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THE IDEA OF ISRAEL

My brothers, my kinsmen by flesh—they are Israelites.

PAUL, ROMANS 9.3–4

Israel is a race of souls, and Jerusalem is a city in Heaven.

ORIGEN, *ON FIRST PRINCIPLES* 4.3.8

How did a Jewish message of a Jewishly conceived end of time—a coming messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the defeat of pagan gods, the ingathering of Israel, the turning of the nations to Israel's god—spill over to pagan auditors? How, after the apostolic generation, did this message shift, grow, and change into what would eventually become gentile Christianities? And how did such a Jewish message finally transmute into anti-Jewish theologies? To answer these questions, we first need to orient ourselves within two worlds: that of the Roman Mediterranean, and that of the Jews who lived within it. Late Second Temple Judaism was the seedbed from which all later Christianities sprang.

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The Second Temple Matrix

"The times are fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and trust the good news!" Thus the message of Jesus of Nazareth, according to the late first-century Gospel of Mark (1.15). So too, according to Matthew, the proclamation of Jesus's predecessor, John the Baptizer (Matthew 3.2). So, too, in the mid-first century, Paul's message to an assembly in Rome: "Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand" (Romans 13.12).

What did their auditors need to do to prepare for this end-time event? All three men called for repentance. But they issued this call to different audiences. John and Jesus proclaimed their message to fellow Jews in Judea and the Galilee; Paul, to non-Jews, in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean. Preparing for the Kingdom—and coming judgement—entailed repentance. John's and Jesus's hearers had to repent of Jewish sins. Paul's hearers had to repent of pagan sins.

"Repentance," accordingly, in light of these different audiences, was also configured differently. John and Jesus, in the late 20s and early 30s of the first century, seem to have called fellow Jews to rededicate themselves to their interpretation of the Ten Commandments—thus, to Jewish ancestral custom. In Mark 10.18–19, for example, Jesus recites these commandments; in Mark 12.28–31, he synopsizes them. The Ten Commandments stood at the core of the Sinai covenant (Exodus 20.2–17; cf. Deuteronomy 5.6–21). In biblical narrative, they were directed to Israel.

But Paul saw himself as preeminently a messenger to non-Jews—*ta ethnē*, as he calls them. This Greek word, which translates the Hebrew *goyim*, can come into English in several different ways. One way is as "nations," which number can include Israel. (Humanity after the flood was divided into seventy different goyim/*ethnē*, Genesis 10.) More commonly in Jewish literature, however, the word refers to non-Jewish nations—the vast majority of humankind—as distinguished from Israel. Here English has two translation choices: "gentile," and "pagan."

"Gentile" is a religion-neutral term, simply indicating non-Jewish ethnicity. But in the first century there was no such thing as a religion-neutral

ethnicity: people groups were defined in part by the gods they worshiped. By definition, a non-Jew worshiped non-Jewish gods.

For this reason, "pagan" might serve as the preferred translation for *ethnē*. The term "pagan" itself is a fourth-century Christian term of derogation, meant to distinguish Christian gentiles from non-Christian ones. But Paul's non-Jewish contemporaries were not religiously neutral: they worshiped their own gods, often through cult to their images. "You turned to God from idols," Paul reminds his assembly in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1.9). "You were led astray to dumb idols," he reminds the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12.2). "Formerly, when you did not know God," he reminds Galatian assemblies, "you were enslaved to beings that are not by nature gods" (Galatians 4.8). Paul's auditors, in brief, were "pagans."

Paul was able to reach pagans because Jews were so well integrated into Greco-Roman culture.

Israel among the Nations

In early Roman antiquity, it seems, Jews were everywhere. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived one generation after Paul, reports that the geographer Strabo claimed: "This people has made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world that has not received [them]" (*Antiquities* 14.115). Josephus's near contemporary, the author of the New Testament's Acts of the Apostles, filled in some detail. Among the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the next pilgrimage holiday, Shavuot (Greek "Pentecost"), Luke says, were those hailing from Parthia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia and Phrygia and Pamphylia and Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete, and Arabia (Acts 2.9–11)—which is to say, from present-day Turkey, the area around the Black Sea, Babylonia and western Persia, and the eastern rim of the Mediterranean. This population also settled as well in the Mediterranean islands, the western areas of North Africa, the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas, and in what would one day be France.

