hebrews were commanded to ornament the Tabernacle as a type of the Church, that they might be able, by means of sensible things, to announce beforehand the image of divine things.” This typological significance is true as well of the new order, as it is seen as symbolic of the heavenly order: “Now the Jews prophesied our state, but we foretell the heavenly; since the Tabernacle was a symbol of the Church, and the Church

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<sup>110</sup> Pamphilus, *An Exposition of the Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles*, ANF VI, 166.

<sup>111</sup> Methodius, *Concerning Free Will*, ANF VI, 356-363.

<sup>112</sup> Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 10.5, ANF VI, 350.

<sup>113</sup> Methodius, *Oration Concerning Simeon and Anna* 11, ANF VI, 391.

of heaven.”<sup>114</sup> The fact that the Jews missed the true significance of their own Scriptures revealed their inferior spiritual sensitivity:

For what was the purpose of the theologian Moses, in introducing, under a mystical sense, the Feast of Tabernacles in the Book of Leviticus? Was it that we may keep a feast to God, as the Jews with their low view of the Scriptures interpret it? As if God took pleasure in such tabernacles, decked out with fruits and boughs and leaves, which immediately wither and lose their verdure.

These tabernacles are instead, according to Methodius, a pre-figurement of the resurrection of believers, in which they will be able to celebrate God’s great acts on their behalf.<sup>115</sup> While these allegorical interpretations are easily evident to Christians, the Jews miss them because of spiritual immaturity or hard-heartedness:

Here the Jews, fluttering about the bare letter of Scripture, like drones about the leaves of herbs, but not about flowers and fruits as the bee, fully believe that these words and ordinances were spoken concerning such a tabernacle as they erect. . . . Nor do they understand that by it also the death of Christ is personified . . .

Similarly, the Passover Lamb’s role as a figure of Jesus, the Lamb of God, is concealed from the Jews due to their inability to get beyond their pre-occupation with things of this world: “Wherefore let it shame the Jews that they do not perceive the deep things of the Scriptures, thinking that nothing else than outward things are contained in the law and the prophets; for they, intent upon things earthly, have in greater esteem the riches of the world than the wealth which is of the soul.”<sup>116</sup> They were, after all, persistent violators of the law under which they lived before God: “But these, thinking fit to bid a long farewell to this law, turned to idolatry. Hence God gave them up to mutual

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<sup>114</sup> *Banquet 5, 7-8, ANF VI, 328.*

<sup>115</sup> *Methodius, Discourse on the Resurrection 1.14, ANF VI, 368.*

<sup>116</sup> *Banquet 9.1, ANF VI, 344-345.*

slaughters, to exiles, and captivities, the law itself confessing, as it were, that it could not save them.”<sup>117</sup>

The fact of their rebelliousness was plain, not only from their history, but also from the allegorical sense of the Scriptures. From Judges 9:8-15, Methodius concludes: “The olive signifies the law given to Moses in the desert, because the prophetic grace, the holy oil, had failed from their inheritance when they broke the law.”<sup>118</sup> Christ is presented as the one who brings about the supplanting of Judaism with a better way, as Simeon addresses the baby Jesus: “For you I look, the Giver of the law, and the Successor of the law.”<sup>119</sup>

The coming of the Christ did not obliterate the law or the religion of the Jews. It instead confirmed the legitimacy of the law by finding that in Christ the law was not destroyed but fulfilled: “It became indeed the Lord of the law and the prophets to do all things in accordance with his own law, and not to make void the law, but to fulfill it, and rather to connect with the fulfillment of the law the beginning of his grace.” Judaism and its law were good, but not complete. What was good in the law was made better in Christ: “Good fruit came by Moses, that is the law, but not so goodly as the Gospel. For the law is a kind of figure and shadow of things to come, but the Gospel is truth and the grace of life. Pleasant was the fruit of the prophets, but not so pleasant as the fruit of immortality which is plucked from the Gospel.”<sup>120</sup> Divine revelation was seen as a progressive affair, as seen, for example, in the institutions of marriage: after

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<sup>117</sup> *Banquet* 10.3, ANF VI, 349.

<sup>118</sup> *Banquet* 10.2, ANF VI, 348.

<sup>119</sup> *Simeon* 6, ANF VI, 387.

<sup>120</sup> *Banquet* 9.3, ANF VI, 346.

the creation of the world and the human race, sisters were allowed to be taken as wives in order to populate the world. With the coming of God's covenant of circumcision with Abraham, incest was no longer an acceptable practice. The law initiated restrictions on marital relationships and enjoined continence. With the coming of the prophets, God made it plain that polygamy, acceptable for the patriarchs, was no longer valid. The Christian Church would then bring in the highest level of morality: "We have already spoken of the periods of the human race, and how, beginning with intermarriage of brothers and sister, it went on to continence; and we have now left for us the subject of virginity."<sup>121</sup>

This exaltation of Christian virginity, along with other anachronisms such as a strong doctrine of Mary, suggest that the document, as it now exists, may well bear the marks of modifications in later periods.<sup>122</sup> If, in fact, these writings of Methodius were at some later time altered by a more anti-Jewish hand, this same editor could have been the pseudo-Methodius responsible for other works published in his name. *Oration on the Palms* is a work of dubious authenticity<sup>123</sup> which exhibits that same anti-Jewish tone: "O the madness of these falsely-named teachers! O incredulous fathers! O foolish seniors! O seed of the shameless Canaan, and not of Judah the devout! The children acknowledge their creator, but their unbelieving parents said, who is this?"<sup>124</sup> The author reproaches the Jews as Canaanites unworthy of bearing their patriarch's name, while asserting that Christians, as children of the Jewish nation, put their parents to

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<sup>121</sup> *Banquet* 1.2-4, ANF VI, 311-313.

<sup>122</sup> *Simeon* 3, ANF VI, 385, incl. f.n.; see also 14, f.n. 393.

<sup>123</sup> ANF VI, 394, f.n.; "Elucidations," 398.

<sup>124</sup> *Palms* 3, ANF VI, 395.

shame by clinging to true religion in spite of their parents' apostasy. At some length he goes on raging against the Jews in this manner.<sup>125</sup> The Jews, witnesses to the arrival of the Christ in their city as their king, sang praises of triumphal entry, but soon turned them into cynical doubt: "The city began to inquire, saying, Who is this? stirring up its hardened and inveterate envy against the glory of the Lord. But when you hear me say the city, understand the ancient and disorderly multitude of the synagogue."<sup>126</sup> This unbelieving response arose from the spiritual pride of the Jews and resulted in their condemnation by God: "Therefore the house in which they boasted was filled with smoke . . . a sign and sure evidence of wrath."<sup>127</sup>

Methodius is, at the same time, both more and less favorable toward the Jews than other Christian writers of the period. Against Origen's view that Ezekiel's prophecy predicted the restoration of national Israel from Babylon to its homeland, Methodius argues that this passage instead is meant to be understood as a reference to resurrection, since the restoration actually experienced by Israel was so limited in time and significance. Methodius' spiritualization of this passage makes it unlikely that he was interested in an ongoing physical presence of the Jews in his own day. On the other hand, when he cites Josephus to demonstrate how Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, he abstains from the frequent Christian practice of pointing to any moral deficiency on the part of the Jews as a potential cause of this destruction.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Palms* 3-5, ANF VI, 395-597.

<sup>126</sup> *Palms* 3, ANF VI, 395.

<sup>127</sup> *Simeon* 11, ANF VI, 391.

<sup>128</sup> *Discourse on the Resurrection* 2.18, ANF VI, 376-377.

### Alexander of Lycopolis

Some time between A.D. 300 and 350, Alexander, Bishop of Lycopolis, wrote an address which explores the beliefs and practices of the Manichæans. This work includes no reference to the Jews, good or bad, as it focuses on cosmological and philosophical arguments regarding the person and nature of God.<sup>129</sup> In spite of the widely increasing tensions between Jews and Christians at this time, not every Christian writer was consumed with the topic.

### Archelaus

Archelaus, a bishop in Mesopotamia near the end of the third century, wrote a treatise c. A.D. 277 during the campaign against the Christians in the time of Phobus. His attack on Manichaeism heavily supports the view that the Church and Israel have a strong connection, “that there is a mutual relationship between the two testaments, and also between the two laws.” Archelaus aligns himself with the Jews against this heresy, even as Manes himself lumps together Jews, Christians, and pagans as followers of the false religion of the god of the material universe:

He holds also that God has no part with the world itself, and finds no pleasure in it. . . . Him again, who spoke with Moses, and the Jews, and the priests, he declares to be the prince of darkness; so that the Christians, and the Jews, and the gentiles are one and the same body, worshipping the same God; for he seduces them in his own passions, being no God of truth.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Of the Manichaeans*, ANF VI, 241-252.

<sup>130</sup> Archelaus, *The Acts of the Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes* 11, ANF VI, 185.

Archelaus repudiates this deprecation of the Jewish religion, and brands it as a mark of heresy. He claims as his foundation both Christian and Jewish spiritual ancestors, showing that he saw the Christian faith as the completion of the religion of his Jewish forebears, not as a contradiction of it. He rejects the teachings of Manes because “there have been also certain affirmations of his which seem very far removed from what has come down to us by the tradition of our fathers.”<sup>131</sup>

Archelaus highlights similarities between Moses and Christ in order to shed light on this parallelism, which is seen to be the result of prophetic prediction, as Moses said to the people of Israel, “The Lord your God shall raise up a Prophet unto you, of your brethren, like unto me.” Both Moses and Jesus were born into hardship, both were in Egypt. Moses led the people of God out of Egypt into the promised land, while Jesus led them out of Pharisaism into eternal life. Both brought divine bread to the people: Moses through prayer, Jesus by his own power. Moses was tried for forty days on Mt. Sinai, Jesus spent his forty days in the desert, being tempted by Satan. Moses witnessed the killing of the first-born males of Egypt and Jesus escaped Herod’s murderous slaughter of Jewish boys in Bethlehem. As Moses interceded with God for Pharaoh and the Egyptians to be spared from the ten plagues, so Jesus asked forgiveness for his enemies. Moses’ face shone after his experience on Mt. Sinai while Jesus’ entire body shone on the mount of transfiguration. Moses turned the sword against those who indulged in calf-worship, and Jesus released a “sword on the earth,” sending every man against his neighbor (Mt. 10:34). Moses walked without fear into clouds that carry

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<sup>131</sup> *Disput.* 40, ANF VI, 213.

water and Jesus walked on the sea itself. Moses stretched out his hands in Israel's battle against Amalek; Jesus stretched out his on the cross for the salvation of all humanity.<sup>132</sup>

Jesus, as the promised Christ of the Old Testament, came to fulfill, and not to abolish, that covenant:

Again, as to the assertion that the Sabbath has been abolished, we deny that he has abolished it plainly; for he was himself also Lord of the Sabbath. . . . And again, he did not actually reject circumcision; but we should rather say that he received in himself and in our stead the cause of circumcision, relieving us by what he himself endured, and not permitting us to have to suffer any pain to no purpose . . . and that is quite in accordance with the truth which we have learned now, to wit, that if one prevails in the keeping of the two commandments, he fulfils the whole law and the prophets.<sup>133</sup>

In contradiction with the heretic, Manes, Archelaus finds the relationship between the old and new covenants to be harmonious, basing this conclusion on his study of the holy Scriptures, including both those of Jewish and Christian origin:

I understand, then, that his chief effort was directed to prove that the law of Moses is not consonant with the law of Christ; and this position he attempted to found on the authority of our Scriptures. Well, on the other hand, not only did we establish the law of Moses, and all things which are written in it, by the same Scripture; but we also proved that the whole Old Testament agrees with the New Testament, and is in perfect harmony with the same, and that they form really one texture, just as a person may see one and the same robe made up of weft and warp together. For the Truth is simply this, that just as we trace the purple in a robe, so, if we may thus express it, we can discern the New Testament in the texture of the Old Testament; for we see the glory of the Lord mirrored in the same.<sup>134</sup>

Manes attempted to Hellenize Christianity through his emphasis on the spiritual over the material and his philosophical formulation of the Demiurge. He rejected the

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<sup>132</sup> *Disput.* 44, ANF VI, 219-220.

<sup>133</sup> *Disput.* 42, ANF VI, 217.

<sup>134</sup> *Disput.* 41, ANF VI, 215.

virgin birth and the true humanity of Jesus, along with the very legitimacy of the Jewish religion. In response, Archelaus embraces Jewish influence on Christianity, insisting on both the virgin birth and humanity of Jesus, emphasizing his biological connection to the Jewish royal line through Mary. Manes had to reject the Jews and their religion in order to preserve his dualism: “. . . you think to prove that our Jesus was made man only in fashion and in appearances; which assertion may God save any of the faithful from making.”<sup>135</sup> Archelaus binds the old and new covenants together to resist Manes’ arguments: “. . . the very sequence will show that the Old Testament belongs to him to whom also the New Testament pertains.”<sup>136</sup> The old must be fulfilled in the new, and the fact that Manes failed to do this is evidence of his status as a false prophet. Commenting on the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail,” Archelaus challenges Manes, “And let this man, then, tell us what prophecy of the Jewish Hebrews he has done away with.” While Manes disregarded Jewish prophecies as misguided and irrelevant, Archelaus claimed them as belonging to the Church and finding their fulfillment in Christ.<sup>137</sup>

Whereas Manes drew a heavy line of contrast between the old and new, Archelaus saw instead continuous development and a difference of degree, not of kind, as shown in his exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:

I shall speak now with the utmost brevity of the veil of Moses and the ministration of death. For I do not think that these things at least can introduce very much to the disparagement of law . . . this passage at any rate

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<sup>135</sup> *Disput.* 47, 50, ANF VI, 222-223, 228.

<sup>136</sup> *Disput.* 45, ANF VI, 220.

<sup>137</sup> *Disput.* 37, ANF VI, 211.

acknowledges the existence of a glory on the countenance of Moses, and that surely is a fact favorable to our position.<sup>138</sup>

Rather than portraying Judaism as something evil that needed to be abandoned, Archelaus showed that the difference between Moses and Christ is one of degree of glory, not evil against good. This clearly leaves the door open to the Jews. All that is needed for their conversion is that they see all that Moses said of Christ, without the veil. It also maintains a value to the law as a necessary aid in bringing one to Christ: “Now, on the other hand, I might refer to the fact, that one who of old was minded to make his way to the schools without the pedagogue was not taken in by the master.”<sup>139</sup>

Archelaus goes out of his way to protect the reputation of the Jews. He asserts that those who worshipped the golden calf in disobedience to God and Moses were, in fact, not true Israelites, but Egyptians who had mixed in with Israel as the nation came out of Egypt. The Jews were not, therefore, guilty of idolatry from their very beginning, as many Christian observers would claim, but were actually the victims of false accusation on that score. This perspective on the narrative in Exodus also demonstrates that the church fathers, as represented by Archelaus, relied directly on the rabbinic interpretations of the Jewish scriptures which offered such explanations.<sup>140</sup> The law is seen in an almost totally positive light, being a force for freedom and life for those to whom it was given: death ruled over all mankind up to the time of Moses, “but after Moses had made his appearance, and had given the law to the children of Israel, . . .

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<sup>138</sup> *Disput.* 43, ANF VI, 218.

<sup>139</sup> *Disput.* 41, ANF VI, 216.

<sup>140</sup> *Disput.* 31, and f.n., ANF VI, 204.

then death was cut off from reigning over all men; for it reigned then over sinners alone, as the law said to it, ‘touch not those that keep my precepts.’”<sup>141</sup>

The work of Christ, then, became the continuation and completion of the work of Moses. It was not in contrast or contradiction to it: the people of Israel “were unable to bear the penalties and the curses of the law. But, again, he who is ever the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, came and delivered these men from the pains and curses of the law, forgiving them their offenses.”<sup>142</sup> Language of the New Testament that is harsh toward the Jews is interpreted by Archelaus more broadly as applying to all humanity in general, rather than to the Jews alone. For example, he says of John 8:44: “Moreover, as to this word which is written in the Gospel, ‘You are of your father the devil,’ and so forth, we say in brief that there is a devil working in us, whose aim it has been in the strength of his own will, to make us like himself.”<sup>143</sup>

### **Peter of Alexandria**

Peter, Bishop of Alexandria from c. A.D. 300-311, was another notable Christian writer who served as head of that city’s famous catechetical school. Bishop for twelve years up until the time of his martyrdom, he was renowned as a spiritual leader and teacher of theology. He is relatively silent about the Jews, but does make passing references to them that suggest his underlying attitude. His *Canonical Epistle* says nothing about the Jews until the very end, in which place he refers to their plotting

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<sup>141</sup> *Disput.* 30, ANF VI, 203.

<sup>142</sup> *Disput.* 31, ANF VI, 204.

<sup>143</sup> *Disput.* 32, ANF VI, 204-205.

against Jesus. He explains that Christians fast on the fourth day of the week “because on it the Jews took counsel for the betrayal of the Lord.”<sup>144</sup> His focus is obviously not the Jews; he is merely referring to them as a way of elucidating his subject, which is the Christian practice of fasting. The reason offered as an explanation of why the fourth day was selected as a day of fasting does reflect some level of Christian consensus that the Jews were, in fact, plotters against Jesus, but it seems more of a historical allusion than an insight into Peter’s present attitude. In other places, he speaks of the Jews and their religious traditions in a manner that demonstrates a certain level of respect: “Moreover, he makes quite clear that the first month amongst the Hebrews was appointed by law, which we know to have been observed by the Jews up to the destruction of Jerusalem, because this has been so handed down by the Hebrew tradition.” The “Hebrew tradition” is relied on as a dependable account of factual information. Jewish accounts were used to calculate the proper date for observance of Easter. The purpose of turning to these passages was to determine God’s original intent as reflected in the Scriptures, even if contemporary Jews might be mistaken in the application of these principles: “Whether therefore the Jews erroneously sometimes celebrate their Passover according to the course of the moon in the month Phamenoth, or according to the intercalary month, every third year in the month Pharmuhi, matters not to us.” The bottom line is that Peter had confidence in the Jewish records and practices, “since in this matter the Jews never erred.”<sup>145</sup> Peter treated the subject and these sources in such a way as to

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<sup>144</sup> Peter of Alexandria, *Canonical Epistle* 15, ANF VI, 278.

<sup>145</sup> Peter of Alexandria, *Fragments* 1, 3, 4, ANF VI, 281.

signal to the Jews that Jesus had explicitly reached out to them by coordinating his spiritual sacrifice with their observance of the Passover:

At the time, therefore in which our Lord and God Jesus Christ suffered for us, according to the flesh, he did not eat of the legal Passover; but, as I have said, he himself, as the true Lamb, was sacrificed for us in the feast of the typical Passover, on the day of the preparation, the fourteenth of the first lunar month. The typical Passover, therefore, then ceased, the true Passover being present.<sup>146</sup>

Peter's *Genuine Acts*, which recount the events of his ministry in Alexandria, reveal that instead of the Jews, he had a more pressing foe with whom to contend: Arius, "that wolf and framer of treachery . . . covered with a sheep's skin."<sup>147</sup> This new Christian heresy loomed as a greater threat to the faith than did the efforts of the Jews.

### Lactantius

Lactantius earned his living as a pagan teacher of rhetoric under Diocletian and as an aged Latin tutor under Constantine until his death near A.D. 326, but he can fairly be represented as both historian and theologian. In his writing, he demonstrates an ability to deliver a scathing criticism of any adversary to Christianity. He often selected pagans as his primary target. In *A Treatise on the Anger of God*, he enters into a stylized debate with Epicurus over the nature of God, referring in his arguments to the writings of Cicero, the Stoics, Ovid, and others.<sup>148</sup> He takes a similar course in other works, assaulting pagan beliefs about God and human origins.<sup>149</sup> In his *Divine Institutes*, he indicts pagans for their immoral and unjust ways. Accusing them of piracy, murder,

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<sup>146</sup> Peter, *Fragments* 5.7, ANF VI, 282.

<sup>147</sup> *Genuine Acts of Peter*, ANF VI, 261-268.

<sup>148</sup> Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God*, ANF VII, 259-280.

<sup>149</sup> Lactantius, *On the Workmanship of God or the Formation of Man*, ANF VII, 281-300.

adultery, infanticide, unrestrained sexual indulgence, treason, legal corruption, impiety, and self-mutilation, Lactantius concludes that these actions arise from their pagan religion: “These crimes, I say, and more than these are plainly committed by those who are worshippers of the gods.”<sup>150</sup>

The evil ways he saw in the pagans were not unexpected, for he saw in the Greeks an eager receptivity to this way of life: “And this evil originated with the Greeks, whose levity being furnished with the ability and copiousness of speech, excited in an incredible degree mist of falsehoods.” They were this way, ultimately, because they worshipped as gods divinized former kings, whose vices were the same as their own: “For this is always the excuse of those who regard their evils as gods, as the Romans esteem Blight and Fever.”<sup>151</sup> Because they were so spiritually deceived, they wrongly regarded as true religion the anti-Christian persecutions which they executed: “But, they say, the public rites of religion must be defended. Oh with what an honorable inclination the wretched men go astray! . . . but as they are deceived in the matter of religion itself, so also are they in the matter of its defense.”<sup>152</sup>

In these polemics against paganism, Lactantius at times sounds like a friend to the Jews, at least in terms of his espousal of an ethical monotheism which would have conflicted with the claims of polytheistic paganism. In the *Divine Institutes*, he thoroughly critiques Homer, along with other Greek poets and philosophers, concluding, on the basis of his own philosophical reasoning, “the universe, therefore,

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<sup>150</sup> Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 5.9, ANF VII, 145.

<sup>151</sup> *Div Inst.* 1.15, 20, ANF VII, 27, 33.

<sup>152</sup> *Div Inst.* 5.20, ANF VII, 157.

must be ruled by the will of one.” He specifically credits Jewish prophets with understanding God properly: “The prophets, who were very many, proclaim and declare the one god; for being filled with the inspiration of the one God, they predicted things to come with agreeing and harmonious voice.” However, in the face of the widespread derision in which the Jewish writers were held, he also finds it necessary to enlist the Greek poets and philosophers in his defense of monotheism “lest a proof derived from those who are universally disbelieved should appear insufficient.” That the pagans, and not the Jews, were his main concern is demonstrated by the fact that only one of seven books of his *Divine Institutes*, and only parts of seven out of seventy-three chapters in the *Epitome of the Institutes*, actually discuss matters related to Jewish-Christian dialogue and interactions.<sup>153</sup>

Lactantius does, in fact, say many things that reflect in a positive way on the Jews. After telling how Ham, the father of the Canaanites, was cursed by his father Noah and sent away, he reports, “But the descendants of his father were called Hebrews, among whom the religion of the true God was established.”<sup>154</sup> He held the Jewish prophets and Jewish scriptures in high regard, defending their integrity to pagan skeptics:

Of so much greater antiquity are the prophets found to be than the Greek writers. And I bring forward all these things, that they may perceive their error who endeavor to refute Holy Scripture, as though it were new and recently composed, being ignorant from what fountain the origin of our holy religion flowed.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *Div Inst.* 1.3-4, ANF VII, 12-13.

<sup>154</sup> *Div Inst.* 2.14, ANF VII, 63.

<sup>155</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.5, ANF VII, 105.

When he looked for villains, Lactantius was much more likely to point to Roman figures than to the Jews. His catalog of those who had acted violently, and unjustly, toward the Christians included Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, Diocletian, Maximian, and Galerius. The atrocities of Diocletian and Galerius in particular are told in graphic detail, standing in sharp contrast to the actions of the righteous rulers Constantine and Licinius, loyalists to the Christian God.<sup>156</sup> While it is not surprising that Lactantius wrote generously about those rulers who, in his time, stood as victors in the struggle against their rivals, it is still worth noting that in his account of Roman persecution of the Christians, he does not indict the Jews for directly or indirectly conspiring with the Romans in this effort.

It is true, nonetheless, that Lactantius viewed the Jews as a people *passé*, whose place in the plan of God had now been taken by the Christians as recipients of God's completed revelation: "But it is plain that the house of Judah does not signify the Jews, whom he cast off, but us, who have been called by him out of the Gentiles, and have by adoption succeeded to their place, and are called sons of the Jews, which the Sibyl declares when she says: 'The divine race of the blessed, heavenly Jews.'"<sup>157</sup>

This identification of the Church with the legacy of the Jews was an assumed reality for Lactantius. He spoke of the exploits of the people of God in the Old Testament as those of his own people: "Our ancestors, who were chiefs of the Hebrews, when they were distressed by famine and want, passed over into Egypt, that they might

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<sup>156</sup> Lactantius, *Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died* 2-15, ANF VII, 301-304.

<sup>157</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.21, ANF VII, 123.

obtain a supply of corn.”<sup>158</sup> Prophecies of the Old Testament found their fulfillment in Jesus as the Christ, in spite of Jewish opinion to the contrary: “But the reason why the Jews did not understand these things was this, because Solomon the Son of David built a temple for God, and the city which he called from his own house, Jerusalem. Therefore they referred the predictions of the prophets to him.”<sup>159</sup> The failure of the Jews to see the validity of this perspective was attributed to their misunderstanding of their own prophets, who pointed to his true identity and character. Lactantius interestingly reports to his emperor Constantine that the perspective of the Jews was remarkably like his own: “He performed wonderful deeds; we might have supposed him to be a magician, as you now suppose him to be, and the Jews then supposed him, if all the prophets did not with one accord proclaim that Christ would do those very things.”<sup>160</sup>

Although he did not speak often of the Jews in his writings, Lactantius surely spoke clearly and strongly when he did address the subject. For all their advantages, and their legacy as the people of God, the Jews, believed Lactantius, had squandered their heritage, and had persistently rebelled against God and moved steadily away from him. Their idolatry in the desert was an early display of their true character and the cause of the giving of the Mosaic law: “With which sin and crime God was offended, and justly visited the impious and ungrateful people with severe punishments, and made them

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<sup>158</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.10, ANF VII, 108.

<sup>159</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.13, ANF VII, 113.