We habitually use the word "Diaspora" to identify this population; but for the Mediterranean regions, the term is somewhat misleading. It

draws on the idea of involuntary exile: in the Bible, this concept comes especially coupled with the consequences of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and the destruction of the first temple, built by Solomon. "Diaspora" is the Greek word for "dispersion," that is, to be scattered, forced to leave the land of Israel, to settle "by the waters of Babylon." "Diaspora" is melancholy displacement.

A different experience, however, stood behind the bulk of this western Jewish population. For the most part, centuries before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and of its temple in 70 CE, these Jews had resettled voluntarily. They were pulled by the wider world created by Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) and, later, by Rome. War builds empires, but peace sustains them. The empires of Alexander and especially of Rome established a new stability, one that enabled and even sponsored the internal migrations of populations. As other peoples relocated, so too did Jews.

Like other peoples conquered by Alexander, Jews adopted Greek as their vernacular. They settled into their new cities and their new culture. Inscriptions bespeak the presence of Jews in pagan educational institutions such as the *gymnasium*, dedicated to the gods Heracles (brawn) and Hermes (brain). Jews showed up in pagan civic structures like theaters (whose performances were dedicated to the gods and given on pagan festal days), and in civic organizations (like city councils, convened by invoking city gods). Jews served in foreign armies. They competed in athletic games (also—like the Olympics—dedicated to non-Jewish gods). They performed as mimes and as actors in the theater. They took Greek names.

Literary evidence reveals the ease with which Jewish elites found their way into the pagan gymnasium, where they learned control of the classical curriculum. Educated Hellenistic Jews literally wrote themselves into pagan culture. One text, *Aristeas*, portrayed a Ptolemaic king so eager for Jewish wisdom that he commissioned the translation of Jewish scriptures into Greek. Another Hellenistic Jewish author attributed the source of the alphabet to Moses; another claimed that Moses taught music to Orpheus. Josephus relates a story of Alexander the Great's coming to Jerusalem, worshiping in the temple, and inviting

Jerusalemite Jews to enlist in his army (*Antiquities* 11.329–39). The point to note is the degree to which Greek-speaking Jews made Greek culture and, for intellectual elites, especially Greek philosophical culture, their own. One pagan philosopher, Numenius, finally famously asked, "What is Plato but Moses speaking Greek?"

Most momentously, beginning sometime in the third century BCE in Alexandria, God himself began to "speak" Greek. The Greek translation of Jewish scriptures, often referred to collectively as the "Septuagint" (LXX), did more than introduce new terms and concepts into the Jews' ancestral writings. Crucially for the development of later Christianity, the Bible in Greek made Jewish traditions available to an ethnically broader audience.

How did Jewish traditions in Greek reach non-Jewish auditors? Jewish immigrant groups abroad organized themselves into assemblies (called "prayer houses" or "colleges" or "synagogues"). These assemblies or associations had many functions: discerning the Jewish calendar; collecting monies to be sent back to the temple in Jerusalem; preserving local records. Jews might gather in community one day out of every seven to hear ancestral traditions read or recited aloud and discussed in Greek. And—crucially, for the later Christian movements—interested pagans might also be among those listening.

Jewish communities welcomed the interest of sympathetic outsiders. Sources both literary and epigraphic (that is, from inscriptions) occasionally refer to such people as "God-fearers." These non-Jews were not "converts." Rather, they were pagans, actively engaged with their own gods, who evinced interest in—and showed respect to—the god of Israel as well. Philo, an elder contemporary of Jesus and of Paul, mentions an annual meal in Alexandria celebrating the translation of Jewish texts into Greek, attended by both Jews and pagans (*Life of Moses* 2.41). One generation later, Josephus speaks of pagan votives and of pagan pilgrimage to Jerusalem's temple, where non-Jews could be received in the largest courtyard of Herod's magnificent building (*Jewish War* 5.190–94; *Antiquities* 15.417; *Against Apion* 2.103). Josephus also comments that the observance of (some) Jewish practices ("Judaizing") had spread among pagan populations, especially women (*War* 2.561; *Against Apion* 2.282).