<sup>160</sup> *Div Inst.* 5.3, ANF VII, 139.

subject to the law which he had given by Moses.”<sup>161</sup> Their guilt exceeded that of the Gentiles because of the privileged position from which they fell:

What wonder if Apollo thus persuaded men ignorant of the truth when the Jews also, worshippers (as they seemed to be) of the Most High God, entertained the same opinion, though they had every day before their eyes those miracles which the prophets had foretold to them as about to happen, and yet they could not be induced by the contemplation of such powers to believe that he whom they saw was God? . . . David . . . thus condemns them: “Render to them their dessert, because they regard not the works of the Lord.”<sup>162</sup>

From patriarchal times, through the eras of Moses and the prophets, and continuing down to the time of the advent of Jesus, they had abandoned the true religion of their fathers:

Therefore they served God, being bound by the chains of the law. But they also by degrees going astray to profane rites, undertook the worship of strange gods, and, leaving the worship of their fathers, sacrificed to senseless images. Therefore God sent to them prophets filled with the Divine Spirit. . . . But they not only persisted in their course, but even slew the messengers themselves. Therefore he condemned them on account of these deeds; nor did he any longer send messengers to the stubborn people; but he sent his own Son to call all nations to the favor of God.<sup>163</sup>

Their loss of divine identity was clear: After settling in Palestine after the exodus from Egypt, “the Hebrews lost their ancient name; and since the leader of their host was Judas, they were called Jews.” Soon after, their religious demise resulted in their subjection to other peoples: “But during the government of the Judges the people had often undertaken corrupt and religious rites and God, offered by them, as often brought them into bondage to strangers.” This inferior national status continued

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<sup>161</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.10, ANF VII, 108.

<sup>162</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.13, ANF VII, 112.

<sup>163</sup> *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 43, ANF VII, 239.

unabated throughout the nation's history up to the advent of Christ, in whose time they were under the domination of Rome, as well as the Herodian family.<sup>164</sup>

The Jews' guilt for the murder of Christ is the culmination of a long history of national rebellion against God. As people began to turn to Jesus as the Christ, "the priests and rulers of the Jews, filled with envy and at the same time excited with anger, because he reproved their sins and injustice, conspired to put him to death."<sup>165</sup> This violence against the Christ of God had been foreshadowed by the violence done by the Jews to earlier prophets, as revealed in the Jewish scriptures, including messages from Elijah, the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, and Malachi:

But they, when rebuked by the prophets, not only rejected their words; but being offended because they were upbraided for their sins, they slew the prophets themselves with studied tortures: all which things are sealed up and preserved in the sacred writings. . . . But he commanded his own Son, the first-begotten, the maker of all things, his own counselor, to descend from heaven, that he might transfer the sacred religion of God to the Gentiles, that is, to those who were ignorant of God, and might teach them righteousness, which the perfidious people had cast aside . . .<sup>166</sup>

Nor however, did he shut them out, impious and ungrateful as they were, from the hope of salvation; but he sent him to them before all others, that if they should by chance obey, they might not lose that which they had received; but if they should refuse to receive their God, then, the heirs being removed, the Gentile would come into possession.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.10, ANF VII, 108.

<sup>165</sup> *Epit.* 45, ANF VII, 240.

<sup>166</sup> *Div Inst.* 4.11, ANF VII, 109.

<sup>167</sup> *Epit.* 43, ANF VII, 239.

## Aphrahat

Aphrahat, a Persian Christian writer, was perhaps also a bishop. When he wrote his *Demonstrations* (AD 337-344), it appears that the Jews were still buoyed by the ascendancy they enjoyed in the third century, when the Church had to provide an answer to Jewish polemic against the Christian faith. He writes, “This brief memorial I have written to you concerning the peoples, because the Jews take pride and say, ‘We are the people of God and the children of Abraham.’”<sup>168</sup> Although these writings themselves post-date Eusebius and Nicene Christianity, they speak about the Jews in a way that reveals a new dimension to Christian thinking at the turn of the fourth century. Like earlier Christian writers, he mines the Jewish scriptures for indications that there would be a “new Israel” to take the place of the old, finding such promises throughout the Scriptures, especially in the Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Like these earlier writers, he sees in the prophecies of the Jewish scriptures the prediction of the emergence of the Church to take the place of the rebellious Jews:

And when he saw that they rashly rose against him and impudently responded to him, then he abandoned them as he had prophesied, saying, “I have abandoned my house. I have abandoned my inheritance. I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of his enemies. And in his place a painted bird has become my inheritance” (Jer. 12:7-9). And this is the church which is of the peoples, which has been gathered together from among all languages.

He observes that the inclusion of non-Jews into the people of God had been ongoing throughout Israel’s history: “Even from of old, whoever from among the peoples was pleasing to God was more greatly justified than Israel.” He finds examples

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<sup>168</sup> Aphrahat, 16.8, Neusner, 196.

of his premise in such people as Jethro, the Gibeonites, Rehab, Obededom, Ebedmelech, Ruth, Uriah, and the “gentiles” of Isaiah. Unlike those Christians who wrote before him, however, Aphrahat concludes that the Jews had never enjoyed true fellowship with God, “never did God accept their repentance [through] either Moses or all of the peoples.” Against Jewish arguments to the contrary, Aphrahat asserts that there will never be a restoration for Israel: “Israel never is going to be gathered together.” He finds proof of this assertion in the Scriptures of the Jews themselves, including texts from Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah, and Malachi. Israel had never walked obediently before God, and now their waywardness had become fatal: there was no place for their return to the place now taken by the Church. Having been delivered by God twice, from Egypt and from Babylon, Israel would be saved no more.<sup>169</sup>

### Summary

The collection of Christian writers assembled in this chapter present an uneven picture of Christian attitudes toward the Jews from the last third of the third century into the early fourth century. Within this group, some appear to be totally unaware of any rivalry with the Jews, while for others, this seems to be their foremost concern. Fathers like Malchion and Alexander of Lycopolis, whose subject matter might have prompted them to give attention to the Jews, totally ignore the topic. Others, such as Cyprian,

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<sup>169</sup> Aphrahat 16.2, 5, 6, Neusner, 192, 194-198.

Methodius, and Lactantius, write pointedly about the Jews in some of their works, while completely avoiding the issue in others.

Positive remarks about the Jews abound, emphasizing the Jewish roots of Jesus, giving careful attention to Jewish customs, and asserting the divine origin and value of the law. Jewish precedents are presented in order to legitimize Christian practices. False accusations against the Jews are answered sharply, and Jewish history is exalted above that of competing nations. These Christian writers embraced the God of the Jews as the one true God and argued strongly for the ethical monotheism of the Jews. There is evidence of continued Christian reliance on rabbinical instruction and Hebrew tradition.

Within the same time period, other writers made harsh attacks on the Jews and issued strong warnings to Christians considering the appeals of the Judaizers. Some asserted that the Jews had never been in God's favor, and that they had lost the designation "Hebrews" as the result of their disobedience to God in the desert under Moses. They were seen to be relegated to second-class status in terms of their level of spiritual experience and understanding. The coming Antichrist would have a special relationship with the Jews since their purposes were so closely connected.

In their use of Scripture, these writers were all heavily dependent on the Jewish Scriptures and saw them as the rightful possession of the Christian Church. They were read and used in the churches even ahead of the Christian gospels and epistles. Resorting to an examination of these Scriptures, Christians often defended the Jews against their critics. Christian use of Scripture could also, however, be turned against the Jews, especially through the creative use of allegorical interpretation, through which some of these writers found anti-Jewish denouncements on every page.

The Christians all made the claim that the Church was now the true, spiritual Israel, and had been prophesied to be so by the very prophets of the Jews themselves. The Church now stood in the place of the Jewish nation: they could actually call themselves “Jews” and talk about “our ancestors,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For the most part, this appropriation of Israel’s position did not bring with it the denigration of the old covenant under which Israel had stood before God. The law had not been voided, but fulfilled with a Church that was better than the former people of God, that enjoyed fuller revelation of who God is and what his requirements are. That new Israel now considered both God’s promises and warnings in the Scriptures to be directed to them.

Heretics continued to be regarded as a greater threat to the Church than the Jews. While heretics were excluded from the Church, Jews were invited to place their faith in Christ and join the Church through baptism. This was deemed possible because the Jews possessed the knowledge of who the Christ would be, even if they had to this point declined to see Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies. Archelaus is a notable case in which a father of the Church sided with the Jews against a heretical group, the followers of the dualist Manes. There were also writers who maligned the Jews with the heretics, seeing the former as the inspiration of the latter because both denied the full deity of Christ. Arians were specifically targeted because of their similarities to the Jews; or perhaps, the Jews’ status fell because of their similarity in some points with these deeply feared heretics who had recently appeared on the scene.

In either case, Christians felt the need to take up a strong defensive posture against the Judaizing efforts of the heretics. Some Christian writers perceived that the Jews were pridefully reveling in gains they had made at the Christians' expense at the end of the third century. At the same time, the tone of Christian anti-pagan apologetic also became more aggressive, suggesting that Christians during this time were feeling hard pressed from every direction.

As with other Christian Fathers, these writers accused the Jews of perpetual disobedience to God, idolatry, and rejection of God's messengers. They blamed the Jews for the death of Christ, and attributed their rejection, not to unbelief, but to envy and the fear of losing their authority and power. In spite of Jesus' sacrificial love for them, they put him to death and celebrated his demise. They followed up on this act by also persecuting Jesus' followers over several generations.

There were those who held out hope that the Jews would yet turn to Jesus, that through a demonstration of God's power they would become convinced that he is the Christ. These writers envisioned a Church marked by the unity of Jews and Greeks together as the people of God. Others seemed to have no such hope, and regarded the Jews as permanent recipients of God's wrath.

### **Eusebius of Caesarea**

Few people contributed more to the history of the early church than Eusebius of Caesarea. Bishop, historian, theologian and biblical commentator, he wielded a great influence over the Church, in his own time in the early fourth century and after. Although this dissertation commenced with a quotation regarding the Jews from

Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, the early bishop's impact on Jewish/Christian relations is best displayed in his *Proof of the Gospel*, also known as the *Demonstratio*. His other works will not be ignored, and the citation from the *Life* will be discussed in due course. However, it is to the *Proof* that one must turn first, in order to understand the basic approach and methodology with which Eusebius takes on this topic. Whether intended for the Jews themselves or for interested pagans who questioned the place of the Jews in Christian thinking, this work was intended to persuade its readers of the truth of Christianity based on its conformity to the prophecies of the "ancient Hebrew scriptures." It holds a unique place in the Eusebian corpus because it answered multiple needs of the Christian church of its time as "both a polemic and a manual of edification . . . for the educated pagan interested in Christianity or the recent convert, thereby creating an original *magnum opus*."<sup>170</sup>

Eusebius believed that he stood in a direct line with the Jews and their Scriptures. Against Gnostics and pagans who denied that the God of the Bible was the God of Creation, he sided with the Jews: "It was certainly the doctrine of the Hebrews, and the most famous philosophers agreed with them. . . . And Christ also taught us to expect a consummation and transformation of the whole into something better, in agreement with the Hebrew scriptures."<sup>171</sup>

Of the biblical writers, he says, "I propose to use as witnesses those men, beloved by God, whose fame you know to be far-spread in the world: Moses, I mean,

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<sup>170</sup> Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism*. Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2000, 75, 79-80.

<sup>171</sup> *Proof* 3.3.

and his successors, who shone with resplendent godliness, and the blessed prophets and sacred writers.”<sup>172</sup> He defended the Jewish prophets against heretics, who would make their work obsolete or even evil. He aims to “rebut the empty lies and blasphemy of godless heretics against the holy prophets by its exposition of the agreement of the new with the old.”<sup>173</sup> In addressing the controversy over the observance of Easter, he noted the parallels between the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb and that of Jesus, both slain on the fourteenth day of Nisan, and cited rabbinical support for that month as the time of “first and final redemption” predicted in biblical texts.<sup>174</sup>

He believed strongly that the writings of the Jews were divinely inspired, and as he began his work, he asserted:

And the importance of my writing does not lie in the fact that it is, as may be suggested, a polemic against the Jews. Perish the thought, far from that! For if they would fairly consider it, it is really on their side. For as it establishes Christianity on the basis of the antecedent prophecies, so it establishes Judaism from the complete fulfillment of its prophecies.<sup>175</sup>

He had unflinching confidence in the authority of the Jewish scriptures, and believed that they held sway over Christians as well as Jews:

But I will close here my vindication of the divine power of the Hebrew prophets. For it is right for us to obey them, if they teach us, as men inspired and wise, not according to humanity but by the breath of the Holy Spirit, and to submit to the discipline of their doctrine, and holy and infallible theology, which no longer involves any suspicion, that they include any elements alien to virtue and truth.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Proof 1, intro.*

<sup>173</sup> *Proof 1.1.*

<sup>174</sup> William L. Petersen, “Eusebius and the Paschal Controversy,” in *Eusebius and the Paschal Controversy*, 311-325.

<sup>175</sup> *Proof 1.1.*

<sup>176</sup> *Proof 5.1.*

He saw Jesus, not as the founder of a new religion, but as one who built on and affirmed the law of Moses, for “He did not in any way break Moses’ enactments, but rather crowned them, and was their fulfillment, and then passed on to the institution of the Gospel law. . . . He laid down a law suitable and possible for all. Nor did he forbid his Apostles to preach Moses’ law to all men, except when it was likely to be a stumbling-block to them.”<sup>177</sup> He believed that he would “authenticate Moses and the succeeding prophets, in that we accept the Christ and endeavor prayerfully to tread in the steps of his teaching, for so we do what Moses himself would approve.” The prophet Jeremiah was also seen to lend his support to Christ, for he brought “perfection and heavenliness, which he thought fit to inscribe not on tables of stone like Moses, nor yet with ink and parchment, but on the hearts of his pupils, purified and open to reason.”<sup>178</sup>

Jesus himself was proof of the importance of the Jewish race, for, according to Genesis 36, “Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born of the seed of Isaac, according to the flesh, in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, in learning through him of Almighty God, and in being taught through him to bless men dear to God.”<sup>179</sup>

Eusebius constantly quoted from the Jewish scriptures, and considered them to be perfectly clear in their meaning. He repeatedly uses the phrase, “This is clear enough to need no interpretation,” often when asserting a Christological interpretation of a particular Scripture which others might hesitate to so use.<sup>180</sup> The Jews did not fail to believe in the promise of a Messiah, yet they did not recognize the Messiah when he

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<sup>177</sup> *Proof 1.7.*

<sup>178</sup> *Proof 1.7.*

<sup>179</sup> *Proof 2.1.*

<sup>180</sup> *Proof 2.1, on Ps 21, 46.*

came: “But the doctrine of Christ is peculiar and common to the Hebrews and ourselves, and, though following their own Scriptures, they confess it equally with us, yet they fall far asunder from us, in not recognizing his Divinity . . .” The belief that Jesus was not just a man, but the Word of God who made the universe, was seen as a common truth “as also the holy oracles of the earliest Hebrew theologians and prophets mystically teach.”<sup>181</sup>

It was, in fact, the Word himself who made the law of Moses, in the face of desperate need and in a way that condescended to the lowly spiritual state of the Jews:

These and many other holy teachings and commands God the Word gave to them of old by Moses as delivering the elementary truths at the entry of the life of holiness, by means of symbols, and worship of a shadowy and external character, in bodily circumcision, and other things of that kind which were completed on the earth.<sup>182</sup>

He was comfortable enough in his use of the Scriptures that he claimed them as his own: “And I have also made it clear that their prophetic writings in their foresight of the future recorded our own calling through Christ, so that we make use of them not as books alien to us, but as our own property.”<sup>183</sup> Like his favorite Christian theologian, Origen, he was not adverse to Jewish influence on his interpretation of the Scriptures, as pointed out by Hollerich in regard to Eusebius’ *Commentary on Isaiah*:

Comparison of the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in the commentary with Eusebius’ earlier reading of it in the *Prophetic Selections* shows that he may have been influenced by discussion with Jewish exegetes. . . . Since Eusebius had practically no knowledge of Hebrew, the only source for this discovery must

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<sup>181</sup> *Proof* 4.1.

<sup>182</sup> *Proof* 4.10.

<sup>183</sup> *Proof* 3, intro.

have been Jewish exegetes in Caesarea, whom elsewhere in the commentary he admits he consulted.<sup>184</sup>

Eusebius defers to the Septuagint's rendition of the biblical texts, relying on both the original Jewish translators as well as later editors:

The seventy Hebrews in concert have translated them together, and I shall pay the greatest attention to them, because it is the custom of the Christian Church to use their work. But whenever necessary, I shall call in the help of the editions of the later translators, which the Jews are accustomed to use today, so that my proof may have stronger support from all sources. With this introduction, it now remains for me to treat of the inspired words.<sup>185</sup>

He further relies on specific biblical scholars with Jewish connections: Aquila, whom he identifies as “a proselyte, and not a Jew by birth,” and Symmachus, who “is said to be an Ebionite.” On more than one occasion, he sets Aquila, Symmachus and the Septuagint beside the Hebrew text for purposes of determining the most accurate translation.<sup>186</sup> He employs Jewish sources other than the Bible as well, showing both high regard and the existence of interaction between Christian and Jewish scholars during this period. One of his favorite Jewish sources is the historian Josephus.<sup>187</sup> He paid special attention to this source, since “Josephus carefully studied the additional comments of the expounders as well, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews as he was, hear his description of the events of those times . . .”<sup>188</sup> Eusebius seemed to take his scholarship seriously and tried to convey his diligence to his readers by citing the names of these

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<sup>184</sup> Michael J. Hollerich, “Eusebius as Polemical Interpreter” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 604.

<sup>185</sup> *Proof* 5.1, 231.

<sup>186</sup> *Proof* 7.1-2; 8.1-2.

<sup>187</sup> *Proof* 3.5; 8.2; 9.5.

<sup>188</sup> *Proof* 6.18.

sources, along with less frequent references to others Jewish and Christian sources, such as Theodotian, Philo, and Africanus.<sup>189</sup>

His links with Origen further tied him to Arius, Constantinople, the East, and the Jews.<sup>190</sup> He believed that in the Scripture were countless predictions of the coming of the Christ which were fulfilled in Jesus. Eusebius pointed to parallels between Jesus and prophets of the Old Testament, which for him were unmistakable proofs that he was the Messiah promised to the Jews through their Scriptures. None of these parallels was as striking or significant as that drawn between Jesus and Moses. Eusebius elaborates on this comparison extensively, as shown in the sampling included below:

Moses again by wonderful works and miracles authenticated the religion that he proclaimed: Christ likewise, using his recorded miracles to inspire faith in those who saw them, established the new discipline of the Gospel teaching. Moses again transferred the Jewish race from the bitterness of Egyptian slavery to freedom from their impious Egyptian idolatry under evil demons. . . . Moses fasted forty days continuously . . . and Christ likewise; Moses again fed the people in the wilderness. . . . And our Lord and Savior likewise says to his disciples: "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?" . . . Moses again went through the midst of the sea. . . . In the same way, only more divinely, Jesus the Christ of God walked on the sea. . . . Moses again made the sea dry. . . . In like manner, only much more grandly, our Savior "rebuked the winds, and the sea, and there was a great calm." Again when Moses descended from the Mount, his face was seen full of glory. . . . In the same way only more grandly our Savior led his disciples "to a very high mountain, and he was transfigured before them, and his face shone as the sun, and his garments were white like the light. . . ." Moses again legislates saying: "You shall not kill . . . . But our Savior, extending the law, not only forbids to kill, but also to be angry . . . . Even when they say that no man knew the death of Moses, or his sepulcher, so (none saw) our Savior's change after his Resurrection into the divine. If then no one but our Savior can be shown to have resembled Moses in so many ways, surely it only remains for us to apply to him, and to none other, the prophecy of Moses, in which he foretold that God would

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<sup>189</sup> *Proof* 7.1; 8.2.

<sup>190</sup> Petersen, 317-318.

raise up one like unto himself saying. . . . And Moses himself, interpreting the words to the people said “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you of your brothers, like me . . . .”<sup>191</sup>

Eusebius is convinced that this long, detailed comparison of Moses and Jesus leaves no room for disagreement with his conclusions: “I have then proved that the Divine Spirit prophesied through Moses of our Savior, if he alone and none other has been shown to fulfill the requirements of Moses’ words “and he shall be Lord over the Gentiles and his kingdom shall be exalted.”<sup>192</sup>

Eusebius did not avoid figurative interpretation when he thought it helpful. Of Isaiah 8, he asserts, “It is clear that the only way to preserve the sense of this passage is to explain it figuratively. Thus it means by the water of Siloam that goes softly, the Gospel teaching of the word of salvation.” He goes on to explain that the passage admits of both literal and figurative usage without violating its divine purpose: “And this I have interpreted, so as to show that most prophecies can be explained either literally or figuratively. Hence we must proceed to consider the remainder of the prophecy before us in both ways.”<sup>193</sup> The urgency of the need to make an apologetic point could drive Eusebius’ readiness to resort to allegory, as explained by Hollerich: “Allegorical conventions helped Eusebius to find allusions to the calling of the gentiles wherever the text used common nouns such as forest, deserts, animals, etc. as well as certain proper nouns.”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Proof 3.2.*

<sup>192</sup> *Proof 3.2, 109.*

<sup>193</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>194</sup> Hollerich, “Eusebius as Polemical Interpreter” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 585-615.

Central to his use of the Scriptures is Eusebius' belief that their focal point is the person of Christ, to whom they consistently point. Moses was the first to use the name Jesus, when he prophetically "changed the name of his successor and altered it to Jesus."<sup>195</sup> Throughout the prophets, "The Christ is called the governor and shepherd of Israel."<sup>196</sup> The "Angel of the Lord" who appears to people in the Jewish scriptures was the Son of God in his pre-incarnate form: "the Being who was seen must have been the Word of God, whom we call Lord as we do the Father."<sup>197</sup> This divine angel, the pre-incarnate Christ, also revealed himself to the Jews in other forms, including the pillar of fire and cloud in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt, of which Eusebius says, "And I have already shown that this was not the Almighty God, but another Being whom we name, as the Word of God, the Christ who was seen for the sake of the multitude of Moses and the people in a pillar of cloud . . ."<sup>198</sup> The prophecy of Isaiah about the suffering servant, "As a sheep he was led to slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before here shearers," finds its fulfillment in Jesus, "the Lamb of God," as does the prophetic voice of Jeremiah, who says of himself, "I was led as a lamb to the slaughter." Both of these prophets' messages found their fulfillment in the one of whom John Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God."<sup>199</sup>

The relationship of Christ to his heavenly Father, his sovereignty over the entire world, and even the place of his birth are seen in the prophecies of the Jewish writings:

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<sup>195</sup> *Proof 4.17*; Joshua (*Yeshua*) was Jesus' real name.

<sup>196</sup> *Proof 7.2*.

<sup>197</sup> *Proof 1.5*.

<sup>198</sup> *Proof 5.14*.

<sup>199</sup> *Proof 1.10*.

And it was said also to David that “of the fruit of your body shall one be raised up,” about whom God says further on: “He shall call on me, You are my father; and I will make him my firstborn.” And about him he says again, “And he shall rule from the one sea to the other, and from the rivers even unto the ends of the world.” And once more, “All the Gentiles shall serve him, and all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed in him.” And moreover, the definite place of his prophesied birth is foretold by Micah, saying: “And you, Bethlehem, House of Ephratha, are the least that can be among the thousands of Judah. Out of you shall come a leader, who shall feed my people Israel.”

Employing a combination of translations from Aquila and Theodotion, Eusebius finds in the prophet Isaiah that “the child that is ‘a suckling and nurtured at the breast’ exactly therefore shows forth the birth of Christ, and ‘the thirsty and untrodden land’ the Virgin that bare him.” Similarly, the same prophet speaks of Christ’s vicarious death: “He was wounded for our sins and bruised for our iniquities.”<sup>200</sup> In short, “the inspired prophets going in every way into the midst of the Jewish synagogues, heralded the coming of the Christ.”<sup>201</sup>

Eusebius is insistent that the Christ found in the Hebrew scriptures is not merely a man, but is, in fact, the divine Son, the one who made the universe: “It is now time to see how the teaching of the Hebrews shows that the true Christ of God possesses a divine nature higher than humanity.”<sup>202</sup>

Further, this divine Son revealed in the Jewish scriptures was also predicted by them to become incarnate in human form. At the end of the fifth book of the *Proof*, Eusebius claims to have demonstrated the deity of Christ by “thirty prophetic quotations,” leaving only the task of proving “from the holy books of the Hebrews that

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<sup>200</sup> *Proof* 3.2.

<sup>201</sup> *Proof* 9.9.

<sup>202</sup> *Proof* 4.15.

it was necessary for this same God to come to men.”<sup>203</sup> Of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 he concludes: “And what could the contest and labor or the toil of this God in the prophecy refer to but his entry by human birth, as I and the Septuagint interpret it, of a virgin, or even according to the current Jewish rendering, of a young woman?” This prophesied child could be no other than the divine messiah, for he would be “God with us,” thereby ruling out a strictly human person as a fulfillment such as Hezekiah or another Jewish king.<sup>204</sup> The words of the Jewish scriptures not only allow this, but demand it, “for what else could the tabernacle of the God of Jacob be but the Body of Christ which was born at Bethlehem, in which, as in a tabernacle, the divinity of the Only-begotten dwelt?”<sup>205</sup>

He asserts that belief in Jesus as the Christ “is strictly in agreement with what the prophets witness about him.”<sup>206</sup> The spread of the Christian gospel throughout the world is seen in Isaiah 2:3, “out of Zion shall go forth a law,” as he observes, “This law going forth from Zion, different from the law enacted in the desert by Moses on Mount Sinai, what can it be but the word of the Gospel, ‘going forth from Zion’ through our Savior Jesus Christ, and going through all the nations?”<sup>207</sup> In short, “the doctrine connected with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in its wonderful dispensation shall be supported from the Hebrew prophecies as presently their evidence will show; the new

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<sup>203</sup> *Proof 5.*

<sup>204</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>205</sup> *Proof 7.2.*

<sup>206</sup> *Proof 1.1, 5.*

<sup>207</sup> *Proof 1.4, 24.*

Scriptures shall prove the old, and the Gospels set their seal on the prophetic evidence.”<sup>208</sup>

All that has been said so far regarding Eusebius would suggest that he embraced the Jewish heritage of the Church and sought continuity, rather than conflict, with this heritage. Quite the opposite is true. Sellev speaks legitimately of “Eusebius’ disparaging treatment of Jewish Christianity,” and describes how this resulted in his terse presentation of *Matthew* as a gospel written in Hebrew for Jewish Christians, as well as his rejection of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*.<sup>209</sup> Hollerich points out that Eusebius drew heavily on the arguments and interpretations of Justin Martyr against the Jews, echoing that apologist’s charge that the Gentiles have been included even as Israel has been rejected for its repudiation of Jesus as the Christ.<sup>210</sup> While clearly indebted to Jewish influence for his interpretation of the Scriptures, he was sharply critical of Jewish exegesis, accusing the Jews of external ritualism, rejection of the Messiah, wrongful exclusion of the Gentiles, and mistreatment of biblical messianic texts through “superficial literalism.”<sup>211</sup> Eusebius seeks to confront Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures, so that he can “eliminate the judaizing inclination of his readers, and also to stress the difference between the correct Christian understanding of Scripture and the simplistic, sometimes foolish understanding on the part of the Jews.”<sup>212</sup> Horsley speaks of a “heritage of hostility” between Eusebius and the Jews, and believes that at times

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<sup>208</sup> *Proof* 4.15, 191.

<sup>209</sup> Philip Sellev, “Eusebius and the Gospels,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 110-138.

<sup>210</sup> Hollerich, 602.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 598, 607.

<sup>212</sup> Kofsky, 56.

Eusebius wants to “write history primarily as the vindication of Christ the Savior against the dastardly deeds of the Jews.”<sup>213</sup>

Eusebius identified the Church as a distinct third option, contrasted with both Judaism and polytheism, even as it built on the religious beliefs of both, as he begins his *Proof* “with an invocation of the God of the Jews and Greeks alike in our Savior’s name.”<sup>214</sup> He asserted that he incurred the wrath of pagans because “in recognizing the Hebrew oracles we honor the work of barbarians more than those of the Greeks.” He equally offended the Jews: “. . . they claim to be justly incensed against us, because we do not embrace their manner of life, as we make use of their sacred writings.”<sup>215</sup> Eusebius saw Judaism as infused with a spirit of dark idolatry as much as pagan religions were, for as he remarked concerning Isaiah’s perspective on the destruction of the military enemies of King Ahaz, “the defeat of their spiritual and unseen foes will be as complete, those demons and unseen powers . . . for having involved not only the Jewish race but the whole of mankind in every form of evil, and especially in godless idolatry.”<sup>216</sup> He believed that demonic powers were responsible for false religion, and that before the coming of Christ, they “enslaved the Hebrew race as well as the rest of mankind in the practice of impiety and idolatry.”<sup>217</sup>

In common with the patriarchs, Christians “turned their backs on the errors of polytheism, they relinquished idolatrous superstition, they looked beyond the whole of

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<sup>213</sup> Richard Horsley, “Jesus and Judaism—Christian Perspectives,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 53.

<sup>214</sup> *Proof* 1.2.

<sup>215</sup> *Proof* 1.1.

<sup>216</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

<sup>217</sup> *Proof* 6.13.

the visible creation and deified neither sun nor moon, nor any part of the whole. They raised themselves to the Supreme God, himself the highest, the creator of heaven and earth." From Psalm 105:12, "Touch not my Christs, and do no evil to my prophets," Eusebius concludes that "this must be referred to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: they therefore shared the name of Christ with us." As Christians preach Christ's gospel of holiness throughout the world without reference to the Mosaic Law, "so by these men of old time the independent ideal of holiness was upheld. They cared nothing for circumcision, nor do we. They did not abstain from eating certain beasts, neither do we." Regarding Christian beliefs about demons and other spiritual forces arrayed against God and his people, Eusebius claims, "Whatever teaching of this kind is found in the doctrine of our Savior is exactly the same religious instruction as the godly men and prophets of the Hebrews gave."<sup>218</sup> Although Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others had ordinarily been considered part of the Jewish heritage, "they could not properly be called Jews, inasmuch as the system of Moses' law had not yet been brought into being."<sup>219</sup> If they were not Jews, they were then advocates of some other religion which, by its primeval origin, lays claim to the greatest antiquity, and therefore the greatest honor, of all religions:

This compels us to some other ideal of religion, by which they must have guided their lives. Would not this be exactly that third form of religion midway between Judaism and Hellenism, which I have already deduced, as the most ancient and most venerable of all religions, and which has been preached of late to all nations through our Savior. Christianity would therefore be not a form of Hellenism nor of Judaism, but something between the two, the most ancient

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<sup>218</sup> *Proof* 3.3; 4.15.

<sup>219</sup> *Proof* 1.2.

organization for holiness, and the most venerable philosophy, only lately codified as the law for all mankind in the whole world. The convert from Hellenism to Christianity does not land in Judaism, nor does one who rejects the Jewish worship become *ipso facto* a Greek. From whichever side they come, whether it be Hellenism or Judaism, they find their place in that intermediate law of life preached by the godly and holy men of old time, which our Lord and Savior has raised up anew after its long sleep, in accordance with Moses' own prophecies, and those of other prophets on the point.<sup>220</sup>

Christianity is, therefore, not merely similar in certain respects to the religion of the patriarchs. It is actually "a renewal of the ancient pre-Mosaic religion, in which Abraham, the friend of God, and his forefathers are shown to have lived." Christians are "partakers of the religion of these men of old time."<sup>221</sup> The Christian priesthood predated that of the Jews, as it existed in Melchizedek and Adam. It also co-existed with Jewish priests, thereby connecting Christ to the patriarchs.<sup>222</sup> As Droge observes: "To express his vision of history and Christianity's place in it Eusebius was required to rewrite the past histories of paganism and Judaism, and the recent history of heresy. The result was an unbroken line running from Abraham through Christ down to the Christianity Eusebius knew."<sup>223</sup>

In presenting Christianity as the ultimate revelation of God to mankind, he set it apart from both Jewish and Gentile religions that had preceded it: "For as it has escaped the Greek godlessness, error, superstition, unbridled lust and disorder, so it has left

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<sup>220</sup> *Proof* 1.2.

<sup>221</sup> *Proof* 1.5, see Kofsky, 88.

<sup>222</sup> Simon, 85.

<sup>223</sup> Droge, 506-507.

behind Jewish unprofitable observances, designed by Moses to meet the needs of those who were like infants and invalids.”<sup>224</sup>

Specifically in regard to Judaism, that parent faith of Christianity was now to be left behind for the new and better way: “So then we are not apostates from Hellenism who have embraced Judaism, nor are we at fault in accepting the law of Moses and the Hebrew Prophets, and we do not live as Jews, but according to the system of the men of God who lived before Moses.”<sup>225</sup>

Differences between the manner of life of Christians in Eusebius’ time and that of the ancient patriarchs were due, not to belief, but to different circumstances, e.g., in regards to marriage and childbearing. Although the patriarchs, in their more relaxed world, “were able to worship God without distraction from their wives and children and domestic cares, and were in no way drawn by external things from the things that mattered most,” Eusebius observes, “in our day the men are necessarily devoted to celibacy that they may have leisure for higher things; they have undertaken to bring up not one or two children but a prodigious number, and to educate them in godliness, and to care for their life generally.”<sup>226</sup> The same could be true for the use of animal sacrifices by the patriarchs, which was obviously absent from Christian practice, for “the former sacrifices ceased at once because of the better and true Sacrifice.”<sup>227</sup>

Christians were not Jews, but Hebrews, as Eusebius makes a distinction between those two, the former referring to those who followed the law of Moses, the latter to

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<sup>224</sup> *Proof 1.6.*

<sup>225</sup> *Proof 1.7.*

<sup>226</sup> *Proof 1.9.*

<sup>227</sup> *Proof 1.10.*

those who lived in the simple faith of the patriarchs.<sup>228</sup> Judaism, unlike the ancient religion of the patriarchs, or the renewal of that faith in Christianity, was a religion with its own rites, such as observance of the Sabbath and circumcision,<sup>229</sup> which were limited to a specific time in a specific place. Between Abraham and Christ, the written law is a “transitory phase,” awaiting its completion in a renewal of the religion of Abraham: “it was altogether necessary to set up another kind of religion different from the law of Moses, that all the nations of the world might take it as their guide with Abraham, and receive an equal share of blessing with him.”<sup>230</sup> The contrast between the old order and the new could not have been sharper than it is:

But Moses was leader of but one nation, and his legislation has been proved to be only applicable to that one nation; whereas the Christ of God, receiving the promise from his Father, “desire of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance,” as being established by his Father the Giver of the new law of holiness not to the Jews only, but to the whole human race, in calling all nations set before them a legislation that they could obey and that suited them.<sup>231</sup>

In contrast to the restricted nature of Judaism, Christianity reached out to all people in all times, bearing the stamp of approval of none other than Moses, the author of the old law:

Hence, of course, our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Son of God, said to his disciples after his resurrection: “Go and make disciples of all nations,” and added: “Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” For he did not bid them to teach the laws of Moses to all nations, but whatsoever he himself had commanded: that is to say, the contents of the Gospels.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> *Proof* 4.1.

<sup>229</sup> Simon, 82.

<sup>230</sup> *Proof* 1.2-3.

<sup>231</sup> *Proof* 9.11.

<sup>232</sup> *Proof* 1.3, 1.5.

This new dispensation “showed clearly the righteousness of God, who reckoned the whole of mankind worthy of the calling of God. Such was not the Mosaic dispensation, which was given to the Jews only: wherefore having appeared for a time it has passed away.”<sup>233</sup>

Not only was the Mosaic order subject to obsolescence because of its restricted scope, it was also flawed because of the very nature of its purpose and origin. People who lived before Moses followed God faithfully without this law: “What need had they of the commandments of Moses, which were given to weak and sinful men?”<sup>234</sup> At best, the law of Moses could be characterized as “elementary but helpful.”<sup>235</sup> At worst, it was to those who were subjected to it “an external yoke” and an oppressive burden which “pressed on their neck.”<sup>236</sup>

The inferiority of the Mosaic system arose from the depravity of those to whom it was given. Nothing better would have suited them:

It was like a nurse and governess of childish and imperfect souls. It was like a doctor to heal the whole Jewish race, worn away by the terrible disease of Egypt. As such it offered a lower and less perfect way of life to the children of Abraham, who were too weak to follow in the steps of their forefathers. For through their long sojourn in Egypt, after the death of their godly forefathers, they adopted Egyptian customs, and as I said, fell into idolatrous superstition. . . . Moses tore them from their godless polytheism, he led them back to God, the Creator of all things; he drew them up as it were from an abyss of evil, but it was natural for him to build this first step of holiness at the threshold and entrance to the Temple of the more Perfect.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *Proof 8.2.*

<sup>234</sup> *Proof 1.6.*

<sup>235</sup> *Proof 8.1.*

<sup>236</sup> *Proof 9.8.*

<sup>237</sup> *Proof 1.6.*

As a result of this assessment, Eusebius concluded that the church was free from any obligation to follow Jewish ways, even as it accepted the Jewish scriptures to the extent that they legitimized the new faith: “And, therefore, we reject Jewish customs, on the ground that they were not laid down for us, and that it is impossible to accommodate them to the needs of the Gentiles while we gladly accept the Jewish prophecies as containing predictions about ourselves.”<sup>238</sup> This rejection was not due entirely to the limitations of Judaism, but also rested on the conviction that in Christianity was available the fulfillment of all that was good in the old way: “And we, who have received both the truth and the archetypes of the early copies through the mysterious dispensation of Christ, can have no further need for the things of old.”<sup>239</sup> Observance of the Eucharist, along with personal consecration, is seen as religious devotion more pure than the rites of the old faith: “For these are more acceptable to him, so we are taught, than a multitude of sacrifices offered with blood and smoke and fat.”<sup>240</sup> This theme is brought out from the writings of the Jewish prophets themselves. Of Isaiah’s rebuke of his people for vain sacrifices, Eusebius concludes, “Thus it takes away what belongs to the Mosaic law, and introduces in its place another mode of the forgiveness of sins, through the washing of salvation and the life preached in accordance with it.”<sup>241</sup> The old way was never intended to do anything but point to the need for a new way, being merely a “Mosaic circle of symbols and signs and bodily ordinances.”<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *Proof* 1.7.

<sup>239</sup> *Proof* 1.10.

<sup>240</sup> *Proof* 1.10.

<sup>241</sup> *Proof* 2.3.

<sup>242</sup> *Proof* 2.3.

In order to further his case against the continued validity of Judaism, Eusebius asserted, as had many of his Christian predecessors, that the Jews had, after all, continually rebelled against God throughout all of their history. Moses was not just a savior from oppression, but was also a corrective judge over an ungodly people: “He found them attached to the deceitful polytheism of Egypt, and was the first to turn them from it, by enacting the severest punishment for idolatry.”<sup>243</sup> The law of Moses was, therefore, not a reflection of the perfect will of God, but a necessary corrective to people who were enamored of the ways of other nations. Eusebius passes on to his readers the word that it was “a common charge against the Jews themselves, that they worshipped idols on every high mountain in imitation of foreign nation.”<sup>244</sup> Reflecting on Psalm 98 and the words of Jeremiah, he concludes, “For the old covenant was given as a law to the Jews, when they had fallen from the religion of their forefathers, and had embraced the manners and life of the Egyptians, and had declined to the errors of polytheism, and the idolatrous superstitions of the Gentiles.” Israel’s sinfulness was so deep and perverse that it explains why God concealed in the Scriptures the prophecies of Jewish apostasy and Gentile inclusion:

Wonder not if this is expressed in dark and riddling figures. For I have already attributed the cause of such economy of Scripture to the desire to hide the final destruction of the Jewish race, so that they might preserve the Scriptures for our benefit and use. For if the prophets had openly predicted destruction for them, and prosperity for the Gentiles, none of the Jews would have loved them, but they would have destroyed their writings as hostile and opposed to them . . .<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> *Proof* 3.2.

<sup>244</sup> *Proof* 6.9.

<sup>245</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

The worst offense of Israel, of course, was their rejection of Jesus as their Christ. Eusebius accused the Jews of “attacking” Jesus, instead of listening to his teaching.<sup>246</sup> In light of the nation’s persistent rebelliousness, and in light of the prophetic witness of their own Scriptures, this came as no surprise to Eusebius:

They foretell the Jews’ disbelief in him, and disputing, the plots of the rulers, the envy of the Scribes, the treachery of one of his disciples, the schemes of the enemies, the accusations of false witnesses, the condemnations of his judges, the shameful violence, unspeakable scourging, ill-omened abuse, and, crowning all, the death of shame. They portray Christ’s wonderful silence, his gentleness and fortitude, and the unimaginable depths of his forbearance and forgiveness.<sup>247</sup>

The words of the prophets that describe sharply the sins of the people of their own times are applied directly by Eusebius to the generation of the Jews in the time of Jesus, as seen in his exposition of Psalm 118:22, “The stone which the builders refused the same is become the head of the corner. This is of the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Eusebius concludes: “This oracle too indubitably indicates the Jewish conspiracy against the subject of the prophecy, how he has been set at naught by the builders of the old wall, meaning the Scribes and Pharisees, the High-Priests and all the rulers of the Jews.”<sup>248</sup> When Isaiah refers to the leaders and people of his time as “rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah,” and says to them, “your hands are full of blood,” Eusebius sees a prophetic allusion to the Jews’ actions against Jesus: “Since he so very clearly mentions someone’s blood, and a plot against some one just man, what could this be but the plot against our Savior Jesus Christ?”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> *Proof 8.2.*

<sup>247</sup> *Proof 1.1.*

<sup>248</sup> *Proof 1.7.*

<sup>249</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

The guilt of the Jews in this matter was overwhelmingly evident to Eusebius, for “the nature and number of his sufferings at the hands of the Jews” could not be passed over in an accurate account of the gospel.<sup>250</sup> The failure of the Jews to believe in Christ was due to their spiritual blindness, as explained in the seventh chapter of Isaiah: “For though they hear daily with their ears the prophecies about Christ, they hear them not with the ears of their mind.”<sup>251</sup> They had the opportunity to receive God’s messenger, but refused: “For when they heard our Savior teaching among them, and would not listen with their mind’s ear, nor understood who he was, seeing him with their eyes, but not beholding him with the eyes of their spirit, they hardened their heart, and all but closed the eyes of their mind, and made their ears heavy.”<sup>252</sup> The strength of the Jewish opposition stunned Eusebius and caused him to wonder how it could be: “As this is before our eyes even now, it is extraordinary that the Jews are not only so daring as to refuse to see what is clear but so blind and dark in their minds as well as not to be able to see the clear and evident fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>253</sup>

The persistent rebelliousness of the Jews and their eventual persecution of the divine Christ Jesus resulted in grave consequences. Their self-imposed destruction was, like the sinfulness which caused it, foreseen by the prophets:

How their kingdom, that had continued from the days of a remote ancestry to their own, would be utterly destroyed after their sin against Christ; how their fathers’ laws would be abrogated, they themselves deprived of their ancient worship, robbed of the independence of their forefathers, and made slaves of their enemies, instead of free men; how their royal metropolis would be burned

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<sup>250</sup> *Proof 3.7.*

<sup>251</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>252</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

<sup>253</sup> *Proof 8.2.*

with fire, their venerable and holy altar undergo the flames and extreme desolation, their city be inhabited no longer by its old possessors but by races of other stock, while they would be dispersed among the Gentiles through the whole world, with never a hope of any cessation of evil, or breathing-space from troubles.<sup>254</sup>

Eusebius notes that Isaiah, after prophesying that the Gentiles would find their place among the children of Abraham, “proceeds to add about the Jews: ‘For he has rejected his people, the house of the God of Jacob.’” This rejection was linked to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah, as Eusebius comments that “the Jews themselves are utterly desolate,” and notes that this process commenced with their rejection of him:

When was this fulfilled, except from the times of our Savior . . . “Your house is left unto you desolate from that moment and not long after the prediction they were besieged by the Romans and brought to desolation. . . . The Scripture, as I suppose, means by this, that after the first siege, which they are recorded to have undergone in the time of the apostles, and of Vespasian, Emperor of the Romans, being a second time besieged again under Hadrian they were completely debarred from entering the place, so that they were not even allowed to tread the soil of Jerusalem.<sup>255</sup>

The words of Zechariah 14 predict “the final siege of the people by the Romans, through which the whole Jewish race was to become subject to their enemies.” Jeremiah and Ezekiel also prophesied “the destruction of all their race,” occurring as the result of their rejection of Jesus as their Christ.<sup>256</sup>

This change of fortunes for the Jews pertained to material as well as spiritual consequences, such as the “siege of Jerusalem, and the total desolation of their ancient Temple, and the settling of foreign races on their land, enslaving them with stings, that

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<sup>254</sup> *Proof 1.1.*

<sup>255</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

<sup>256</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

is to say with harsh enactments.”<sup>257</sup> Eusebius could say as a matter of fact, rather than as an assertion to be proven, “And we can see that from our Savior’s time by the siege of Jerusalem the independence and national power of the Jewish race that existed up till then was destroyed and utterly cast away.”<sup>258</sup> From the time of Jesus forward to his own day, the land of Israel had been characterized by conditions which stood as clear fulfillments of the prophets’ declarations:

For from that time to this utter desolation has possessed the land; their once famous Mount Zion instead of being as once it was the center of study and education based on the divine prophecies, which the children of the Hebrews of old, their godly prophets, priests, and national teachers loved to interpret, is a Roman farm like the rest of the country, yes, with my own eyes I have seen the bulls plowing there, and the sacred site sown with seed.<sup>259</sup>

The prophecies that the Jews would suffer total desolation, for example from Micah 1, could be seen fulfilled in Eusebius’ day in both literal and figurative ways:

And who could deny that this was fulfilled after the time of our Savior Jesus Christ, when he sees all these things not only shaken, but abolished? . . . we have seen in our own time Zion once so famous ploughed with yokes of oxen by the Romans and utterly devastated, and Jerusalem, as the oracle says, deserted like a lodge. And this has come to pass precisely because of their impieties, for the sake of which the Heavenly Word has come forth from his own place.<sup>260</sup>

The visible physical destruction of Israel was seen in the prophecies of Isaiah under the guise of enemies of the nation centuries before. That Rome is, for obvious reasons, not mentioned by name by the prophet Micah, is no problem, for it is plain to Eusebius that it is represented by the Assyrian power which threatened Israel in Isaiah’s time, symbolized by Isaiah as a great, flooding river:

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<sup>257</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

<sup>258</sup> *Proof* 9.4.

<sup>259</sup> *Proof* 8.3-4.

<sup>260</sup> *Proof* 6.13.

He will bring the strong and full flood of the river, which the word of the prophecy interprets for us to be the king of the Assyrians: Meaning here again either figuratively the Prince of this world, or the power of Rome actually dominant, to which they were delivered who rejected the said water of Siloam that went softly, and embraced beliefs utterly hostile to good teaching. At once surely and without delay on those who rejected the Gospel of our Savior, and refused the water of Siloam that went softly, the Roman army came under God's direction through all their valleys, trod down all their walls, took away from Judea every man who could raise his head, or was able to do anything at all, and so great was their camp that it filled the whole breadth of Judea.

Eusebius also relied on the historical record to demonstrate his contention that Jewish desolation was the result of Jewish rejection of Christ. In fulfillment of Isaiah 8, he claimed, the Romans deprived Syria and Palestine of their native kings:

And we know from history that until the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ the kingdoms of Judea and Damascus continued, but that after his appearance to all men, they ceased in accordance with the prophecy, for the Roman Empire absorbed them concurrently with the preaching of our Savior.<sup>261</sup>

Pontius Pilate, Nero, Titus, Vespasian, and Hadrian were unwittingly executing divine judgment on the Jews because they had "outraged" Jesus:

For after the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, their city, Jerusalem itself, and the whole system and their city, Jerusalem itself, and the whole system and institutions of the Mosaic worship were destroyed; and at once they underwent captivity in mind as well as body, in refusing to accept the Savior and Ransomer of the souls of men.<sup>262</sup>

The physical destruction of Jerusalem guaranteed the cessation of the Mosaic system which should have ended of its own accord when Jesus came to fulfill it:

"... the outward and lower worship of the Mosaic Law was prevented any longer from activity by the earthquake which according to his prophecy came upon the Jewish race,

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<sup>261</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>262</sup> *Proof 6.18.*

and by the other causes recorded.” There was also a spiritual accompaniment of this destruction, “so that the light of the Gospel should not shine in their hearts.”<sup>263</sup> This darkening of the spiritual understanding was not only a result of their decision against Jesus, it was also a contributing cause to that decision, the punishment inflicted on them by God, who had tired of their persistent disobedience:

After this prophecy, the prophet next proceeds to bear witness, that though the whole earth shall be full of his glory, yet the Jewish race shall not participate. . . . Here he expressly foretells the opposition of the Jews to him, and how they will see him, and not understand who he is; how they will hear him, speaking and teaching them, but will be quite unable to grasp who it is that speaks with them, or the new teaching he offers them.<sup>264</sup>

This was not an unimportant point to Eusebius, because he believed that prophetic declaration of the just punishment of the Jews afforded to the Church a superior position: “Yes, the Hebrew oracles foretell distinctly the fall and ruin of the Jewish race through their disbelief in Christ, so that we should no longer appear equal to them, but better than they.”<sup>265</sup> The Church succeeded the Jews because the Jews earned the permanent disfavor of God: “On whom also Scripture foretells an extreme curse, adding a lamentation for the Jewish race, which actually overtook them immediately after their impiety against our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>266</sup>

No longer would reconciliation with God be available through the Jewish rites. God had both blinded the spiritual eyes of the Jews and deprived their ritual of its efficacy, passing it on to another: “. . . because the forgiveness of sins was no longer

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<sup>263</sup> *Proof 6.18.*

<sup>264</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>265</sup> *Proof 2.2.*

<sup>266</sup> *Proof 4.16.*

extended to them by the legal sacrifices, but by the cleansing and washing delivered to her that was before thirsty and deserted; I mean the Gentile Church.”<sup>267</sup> True religion, reflecting not mere human ritual but real connection with the divine, was now found apart from the trappings of the Mosaic law: “He has transferred the glory of Jerusalem to the desert of Jordan, since, from the times of John, the ritual of holiness began to be performed not at Jerusalem but in the desert.”<sup>268</sup> Even the places in which Jesus ministered, and from which he called his disciples, were chosen to display this shift away from the Jews to the Gentiles: “Now why did he pass most of his life in Galilee of the Gentiles? Surely that he might make a beginning of the calling of the Gentiles, for he called his disciples from thence.”<sup>269</sup>

The extent of this destruction was not merely to be found in its severity, but also in its permanence. “The souls of the Jews,” he says, “because of the contrast of their wretchedness with their former exaltation, bewailing the passing of the aforesaid glory, will melt like wax before the fire, and be as water rushing down a chasm, through the multitude of those that fall from bad to worse.”<sup>270</sup> Eusebius cites Daniel’s “seven times seventy weeks” as evidence that God had determined in that prophet’s time that the expiration of the Jews as a nation had already been determined: “It is quite clear that seven times seventy weeks reckoned in years amounts to 490. That was therefore the period determined for Daniel’s people, which limited the total length of the Jewish nation’s existence.” Eusebius found the fulfillment of this prophecy in the events of the

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<sup>267</sup> *Proof 9.5.*

<sup>268</sup> *Proof 9.6.*

<sup>269</sup> *Proof 9.8.*

<sup>270</sup> *Proof 8.3.*

times of Jesus, asserting that Daniel's mention of the "Christ" was not actually a reference to the Messiah of God, but a generic allusion to the political and religious leaders of the Jews:

It says then that Christ shall be cast out after the completion of the said weeks. Who can this be but the governor and ruler of the high-priestly line? He remained therefore until the weeks were fulfilled; and when they came to an end, the ruler of the nation in the line of succession was cut off as the prophecy foretold. And this was Hyrcanus, whom Herod murdered, and seized the kingdom on which he had no special claim, and he was its first king of alien stock.

The joint high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas referred to in the Gospels is further evidence for Eusebius that the "old rules" have been set aside: "For how could they both be high-priest at the same time unless the rules of the high-priesthood were disregarded?"<sup>271</sup>

Eusebius asserted that this overwhelming picture of judgment on the Jews was exactly as it should be, based on the depth of their sinfulness. Their rejection of Christ was not an isolated incident, but only the most recent, and most dastardly, of a long history of rebellious acts which called out for justice: "The Jewish nation, not receiving him that was foretold, has paid the fit penalty according to the divine prediction."<sup>272</sup>

As a result of God's dismissal of the Jews as his chosen people, the way has now been opened for the Church to supplant them and inherit their promises. The weight of prophecy is said to indicate a reversal of the spiritual fortunes of the peoples of the world: "The prophecy plainly foretells the change of each of these divisions to

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<sup>271</sup> *Proof* 8.2.

<sup>272</sup> *Proof* 9.12.

the opposite of what they were before, the change of the Jewish nations from better to worse, and the change of the Gentile Church from its old desolation to a divine fruitfulness . . .”<sup>273</sup>

According to Psalm 17, “the call of the Gentiles” will accompany this rejection of Israel.<sup>274</sup> This is also evident in the prophets, who “could preach the good news that though one race were lost every nation and every race of men could know God, escape from the demons, cease from ignorance and deceit and enjoy the light of holiness . . . they could see churches of Christ established by their means among all nations.”<sup>275</sup>

In the words of the Jewish scriptures, Eusebius expressed his conviction that the transmission of the promises of God from Israel to a Church of all nations was as much as a completed fact.

“ . . . That God is King” not only of the Jewish race in the future, he says, but “of all the earth, sing with understanding” . . . For from that day to this all men throughout all the world have been called, and all the nations of the east and west. And the Jewish worship has ceased and been abolished, all men being called to worship according to the new Covenant of the preaching of the Gospel, and not according to the law of Moses . . . the new Covenant, by the whole earth, not by the Jewish race; and that the good news will be no longer for Israel, but for all the nations, since it says that the Lord who is to come will be their King.<sup>276</sup>

Even the Christian pilgrimages of his own day take on prophetic significance as the fulfillment of Ezekiel 11:22, “And the Cherubim lifted their wings and the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was on them above them, and he stood on the mount which was opposite to the city:”

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<sup>273</sup> *Proof 7.1; 9.1.*

<sup>274</sup> *Proof 6.1.*

<sup>275</sup> *Proof 1.1.*

<sup>276</sup> *Proof 6.2-4.*

Which it is possible for us to see literally fulfilled in another way even to-day since believers in Christ all congregate from all parts of the world, not as of old time because of the glory of Jerusalem, nor that they may worship in the ancient Temple at Jerusalem, but they rest there that they may learn both about the city being taken and devastated as the prophets foretold, and that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite to the city, whither the glory of the Lord migrated when it left the former city.

And of Malachi 4:2, “that the Mount of Olives shall be divided,” he says: “It possibly shows the expansion of the church throughout the whole inhabited world . . . and it is possible that by its divisions is figuratively meant the schisms and heresies and moral declensions in everyday life that have taken place in the Church of Christ, and are even now taking place . . .”<sup>277</sup> He similarly reads Micah 4 as pertaining to the Church, and not to Israel: “‘A law shall go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and it shall judge in the midst of the nations,’ it says: ‘The Lord shall be King.’ He shall not be King in Jerusalem, nor of the Jewish race; but, over all the earth in that day.”<sup>278</sup>

The Jewish feast of Tabernacles is now, as was predicted by the prophets, observed by all the nations, not by the erection of tents or booths, but by the appearance of “local Christian churches,” in Egypt and around the world, “for the power of our Savior Jesus Christ has pegged them far better than Moses’ tents through the whole world, so that every race of men and all the Gentiles may keep their Feast of Tabernacles to Almighty God.”<sup>279</sup> Both the demise of the Jews and the inclusion of the Gentiles are seen in the prophetic Scriptures: “Thus, then, the Hebrew scriptures contain

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<sup>277</sup> *Proof* 6.18.

<sup>278</sup> *Proof* 6.18.

<sup>279</sup> *Proof* 8.4.

the double message that Emmanuel would be rejected by the Jews and cause their great miseries, and that he would be accepted by us Gentiles and prove himself our source of salvation and of the knowledge of God.”<sup>280</sup>

Through such exposition of various Scripture texts he asserts, “I have proved the inclusion of the Gentiles in the divine promise,” and attributes this inclusion to the forecasted work of Jesus as “the Savior, not only of the Jews, but of the whole Gentile world.”<sup>281</sup> In fulfillment of messianic prophecies about himself, e.g., Psalm 2, Christ declares his ownership of the nations: “And thus he no longer claimed as under his own authority just and clear-sighted Israel, nor his own proper portion only, but all the nations on the earth, which before were allotted to many angels, and were involved in all sorts of wickedness.”<sup>282</sup>

It is through the person of Jesus Christ himself that the Church may lay claim to the name and privileges of Israel, for: “he himself, our Lord and Savior who came from Bethlehem, was shown to be the ruler of the spiritual Israel, such being the name of all people of vision and piety.”<sup>283</sup> This reality brings with it “promises of good for the nations, the knowledge of God, a new ideal of holiness, a new law and teaching coming forth from the land of the Jews.”<sup>284</sup> Eusebius celebrates the arrival of this expanded people of God as the source of great joy:

“And the Lord of Sabaoth shall make a feast for all the nations. They shall drink joy, they shall drink wine, they shall be anointed with myrrh . . .” These were

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<sup>280</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>281</sup> *Proof 2.1.*

<sup>282</sup> *Proof 4.10.*

<sup>283</sup> *Proof 6.13.*

<sup>284</sup> *Proof 6.13.*

Isaiah's "wonders," the promise of the anointing with ointment of a good smell, and with myrrh made not to Israel but to all nations. Whence not unnaturally through the chrism of myrrh they gained the name of Christians. But he also prophesies the "wine of joy" to the nations, darkly alluding to the sacrament of the new covenant of Christ. . . . And so all these predictions of immemorial prophecy are being fulfilled at the present time through the teaching of our Savior among all nations.<sup>285</sup>

The combined weight of these prophecies and their fulfillments emboldens Eusebius to declare that they remove any possible doubt that Jesus is, in fact, the promised King of the Jewish scriptures: "surely we must also agree that the Kings who was prophesied, the Christ of God, has come, since the signs of his coming have been shown in each instance I have treated to have been clearly fulfilled."<sup>286</sup>

Since the prophecies of the Jewish scriptures about a coming Savior have now been fulfilled, salvation is available to all who are in his kingdom. Eusebius emphasizes the idea that this includes people of all nations: ". . . we have learned from these passages that the presence of Christ was intended to be the salvation not only of the Jews, but of all nations as well."<sup>287</sup> The promises of this kingdom are intended for the Church, which is perceived to be primarily a Gentile, and not a Jewish, body, since the Scriptures teach that the Christ will rise from the family of David "to rule the Gentiles. In him shall the Gentiles hope." Scripture says that this king "is to reign over the Gentiles, but not over Israel." Those Jews who are included are the exception, not the rule. Out of a nation that in general is under condemnation for rejecting Christ, they are the "faithful remnant" spoken of by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans: "In these

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<sup>285</sup> *Proof 1.10.*

<sup>286</sup> *Proof 8.4.*

<sup>287</sup> *Proof 2.2.*

words the Apostle clearly separates, in the falling away of the whole Jewish people, himself and the Apostles and the Evangelists of our Savior like himself and all the Jews now who believe in Christ.” This was not a new idea with Paul, for he is merely rehearsing the words of the prophets of the Jews themselves, who predicted that only “a small and quite scanty number . . . should believe in our Lord and Savior” from among the Jews. This remnant that is saved finds its purpose in bringing the nations into Christ’s kingdom:

And it means by these the apostles, disciples, and evangelists of our Savior, and all the others of the Circumcision, who believed on him, at the time of the falling away of their whole race. . . . These must surely be our Savior’s Hebrew disciples, going forth to all men, who being left behind like a seed have brought forth much fruit, namely, the churches of the gentiles throughout the whole world.<sup>288</sup>

The apostles, although coming from the Jews, find themselves opposed to their own nation in favor of the Church of the nations: “And these same refugees from the lost race of the Jews, the disciples and apostles of our Savior belonging to different tribes, thought worthy of one calling, and one grace and one Holy Spirit, will cast away all the love, which the tribes of the Hebrew race had to them.”<sup>289</sup>

He points out that “all our Savior’s life was literally passed with the Jewish race, and he was leader of many gathered out of Israel, as many of the Jews as knew him and believed in him.”<sup>290</sup> He asserts that “many others of the Jews believed on him” in addition to the apostles.<sup>291</sup> In fact, he builds his case for the uniqueness of Jesus on the

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<sup>288</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

<sup>289</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

<sup>290</sup> *Proof 7.2.*

<sup>291</sup> *Proof 6.17.*

supposition that many people from among the Jews were persuaded of his divinity through the many miracles that accompanied his ministry and that of his apostles:

If, then, even the historian's evidence shows that he attracted to himself not only the twelve Apostles, nor the seventy disciples, but had in addition many Jews and Greeks, he must evidently have had some extraordinary power beyond that of other men. . . . And the evidence of the Acts of the Apostles goes to show that there were many myriads of Jews who believed him to be the Christ of God foretold by the prophets.<sup>292</sup>

On the other hand, he most often describes the household of salvation in a way that emphasizes the inclusion of the nations, without even mentioning the Jews: Christ was "preaching the Gospel of the Father's love, the same for all nations, whether Greeks or Barbarians, to every race of men, moving all to a common salvation in God, promising the truth and light of true religion, the kingdom of Heaven, and eternal life to all."<sup>293</sup> Not only is the emphasis on the Gentiles, but the Jews actually seem to be neglected, as Eusebius explains from Isaiah, "And we see how true it is that the light of our Savior, which rose from Jacob, that is from the Jews, has shone on all nations but Jacob, from whence it came forth."<sup>294</sup>

Eusebius persistently points out that the prophets refer to "the scanty number of those of the Circumcision who will escape destruction and the burning of Jerusalem." They prophesy that "a scanty few" of the Jews would be included among the followers of the Christ. So small is the number of the Jews who remain faithful that "they that are left shall be more precious than gold." The Jewish scriptures make it plain that there

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<sup>292</sup> *Proof 3.5.*

<sup>293</sup> *Proof 8.1.*

<sup>294</sup> *Proof 9.1.*

will be but a “small number of the saved in the time of the ruin of the wicked, so that it is not possible to expect that absolutely all the circumcised without exception and the whole Jewish race will attain to the promises of God.” The promises of blessing found in those same prophets are intended for “the remnant of his people, not to all their nation but to those only signified by the remnant.” The remnant is understood to be the apostles and other early followers of Jesus from among the Jews: “And the Choir of the apostles is shown forth by those figures, as being a drop and a seed from the Jewish race.” These Jewish apostles are now regarded to be among the Gentiles, to whom they brought the message of Christ with “bravery and intrepidity.” The Jewish prophets testify to this: in the words of Zephaniah “the Lord promised that there will be left for him a people meek and lowly, meaning none others but they of the circumcision who believed in his Christ.” Eusebius finds that Zechariah foretells “the final siege of the people by the Romans, through which the whole Jewish race was to become subject to their enemies. He says that only the remnant of the people shall be saved, exactly describing the apostles of our Savior.” Ezekiel and Isaiah are also cited by Eusebius to prove that it was only that select group among the Jews who were intended as the “faithful remnant,” for “how could they not be beautiful, which in so small, so short, a time have run over the whole earth, and filled every place with the holy teaching about the Savior of the world.”<sup>295</sup> The apostles could not be viewed as representatives of the Jewish people, for they were taken from the Jews as hostages taken in battle from a warring power: “And by the ‘spoils of Samaria’ you will in this case understand our

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<sup>295</sup> *Proof 2.3; 3.1.*

Savior's Jewish apostles and disciples, whom as it were he took as his spoils from the hostile Jews who attacked him."<sup>296</sup>

As a result of the exceptional nature of the obedience of the apostles and a few other Jews, Eusebius feels no compunction about describing the people of God as "the Church of the Gentiles."<sup>297</sup> In contrast to the disbelief of the Jews and the consequent destruction of their land and people, Eusebius sees "the transformation of the heathen world from its former desolation into the field of God."<sup>298</sup> The Church has become a Gentile institution.

It is evident from Eusebius' *Proof* that he was consciously responding to criticism of the Christian faith from the Jews. In many places this is evident from the content of his teaching about the obsolescence of the Mosaic system, for to follow it was not only passé, it was destructive: "And therefore, of course, they have fallen under Moses' curse, attempting to keep it in part, but breaking it in the whole, as Moses makes absolutely clear: 'Accursed is he, who does not continue in all the things written in this law, to do them.'"<sup>299</sup> Eusebius did more than merely imply that he was struggling against an active opponent, however. He explicitly identifies his enemies and their arguments. There were active in his days both Jews and Judaizing Christians who were attacking the claims of the Christian faith, and Eusebius was seeking to refute them:

They hold that the prophets were theirs, that the Christ, whom they love to call Savior and Redeemer, was foretold to them and that it is to be expected that the

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<sup>296</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

<sup>297</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

<sup>298</sup> *Proof* 7.1.

<sup>299</sup> *Proof* 1.6.

written promises will be fulfilled for them. They despise us as being of alien races, about which the prophets are unanimous in foretelling evil.<sup>300</sup>

Throughout the following section, Eusebius alludes to a host of anti-Christian arguments arising from his Jewish rivals, those identified consistently as “the Circumcision,” and as those who deny that Gentiles, an alien people, have any standing among the people of God: “. . . it is their constant habit to pick out the prophecies which are more favorable to themselves and to have them ever on their lips.” They claimed that “the hope of the Messiah was more proper for them than for us”; they assert that “the privileges of the old dispensation were limited to them” and deny that “their own prophets” include promises to the Gentiles”; they believe that the blessing of Abraham to all nations “referred to Jewish proselytes”; they “proudly and boastfully claim that God has preferred them before all other nations, and given them a peculiar privilege in his divine promises”; they pride themselves as being the “portion” of the Lord and specially “chosen out to act as priest and to offer worship to God”; they argue that “the promises of God were given to them alone,” and that the Gentiles have no claim to these promises.<sup>301</sup> They claim that Jesus was merely a deceiver, and they oppose him because of his opposition to God-ordained sacrifices,<sup>302</sup> the validity of which is confirmed by their continuation for several years after the death of Jesus.<sup>303</sup> They say that he was “thirsty for notoriety,” and inspired by Egyptian superstition.<sup>304</sup> They accuse Christians of flawed interpretation of biblical prophecies, refusing to acknowledge the

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<sup>300</sup> *Proof 2. Pref.*

<sup>301</sup> *Proof 2.1,3.*

<sup>302</sup> *Proof 3.3.*

<sup>303</sup> *Proof 8.2.*

<sup>304</sup> *Proof 3.6.*

distinction between the first and second comings of the Christ.<sup>305</sup> They deny that messianic prophecies from their own Scriptures point to Jesus, instead arguing that such texts applied to Hezekiah, Solomon, or other figures from their history.<sup>306</sup> They oppose the arguments of Eusebius and deny the miracles of Christ or ascribe them to sorcery.<sup>307</sup>

Eusebius is not impressed with their resistance to Christianity. He sees them as the successors of that generation of Jewish leaders who arrested and killed Jesus, then plotted against, imprisoned and persecuted his apostles and followers.<sup>308</sup> Even up to the present time, they “curse him in their synagogues.”<sup>309</sup> Their method required them “to make suppositions contrary to the record.” They ought “to become a laughing-stock, being convicted as friends of envy and malice, and foes of truth itself,” since they have disregarded rational thinking, reliable witnesses to the truth, the power of supernatural confirmation, inexplicably changed lives, and the weight of history.<sup>310</sup>

Eusebius’ very reason for writing this work is expressed in terms of the need for an apologetic against the efforts of the Jews against the Church: “I have but collected these passages, as I was bound to do, in order to refute the impudent assertions of those of the Circumcision who, in their brainless boasting, say that the Christ will come for them only, and not for all mankind.”<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> *Proof 4.16.*

<sup>306</sup> *Proof 7.1.*

<sup>307</sup> *Proof 3.4-6.*

<sup>308</sup> *Proof 3.5.*

<sup>309</sup> *Proof 3.3.*

<sup>310</sup> *Proof 3.5.*

<sup>311</sup> *Proof 2.3.*

In the writings of Eusebius one first sees a systematic, purposeful anti-Jewish theology. Simon suggests that this distinctively Christian anti-Semitism stood out from paganism's "spontaneous and unorganized" prejudice, since "... that of the Christians was devoted to a well-conceived end. Its aim was to make the Jews abhorrent to all, to sustain the dislike of those in whom the Jews already found dislike, and to turn the affections of those who were well disposed."<sup>312</sup> At the heart of this effort was an intention to bolster the position of the emperor as the political and religious head of Roman society. This process found precedent in the work of Origen, who sought Christian supremacy in the spiritual realm, as it relates to the interpretation of the Scriptures: "What Origen had done as an exegete in reassessing the whole reality of Hebrew scriptures in their letter and their spirit, Eusebius did as a political theologian in restating the whole significance of imperial rule." He took on this task eagerly, seeking biblical and patristic authority for the supremacy of the political institution with which he was closely associated:

The political claim of the theologian is to articulate the practical realization of the gospel event on the universal scale of the Roman Oikoumene. . . . In unequivocal terms this most learned bishop in the Christian churches of his day identifies the divine Logos and the emperor as the two complimentary principles of a salvation economy reaching its final state. . . . The very notion of the emperor as a new Abraham who brings at last the human race back to God's original revelation and paradise, speaks of Origen's eschatology more than of anything else.<sup>313</sup>

The convergence of religious and political authority in Constantine pushed the Church for the first time into a position in which it had opportunity and power to

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<sup>312</sup> Simon, 223.

<sup>313</sup> Kannengeiser, 453-455.

respond with clout to its longstanding rival. This union of Church and state yielded “an intolerant and aggressive imperial policy toward the Jews.”<sup>314</sup> The pressure for uniformity came from the Church as well as from the emperor:

Christianity now had the opportunity to settle accounts with the Jews. Previously, the Church engaged in polemics with the synagogue through books and sermons. But now armed with governmental sword, it resorted to polemics of another sort—brutal force. . . . In 315, shortly after Constantine the Great had triumphed “under the sign of the cross,” the period of legislative scorpions arrived with restrictions of rights and many repressions against the Jews, who became the enslaved of the Christian kingdom.<sup>315</sup>

The Jews were no longer merely one element out of many within the Roman population. Christian apologists “demanded that they should exist in misery, that they should enjoy a precarious status, a diminished existence that would mark them out as the people who were once chosen, but now condemned.”<sup>316</sup> Judaism, along with paganism, could not be allowed to thrive and grow. There was no room “for error to exist freely, side by side with the truth.” Throughout the fourth century and beyond, laws against the destruction of synagogues were first ignored, then changed. Eventually, the requirements for restitution were lifted and bans were imposed prohibiting the rebuilding or repair of those which were destroyed.<sup>317</sup> Christian destruction, or confiscation, of synagogues “in exactly the same way” as pagan temples was seen as “not only legitimate but meritorious.”<sup>318</sup> While the Church continued to resist the efforts of Judaizing Christians, Christians believed that it was the “job of the secular arm to

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<sup>314</sup> Simon, 263.

<sup>315</sup> Dubnov, 167.

<sup>316</sup> Simon, 227.

<sup>317</sup> Juster, *Les Juifs*, 1:469, n. 2; *Nov. Theod.* 3.3; quoted in Simon, 228.

<sup>318</sup> Simon, 225.

mete out punishment” against the Jews, including Jewish sympathizers and converts.<sup>319</sup>

The resultant policy, without precedent in Christian history, ushered in a new era of relations between the Jews and Christians, and between the Jews and the Roman state:

Thus a radical change came over the relations between Judaism and the empire, brought about by the victory of Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century and by its establishment by the end of that century, as the religion of the state. . . . The restrictions that were progressively imposed on the civil and religious liberty of Jews ultimately had the effect of placing them on the same footing as heretics, with the sole difference that no one actually denied their right to exist, as dissident Christianity’s right of existence was denied.<sup>320</sup>

Eusebius himself experienced the power of political-ecclesiastical pressure in relation to the Quartodeciman controversy. Petersen observes, based on Eusebius’ early writings, that “prior to Nicaea, one may reasonably conjecture that Eusebius’ sympathies were with the Quartodecimans,” but because of the combined support of Church leaders and the emperor himself, “the decision of the Council of the Nicaea was, however, so sweeping, and Eusebius’ relationship with Constantine so supportive (or tenuous?), that after 325 he felt obliged to revise his account of the Quartodeciman controversy in Book 5.”<sup>321</sup> Kannengeisser insists that the political theology developed by Eusebius throughout this period does not, however, arise from irresistible pressure, but out of a well-thought theological reflection on ultimate reality:

In short, it is not the program of a politician, which might be dictated by some opportunistic strategy, or improvised momentarily under the pressure of public circumstance; it derives from Eusebius’ deepest theological convictions, and he was a man of strong convictions. As a convinced idealist, his mindset was molded by the Origenian sense for a comprehensive theory of salvation. He

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<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>321</sup> Petersen, 320.

would apply such a theory systematically to the imperial history of his day, with the pivotal figure of the divine Logos at the core of his vision.<sup>322</sup>

Whether Eusebius came to his political theology independently or under imperial pressure, he expresses it in such tight conformity to Constantine that it is impossible to distinguish one of their voices from the other. In his *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius includes the emperor's letter to the Christian churches regarding the Easter controversy. The tone of this letter is much harsher than earlier Christian writing against the Jews. It is more severe than even other fourth century Christian polemic. The content of the letter, beyond the tone, is not actually inconsistent with Eusebius' treatment of the Jews found above. This may be, in fact, an authentic imperial letter. It might be, instead, a Eusebian creation designed to claim imperial support for an ecclesiastical agenda. In either case, it cannot be known with certainty whether Eusebius or Constantine was the driving force behind the letter or whether there was truly any difference between the agendas of the two:

In the first place it was decreed unworthy to observe that most sacred festival in accordance with the practice of the Jews; having sullied their own hands with a heinous crime, such bloodstained men are as one might expect mentally blind. It is possible, now that their nation has been rejected, by a truer system which we have kept from the first day of the Passion to the present, to extend the performing of this observance into future periods also. Let there be nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of Jews! We have received from the Savior another way; a course is open to our most holy religion that is both lawful and proper. Let us with one accord take up this course, right honorable brothers, and so tear ourselves away from that disgusting complicity. For it is surely quite grotesque for them to be able to boast that we would be incapable of keeping these observances without their instruction. What could these people calculate correctly, when after that murder of the Lord, after that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not by any rational principle,

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<sup>322</sup> Kannengeiser, 451-452.

but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their internal frenzy may lead them? Hence it comes about that in this very matter they do not see the truth, so that nearly always they get it wrong, and instead of the proper calculation they observe the Pascha a second time in the same year. Why then do we follow those who are by common consent sick with fearful error? We would never allow the Pascha to be kept a second time in the same year. But even if that argument were absent, your Good Sense ought to make it the continual object of your effort and prayer, that the purity of your soul should not by any resemblance appear to participate in the practices of thoroughly evil persons.<sup>323</sup>

In this letter, Christian accusations against the Jews are intensified beyond earlier statements: spiritual blindness has become madness, stubborn disobedience has been replaced with “uncontrolled impulse,” and a desire to persuade the Jews has given way to a commitment to separate from them, in action, belief, and even in appearance. While the theological innovations of Eusebius and other fourth century Christians contributed to an environment in which these changes became possible, they are not adequate, by themselves, to fully account for such changes.

### Summary

Just as the writings of the New Testament laid out fundamental principles that would influence Christian attitudes toward the Jews throughout the first three centuries A.D., so the works of Eusebius are a culmination of the development of those principles. Building on the work of Origen, Justin, and many of the other Fathers of this era, Eusebius creates a systematic approach to the issue that embraces the previous approaches and applies them to the circumstances of his own day.

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<sup>323</sup> Eusebius, *Life*, 3.18.2-4.

Positively, Eusebius acknowledges the continuity of the old and new covenants through an assertion of parallels between Moses and Jesus, the founders of each covenant. Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the law of Moses, not as one who would destroy it. Eusebius takes the side of the Jews against the Gnostics, arguing against the heretics that Jewish law, prophets, and religion were founded in divine inspiration.

Eusebius' interpretation of the Bible is admittedly influenced by Jewish exegetes, translators, and textual editors. Jewish scriptures, claimed as the possession of the Church, are seen to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and are used throughout his work to establish Christian beliefs and practice. He asserts that in Jesus Christ, descended from the Jews, the Church built in his name has now become the true Israel, and is the heir of God's promises declared in the law and the prophets of the Jews.

As the new Israel, Christians are subject to the law and the prophets, but remain free from those Jewish customs which are perceived to be roadblocks for the Gentiles. Christological interpretation of the Scriptures finds in them the demonstration of both the humanity and divinity of the Christ. Through the use of allegorical interpretation, Eusebius is able to uphold Christian doctrine from any and every text of the Jews, who are unable to see these truths because of their spiritual blindness. As the new Israel, the Church is a third way, distinct from (and superior to) the Jews and the Gentiles.

The Jews are aggressive enemies of the Church who curse Christians in their synagogue. They deny that God has included the Gentiles among his people, asserting that the Jews alone enjoy his special favor. Worst of all, they label Jesus as a deceiver and reviler of the law. The Jews assert that the Christians' applications of prophetic passages to Jesus are erroneous, and that those Scriptures actually found their

fulfillment in historical figures such as Hezekiah and Solomon. Not surprisingly, Eusebius, in turn challenges these Jewish interpretations.

The opposition of the Jews to the Church is seen to be demonically inspired. The Mosaic law, good though it was, had been given to them to control their persistent inclination to idolatry, not because God intended it to be a permanent arrangement. At the time that God brought them out of Egypt, their rebelliousness against God in the desert caused them to lose the name “Hebrews” in favor of “Jews,” as a reminder of their connection with one of Jacob’s wayward sons. They had demonstrated the depth of their wickedness when they rejected and killed Jesus, the Christ of God. From then up until the time of Eusebius, successive generations of the Jews had continued the sin of their fathers by persisting in unbelief and persecuting the Christians.

The consequences of Jewish guilt were obvious. Their law, forms of worship, temple, and chief city had been destroyed. They were now enslaved by the Romans, oppressed and dispersed throughout the world. In response to this reality, Eusebius formulated a comprehensive apologetic against the Jews, seeking to establish the fact that the Jews had been permanently displaced as the people of God. At the same time, his work was aimed at articulating a theological justification of a Christian political order, in which the state would act in the interests of the Church. He does not hold out any hope for a national restoration. Biblical references to such a restoration had in mind only the salvation of a faithful remnant, found in the persons of the apostles who preached the good news of Christ in the nations, leading to the miraculous appearance of the Church in every corner of the world. Other than these faithful few, the Church,

the new people of God, was a body of Gentiles, with the Jews left outside because of their sin.

**Part Two:**  
**Outside Perspectives on the Question**

## CHAPTER V

### THE JEWISH VIEW

Essential to an understanding of these developments is an accurate view of the state of Judaism and its outlook on Christianity and the outside world within this time period. It must be said that, in the light of the entire body of Jewish literature of the period, there is relatively little criticism of Jesus or his followers. There seems to have been much less concern with the relations between the two faiths in the first few centuries of the Church than there is today. Simon relates that much of modern scholarship, including such notable names as Harnack and Duchesne, "have accepted that the two religions, developing on radically divergent lines, very quickly ceased to take any interest in each other."<sup>1</sup> One major reason presented for this was geography: in Palestine, Judaism prevailed as the majority religion, while Christianity struggled, even as late as the fourth century, to gain a foothold there. Meanwhile, in the Diaspora, in the presence of a Judaism apparently moving away from its Hellenistic forms of expression, Christianity "became a historical power of the first magnitude."<sup>2</sup> The comparative failure of Christianity in the Jewish homeland accounts for the relative lack of concern about the new faith found in the rabbinical record:

The small number of the Judaeo-Christians explains why the rabbis paid so little attention to them, and to Christianity as a whole. After a most diligent perusal of

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, x.

<sup>2</sup> Avi-Yonah, 138.

the whole Talmudic literature, which contains certainly no less than 15,000 pages, only 139 passages were found (a total of hardly 36 pages) which deal with the Minim and their opinions, it is not even clear whether this term refers always to Judaeo-Christians, or whether other sects may not be meant.<sup>3</sup>

The two religions were, in fact, regarded widely as two sects of the same faith, so that one can note a rise in pagan anti-Semitic comment concurrent with the spread of early Christianity, due to pagan perceptions that this was but another example of Jewish religious activity against which they felt compelled to protest.<sup>4</sup> That Christians remained tied to the Jews in the eyes of both sides is hinted at by the evidence for Christian burials in Jewish cemeteries during this era.<sup>5</sup> The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in A.D. 70 was motivated by a belief that it would, in one fell swoop, destroy the religious foundation of both Judaism and Christianity:

Others, and Titus himself, expressed their opinion that the Temple should be destroyed without delay, in order that the religion of the Jews and Christians should be more completely exterminated. For those religions, though opposed to one another, derive from the same founders, the Christians stemmed from the Jews and the extirpation of the root would easily cause the offspring to perish.”<sup>6</sup>

The spread of Christianity across the empire could be seen as “a kind of Jewish-Christian diaspora,” and throughout the period, a form of Christianity persisted that included Jewish practices and was heavily influenced by its Jewish background. This is testified to by the arguments of the biblical epistles and writings of the apostolic fathers. Even the Christians themselves recognized that they shared much with the Jews in relation to the rest of the world. Early Christian charges against the Jews omitted the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>5</sup> Simon, 119, 124, 157.

<sup>6</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* 2.30.7.

typical pagan criticism, such as misanthropy, lack of images, Sabbath practices, circumcision, food rules, ass worship, and ritual murder. Christians could not very well turn against the Jews on these issues, because in many cases, they shared with the Jews the very practices which provoked the criticism.

Although Judaism and Christianity were close enough that each could be confused with the other, this would eventually produce, not harmony, but conflict. Kofsky argues that the presence of Christian treatises against the Jews in the early part of these centuries may be seen as evidence that there was, in fact, an ongoing Jewish-Christian polemic during these years.<sup>7</sup> Judaism was still a force to be reckoned with, and its continued strength was perceived as a real challenge to the success of the new Christian faith.

Christian criticism of Judaism, such as Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, can be interpreted "not as a specifically Christian reaction, but the opinion of a party within Hellenistic Judaism."<sup>8</sup> Christianity can be seen as merely one factor in the internal tension within Judaism between its internally-focused and externally-focused wings. Independent of the rise of Christianity, there was within Judaism a struggle going on between one faction, Hellenistic Judaism, which inclined toward interaction with Greco-Roman culture and a philosophical expression of the faith, and another, Pharasaic, or rabbinic Judaism, which was internally-focused and emphasized the ritual

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<sup>7</sup> Kofsky, 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> Simon, 13.

and ethical teachings of the Jewish faith. The entry of Christianity into this conflict influenced the outcome of this struggle in favor of the rabbinic faction:

Hellenistic and Pharasaic tradition of midrash must have coexisted in a struggle to control the Hellenistic synagogue, with the Pharasaic traditions gradually winning out after the church had drawn the Hellenistic mode (and probably much of its clientele) to itself. If the rabbinic school won out, as far as Judaism is concerned, it is largely because the rise of Christianity itself appropriated the fruits of the missions of the Diaspora and its Hellenistic midrash and so made them unacceptable to a Judaism now in a posture of defensive self-consolidation after the Jewish wars.<sup>9</sup>

The development of a “Jewish Christianity” cannot be seen in isolation from the parent faith: “The real and lasting danger that the early Church had to meet came not from little groups of Jewish Christians in the Trans-Jordan or elsewhere, but from Judaism itself, which was widely distributed across the empire.” The powerful attraction of the Bible, the synagogue, and other Jewish institutions, led to “a Judaizing pressure that operated from without.” It “could not have been brought to bear against the will of the Jews, or even without their cooperation. It is only fully comprehensible if they actively participated in it. In most cases, the existence of this Judaizing influence implies the survival in Israel of the missionary, proselytizing spirit.”<sup>10</sup>

This perspective assumes that Judaism was a proselytizing religion at the time of the rise of the Christian church. Although this assumption goes against the grain of much modern opinion, it is not without compelling evidence. There was clearly an openness within Judaism to the idea of non-Jews coming to God. For example, all of humanity had been given divine instructions by which they were expected to live, which

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<sup>9</sup> Ruether, 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> Simon, 269-270.

shared much with the ways of the Jews. The rabbis understood that God had used Israel to attract people from many nations to himself: “From Tyre to Carthage the nations know Israel and their Father who is in heaven.”<sup>11</sup>

There is, in the Talmud, some apprehension about the inclusion of proselytes. For example, “That ‘those who receive proselytes,’ [bring evil upon themselves, is deduced] in accordance with a statement of R. Helbo. For R. Helbo stated: Proselytes are hurtful to Israel as a sore in the skin.”<sup>12</sup> However, this perspective seems only to advise people of the difficulty with which proselytes are sometimes joined to Judaism, rather than to prohibit the practice. Like the people of Israel themselves, proselytes reap the consequences of their disobedience: “It was taught: R. Hanania son of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said: Why are proselytes at the present time oppressed and visited with afflictions? Because they had not observed the seven Noachide commandments.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, some skepticism was warranted, since those who joined Israel during this time might expect hardship rather than blessing in their association with the nation. Yet, even in such circumstances, profession was to be taken at face value:

Our Rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: “What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte, do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?” If he replies, “I know and yet am unworthy,” he is accepted forthwith; and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments. . . . If accepted, he is circumcised forthwith. . . . As soon as he is healed arrangements are made for his immediate ablution. . . . When he comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *B. Mena.*, 110a.

<sup>12</sup> *B. Yebam.* 109b.

<sup>13</sup> *B. Yebam.* 48b.

<sup>14</sup> *B. Yebam.* 47a-b.

Any caution or reluctance about proselytes, however, does not preclude their acceptance, as demonstrated by the overwhelming sentiment of Talmudic references to their inclusion. Since God has a heart for the proselyte, Israel must as well:

“When any man (*adam*) of you brings an offering” why *adam*, not *ish*? “so as to include proselytes.” R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, to one who denied God’s justice to the heathen: “I answered him: ‘My son, thus have the Sages taught in the Mishnah: When a would-be proselyte comes to accept Judaism, a hand should be stretched out towards him to bring him beneath the wings of the *Schechinah*. Thus from that time onwards, the proselytes of every generation warn their own generation.’”<sup>15</sup>

Regarding Ruth the Moabitess, the ancestor of David, “R. Judah b. Simon commented: Come and see how precious in the eyes of the Omnipresent are converts. Once she decided to become converted, Scripture ranks her equally with Naomi.”<sup>16</sup> The Jewish Dispersion itself is explained in terms of the divine purpose to bring into Israel people from among the nations. “R. Eleazer also said: The Holy One, blessed be he, did not exile Israel among the nations save in order that proselytes might join them, for it is said: *And I will sow her unto me in the land*: surely a man sows a *se’ah* in order to harvest many *kor*!”<sup>17</sup>

Debate on the subject explored only the question of how many of the precepts of God, such as circumcision, procreation, and dietary laws, applied to both “the Noachides and the children of Abraham.”<sup>18</sup> There was a long history of those who had been accepted by God from outside the people of Israel:

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<sup>15</sup> *Mid. Lev R.* 2.9.

<sup>16</sup> *Mid. Ruth R.* 3.5.

<sup>17</sup> *B. Pes.* 87b.

<sup>18</sup> *B. Sanh.* 59b.

Our rabbis taught: Naaman was a resident alien, Nebuzaradan was a righteous proselyte, the descendants of Sisera studied Torah in Jerusalem; the descendants of Sennacherib taught Torah to the multitude. . . . The descendants of Haman studied Torah in Benai Berak. The Holy One, blessed be he, purposed to lead the descendants of that wicked man too under the Wings of the Shechinah, but the ministering Angels protested before him.<sup>19</sup>

In the Scripture, God had clearly revealed his love for the proselyte. References to general divine goodness shown to the human race were, in fact, allusions to his intention to bring outsiders under the influence of his special revelation in the Torah. A proselyte who enjoys “bread and raiment” from God actually receives much more: “Then he visited R. Joshua, who began to comfort him with words: ‘*Bread*’ refers to the Torah, as it says, *Come, eat of my bread* (Prov. 9:5), while ‘*raiment*’ means the [scholar’s] cloak: when a man is privileged to [study the] Torah, he is privileged to perform God’s precepts.” God’s mercy toward these proselytes is also demonstrated by the fact that he allows them to “marry their daughters into the priesthood, so that their descendants may offer burnt-offerings on the altar.”<sup>20</sup> The value that God places on those won from outside of Israel was vividly portrayed by an analogy. Comparing a proselyte within Israel to a wild stag among a king’s goats, the king prizes and cares for the stag above all the goats because he has chosen of his own accord to enter the king’s courtyard, while the goats do so by nature and habit, and know nothing else:

In like manner, ought we not to be grateful to the proselyte who has left behind him his family and his father’s house, aye, has left behind his people and all the other peoples of the world, and has chosen to come to us? . . . the Omnipotent

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<sup>19</sup> *B. Sanh.* 96b.

<sup>20</sup> *Mid. Gen. R.* 70.5.

kept the sinners of Israel at a distance and brought close to him the proselytes who came in honor of his Name.”<sup>21</sup>

Proselytes, then, have a special place in the heart of God:

R. Abbahu [opened his discourse with the text], *They shall return, dwelling under his shadow* (Hosea 14:8). These, he said, are the proselytes who come and take shelter under the shadow of the Holy One, blessed be he . . . The Holy One, blessed be he, said: “The names of the proselytes are as pleasing to me as the wine of libation which is offered to me on the altar.”<sup>22</sup>

The assumption that lies behind Talmudic discussion of the subject is that proselytism was to be expected, that something was wrong if it was not taking place:

“For Rab Judah said: Who are the ‘stout-hearted’? The stupid Gubaeans. R. Joseph said: The proof is that they have never produced a proselyte. R. Ashi said: The people of Mata Mehasia are ‘stout-hearted’, for they see the glory of the Torah twice a year, and never has one of them been converted.”<sup>23</sup>

Feldman notes that the great attractive power of Judaism in this period arose from a number of reasons: its antiquity, its revered law, a general religious openness, the reality of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, its reputation for wisdom, its popular manifestations in magic, dreams, and superstition, potential economic gain, fear, and Jewish slaveholding.<sup>24</sup>

The Jews capitalized on this openness by welcoming proselytes into the synagogue with open arms. Support for ongoing proselytism is found throughout the rabbinical writings: “Beloved are the proselytes, for Scripture in every instance

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<sup>21</sup> *Mid. Num. R.* 8.2-3.

<sup>22</sup> *Mid. Lev. R.* 1.2.

<sup>23</sup> *B. Ber.* 17b.

<sup>24</sup> Feldman, 380, 386-387.

compares them to Israel.”<sup>25</sup> Again, “Beloved are proselytes [by God], for [Scripture] everywhere uses the same epithets of them as of Israel.”<sup>26</sup> Further, “said Resh Lakish: The proselyte who converts is dearer than Israel [was] when they stood before Mount Sinai,” because they converted without the miraculous sights and sounds Israel experienced.<sup>27</sup> The story of the three gentiles who approached Shammai and Hillel is recounted to demonstrate “that proselytism was important, not only in Hillel’s day, but also when the baraita was composed, probably in the second or third century.”<sup>28</sup> Bamberger, asserting that as many as forty-five cases of specific conversions are found in the rabbinic literature of the period,<sup>29</sup> insists that the reality of Jewish proselytizing fervor in the period of the emergence of the Church is indisputable:

There is indeed, almost nothing in the halakah that betrays hostility or prejudice toward converts. The opinion that after the Hadrianic war candidates were received in such a way as to repel them has been shown to be erroneous. . . . The aggadah, both tannaitic and Amoraic, Palestinian and Babylonian, is overwhelmingly favorable in its statements regarding converts and conversion. It contains passage after passage in praise of converts, urging for them equal and friendly treatment, asserting that they are particularly near and dear to God. The exceptions are few.<sup>30</sup>

Contributing to the Pharisees’ push to influence the outside world, without being influenced by it, were a number of other developments. The rise of Christianity as a competitor in the endeavor to win pagans was “the deciding factor in Judaism’s gradual development toward total retrenchment.” Judaism gradually abandoned Hellenism as

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<sup>25</sup> *Midr. Num R.* 8.2.

<sup>26</sup> *Gerim* 4.3.

<sup>27</sup> *Mekilta Nezeikinon* 18 on 22.20; *N. Lek. Leka* 6.

<sup>28</sup> Bamberger, 225.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-259.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 143, 169.

Christianity made better use of it; the Jews eventually repudiated allegory and the use of the Septuagint due to the Christians' use of both against them. Even the destruction of the temple had a positive effect in the strengthening of the Pharasaic position within Judaism: "the destruction of the temple, by removing the differences between the Jews of Palestine and those of the dispersion, strengthened the unity that was given to Judaism by the Pharisees' triumph."<sup>31</sup> While the Pharisees, like all Jews of the period, continued to seek converts from among the Gentiles, their dominance within Judaism eventually made the faith less receptive to interaction with non-Jews.

Interspersed in this discussion recurrent references have appeared to the Jewish revolts against Rome that resulted in Roman actions against the Jews in A.D. 70 and 135. Against traditional scholarship, Simon asserts that Juvenal was right when he observed that the war of A.D. 70 "did not entail the consequences that have sometimes been ascribed to it"; that "Judaism, perhaps more so than in the preceding centuries, was making its mark in the world, and that even in the diaspora it continued to make converts from its implacably hostile rival."<sup>32</sup>

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 turned out, in fact, to be a constructive crisis for the Pharisees, who found new ways to cope in the aftermath of these events. Johanan ben Zakkai responded to the crisis by publicly predicting that Vespasian would attain the imperial throne. Perhaps in response to this affirmation, he received permission to open a rabbinical school at Jabneh, and saw that the destruction

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<sup>31</sup> Simon, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 281-282.

of the temple had shifted the means of remission of sin from the altar to acts of charity.<sup>33</sup> The lasting consequence of the temple's destruction on Judaism was not restrictive, but stimulating: "Far from overthrowing Judaism the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem relieved it of the embarrassment of the cult, giving it thereby a new vigor and making its apologetic task much easier."<sup>34</sup> Bamberger sees this development as one of the essential characteristics of second century Judaism: Judaism, after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, became more attractive to Romans because it was no longer tied to the political and nationalistic hopes that had earlier been a stumbling-block to conversion.<sup>35</sup>

As they reflected on the significance of the destruction of their temple and its city, Jews of this period arrived at varying conclusions, as discussed at length in the Talmud:

Abaye said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because the Sabbath was desecrated therein, as it is said, *and they have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, therefore I am profaned among them.*

R. Abbahu said: Jerusalem was destroyed only because the reading of the shema morning and evening was neglected [therein], for it is said, Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink [etc.]; and it is written, And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord; and it is written, Therefore my people are gone into captivity, for lack of knowledge.

The passage goes on to describe other possible explanations for the destruction. Rabbi Hamnuna declared that it was because the people had neglected the education of school

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Bouché-Leclerq, *Intolérance Religieuse*, 189, quoted in Simon, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Bamberger, 380.

children. Ulla declared that it was because they were not ashamed of each other's immoral conduct; Rabbi Amram, speaking for himself as well as other rabbis, similarly concluded that it was because they did not rebuke each other. Rabbi Isaac surmised that the destruction fell because the small and the great had been made equal (the priests were not distinguished from their people). Rabbi Judah said that the city fell because "scholars were despised therein." Raba lamented that when men of faith no longer were found in the city, God's destruction came.<sup>36</sup> The point of all these observations is that they demonstrate that the catastrophic events, however severe, were assimilated quite quickly into the Jewish national experience. They did not signal a withdrawal from the world; rather, they reveal a collective effort to extract the intended spiritual lesson and move on, continuing to attempt to be God's light to the surrounding nations.

As Judaism emerged from these crises, both retrenchment in traditional values and a universalistic spirit continued. Christian pronouncements against the law evoked a Jewish reiteration of the law as a "safeguard of Judaism's spiritual autonomy." The Torah was the linchpin of Jewish belief and practice. As the Jew leaves his time of prayer, he is focused on the place of the Torah in his life:

On his *leaving* what does he say? "I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, that you have set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha-Midrash and you have not set my portion with those who sit in [street] corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise for words of Torah and they rise for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *B. Shab.* 119a.

<sup>37</sup> *B. Ber.* 28b.

As Christian writers and preachers consistently asserted that Christology was the proper center of theology, the rabbis insisted that the law continued to hold this place. While Christians from Stephen to Barnabas and Diognetus claimed that the law was a divine concession to Jewish weakness or wickedness, the Jews responded that the law remained a pure revelation of God. Failure to give the law its proper regard was among the most heinous of sins: “to be given a scroll of the law to read from and refuse” was one of only a few things that actually could shorten a man’s life.<sup>38</sup> Within the Jewish scriptures, the Pentateuch was especially regarded as authoritative, so that a particular lesson gleaned from Exodus carried greater weight than the same idea found in the book of Daniel:

R. Johanan said: The Holy One, blessed be he, gives wisdom only to one who already has wisdom, as it says, *He gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding*. R. Tahlifa from the West heard and repeated it before R. Abbahu. He said to him: You learnt it from there, but we learn it from this text, namely, *In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom*.<sup>39</sup>

It is at least possible that this prioritization of sections of Scripture was a reaction against Christian claims for the writings of their emerging canon: that by emphasizing the central and foundational role of the Pentateuch even within their own recognized writings, the Jews were formulating an apologetic against any Christian writings which contradicted this permanent revelatory foundation.

The law was so central to faithfulness to God that devotion to it overwhelmed other considerations and distinctions. Even a faithful proselyte could attain the highest

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<sup>38</sup> *B. Ber. 55a.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

place as a follower of God through strict obedience to its precepts: “*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances which, if a man do, he shall live by them.*’ It does not say, ‘If a priest, Levite, or Israelite do, he shall live by them,’ but ‘*a man*’; here, then, you can learn that even a heathen who studies the Torah is equal to a High Priest!”<sup>40</sup>

Next to the centrality of the Torah itself was the importance of the rabbis as its proper interpreters. Again, the implication is that Christians, without the essential contribution of the rabbis, were doomed to fall into misuse and abuse of the Scriptures, for the rabbis were nearly inseparable from the biblical text to which they had devoted themselves. This is illustrated in a commentary on Genesis which found God’s presence in the “sages” as much as in the text, as foreshadowed in the story of Rebekah, pregnant with Jacob and Esau:

When she stood near synagogues or schools, Jacob struggled to come out. . . . “And she went to inquire of the Lord” (25:22). Were there then synagogues and houses of study in those days? Surely she went only to the college of Shem and Eber? Hence this teaches you that to visit a sage is like visiting the Divine Presence.<sup>41</sup>

The Christian use of allegory to find a practical use for the ritual law was met with a renewed Jewish insistence on the literal interpretation of the Scriptures.<sup>42</sup>

Gamaliel II traveled to Rome in A.D. 95, presumably to confront gentile Christians on the issue of the unity and continued authority of the Law.<sup>43</sup> Matsunaga asserts that Jewish decisions arising from this time intentionally separated the Jews from the

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<sup>40</sup> *B. Abod. Zar.* 3a.

<sup>41</sup> *Mid. Gen. R.* 63.6.

<sup>42</sup> *Simon*, 86-87.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

Christians, making clear to everyone that the latter were not at all the Jewish sect that many thought them to be. In the “Twelfth Benediction,” composed near A.D. 80, the rabbis rejected any standing for the Christians:

For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed are you, O Lord, who humbles the proud!<sup>44</sup>

While there has been some disagreement about who the *Minim* are, it seems clear that Christians, specifically Jewish Christians, are included in this condemnation from the synagogue, even if others might be intended as well. Whatever the precise meaning, these people, Christians included, were regarded as worse than pagans and worthy of the harshest condemnation by the rabbis. The Council of Jamnia pushed the Christians away from Judaism in a public fashion, with severe consequences resulting for the Christians:

Another momentous consequence of the Jamnia decision was that Christianity, because of being excluded from the Jewish religion, no longer enjoyed the protection of a *religio licita* that Judaism did under the Roman Empire. The persecution and martyrdom that began in the 90s is directly attributable to the change in legal status that followed from this decision.<sup>45</sup>

A great deal of attention has been paid to other references to the *minim* in the Jewish writings of this period as well, seeking to find in these references clues to the nature of Jewish-Christian relations during this time. The *minim* were those regarded by the rabbis as people whose claim to be included in Judaism held dubious credentials,

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<sup>44</sup> *B. Ber.* 28b, in Kikuo Matsunaga, “Christian Self-Identification and the Twelfth Benediction,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 355.

<sup>45</sup> Matsunaga, 358.

either because of their beliefs or their behaviors. The importance of identifying these people and barring them from the synagogue was clear:

Our rabbis taught: Simeon ha-Pakuh arranged the eighteen benedictions in order before Rabban Gamaliel in Jabneh. Said Rabban Gamaliel to the Sages: Can any one of you frame a benediction relating to the *Minim*? Samuel the Lesser arose and composed it. The next year he forgot it and he tried for two or three hours to recall it, and they did not remove him. Why did they not remove him seeing that Rab Judah has said in the name of Rab: If a reader made a mistake in any of the other benedictions, they do not remove him, but if in the benediction of the *Minim*, he is removed, because we suspect him of being a *Min*? – Samuel the Lesser is different, because he composed it.<sup>46</sup>

Because the heretical rebellion of the *minim* against God was so complete, faithful Jews were advised to totally abstain from interaction with them. Even learned rabbis would do better to avoid the *minim* than to dispute with them, regardless of their ability to win the debate:

The *minim* used to have dealings with R. Judah b. Nakosa. They used constantly to ask him questions which he was always able to answer. He said to them, “In vain you bring your trifling arguments. Let us agree together among ourselves that whoever overcomes his opponent [in debate] shall split his head open with a mallet.” He defeated them and rained blows on their heads until they were filled with cracks. When he returned his disciples said to him, “Rabbi, they helped you from heaven and you conquered!” He replied to them, “In vain! Go and pray for me and for this bag which was full of precious stones and pearls but is now filled with ashes.”<sup>47</sup>

That Christians are often meant by the use of the term *minim* seems beyond question. At least some of the passages that include that term include enough information to indicate that a slam against Jesus or early Christians is clearly intended.

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<sup>46</sup> *B. Ber.* 28b-29a

<sup>47</sup> *Midr. Eccl. R.* 1.8.4.

For example, the modern editors of the Midrash indicate in their footnotes<sup>48</sup> that the following passage includes references to Jesus (as “So-and-so”) and one of his disciples named James. The passage begins with Rabbi Eliezer wondering why he had abruptly been charged with heresy in a Jewish court:

R. Akiba visited him and said to him, “Rabbi, perhaps one of the *minim* expounded something in your presence which was acceptable to you.” He answered, “By heaven, you have reminded me! Once I was walking up the main street of Sepphoris when there came toward me a man named Jacob of Kefar Sekaniah who told me something in the name of So-and-so which pleased me . . . and the law [not to listen to the words of a *min*] escaped my memory at the time. When he saw that I acknowledged his words, he added, ‘Thus said So-and-so . . .’ and the thought pleased me. On that account I was arrested for heresy.”<sup>49</sup>

This passage makes plain that Jews of this time and place had formulated an aggressive policy of systematic avoidance and rejection of the Christians. This response was called for, even in the most dire of circumstances:

It was for this that R. Eleazr b. Dama, the son of R. Ishmael’s sister, met his death. He had been bitten by a serpent and Jacob of Kefar Sekaniah came to heal him, but R. Ishmael would not allow him, saying to him, “You are not permitted, Ben Dama, [to accept the help of this *min*].” He said to him, “Permit me, and I will cite a proof to you from the Torah that it is allowed”; but he had not sufficient time to cite the proof to him before he died. R. Ishmael rejoiced and exclaimed, “Happy are you, Ben Dama, that you expired in a state of purity and did not break down the fence erected by the Sages!”<sup>50</sup>

There was a certain degree of fear that accompanied this Jewish rejection of the Christians. In another passage which seems to employ terms with Christian connotations, the Talmud warns of the potential harm that can be suffered through ill-

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<sup>48</sup> Cohen, A., ed., *Ecclesiastes*. Volume VIII in *Midrash Rabbah*, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1983, fn. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Midr. Eccl. R. 1.8.3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

advised interaction with these Christian heretics. The “wicked person” who rode on an ass is undoubtedly a reference to Jesus:

Hanina, the son of R. Joshua’s brother, came to Capernaum, and the *minim* worked a spell on him and set him riding upon an ass on the Sabbath. He went to his uncle, Joshua, who anointed him with oil and he recovered from the spell. R. Joshua said to him, “Since the ass of that wicked person has roused itself against you, you are not able to reside in the land of Israel.” So he went down from there to Babylon where he died in peace.<sup>51</sup>

Just as later Christian stereotypes would regard the Jews as immoral, child-killing, devil-inspired money-lovers, so also the Jews built extreme, certainly exaggerated, cases against the Christians in some accounts, as this one which assailed Christian moral character:

One of R. Jonathan’s disciples ran away [to the *minim*]. He came and found him in subjection to them. The *minim* sent the following message after him: “Is it not written thus, Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse?” (Prov. 1:14). He fled and they pursued him. They said to him, “Rabbi, do an act of kindness to a certain bride.” He went and found them ravishing a girl. He exclaimed, “Is this the way for Jews to behave!” They replied to him, “But is it not written in the Torah, ‘Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse?’” He fled and they pursued him till he came to the door [of his house] and shut it in their faces. They said, “R. Johanan, go, tell your mother that you have not turned and looked upon us; for if you had turned and looked upon us, more than we pursue you would you have pursued us!”<sup>52</sup>

The apparent dread with which some Jews approached interactions with the Christians was reinforced by at least occasional Christian success in persuading notable Jewish confessors to leave Judaism and enter the Church. In answer to the question of whether a good man can turn bad, the Talmud cites an apparently well-known case where that precise thing had happened: “Have we not learned: Believe not in yourself

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<sup>51</sup> *Midr. Eccl. R.* 1.8.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

until the day of thy death? For lo, Johanan the High Priest officiated as High Priest for eighty years and in the end he became a *Min?*”<sup>53</sup> In fact, the widespread acceptance of the Christian “heresy” was a signal that the final age of the coming of the genuine Messiah must be at hand:

It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: In the generation of Messiah’s coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield its fruit, yet shall wine be dear, and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? *It is all turned white: he is clean.*<sup>54</sup>

At its inception, the Church had taken its Gospel “to the Jews first.” The Christian faith was, in its essence, an extension of, rather than a contradiction to, Judaism. In addition to the pre-disposition of Christianity in general to view Judaism in a positive light, there was also, from the beginning, a faction within the Church that sought a closer relationship between the new faith and its immediate ancestor. From the first century onward, these Jewish Christians tried to minimize distinctions between the Jews and the Church. For them, the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a motivating force to proclaim the gospel to their brothers with greater urgency, “not as a sign that God had abandoned his people, but rather as a sign that the final cataclysm was near, and with it an imminent change of fortune.”<sup>55</sup> Avi-Yonah asserts that this group declined in numbers and influence in the second and third centuries.<sup>56</sup> The decline of Jewish

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<sup>53</sup> *B. Ber.* 29a.

<sup>54</sup> *B. Sanh.* 97a.

<sup>55</sup> Simon, 66.

<sup>56</sup> Avi-Yonah, 139.

Christianity was not accidental, but intentional, as the sect was pressured both by the Church and by the Jews:

The condemnation of the Jewish Christians was a defensive measure by the gentile Christians, anxious to preserve the autonomy of a cult they had made their own. The stiffening attitude of Jewish orthodoxy was partly prompted by the development of Catholic theology, which exalted Jesus more and more above the merely human condition.<sup>57</sup>

In the fourth century A.D., Epiphanius described the way in which these Ebionites sought to marginalize the apostle Paul, whom they saw as the origin of anti-Jewish sentiment:

Then they [i.e., Ebionites] say that he was a Greek, the child of a Greek mother and Greek father. He went up to Jerusalem, stayed there for some time, was seized with a passion to marry a daughter of the priest. This is why he became a proselyte and was circumcised. Then, when he did not receive the girl, he flew into a rage and wrote against circumcision, Sabbath, and Law.<sup>58</sup>

These believers shared the faith of orthodox Christians that Jesus is the Christ, but unlike other Christians, they are “trained in the law, in circumcision, the Sabbath, and other things.”<sup>59</sup> Their bent toward Jewish practice did not compromise their Trinitarian beliefs, but they did succumb “to the fascination of the Synagogue liturgy, the cycle of the solemn festivals, the call of the Shofar, the mysterious power ascribed to the unleavened bread, and the majesty of the Name.”<sup>60</sup> Especially in the East, the Church continued to feel the powerful influence of Judaism through the Ebionites: “They attended synagogue worship, resorted to Jewish courts, listened to the reading of the

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<sup>57</sup> Simon, 260.

<sup>58</sup> Epiphanius, Pau. 30. 16, citing “The Ascent of James,” in Dennis R. MacDonald, “Legends of the Apostles,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 166-180.

<sup>59</sup> Epiphanius, Pau. 29.7.5, in Segal, “Jewish Christianity,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 343.

<sup>60</sup> Simon, 375-376.

Torah in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and on the next day came to join in the Eucharist.”<sup>61</sup> Their Christian belief and practice was polluted by their reliance on rabbis as healers, their belief in the magical powers of Jewish practices, their admiration for Jewish use of unleavened bread, candlesticks, and phylacteries, and their invocation of angels.

Christian observance of Sunday instead of the Sabbath and the celebration of Easter over the Passover were the result of conscious decisions to draw more definite lines between the two faiths. The Ebionites were still a force in the fourth century; they were perhaps a target of Jewish conversion efforts, as suggested by a visit into their midst by Rabbi Huna ben Judah.<sup>62</sup> The strength of this movement is realized in the recognition that Christian anti-Jewish polemic of the period was aimed at Christians, not pagans or Jews, in order to stiffen their resistance to the appeal of the Judaizers.

While it would not have been unreasonable for the Jews in this period to see Roman action against the Christians as divine vindication of the Jewish position, Simon asserts that they were more interested in using these events to win Christians over to their religion:

It is also a fact that at the time of the great persecutions the Jews did not find themselves implicated in the attacks made on the Christians. On the contrary, the Jews pressed their proselytizing attentions on the presented Christians themselves. A conversion to Judaism was as efficacious in avoiding punishment as a sacrifice to idols.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Neusner, 61.

<sup>62</sup> B. Qam 117a.

<sup>63</sup> Simon, 106-107.

Internally, the Jews sought to combat undesirable outside influence through the prohibition of Greek in the synagogue, beginning in the second century. Simon asserts that “the fate of Greek in the Synagogue and the fate of Jewish proselytism were bound up together.” This assertion is true in the sense that this prohibition was an initial step in a direction that, over the next couple of centuries, would cause Judaism to turn in on itself and away from the outside world. It was not, however, an immediate or universal change. While second century Palestinian Jews rejected Greek, those throughout the empire clung to it, for it was part of who they were: “For the Jews of the diaspora and this means, let us not forget, the majority of Jews, who conversed as well as prayed in Greek, to renounce the language would have been to renounce their mother tongue and to upset completely their whole way of life.” The impetus for the ban in the second century was a unique set of second century circumstances: the actions of Hadrian against the Jews and the Christian use of Greek writings, specifically the Septuagint, against them. The use of Greek persisted in both worship and writing, and the strength of the ban seems to have waned with the passing of time, as demonstrated by the explicit allowance of Greek prayers by the rabbis, rabbinical teaching in Greek, according to Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, and significant use of Greek, along with Hebrew, in Jewish inscriptions well into the fifth century. The seed had been planted, however, and throughout the period a debate was waged over the role of language in Judaism’s effort to combat the gains of its rival. There was “still the will to confound and convert Christians, and to dispute with Christianity over pagan souls” using whatever tools were necessary. The new Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures by Aquila was seen as the “means whereby [non-Jewish readers] may come

to belong to Israel;” and the dispute over the legitimacy of Greek in the Synagogue was still strong enough to require imperial intervention in Justinian’s time.<sup>64</sup>

Jewish diatribe against outsiders and Christian works against the Jews continue well past the second century; these works imply that both Christianity and Judaism continued to seek to impact the other. The anti-Jewish polemical works of Christians, for example, infer that Jews continued to seek converts from the Church: The lasting power of the proselytizing spirit within Judaism is demonstrated by the fact that prohibitions against this activity are still necessary as the first Christian emperors of the fourth century seek to deal with the ongoing “Jewish problem.”

During the third century, however, such forced withdrawal was far from a reality. After a time of recovery from the successive revolts and destructions of 70 and 135, the Jews were again reviving. Dubnov observes, “The land of Judea, barren and desolate after the Bar Cochba uprising, and in hegemony to Galilee, was slowly coming to life again. In the second half of the third century, considerable Jewish communities with academies came to the fore in Caesarea, Lydda, and other cities.” There were now exceptions allowed to the Hadrianic ban of Jews in Aelia-Capitolina, as occasional Jewish pilgrims were admitted to the city formerly known as Jerusalem. Near the middle of the third century, Jewish leadership again asserted itself under Judah II Nesai, son of Gamaliel, resulting in a new influx of Jews into Palestine from Egypt and elsewhere.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 294-299.

The increase, in amount and intensity, of Christian writing against the Jews in the third century attests to the significance of this upswing in Jewish fortunes.

Tertullian, Cyprian, and Commodian complain against the Jews for their hatred of Christians and their instigation of Roman persecution against them. Whether this charge was more perception or reality, there can be little doubt that the Jews were again, or still, a vital threat to the continued health and expansion of the Church.

Palestinian rabbis of this time assert anti-Christian arguments that match up well with the anti-Jewish polemic of Christian authors of the period. They emphasized the characteristics of Judaism which were at once a contrast with Christianity and with the general chaos that pervaded Roman society at the time. Christians of the time might seek to make a case that their faith made proper claim to antiquity and stability, and ought to receive legal recognition from Rome; Judaism could argue that it already possessed, and was widely known to possess, all three. The rabbis also pointed to the reputation of the Jews for ethical behavior and generous philanthropy, and to their esteemed observance of the Sabbath and other festivals. The Jews' faithfulness in adhering to their religion had, for centuries, drawn converts and "God-fearers" throughout the empire. Against Christian claims that Israel had constantly and completely violated God's covenant, the rabbis asserted that God was a witness to their faithfulness: "The nations will then say, 'Sovereign of the Universe, has Israel, who

accepted the Torah, observed it?’ The Holy One, blessed be he, will reply, ‘I can give evidence that they observed the Torah.’”<sup>65</sup>

Third century rabbis could, therefore, hold up their faith to their pagan counterparts as a legally and socially respectable faith that still offered a clear alternative to the disorderly society of their time.<sup>66</sup> The art of the Dura-Europos synagogue, created at about this same time, had the same apologetic purpose as the rabbinical writings. Gutmann suggests that “these paintings may have functioned as theological advertisements, as a sort of religious propaganda, for a Judaism that hoped to attract sympathizers and converts.”<sup>67</sup>

By the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century, Jewish and Christian apologists were actively engaging one another. Neusner, who asserts that this period was the first and only time in which Jews and Christians were contending over the same set of questions, points out that until this time, the Jews were able to ignore Christianity as a mere annoyance. Now, the arguments of Aphrahat and the Talmudists each assume the anticipated answers of the other: “When Aphrahat denied that God loves Israel any more, and contemporary sages affirmed that God yet loves Israel and always will, we come to a clear-cut exchange of views on a common topic.”<sup>68</sup>

As the Church insisted that it was, in fact, the “true Israel,” the Jewish rabbis “found comfort in the iteration that the birthright, the blessing, the Torah, and the hope—all belonged to them and to none other.” Beginning at the end of the third

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<sup>65</sup> *B. Abod. Zar.* 3a.

<sup>66</sup> Feldman, 391-394.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Gutmann, “Early Christian and Jewish Art,” in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, 278.

<sup>68</sup> Neusner, 95, 99-103.

century, this conversation reached its climax in the fourth century with the ascension of Constantine and the emergence of the Christian empire, for “the age of Constantine marked the turning of the world: all things were upside down”:

With the triumph of Christianity through Constantine and his successors in the West, Christianity’s explicit claims, now validated in world-shaking events of the age, demanded a reply. The sages of the Talmud of the Land of Israel, Genesis Rabbah, and Leviticus Rabbah provided it. . . . The Judaism of the dual Torah took shape in response to the crisis of Constantine’s conversion and cause to its systematic literary expression in the writings of the following century.<sup>69</sup>

Rabbi Abbahu, in the time of Constantine, entered into sharp controversy with Christians at Caesarea and wrote on behalf of proselytes, indicating that Judaism was, even at this late date, still drawing new adherents to itself.<sup>70</sup>

However, by the end of the fourth century, the rabbis were forced to forfeit the battle with the Christians for the souls of surrounding pagans and now had no course left open to them but condemnation of and withdrawal from their enemies:

The books of the Evangelist and the books of the minim they do not save from a fire [on the Sabbath]. They are allowed to burn up where they are, they and [even] the references to the Divine Name that are in them. . . . Said R. Tarfon, “May I bury my sons if such things come into my hands and I do not burn them, and even the references to the Divine Name which are in them. And if someone was running after me, I should escape into a temple of idolatry, but I should not go into their houses of worship. For idolaters do not recognize the Divinity in denying him, but these recognize the Divinity and deny him. About them Scripture states, ‘Behind the door and the doorpost you have set your symbol for deserting me, you have uncovered your bed.’” (Is. 57.8).<sup>71</sup>

This does not mean that the rabbis now ignored Christian claims; on the contrary, they were significantly influenced by Christian assertions. Increasingly, the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 107, 147-148.

<sup>70</sup> Bamberger, 287.

<sup>71</sup> *Tosefta Shabbat* 13:5, in Neusner, 99-100

explanation for the Jews' rejection and execution of Christ relies on the assumption that God had "condemned them to perdition" due to their perpetual disobedience.<sup>72</sup> The writings of Aphrahat repeatedly seek to controvert Jewish claims that there remained a divine plan to gather the Jews together as his people of promise.<sup>73</sup> Rabbinical writings of the fourth century continue to reject these Christian perspectives: "Esau the wicked will put on his *Fallith* and sit down with the righteous in Paradise in the time to come, and the Holy One, blessed be he, will drag him and cast him forth from thence."<sup>74</sup> Neusner argues that Jewish writings at the turn of the third century had no concern with the messianic theme, while by the turn of the fifth century, "we find a fully exposed doctrine not only of a Messiah but *the* Messiah," as a direct result of "the Christian challenge."<sup>75</sup> Rabbinical writings of the time reflect this development: "Let the righteous rejoice in the building of your city and the establishment of the temple and in the exalting of the horn of David your servant and the preparation of a light for the son of Jesse your Messiah."<sup>76</sup>

The continued existence and vitality of the Jewish faith in the fourth century is demonstrated by the persistent efforts of Christian emperors to legally counteract the desires of the Jews, ironically parallel to efforts against Christians by pagan emperors a century earlier.<sup>77</sup> However, by the end of the fourth century it was clear that the Church had prevailed in the public arena in their struggle against the Jews. The Jews did not

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<sup>72</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.32; John 12:37-40.

<sup>73</sup> Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 19, in Neusner, 197-202.

<sup>74</sup> *J. Ned.* 3.10, in Simon, 188.

<sup>75</sup> Neusner, 65.

<sup>76</sup> *B. Ber.* 29a.

<sup>77</sup> Simon, 106.

cease to draw converts because they gave up proselytism, however; rather, they ceased to proselytize because they were no longer making converts through proselytism. Even in their victory, however, the Christians were influenced by the Jews, as both rabbis and Christian theologians turned to the Scriptures to find authoritative support for their arguments. To undercut the attractive power of Judaism, Christians maintained a liturgy heavily invested with Jewish precedent; they further brought into the Church ritual observances, popular devotional practices with “talismans and amulets,” and sought to offer substitutes for rabbinical rites of healing.<sup>78</sup>

### Summary

Judaism appears to have had a strong and active presence in the first centuries of the Church's existence. In the earliest years, the two religions appeared to outsiders as merely two bodies within the same religion. They shared common Scriptures, moral commitments, liturgical patterns, and monotheistic theology. There was a growing awareness over the years that Christianity placed the priority on Christ that Judaism did on the law. Both faiths actively sought converts from the surrounding world, and there were at least some converts from each group to the other. The emerging tension between Christians and Jews was at least in part the result of the struggle between Hellenistic and rabbinic Jews for the control of Judaism. It was only with the conversion of Constantine, however, that the Jews appear to have become convinced that they must withdraw rather than expand, as the implications of a Christian emperor

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 377.

became more and more apparent. Almost up until that very moment they remained a social and religious force throughout the Roman world, enjoying a position superior to that of the Christians so far as Roman law was concerned. Even after the Christianization of the empire, rabbis and Church Fathers alike assumed that Judaism still held a continuing attraction for many professing Christians.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PAGAN AND IMPERIAL VIEW

In order to understand the strength of Constantine's opposition to the Jews, it is necessary to examine his imperial interest in the matter. This, in turn, requires a survey of relations between the Jews and the empire in the centuries leading up to Constantine's time. The Hellenistic and Roman cultures in which Christianity first emerged were tainted with existing anti-Jewish sentiment. Ruether aims to downplay the significance of this fact, asserting instead that these cultures moderated anti-Semitism, and that Christianity was the force that overcame this moderation in order to develop widespread and intense anti-Semitism in the empire:

In sum we might say that pagan anti-Semitism provided a certain seed bed of cultural antipathy to the Jews in Greco-Roman society, which Christianity inherited in inheriting that world. But this antipathy had been kept in check and balanced by Roman practicality and Hellenistic Jewish cultural apologetics. It was only when Christianity, with its distinctively religious type of anti-Semitism, based on profound theological cleavage within the fraternity of biblical religion, entered the picture that we have that special translation of religious hatred into social hatred that is to become characteristic of Christendom.<sup>1</sup>

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to conduct a thorough review of anti-Semitism in classical sources. Such a review has been conducted, however,<sup>2</sup> and a survey of classical thought regarding the Jews reveals a much stronger anti-Jewish bias

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<sup>1</sup> Ruether, 30.

<sup>2</sup> e.g., Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 Vols. (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980). Other than noted, all citations from classical authors in this chapter are taken from Stern's translations in this collection.

in the ancient world than Ruether suggests. Greek animosity arose out of contempt for the Jews as a people who were both non-Greek and apparently not desirous to engage Greek civilization, while Roman hostility seemed to arise from Jewish insistence to remain a people apart, and whose distinctive ways provoked the animosity of those around them. Some of the most obvious themes in this discourse are highlighted below.

One of the foremost opponents of the Jews in the classical world was Apion of Alexandria in the first century A.D.. He represents both Greek and Egyptian animosity toward the Jews, and utilizes the works of many of his predecessors as he makes his case against the Jews. Clement of Alexandria alludes to this mutual disdain when he explains that Apion was “of so hostile a disposition towards the Hebrews, being by race an Egyptian, as to compose a work against the Jews . . .”<sup>3</sup> Apion’s writings come down to modern times as cited by Josephus, who composed his own work, *Contra Apionem*, in response to his opponent’s criticisms. Josephus is not reluctant to cast aspersions on Apion’s motives:

The noble Apion’s calumny upon us is apparently designed as a sort of a return to the Alexandrians for the rights of citizenship which they bestowed upon him. Knowing their hatred of their Jewish neighbors in Alexandria, he has made it his aim to vilify the latter, and has included all the rest of the Jews in his condemnation. In both these attacks he shows himself an impudent liar.<sup>4</sup>

Apion transmitted the criticisms of a fellow-Egyptian, Manetho, a priest of the third century B.C.. Manetho had written against the Jews in the context of the longstanding tension between the two peoples that was evident, not only in Egyptian

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<sup>3</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.21.

<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.32.

writings, but also in the Jewish scriptures, as they described the cruelties suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Egyptians prior to the destruction of the latter by divine power.

Manetho identified the Jews with the Hyksos, variously referred to as “king-shepherds” and “captive-shepherds,” “invaders of obscure race” from Palestine who invaded Egypt and ruled over them for 511 years.<sup>5</sup> Josephus defended the Jews against these arguments of Manetho by denigrating the Egyptian’s veracity, claiming that “he took the liberty of interpolating improbable tales in his desire to confuse us with a crowd of Egyptians, who for leprosy and other maladies had been condemned, he says, to banishment from Egypt.”<sup>6</sup>

Chaeremon, an Egyptian apologist of the first century A.D., espoused this same theory, derogatory to the Jews: “Isis appeared to Amenophis in his sleep. . . . The king, thereupon, collected 250,000 afflicted persons and banished them from the country. Their leaders were scribes, Moses and another sacred scribe—Joseph!”<sup>7</sup>

Lysimachus was another Egyptian-Greek writer who sparred with the Jews in his work, *Aegyptica*, in the second or first century B.C.. He concurred with his compatriot regarding the origin of the Jews:

In the reign of Bocchoris, king of Egypt, the Jewish people, who were afflicted with leprosy, scurvy, and other maladies, took refuge in the temples and lived a mendicant existence. . . . The god told him to purge the temples of impure and impious persons, to drive them out of these sanctuaries into the wilderness, to drown those afflicted with leprosy and scurvy, as the sun was indignant that such persons should live, and to purify the temples. . . . The lepers and victims of scurvy having been drowned, the others were collected and exposed in the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1.82-84.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1.229.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1.289-290.

desert to perish. . . . They traversed the desert, and after great hardships reached inhabited country: there they maltreated the population, and plundered and set fire to the temples, until they came to the country now called Judaea, where they built a city in which they settled.<sup>8</sup>

Apion also included in his assault on the Jews a story attributed to Mnaseas of Patara, from c. 200 B.C.. He describes the gullibility of the Jew at the hands of an unidentified Idumean who promised an appearance of Apollo:

The Jews all believed him; whereupon Zabidus constructed an apparatus of wood, inserted it in three rows of lamps, and put it over his person. Thus arrayed he walked about, presenting the appearance of distant onlookers of stars perambulating the earth. Astounded at this amazing spectacle, the Jews kept their distance, in perfect silence. Meanwhile, Zabidus stealthily passed into the sanctuary, snatched up the golden head of the pack-ass (as he facetiously calls it), and made off post-haste to Dura.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Apion employs in his effort two Greek writers of the first century B.C., Posidonius and Apollonius Molon, who are regarded by Josephus as deliberate and inconsistent liars: "On the one hand they charge us with not worshipping the same gods as other people; on the other, they tell lies and invent absurd calumnies about our temple, without showing any consciousness of impiety." Apollonius Molon is singled out for his particular hostility against the Jews:

Apollonius, unlike Apion, has not grouped his accusations together, but scattered them here and there all over his work, reviling us in one place as atheists and misanthropes, in another reproaching us as cowards, whereas, elsewhere, on the contrary, he accuses us of temerity and reckless madness. He adds that we are the most witless of all barbarians, and are consequently the only people who have contributed no useful invention to civilization.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1.305.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1.113-114.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.148.

Apion asserts that in their Temple, the Jews “kept an ass’ head, worshipping the animal and deeming it worthy of the deepest reverence; the fact was disclosed, he maintains, on the occasion of the spoliation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, when the head, made of gold and worth a high price, was discovered.”<sup>11</sup> As if that were not enough, Josephus complains, Apion adds an additional story: “They would kidnap a Greek foreigner, fatten him up for a year, and then convey him to a wood, where they slew him, sacrificed his body with their customary ritual, partook of his flesh, and, while immolating the Greek, swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks.”<sup>12</sup>

Jews earned the resentment of Greeks and Romans because they were able to win converts at the expense of the traditional pagan religion. This record of successful proselytism prevailed throughout the centuries before Christ. In the late first century B.C., Horace alludes to the reputation of the Jews for effective conversion of outsiders, asserting that the Romans: “. . . like the Jews, will compel you to make one of our throng.”<sup>13</sup> At about the same time, Ptolemy the Historian explains: “The Idumeans, on the other hand, were not originally Jews, but Phoenicians and Syrians; having been subjugated by the Jews and having been forced to undergo circumcision, so as to be counted among the Jewish nation and keep the same customs, they were called Jews.”<sup>14</sup>

In the early years of the first century A.D., Valerius Maximus reflects on the legal removal of Jews from Rome in B.C. 139: “Cornelius Hispalus expelled from Rome the astrologers and ordered them to leave Italy within ten days and thus not offer

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.79.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2.95; also in Damocritus, *De Iudaeis*, from Suda, *Damocritos*.

<sup>13</sup> Horace, *Serm.* 1.4.143.

<sup>14</sup> In Ammonius, *De Adfinium Vocabulorum Differentia*, 243.

for sale their foreign science. The same Hispalus banished the Jews from Rome, because they attempted to transmit their sacred rites to the Romans, and he cast down their private altars from public places.”<sup>15</sup> Another epitomist offers that: “. . . the same praetor compelled the Jews, who attempted to infect the Roman customs with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius, to return to their homes.”<sup>16</sup>

Juvenal displays the extent of Roman fear of Jewish proselytism at the end of the first century A.D., as he observes the power of the Jews over their proselytes, the “God-fearers” who attached themselves to Jewish synagogues throughout the empire:

Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine’s flesh, from which their father abstained, and that of man; and in time they take to circumcision. Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn and practice and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome, forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites, and conducting none but the circumcised to the desired fountain. For all which the father was to blame, who gave up every seventh day in idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life.<sup>17</sup>

This Roman fear of Jewish proselytism persisted throughout the period which accompanied the rise of the Christian church. Cassius Dio observes that at the time of Tiberius, it was bad enough to catch the attention of the emperor: “As the Jews flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways, he banished most of them.”<sup>18</sup> Dio reports that Claudius faced the same problem: “As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them

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<sup>15</sup> *Facta* 1.3.3, Ex Epitoma Ianuarii Nepotiani.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex Epitoma Iulii Paridis.

<sup>17</sup> Juvenal, *Saturae* 14.96-106.

<sup>18</sup> Cassius Dio, *HistRom.* 57.18.5.

out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings.”<sup>19</sup> His description of Domitian’s treatment of Flavius Clemens and his family has become the subject of debate over the possibility that Christianity, not Judaism, was the culprit in this case. It is clear that, at least in the mind of Dio there was no distinction recognized between the two. The emperor’s concern was Judaism, and he perceived that it was not an isolated problem: “The charge against them both was that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned.”<sup>20</sup> Apparently Septimius Severus encountered the same problem while traveling to Egypt: “While on his way thither he conferred numerous rights upon the communities of Palestine. He forbade conversion to Judaism under heavy penalties and enacted a similar law in regard to the Christians.”<sup>21</sup>

Feldmann argues that the Jewish population of Judea at the time of the Babylonian captivity stood around 150,000, that world Jewish population by the mid-first century A.D. had grown to about 8 million, and that “only conversion can account for this vast increase.”<sup>22</sup> Simon argues that the Jews made up 7-8% of the population of the first century Roman empire, with total numbers around six or seven million, including proselytes, with about half a million of those in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> If these numbers are even remotely accurate, Roman ambiguity toward the Jews must have presented a persistent problem to the Roman people and their emperors. The Romans, who rather

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.6.6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.14.2, apud. Xiphilinus.

<sup>21</sup> *HistAug, Septimius Severus* 17.1.

<sup>22</sup> Feldman, 373.

<sup>23</sup> Simon, 33-34.

routinely assimilated conquered peoples into their society, alternated in their views of the Jews between “virulent hatred” and “sympathy and admiration.” They generally found the Jews odious “because they were members of a foreign group who would not assimilate.”<sup>24</sup>

Pagan reaction against this Jewish isolationism became part of the standard case against the Jews. In the early first century B.C., the Roman statesman Cicero seems personally irked by the Jews’ persistent refusal to become like the rest of the Roman world, and was strongly supportive of those who sought to challenge this obstinacy:

When every year it was customary to send gold to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all our provinces, Flaccus forbade by an order its exportation from Asia. Who is there, gentlemen, who could not honestly praise his action? . . . But to resist this barbaric superstition was an act of firmness, to defy the crowd of Jews when sometimes they were hot with passion, for the welfare of the state was an act of the greatest seriousness. . . . Even while Jerusalem was standing and the Jews were at peace with us, the practice of their sacred rites was at variance with the glory of our empire, the dignity of our name, the custom of our ancestors. But now it is even more so, when that nation by its armed resistance has shown what it thinks of our rule; how dear it was to the immortal gods is shown by the fact that it has been conquered, let out for taxes, made a slave.”<sup>25</sup>

Josephus recognizes that this is one of the core arguments of Apion, who “would have it appear that we swear by the God who made heaven and earth and sea to show no good-will to a single alien, above all to Greeks.”<sup>26</sup>

“But,” Apion persists, “why, then, if they are citizens, do they not worship the same gods as the Alexandrians?” . . . He further accuses us of fomenting sedition. But, if it be granted that he is justified in bringing this accusation against the Jews of Alexandria, why then does he make a grievance against the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.67, 69.

<sup>26</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.121.

Jews at large of the notorious concord of our race? . . . Apion has consequently attempted to denounce us on the ground that we do not erect statues of the emperors. As if they were ignorant of the fact or needed Apion to defend them! He should rather have admired the magnanimity and moderation of the Romans . . .”<sup>27</sup>

Tacitus, the Roman historian at the dawn of the second century A.D., attributes Roman political scrutiny of the Jews to the ignorance in which they lived due to their separation from the rest of the world:

It had seemed wise to keep thus under the direct control of the imperial house a province which is difficult of access, productive of great harvests, but given to civil strife and sudden disturbances because of the fanaticism and superstition of its inhabitants, ignorant as they are of laws and unacquainted with civil magistrates.<sup>28</sup>

In the early third century A.D., Cassius Dio links Jewish separatism with their theological exclusivity:

They are distinguished from the rest of mankind in practically every detail of life, and especially by the fact that they do not honor any of the usual gods, but show extreme reverence for one particular divinity. They never had any statue of him even in Jerusalem itself, but believing him to be unnamable and invisible, they worship him in the most extravagant fashion on earth.<sup>29</sup>

The determination of the Jews to remain unpolluted by the surrounding world became one of the major causes of pagan resentment toward them. Near the turn of the third century A.D., Philostratus remarked that the Romans were not the first or only people to notice this stubborn trait:

For the Jews have long been in revolt not only against the Romans but against humanity; and a race that has made its own a life apart and irreconcilable, that cannot share with the rest of mankind in the pleasures of the table nor join in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2.65.

<sup>28</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.11.1.

<sup>29</sup> Cassius Dio, *HistRom.* 37.17.2.

their libations or prayers or sacrifices, are separated from ourselves by a greater gulf than divides us from Susa or Bactra or the more distant Indies.<sup>30</sup>

Although these words are spoken by the opponent of Apollonius, Euphrates, who is not portrayed in a favorable light in the work, they still appear to be a reflection of common Roman sentiment toward the Jews.

Roman antipathy toward the Jews most often appeared in connection with Jewish practices which were incomprehensible and sometimes even revolting to the non-Jewish mind. The Jewish Sabbath was one such practice. The poet Ovid regards this observance with disdain: "Hope not for rain, nor let foreign Sabbath stay you."<sup>31</sup> Apion provides an Egyptian view of the origin of Jewish Sabbath-keeping, a view obviously not intended to instill respect for the Jews:

He gives an astonishing and plausible explanation of the etymology of the word "sabbat"! "After a six days march," he says, "they developed tumors in the groin, and that was why, after safely reaching the country now called Judaea, they rested in the seventh day, and called that day *sabbaton*, preserving the Egyptian terminology; for disease of the groin in Egypt is called *sabbatosis*."<sup>32</sup>

Seneca shared this repudiation of the Sabbath, describing it as "inexpedient," causing the Jews to lose one day from every seven to idleness.<sup>33</sup>

Jewish dietary laws were also a cause of consternation for the Romans, who could not discern rhyme or reason for their sensitivities. Toward the end of the first century A.D., Plutarch has his character Lamprias observe: "My grandfather used to say on every occasion, in derision of the Jews, that what they abstained from was precisely

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<sup>30</sup> Philostratus, *Vita Apolloni* 5.33.

<sup>31</sup> Ovid, *RAmoris* 219-220.

<sup>32</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Seneca, *De Sup.*, from Augustine, *City of God* 6.11.

the most legitimate meat.” There then ensues a debate over the question of whether this Jewish abstention arose from veneration of the pig or abhorrence of it, with no clear consensus emerging.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever other Jewish practices might be subjected to Roman ridicule and misunderstanding, none was more offensive than circumcision. Josephus reports that Apion “denounces us for sacrificing domestic animals and for not eating pork, and he derides our practice of circumcision.”<sup>35</sup> Petronius, probably writing in the first century A.D., saw circumcision as the essential core of Jewish profession: “The Jew may worship his pig-god and clamor in the ears of high heaven, but unless he also cuts back his foreskin with the knife, he shall go forth from the people and emigrate to Greek cities, and shall not tremble at the fasts of Sabbath imposed by the law.”<sup>36</sup> With heavy irony, he craftily puts into the mouth of his character Habinnas these words about his Jewish slave: “He has only two faults, and if he were rid of them he would be simply perfect. He is circumcised and he snores.”<sup>37</sup>

Stern surmises that these incidents of Roman rejection of Jewish religious practices were the norm, not the exception. He points to the satirical words of Persius as “typical of the majority of the educated classes of Roman society at this time.”<sup>38</sup>

But when the day of Herod comes round, when the lamps wreathed with violets and ranged round the greasy window-sills have spat forth their thick clouds of smoke, when the floppy tunnies’ tails are curled round the dishes of red ware,

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<sup>34</sup> Plutarch, *QConv.* 4.4.4.

<sup>35</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.137.

<sup>36</sup> Petronius, *Fragments*, no. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Petronius, *Satyricon* 68.8.

<sup>38</sup> Stern, 434.

and the white jars are swollen out with wine, you silently twitch your lips, turning pale at the Sabbath of the circumcised.<sup>39</sup>

Misunderstanding led to stereotyping, which led to exaggeration. Cassius Dio reports that Jewish rebels committed terrible, even inhuman atrocities after Trajan had been forced to withdraw due to his declining physical condition: “They would eat the flesh of their victims, make belts for themselves of their entrails, anoint themselves with their blood and wear their skins for clothing; many they sawed in two, from the head downwards; others they gave to wild beasts, and still others they forced to fight as gladiators.” As a result of these “known” excesses, he indicates that even in his day on Cyprus “no Jew may set foot in this island, but if one of them is driven upon its shores by a storm he is put to death.”<sup>40</sup> While his description of Jewish actions seems inflated and unrealistic, Dio’s summary of the Cyprian attitude toward the Jews is probably not far off the mark.

Beyond the offense of religious practices there arose in the Roman world an underlying resentment against the Jews. Although this bias may have originated in resistance to Jewish religious rites, it developed into a generalized racial prejudice which can fairly be assessed as anti-Semitism. So, for example, Cicero asserts that Jews, along with Syrians, are “themselves peoples born to be slaves.”<sup>41</sup>

Juvenal voices sentiment that would linger for centuries, through both Roman and Christian periods of European society, that the Jews are inevitably linked to an

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<sup>39</sup> Persius, *PSat.* 5.179-184.

<sup>40</sup> Cassius Dio, *HistRom.* 68.32.1-3, from Xiphilinus.

<sup>41</sup> Cicero, *DeProv.* 5.10.

illicit acquisition of money, “. . . for a Jew will tell you dreams of any kind you please for the minutest of coins.”<sup>42</sup> Ptolemy, the second century A.D. Alexandrian astrologer, affirms this view, asserting that the economic dexterity of the Jews is the result of their astrological fortune: “Therefore these peoples are, in comparison with the others, more gifted in trade and exchange.” He adds, however, that this financial acumen is tainted by Jewish moral depravity, for “. . . they are more unscrupulous, despicable cowards, treacherous, servile, and in general fickle, on account of the stars mentioned . . . these peoples are in general bold, godless, and scheming.”<sup>43</sup>

Apion contends that the disasters endured by the Jews were, in fact, the inevitable outcome of their pernicious character: “A clear proof, according to him, that our laws are unjust and our religious ceremonies erroneous is that we are not masters of an empire, but rather the slaves, first of one nation, then of another, and that calamity has more than once befallen our city.”<sup>44</sup> This judgment is shared by Antonius Julianus at the end of the first century A.D., as reported in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix:

Carefully read over their Scriptures, or if you are better pleased with the Roman writings, inquire concerning the Jews in the books (to say nothing of ancient documents) of Flavius Josephus or Antoninus Julianus, and you shall know that by their wickedness they deserved this fortune, and that nothing happened which had not before been predicted to them, if they should persevere in their obstinacy.<sup>45</sup>

At about the same time, other Romans drew the same conclusions. Quintilian posited the inherent despicability of the Jews as a race: “The vices of the children bring hatred

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<sup>42</sup> Juvenal, *Saturae* 6.542-547.

<sup>43</sup> Ptolemy, *Apot.* 2. 3:65-66 (30-31).

<sup>44</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.125.

<sup>45</sup> *Octavius of Minucius Felix* 33.4, ANF IV, 194.

on their parents; founders of cities are detested for concentrating a race which is a curse to others, as for example the founder of the Jewish superstition . . .”<sup>46</sup> Martial implies that Jewish circumcision was universally associated with lechery.<sup>47</sup> Tacitus boldly declares that there is simply nothing worthwhile in the character behind Jewish religious practices:

Whatever their origin, these rites are maintained by their antiquity; the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity; for the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending their tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews . . . toward other people they feel only hate and enmity . . . among themselves nothing is unlawful.<sup>48</sup>

Cleomides, himself an apologist for the Stoics at the end of the first century A.D., explains the sometimes racy language of Epicurus as the result of the influence of the Jews, with their depraved character, in Roman society:

One may say that these expressions derive in part from brothels, in part they are similar to those spoken by women celebrating the Thesmophoria at the festivals of Demeter, and in part they issue from the midst of the synagogue and the beggars in its courtyards. These are Jewish and debased and much lower than reptiles.<sup>49</sup>

The reality of Roman ill-will toward the Jews was so evident that Christian writings, from the New Testament forward, paint a relatively bright picture of Christian compatibility with Rome in comparison to the persistently troublesome history of Jewish-Roman relations. The size and vitality of the Jewish presence in North Africa has been attributed to its compatibility with the anti-Roman sentiment present there

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<sup>46</sup> Quintilian, *InstOrat.* 3.7.21.

<sup>47</sup> Martial, *Epig.* 5.30.

<sup>48</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.1-2.

<sup>49</sup> Cleomides, *De Motu* 2.1.91.

among such groups as the Berbers, like the Jews a Semitic people.<sup>50</sup> This standing tension between Jews and Romans was so pervasive that it could not help but influence the attitude of the emerging Christian Church, contrary to Ruether's claim that "pagan anti-Semitism, at most, provides a fertile soil for Christian polemics and legislation against the Jews."<sup>51</sup> Instead, as Simon summarizes, "The anti-Semitic attitudes of the pagan world were, on any showing, the foundation on which Christian anti-Semitism was built."<sup>52</sup>

Rather than seeing Roman practicality as a force that overwhelmed sporadic Roman suspicion toward the Jews, as suggested by Ruether, it is more accurate to assert that Roman anti-Jewish sentiment never disappeared, and that Roman concessions to the Jews must be understood as mere temporary and partial abatements to the ever-present underlying reality that the Romans never ceased to fundamentally distrust the Jews as a people. In A.D. 40, a clash between Greens and Blues culminated in the burning of a synagogue, suggesting an underlying resentment of the Jews which continually looked for reason for expression.<sup>53</sup>

The history of Roman imperial action toward the Jews suggests that the emperors consistently treated the Jews as potential adversaries, perhaps as a result of this general popular mistrust. In the first century empire, the Jews received freedom to legally practice their religion and immunity from those requirements of the imperial cult that were tainted with pagan connotations, but they enjoyed these waivers only as a

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<sup>50</sup> Simon, 302-303.

<sup>51</sup> Ruether, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Simon, 207.

<sup>53</sup> Scharf, 28.

matter of political expediency, not out of any deep-seated respect for their national identity, culture, or religious beliefs. They were recipients of some residual goodwill due to their past alliance with Rome against their former overlords, the Seleucids. Later, it was their Idumean kings, not the Jews themselves, who forged mutually beneficial alliances with Rome that eased, for a time, the tension between the two peoples.

That these allowances were tenuous at best is demonstrated by the fact that within the first few decades of the empire, at least twice (under Tiberius and under Claudius) the Jews were expelled from Rome, and by the mid-sixties A.D., they found themselves in open rebellion against the empire and soon subject to its wrath. Eusebius describes the ill-will harbored by Caligula against the Jews and its result:

He hated them so bitterly that in city after city, beginning with Alexandria, he seized the synagogues and filled them with images and statues of himself . . . and in the Holy City he tried to change the sanctuary, which was still untouched and regarded as inviolable, and transform it into a temple of his own, to be called Jupiter the Glorious, the Younger Gaius.<sup>54</sup>

Titus' destruction of the Temple and the city were motivated by his conviction that without severe action, the "Jewish problem" would never go away.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the century, Domitian again found reason to instigate anti-Jewish public policy. Nerva rescinded some measures which had developed from the anti-Jewish fervor of the times before his own so that ". . . no persons were permitted to accuse anybody of *maiestas* or of adopting the Jewish mode of life."<sup>56</sup> This reversal, however, seems to have been tied to the individual emperor, for his successors returned to harsher dealings with the Jews.

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<sup>54</sup> Eusebius, *Hist.* 2.6.

<sup>55</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 2.30.7.

<sup>56</sup> Dio, *HistRom.* 68.1.2, from Xiphilinus.

According to Arrian, “Trajan was determined above all, if it were possible, to destroy the [Jewish] nation utterly, but if not, at least to crush it and stop its presumptuous wickedness.”<sup>57</sup>

In the first third of the second century A.D., the Jews under Bar Cochba revolted against Hadrian. Hadrian’s fear, like that of other emperors, was that the “Jewish problem” might not be confined to the Jewish homeland. As Cassius Dio observes, “the whole earth, one might almost say, was being stirred up over the matter.”<sup>58</sup> In response, Hadrian utterly destroyed the Jews, and then “paganized” the city of Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> In addition, his desire to completely “exterminate” the Jews led him to prohibit obedience to the Jewish law, ban circumcision in the eastern provinces, and outlaw Torah study in synagogues.<sup>60</sup> Antoninus and Caracalla later reversed some of these measures, not because they disagreed with Hadrian’s intent, but because they saw the ineffectiveness of the prohibitions. Perhaps the disgust of the emperors with the Jews is best summarized by the sentiment attributed to Marcus Aurelius: “For Marcus, as he was passing through Palestine on his way to Egypt, being often disgusted with the malodorous and rebellious Jews, is reported to have cried with sorrow: ‘O Marcomanni, O Quadi, O Sarmatians, at last I have found a people more unruly than you.’”<sup>61</sup>

That the imperial position was still toward repression of the Jews in later years is demonstrated by the renewed measures of Septimius Severus against proselytism. These

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<sup>57</sup> Arrian, *Parth.*

<sup>58</sup> Dio, *HistRom.* 69.13.2, from Xiphilinus.

<sup>59</sup> Simon, 98-99.

<sup>60</sup> Dubnov, 56-61.

<sup>61</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.5.5.

edicts are evidence that the emperors continued to be wary of the potential “problem of the Jews.”<sup>62</sup> During the mid-third century, imperial attitudes toward the Jews seem to have seen improvement, at the same time that imperial persecution of the Christians increased. This began perhaps with the policy of general toleration and syncretism pursued by Elagabalus and Alexander Severus out of their interest in oriental affairs and religion. The Jews’ ability to improve their standing with Rome was also enhanced at this time by the general state of chaos and political upheaval that characterized the time from about 235-285.<sup>63</sup> During this era, Romans and pagans sought the stability of earlier times, making more acceptable the “notion of appeal to ancient tradition” with which Judaism might be identified. Simon suggests that “little by little the old anti-Semitic spirit gives way, especially among the educated classes, to a distinct sympathy, nourished by a common hostility to the common enemy.” The new “common enemy” to Jews and Romans alike was the Christian Church, for it stood for all that was new. Its adherents had left the faiths of their fathers, Judaism and paganism, which now found themselves with a common interest in presenting a “united front for the forces of conservatism against upstart, revolutionary Christianity.” This new alliance united the Jews in purpose with post-Severan emperors and neo-platonist philosophers against the Christians,<sup>64</sup> even if some of the latter, such as Porphyry, lambasted Judaism along with Christianity as “the most heretical and atheistic” faith which was “universally

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<sup>62</sup> Simon, 105-106.

<sup>63</sup> Dubnov, 117-120.

<sup>64</sup> Simon, 41.

disparaged.”<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, the Christians, not the Jews, were the danger of the hour.

This placed the Jews in a position of access to power that strengthened its proselytizing opportunities:

The third-century emperors, whose indulgent attitude to the Jews contrasts so sharply with their anti-Christian enactments, were guided by the same considerations as was Julian. . . . Thus the imperial goodwill was bestowed on Judaism, and its acknowledged status as a *religio licita* interpreted as broadly as it could be. In this way it was allowed to bring to bear on Christianity not only the direct influence of its apologetic, but also the attraction of its immunity.<sup>66</sup>

Whether as a result of design (as Eusebius and other Christians of the time infer) or merely fortunate circumstances, the Jews experienced a steady growth of imperial favor during this time compared to the Christians: “From the growth, first of anti-Christian attitudes, then of actual anti-Christian legislation, the Jews appear to have derived a positive advantage.”<sup>67</sup> This culminated in a renewed exemption for the Jews from Roman religious rituals in the time of Diocletian, in spite of the vehemence with which he required conformity by the Christians to these same religious practices.<sup>68</sup> The important point to be drawn from this history is that the imperial policy toward the Jews in the late third century was not intended to bring increased favor toward the Jews, but increased stability in society through greater respect for traditional ways. Because of their recognized antiquity, the Jews benefited from this policy, just as the Christians were hurt by it because of their relatively more recent origin. This bestows a greater

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<sup>65</sup> Kofsky, 35.

<sup>66</sup> Simon, 115.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>68</sup> Dubnov, 120.

sense of urgency to Eusebius' motivation to assert the ancient, patriarchal origins of Christianity seen in his *Proof*, as noted above.

As the heir of these developments in Roman imperial history, Constantine appears to reverse his immediate predecessors' attitudes toward Jews and Christians. It is conceivable that he might have embraced Judaism instead of Christianity for these reasons. However, once he publicly identified himself as a follower of the Christian God, the imperial repression of the Jews became the logical result of his desire to perpetuate his predecessors' conservatism. The underlying intent of those emperors' actions was, not to advance Judaism, but to secure stability and order within the empire. In their times, they found common cause with the Jews against the Christians in pursuit of this objective: "Christianity represented a threat to the established order, whereas Judaism by contrast was already tolerated and protected, and could, besides, be positively useful to that order."<sup>69</sup> In his day, Constantine pursued the same stability and order by repressing the Jews, because they had come to represent dissension within an empire which, with the emperor's conversion, was on a path to becoming a Christian empire. This repression was neither immediate nor complete. Constantine did not seek the annihilation of the Jews. He wanted "to restrict them to the area they then occupied, on the fringes of society; . . . to set the Jews apart from the rest of society, to reduce the number of opportunities they had for social contact, and to turn them into second-class citizens." Ominously, Simon observes, "it was to lead finally to the ghetto."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Simon, 110.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-128.

Both because of his attempt to use religion to bolster social stability within the empire, and because of the long-standing tension between emperors and Jews in the history of Rome, it is fair to conclude with Simon that “Constantine seems scarcely to have departed at all from the traditional policy.”<sup>71</sup> Seen from this perspective, Julian’s later reversion to the preference for Judaism over Christianity is, once again, an affirmation of the previous practice of the third century emperors. It is seen to “proceed from the same principles as had always guided the Roman governments’ religious policies.” In both cases, these heads of the Roman state pursued anti-Christian and pro-Jewish policies not for religious reasons, but in order “to unite the conservative forces of the empire in an endeavor to stem the overwhelming and disruptive flood of Christianity.”<sup>72</sup>

Vacillating Roman policy toward the Jews in the fourth century resulted from the tension felt by individual emperors “according to whether they thought of themselves principally as emperors or as Christians.”<sup>73</sup> As time went on, this tension lessened, for Christian emperors’ loyalty to their Church increasingly pushed them to see Judaism, not as an ally in conservatism, but as a rival to their Church and a potential cause of dissension in the empire: “Jewish legislation, whether conferring a right or declaring a disability, was prefaced by unambiguous expressions of hatred and contempt for Judaism.”<sup>74</sup> This focused action against the Jews was accompanied by a

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 112, 114-115.

<sup>73</sup> Simon, 126; see Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade*, New York: Schocken Books, 1971.

<sup>74</sup> Scharf, 23.

hostile attitude made possible by the innovative theological and political developments in the time of Constantine and Eusebius. By the end of the fourth century, the Jews were no longer seen merely as stubborn holdouts against the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, but were now viewed as a thoroughly corrupt people, as seen in Chrysostom's characterization of them as abandoned by God, gluttonous, immoral, adulterous, child-killers, oppressors of the poor, and stupefied Christ-killers.<sup>75</sup> Augustine could now assert that "since the coming of Christ the Jews have forfeited all right to the Scriptures," and that the Jewish nation continues to exist only as a showpiece of the consequences of disobedience, "for the sake of the miseries it endures for not having believed in Christ."<sup>76</sup>

### Summary

Anti-Jewish sentiment had a long history in the Mediterranean world, held intensely by Egyptian, Greek, and Roman peoples. This attitude went beyond Jewish belief and practice to their very identity. Critics like Manetho asserted the Jews had become a nation because their physical, social, and mental aberrations caused them to be run out of Egypt. They were a group of malcontents, deprived in body and mind, whose lives were characterized by violence. Their religion centered on the worship of an ass and was marked by extreme fanaticism and bizarre practices such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, and incomprehensible dietary laws. The Romans built on this anti-Jewish legacy, seeing the Jews as anti-social, since the observance of

<sup>75</sup> Simon, 271f.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 71, 92-96.

their law kept them from assimilating into the wider Roman culture. Because the Jews rejected pagan gods, they were viewed as atheists. Popular resentment toward the Jews was aggravated by their consistent success in winning proselytes to their religion. Over time, Roman inability to understand the Jews grew into semi-permanent prejudice.

Exaggeration and stereotype contributed to a general Roman aversion toward the Jews, leading to recurrent banishment and overt racial anti-Semitism. Imperial actions against the Jews were based on the conviction that they would always be rebellious, and that their potential influence on surrounding peoples must be controlled or eliminated.

Desolations suffered by the Jews were attributed to their depraved character, tainted as it was, in the Roman view, by sexual perversion and greed. Legal toleration of the Jews, including a moderation in imperial policies in the middle of the third century A.D., generally arose from pragmatic considerations rather than from any real acceptance of Jewish belief, practice, or identity.

## CONCLUSION

The original question that this dissertation sought to answer was the significance of the early fourth century in the development of Christian attitudes toward the Jews. Some, with Ruether, have suggested that anti-Judaism is inherent in Christianity from its beginning, while others have argued that no real anti-Judaism emerges until as late as the sixth century. It was the tentative thesis of this dissertation that the era of Constantine and Eusebius was the single most important turning point for relations between Christians and Jews. The research that followed has confirmed that this is the case.

Prior to the conversion of Constantine and subsequent Christianization of the empire, Jews and Christians each vied for acceptance from the general population and at least toleration from the Roman government. During this era, in various ways and degrees at various times and places, each religion's advocates sought to bolster the faith of its devotees and challenge the beliefs of its rivals. While Christian apologists spoke against Judaism as they did against paganism and quasi-Christian heresy, their treatment of Judaism was more ambiguous, for they desired to demonstrate both the new faith's superiority to its parent religion and its continuity with it. Those Church leaders who wrote and spoke against Judaism did so defensively, perceiving in their own time and place a real danger that the Church might be absorbed back into the synagogue. The reality was that throughout the first four centuries A.D., the Church maintained a strong connection to its Jewish background, Scriptures, worship, theology, and worldview. Because of these close ties, the Church was never out of danger of being drawn back

into Judaism, and had to constantly be on guard lest any of its individual adherents did so. The *Adversus Judaeos* tradition that persistently kept appearing throughout these centuries, then, is evidence of the underlying affinity of the Church to Judaism, rather than a sign that it was inflexibly opposed to it. The observation of Simon is worth noting here: “If the Jews are painted so black, it is because to too many of the faithful they appeared at first sight not sufficiently unattractive. The most compelling reason for anti-Semitism was the religious vitality of Judaism.”<sup>1</sup> One mark of orthodoxy in these early years of the Church’s history was a balance between solidarity with Judaism and separation from it. Conversely, those individuals and groups who advocated a complete repudiation of the parent faith were themselves repudiated by the Church for this stand, and were recognized by the Church as heretics.

After the conversion of Constantine, everything was different, for the Church would not be able to resist the temptation to employ the power of coercion it now possessed. The writings of Eusebius signal that a change is underway. He routinely challenges Jewish interpretations of the Bible with a certain harshness not found in earlier writers. He attributes Jewish intransigence, not only to stubborn disobedience, but also to demonic inspiration. He makes hard and fast a distinction between Hebrews, as the forerunners of the Christians, and the Jews, who defiled the divine revelation they received from their Hebrew ancestors. He systematizes Christian arguments against the Jews and provides for Constantine a theological justification for a new, Christian political order. Even Ruether admits the significance of this development: “In the period

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, 232.

after the establishment of the Church as the religion of the Roman Empire, this argument, that the gentile Church is a messianic fulfillment, takes on a new political tone. The universalism of the nations, gathered in the Church, is equated with the universal sway of the Christian Roman Pax.”<sup>2</sup> Encouraged by the emperor’s determination to enhance political strength through religious unity, and given permission by Eusebius’ theological justification of the convergence of the political and religious powers, the Church took the position of victor over Judaism, which from that point forward (notwithstanding the lapse under Julian) was relegated to the status of a vanquished one-time rival. The increasing subjection of the Jewish people to horrible cruelties, prejudice and abuse was the result, not of an inherently anti-Jewish Christian gospel, but of the legacy of a political and religious Christian alliance that emerged from the Constantinian era.

These developments provide the context necessary to understand the venomous language toward the Jews employed by the emperor in his letter to the churches cited by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*. Constantine concludes of the Jews that “such bloodstained men are as one might expect mentally blind,” and that “they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not by any rational principle, but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their frenzy may lead them.” He enjoins other Christians to hold “nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of the Jews!”<sup>3</sup> The individual perspectives of Constantine and Eusebius are probably indistinguishable in our sources,

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<sup>2</sup> Ruether, 141.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted on p. 7 above.

so they must be spoken of together. They were convinced that Judaism, because of its singular influence over the Christian Church and its continued vitality, posed a serious threat to the new political-religious order and must be kept under control. Their perspective on the Jews differed in several respects from that of the Christian Fathers who preceded them. They saw the differences between Christianity and Judaism as more significant than their similarities. Instead of aligning the Church with the Jews against pagans and heretics, they began to see the Church standing alone against all three. They believed that the Gentile Church had displaced the Jews, rather than joined them, as the people of God. Perhaps most significantly, they formulated a theological and political justification of coercive action by the Christian Church and State against the Jews, as against pagans and heretics, that would become accepted policy by Christian society for centuries to come.

This development, interestingly, suggests a hint of an answer to the recurrent historiographical question of the validity of Constantine's Christian profession. His interest in the controversy over the date of Easter observances, as reflected in his letter to the churches, reveals a personal attachment to the Christian faith similar to that observed in his ongoing involvement in the Church's struggle with Arianism. These interactions do not seem to result from the bare political calculations of a cynical emperor who has aligned himself with the new religion in order to fortify his own position. Neither are they, however, disconnected from the political ramifications of these developments. Instead, a new Constantinian form of Christianity emerges, an unprecedented marriage of theological and political interests, as the most influential force within fourth century Christendom. In spite of his inclination toward semi-Arian

theology, Eusebius remains connected with Biblical and historical orthodoxy, thereby protecting this new strain of Christianity from being viewed as outside of the mainline Christian Church, as Gnosticism, or eventually Arianism, was. Rather, the innovations of this movement were its political assertions, for which there seemed to be room within an orthodox Christian Church which was eager for the benefits offered by its imperial protector. As a result, one can speak of Constantine as a true Christian, understanding that his Christianity was a particular fourth century expression of the faith. While other fourth century figures such as Athanasius and Augustine would make greater contributions to the development of Christian doctrine, none would have a greater impact on the Church's social and cultural approach than Constantine and Eusebius. Specifically, their departure from ante-Nicene Christianity's favorable attitude toward the Jews would become the norm for the Christian state from this time forward.

The assertion that Eusebius and Constantine transformed, rather than continued, Christian attitudes toward the Jews is in direct opposition to the perspective offered by Rosemary Radford Ruether which has been so widely acclaimed. It is now reasonable to reiterate her claims that were itemized in the introduction, in order to assess whether they were, in fact, confirmed by an examination of the primary sources.

First, Ruether found fault with the Church for claiming exclusive right to salvation and the true knowledge of God, leading inevitably to their condemnation of Jewish belief and practice. The primary problem with this indictment is that it reads back into early Christian history the set of religious values that Ruether brings from her personal position as a modern observer. While it is true that early Christians, including the writers of the New Testament and the early Church fathers, believed that they were

right and the Jews were wrong on numerous specific and general points, it is equally true that the Jews of the time regarded their Christian contemporaries in the same way.

The review of Jewish sources that was conducted in this paper makes plain that the leaders of the Jews declared that Christian beliefs and practices were wrong. They were further willing to act on this conviction with whatever means they had at their disposal. If the origin of Christianity is inextricably tied to anti-Judaism, then it is equally understood only in the context of a concomitant Jewish anti-Christianity. The Jewish historian, Josephus, confirms that some leaders of the Jews actively sought the execution of prominent Christians, e.g. James, the brother of Jesus. Several passages in the Talmud clearly reveal that the synagogue took an aggressive stance toward the Christians. These observations in Jewish literature make credible the references to Jewish actions against Christians found in Christian sources. Whether it was conspiracy with pagans in the death of Christians (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*) or more general social and apologetic efforts against them (Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*), it is clear that the leaders of the Jewish community recognized the potential threat to them from a vibrant, growing Christian church, and were not reticent to respond as necessary to quell the threat. The extent of this response only expanded as time went on. In the third century, Hippolytus reports that the Jews are boasting about their role in the death of Jesus and are actively instigating divisions within the Christian community. Cyprian states as a matter of fact that Christians were being persecuted by the Jews, although this persecution was no different from that endured at the hands of pagans, heretics, and others. In the earliest part of the fourth century, Aphrahat concludes that the confident

claims of the Jews against the Church in his own day were the result of the success that the Jews enjoyed, at the expense of the Christians, during the end of the third century.

Throughout this period, it is evident that the Fathers of the Church assumed a defensive, not offensive, position against the Jews as the efforts of Judaizers remained a continual peril. Ignatius, the *Didache*, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian all demonstrate that the leaders of the Church were very concerned about the influence of Judaism within their midst, and had little desire to aggressively pursue Jews outside the Church. Even in the writings of Eusebius, after the ascension of Constantine, there is abundant evidence that Christians were seeking to fend off Jewish activities and arguments that could potentially draw members of the Church back into Judaism. Simon summarizes that Judaism remained throughout this period a force to be reckoned with: “. . . the fact that Judaism is still powerful colors all aspects of the relations between the two religions . . . the claim of the church to be the only true Israel represents a defensive reaction against Israel after the flesh.”<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the early Christian evidence reviewed clearly demonstrates that the early Church was much more anti-pagan and anti-heretic than it was anti-Jewish, based on any measure of the number or intensity of the passages directed against each of Christianity's early rivals. The *Didache* explicitly warns Christians to avoid contact with pagans. The Greeks, in spite of their reputation for learning, owe anything good in their civilization to what they have learned from the Hebrews. Throughout the first three centuries, Christian writers consistently side with the Jews against the pagans, asserting

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 96-97.

that the Jews enjoy a favored place before God among the nations, even if not as high as the Christians. In his defense of Judaism and Christianity against Celsus, Origen asserts that Jews need only take a small step from what they already believe, while pagans must abandon their entire religious background in order to come to Christ. The Fathers, especially the apologists of the second century, use Jewish support to make their case against the pagans, and defend the Jews from pagan accusations against them.

An additional consideration regarding this charge is the obvious presence in these Christian writings of pro-Jewish sentiment on these questions of salvation and knowledge of God. Beginning in the New Testament, with the words of Jesus himself and of the twelve disciples, the apostle Paul, and other canonical writings, there is a continual Christian affirmation that the Jews enjoyed God's favor and received God's word in a unique way, as recorded in the pages of the Old Testament. The early Christian fathers for the most part embraced, rather than condemned, the Jews in this regard. Some, especially in the later years of this period, sought to undermine the position of the Jews of their own time by denying the legitimacy of ancient Jewish religion. Most, however, refused to take this approach, emphasizing that God's good revelation to the Jews had been perfected in the coming of Jesus, rather than that something evil and wrong had been corrected with that coming.

Secondly, Ruether asserted that Christians' interpretation of the Jewish scriptures was distorted by their determination to justify their belief in a suffering Savior and appropriate God's promises to the Jews for themselves. There is partial truth in this assertion, for Christians in the New Testament and after did believe that Jewish refusal to accept Jesus as the Christ resulted in their subjection to spiritual blindness.

This kept the Jews from seeing the plain teaching of their own Scriptures that Jesus was, in fact, the fulfillment of the divine promises found in those Scriptures. This Christian view was not, however, without its ambivalences, for numerous Christian writers acknowledged their dependence on Jewish expositors of the Scriptures for their own interpretations.

Ruether's basic assumption that the New Testament writers framed their accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus explicitly to address tension with the Jewish synagogue in their own day must be challenged. There is no evidence that the Gospels' record of Jewish opposition to Jesus is not authentic, and, in fact, it is much more consistent with the events of the life of Jesus and the subsequent relationship between Jews and Christians than Ruether's alternative hypothesis.

Ruether contends that early Christians misused Scripture by claiming its promises for themselves, while understanding its judgments to be directed against the Jews. This charge appears to be without justification, for the New Testament Scriptures and the Fathers alike draw from the Old Testament both promise and warning for the Church. In the age of the apostolic fathers, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and the *Epistle of Barnabas* make it a point to apply the lessons of the Jewish scriptures to Christians, drawing from the history of Israel sharp warnings for all humanity, but especially for the Christians who now view Jewish history as their own. This pattern continues among the later apologists and theologians, as Tertullian, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria seem to deliberately avoid using prophetic denouncements against the Jews, instead choosing to direct them to their Christian audiences to keep them from falling from the faith. While all Christian writers clearly presented Christian practice as a superior

development of the earlier, imperfect Jewish rites, this contrast is most clearly brought out only in the later period. Eusebius and some of the later writings in the name of Hippolytus specifically turn the Scriptures against the Jews and assert that while Christians do possess the blessings and promises of God from the law and the prophets, the judgments belong invariably to those who are Jews “in the flesh.” While Ruether’s criticism could be valid in regard to these later Christian sources, it is strongly contradicted by most of the Ante-Nicene literature, in which Christians invariably apply all of Scripture to themselves.

Third, Ruether identifies the New Testament as being irreparably anti-Jewish and the original source of the overt anti-Semitism that later emerged in medieval Christendom. A passage previously cited is worth repeating here:

It was only when Christianity, with its distinctively religious type of anti-Semitism, based on profound theological cleavage within the fraternity of biblical religion, entered the picture that we have that special translation of religious hatred into social hatred that is to become characteristic of Christendom.<sup>5</sup>

The review of New Testament and patristic references to the Jews above suggests quite a different picture. The writers of the New Testament were so thoroughly Jewish in their orientation that the contemporary Roman world assumed for several decades that the Church was, in fact, just one of many Jewish sects. The New Testament does not seek to hide the reality of the conflict between the Jews and early Christians, but the nature of that conflict is clearly not that the Church was anti-Jewish, but that it

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<sup>5</sup> Ruether, 30.

purported to be truly Jewish, more than the synagogue itself, which for a variety of reasons, did not embrace Jesus as the fulfillment of all Jewish hope.

To argue that Christian claims to be the true Israel is a “distinctively religious type of anti-Semitism” prejudices the Christological question. Either Jesus was the Christ promised by the Jewish scriptures, or he was not. This alone is the basis of the “profound theological cleavage” that Ruether finds at the bottom of Jewish-Christian hostility. The Church argued in the affirmative, while the synagogue countered with a negative answer, but throughout the ante-Nicene period, both were making a claim for the meaning of true Judaism. This dissertation’s review of the primary evidence failed to turn up any evidence that the Church engaged in “social hatred” toward the Jews in the first three centuries A.D.. Early fourth century Christian writings may indeed reveal such an attitude, but they are, in fact, notable because this is such a clear change from the stance of the New Testament and other early writings which focused on the debate between Christians and Jews over which group owned the legacy of the “true Israel.” Because Ruether reads two thousand years of subsequent development back into the question, she rules out of order the Christian attempt to win that debate.

Fourth, Ruether finds the early church fathers essentially anti-Jewish in their aim and approach, as demonstrated across time and geography. Perhaps her most audacious claim is that Christian uses of the anti-Jewish themes “remain quite constant from the second to the sixth centuries.”<sup>6</sup> If the record of early Christian sources reviewed in this paper fails to prove anything else, it clearly demonstrates a wide variety of Christian

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<sup>6</sup> Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 123.

views and approaches to the Jews over the Church's first three hundred years. There certainly seems to be development over the years, as early Christian efforts to reach the Jews are replaced by Christian attempts to answer the Jews, which, in turn, give way to attempts to silence the Jews. The early accounts of Jewish actions against the Christians are mirrored in later Christian justification of actions against the Jews. Furthermore, within each time period, there are huge differences between individual Christians on the question, varying as a result of personal experience, geography, or personality and style. There are such strong pro-Jewish elements in Papias, the *Testament of Abraham*, the *Didache*, and the *Epistle of Barnabas* that modern observers legitimately ponder whether these writings had their origin, to some extent, within Judaism itself. The fact that most Christian writers throughout this period say little about the Jews suggests that there was no strong consensus against them, as Ruether's assertion implies. Within the same general era, one can observe the open attitude of toleration of Clement of Alexandria, the harsh, accusatory tone of Tertullian, and the alternating portrayal of Jewish-Christian solidarity and blunt condemnation of the Jews found in Origen. It seems apparent that Ruether misses the significance of such differences in order to demonstrate her case for a consistent *adversus Judaeos* tradition throughout the period.

In addition, the presence of persistent positive Christian expression regarding the Jews cannot be ignored. Their scriptures, spiritual disciplines, and principles of moral living are assumed by the Christians. The authority and responsibilities of Christian bishops, priests, and deacons are built on the work of priest and levite under Jewish law. The ancient origins of the Jews are revered, and Christians seek continuity, not contrast, with the legacy of Jewish religion. Christian apologists and theologians

embrace and defend the ethical monotheism of the Jews against pagan and heretical alternatives. Christian martyrs give their lives as much for their stand against pagan polytheism as for their Christian beliefs. Christian biblical commentators, such as Origen and Julius Africanus, turn to Jewish scholars and translators to help them understand both Jewish and Christian scriptures. While this consistent pattern of positive regard for the Jews does not negate Christian criticism of the Jews, it must be taken into account along with the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, which seen by itself presents a very unbalanced, and inaccurate, picture of early Christian sentiment toward the Jews.

Finally, Ruether suggests that Christian writing and preaching regarding the Jews had as its primary aim the buttressing of Christian faith and understanding, and that the conversion of the Jews was not within the view of the early Christians in any significant measure. While she does not make this case specifically for the New Testament writings, neither does she give adequate recognition to the reality throughout these writings of a Christian mission to win the Jews. Jesus and his disciples reached out almost exclusively to their fellow-Jews, and on more than one occasion, voiced an intention not to take their message to those outside the Jewish nation. Throughout the book of Acts, Christian evangelistic efforts were directed first to the Jews, and only later to the Gentiles. Paul not only reminded his readers of this practice, but gave a theological justification for it in the book of Romans, making clear that both his personal hope and his eschatological beliefs gave a preferred status to the Jews in regards to salvation.

The problem in all of these sources, for Ruether, is not that they bar Jews from salvation, but that they insist that Jews, like others, can only participate in God's salvation through Jesus, the Christ. She observes that Augustine does not "hold out any hope that the Jews have an ongoing vehicle of salvation *as Jews*, i.e., within Judaism. Only by becoming Christians, now or at the end of time, will they be saved."<sup>7</sup> While this accurately explains the offense of the Christian message for Jews, and while it further offends Ruether's modern notion of religious toleration, it suggests an impossible path of reconciliation for early Christians, for whom Jesus was the exclusive path to God, not merely for those who believed him to be so, but for all people, Jews included. For them to abandon this insistence would, in their minds, amount to a surrender of their core Christian belief. Ruether is right, then, in seeing dogmatic Christology as the inherent, abiding cause of Christian tension with the Jews, but is naïve and misguided in suggesting that a valid, new kind of Christian faith can somehow be re-invented without it in order to make it more palatable to others.

This dissertation's review of patristic sources has brought to light several occasions on which these authors clearly sought the conversion of their Jewish contemporaries. While it is true, as Ruether points out, that most of these writings were primarily aimed at a Christian audience rather than a Jewish one, it remains a fact that they also kept in front of that Christian audience the possibility and desirability of the conversion of the Jews. Justin and Origen seem to sincerely hear the objections of the Jews to Christian belief and seek to provide answers to them in the hope that they might

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 148.

be persuaded to believe in Jesus. Justin and Irenaeus report that many Jews in their times have converted to faith in Jesus as the Christ. Origen and Hippolytus acknowledge the Ebionites as true Christians and affirm the Jewish stamp on their Christian beliefs and practice. Cyprian, writing against the Jews, affirms his ardent desire for their conversion and seeks to persuade them through his writing. All the Fathers, throughout the period, assert that the Jews will only find salvation as they come to God through Jesus Christ, together with the Gentiles. From Romans 9-11 to Hippolytus and other Fathers, there is a continued belief that Christ's second coming will bring with it an eventual restoration of physical Israel to the family of God, united in the end with the Gentile Church that had temporarily taken its place. Only in Eusebius and other later sources is that hope diminished, as promises of Jewish restoration are held to have been fulfilled in the apostles, who alone are the "remnant" saved by God out of the unbelieving nation.

Rising out of, but going beyond these five specific responses to Ruether's assertions, three more general observations may be made which also call into question the perspective which she offers. These observations come from the examination of the writings of the Church Fathers themselves. Considered together, they provide reason to doubt that early Christianity, from its inception in the writings of the New Testament, was inherently anti-Semitic.

First of all, a review of these writings reveals that changes in Christian attitudes toward the Jews all take place in one direction: from relative silence and generally positive sentiment to growing animosity toward the Jews. There is not a single case in which textual emendations of writings of the Fathers can be shown to be more favorable

to the Jews than that of the original works. On the other hand, there are multiple examples to demonstrate that later editors modified and expanded the work of their subjects in the direction of greater hostility toward the Jews. The longer, later editions of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, along with the spurious letters in his name that come from a later period, include language that is much more explicit in its condemnation of the Jews than anything that Ignatius is believed to have actually written himself. While Origen makes some remarks that raise questions about his attitude toward the Jews, there is no question about the clear anti-Jewish tone of the changes to his writings imposed by his editor, Rufinus. The scattered, harsh anti-Jewish language in the works of Hippolytus is so incongruous with the rest of the text that interpolation by an anti-Jewish editor seems the best explanation. Similar examples of editorial amplification can be found in the works of Julius Africanus and Methodius. The pseudonymous works written in the name of Gregory Thaumaturgus are certainly more anti-Jewish than Gregory's authentic works. As a fourth century compilation of an original second century text, the present form of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is likely to have experienced a similar development at the hands of those who transmitted the text with intent to find additional ammunition against Jewish influence in the Church in their day. The significance of these examples is that they challenge Ruether's assertion that anti-Jewish sentiment was consistently present throughout the history of the early Church. They further make it unlikely that the Christians of successive generations understood the writings of the New Testament and the early Church Fathers to be against the Jews, for if they had, they would not have found it necessary to add more explicitly anti-Jewish language to make their point.

Secondly, the writings of the Church Fathers demonstrate that one of the most essential perspectives of early Christianity was its conviction that it was the “true Israel,” the rightful heir of the promises of God. This conviction was built on many direct influences of Judaism on the Christian faith. Many early Christian writings emphasized the Jewish roots of Jesus. *The Two Ways* of *The Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache* was an early example of the Christian appropriation of Jewish works. According to Ignatius, the *Didache*, Justin, and others, there were many Jews present in the Church, some of whom continued to uphold observance of the law along with their Christian profession. *Barnabas*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and *The Twelve Patriarchs* were very strong in their support of the law as a continuing standard for Christians. Early liturgies of the Church were permeated with the language of sacrifice and the altar, derived from Jewish law and practice. Christian clergy found their calling defined in the levitical instructions for Jewish priests and levites, while the Jewish councils of ruling elders also found expression in Christian versions of the same. The times and manner of Christian practices of prayer and fasting arose from existing Jewish practice, as shown especially in the *Didache* and the writings of Cyprian. Sunday began to be observed as the Lord’s Day along with the continued observance of the Jewish Sabbath. The Christians not only knew and used the Jewish scriptures as their own, but also used them in the translations also used by the Jews, primarily the Septuagint. They sought help from the rabbis to understand the Hebrew scriptures; even the gospels yielded greater understanding when the Jewish customs contained in them had been explicated by the Jews.

The Jewish scriptures were fully embraced by the Christians. They did not see this as borrowing something from the Jews, but as claiming rightly what was their own. They used the Scripture in both private and public times of worship. In them was found the power to convert pagans to the truth of God as well as instructions for Christians to follow in their daily lives. In the Scripture, the one true God had made himself known, so that the God of the Jews was also the God of the Christians. Christ, the Divine Word, was both the author and content of the Scripture, for he had so inspired the prophets that they alluded to his coming incarnation as the center of their message. Against pagans and heretics alike, Irenaeus and others asserted the supremacy of the Scripture over against philosophy, pagan superstition, and all other claims to divine revelation or truth. Christian writers continually emphasized the continuity between God's old and new covenants, between Moses and Jesus, between the Old and New Testaments of Scripture. They openly interacted with known Jewish interpretations of Scripture, sometimes using them in support of their own beliefs, other times challenging them directly. Unlike the Jews, of course, they found proof positive in the Scripture that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ whose coming, in full humanity and deity, had been predicted by the prophets. They often resorted to symbolical means of interpretation in order to uphold their Christological contentions, sometimes resulting in quite elaborate allegorical schemes. The Jews' refusal to acquiesce to this sort of interpretation was attributed to their spiritual bankruptcy, for only one filled with the Spirit of God could understand the meaning intended by the Spirit in the Scripture.

Throughout the literature of this period, Christians claim the legacy of the Jews as "our scriptures," "our holy fathers," and "our promises." It is essential to

understanding the attitude of these Christians to the Jews to see that as they made these claims, the early Christians were including themselves with the Jews of the “Old Testament,” not in place of them. Their perspective was that the Jews of Jesus’ time who rejected him, and those of their own times who persisted in unbelief, had left the true people of God, not that the Christians had left behind the true people of God. True Jews are now those who are in Christ, whether they are physically of Jewish or Gentile origin, according to Justin. Because Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scripture, only those who place their faith in him can call the Scripture their own. Because Christians have done so, they are the rightful heirs of those promises God made in ancient times to the patriarchs, who, according to Tatian, were indeed Christians before Christ. Christianity is simply the perfection, the completion, of an imperfect Judaism: now that the old religion’s fulfillment is here, why would anyone choose to persist in following it in its immature form? Christianity was not a new faith, but the new completion of the old. Judaism, with all of its rites and regulations, was not wrong, but was merely a temporary stage in the progressive revelation of God, and had now been made obsolete by the Christ’s advent in the flesh.

As time went on, Christian writers became more adamant that it was the Jews’ persistent disobedience that had caused the end of the old covenant. By their habitual rebelliousness, they had proven both the imperfection of the old system and their own unworthiness. While the Fathers of the second and third century still taught that the Church had joined, not displaced, Israel, increasingly they also emphasized that it was disobedience that had caused the Jews to lose their unique place. Increasingly, the Fathers spoke of the Church as a Gentile institution, into which the Jews might come,

but without any of their prior status as the privileged people of God. Cyprian, *The Apostolic Constitutions*, and the Clementine literature all witness to the emerging Christian consensus that the Church has become a Gentile body which possesses spiritual benefits which far surpass those offered by the imperfect way of Judaism. The Christian way had been presented as a clear alternative to Judaism and paganism by Justin and other second century apologists, but it took until the time of Eusebius for this idea to develop into a clear assertion that Judaism had only been a temporary parenthesis, marked by stubborn disobedience, between the Christians of ancient times (the Hebrews) and the Christians of the present day, both of whom stand apart by their righteous character from the ungodly Jews.

While Ruether is not unaware of Christian claims on the inheritance of the Jews, she does not take into account the great significance of that fact. Very early in their history, the Christians could have chosen to repudiate their Jewish background and forge a path very distinct from the Jews as a new religion. Instead, they clung to the perspective that they were the Jews, that the Church was Israel, and that those formerly known as the Jews had erred by being unfaithful to their Jewish heritage. Because of this, Jewish traditions were not disdained and rejected, but embraced. Faithfulness to those traditions would become a mark of Christian orthodoxy, distinguishing true Christians from those who demonstrated their heterodoxy by their aversion to, and repudiation of, the Jews.

Finally, it is evident from this review of early Christian literature about the Jews that the Church Fathers viewed heresy and paganism as more severe threats to the Church than that posed by Judaism. Christian responses to these other adversaries

challenge the notion that the early church was basically anti-Semitic in its outlook. Many instances of Christians siding with the Jews in these discussions have been identified, but Christian responses to three specific adversaries, the Gnostics, Celsus, and Manes, stand out as especially illustrative of this point.

Gnostic belief explicitly challenged the legitimacy of Jewish practice. They began with the conviction that material things are evil and that only the realm of the spiritual is good. As a result, they indicted the Jewish scriptures and belief for being attached to an inferior god who showed his evil nature by bringing the material cosmos into existence. As a result of their dualism, they also spoke against the doctrine of the incarnation, for the true God of spirit would never honor human flesh by inhabiting it. These positions pushed Christianity closer to Judaism, as Christians saw the necessity of defending, not just their doctrine of the incarnation, but also the legitimacy of the Jewish God and the reliability of the Jewish scriptures, upon which Christian belief was built. Irenaeus of Lyons devoted his major work to the cause of demolishing the arguments of the Gnostics. As he did so, he repeatedly defended Jewish belief and embraced it as his own, rarely distinguishing between the Jews and the Christians in contrast with the Gnostics. He supported his case against the heretics by demonstrating their dependence on pagan philosophy and polytheism. In contrast, Christian and Jewish beliefs are derived from the (Jewish) Scriptures and are therefore above reproach. Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria likewise defend Jewish belief against the Gnostics, especially the variety that followed the teaching of Marcion. Whereas Marcion might, with good reason, be identified as the chief anti-Semite of the age, these

Christian Fathers make it clear that those who would adhere to orthodox Christianity must align themselves with the Jews against the slanders of the heretic.

In his work, *Against Celsus*, Origen puts Christianity on the side of the Jews against pagan attacks. Celsus attempted to malign the Christians by smearing their Jewish roots and inclinations, but Origen refused to take the bait. Instead of trying to deflect the pagan's criticism by distancing the Church from the Jews, Origen defended the Jews and their beliefs, seeing paganism, not Judaism, as the chief threat to Christian belief. Against Celsus, Origen upheld the biblical account of Jewish antiquity, the legitimacy of their sacrificial system, and the divine origin of their scriptures. He repudiated Celsus' false accusations of the Jews and affirmed that they were a people of privilege in the plan of God.

Archelaus responded to the anti-Jewish teachings of Manes with a vigorous defense of the Jews. Like the Gnostics, Manes asserted that the true God has no relation with the physical world, so Archelaus, like Christian writers against the Gnostics, affirms the goodness of creation, the validity of the Jewish scriptures, and the God of the Jews. He also upholds the value of the law, and emphasizes the continuity of the Old and New Testaments. The advent of Christ is seen to bring about the fulfillment, not the negation of the Jewish law, and Jesus' biological connection to the Jewish nation is emphasized. Archelaus explains harsh language toward the Jews in the gospels as applicable to all humanity, not just to the Jews. Archelaus' perspective is uniquely important in two ways: he writes from Mesopotamia, revealing that the support of the Jews seen in Christians from Alexandria, Palestine, and other Mediterranean regions extended beyond those regions; and he explicitly embraces Jewish precedents as "the

traditions of our fathers,” asserting that those who denigrate the Jews identify themselves as heretics, outside the mainstream of accepted Christian teaching.

The evidence demonstrates that Christianity in the first four centuries A.D. exhibited much more continuity than divergence with Judaism. During this time, the Christian attitude toward the Jews was one of dependence, admiration, and imitation. Christian and Jewish writings alike are devoid of any suggestion that “fratricide” was anywhere in view. In the midst of a nearly unbroken history of Christian attempts to persuade the Jews to recognize Jesus as the Christ and join the Church, the “true Israel,” the fourth century saw an abrupt transformation of the Christian attitude toward the Jews, creating a legacy that would eventually result in hostility, legal restrictions, coercion, and irreconcilable distance. The combined efforts of Eusebius and Constantine were, more than any other known cause, responsible for this transformation.

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