Complaints about pagan Judaizing—of pagans acting like Jews—stand in pagan sources as well: Epictetus, Juvenal, and Tacitus all comment sourly on the phenomenon. Some outsiders adopted the one-day-out-of-seven weekend. Others avoided eating pork.

Inscriptions from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and elsewhere note pagan patronage of various Jewish structures and communities. One first-century aristocratic Roman lady, Julia Severa, who was a priestess in the imperial cult, built a place of assembly for Acmonia's Jews. Two centuries later, Capitolina, another pagan lady, refurbished a synagogue interior: her donor inscription identifies her as a "God-fearer"—again, a pagan who took an active interest in things Jewish. (Capitolina's husband was a senator and a priest of Zeus.) A Jewish inscription from Aphrodisias from the fourth or fifth century indexes donors by affiliation: born Jews, voluntary Jews (converts, *proselytoi*), and "God-fearers" (non-Jewish sympathizers, still pagan), nine of whom were members of the town council.

Added to this we have the literary evidence of both pagan and, eventually, Christian writers who complain about other gentiles (both pagan and Christian) who maintained an interest in things Jewish: celebrating Jewish holidays, taking vows in synagogues, observing Easter according to the Jewish calendar for Passover. In other words, if we find Jews in pagan places doing pagan things—and we do—we also find pagans (and, later, gentile Christians) in Jewish places doing Jewish things. Community boundaries were porous. Just as the larger Greco-Roman city was a site of broad pagan-Jewish interaction, so too was the urban Jewish assembly, the "synagogue." The extraordinarily wide spread of established Jewish communities outside of the homeland ensured an equally wide spread of outsider audiences, throughout the Mediterranean, for Jewish traditions. These would provide the seedbed for later Christian movements.

The Spread of the Gospel

What is the Kingdom of God? It was an idea that represented a collocation of hopes and expectations that arose out of Jewish prophecy. Its core message was redemption. The Kingdom would bring the culmination of history, a time when God would wipe away every tear. According

to some traditions, the forces of good—sometimes led by battling angels; sometimes led by a messiah—would overcome the forces of evil. Those Israelites who had been swallowed up by centuries of conquest would be reassembled, so that Israel would again have all its tribes. The dead would be raised. All would be judged; the wicked punished, the good vindicated. And the gentile nations would cease worshipping their own gods and be gathered along with Israel to worship Israel's god.

Judea in the late Second Temple period, Josephus tells us, saw many popular movements formed around charismatic leaders who were predicting God's coming Kingdom. Many of these leaders—Theudas; the "Egyptian"; a Samaritan prophet; the "signs prophets"—together with their followers, were cut down by Rome. Jesus, who was himself hailed as messiah, met a similar fate in Jerusalem. But uniquely among these popular movements, Jesus's followers were convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. This conviction served to confirm his message of the coming Kingdom. The resurrection of the dead was a signature miracle expected at the end-time, one that Jesus had emphasized in his own teaching. If Jesus had been raised, then the Kingdom, his followers reasoned, truly must be at hand.

Their experience of Jesus raised explains two other odd facts about the original community. The first is that Jesus's followers did not hesitate to settle in Jerusalem, despite his recent execution there, despite Pilate's regular reappearances there (he was governor until the year 36), and despite the constant presence of the priests (named in the Gospels as Pilate's collaborators). This community's commitment to the city indirectly indicates their apocalyptic convictions: in Jewish end-time traditions, Jerusalem stood as the terrestrial epicenter of the Kingdom.

Their experience of Jesus's resurrection, for this community, tipped time into a new phase. They lived in a spiritually radioactive zone between the risen Christ's private revelation to a few insiders—some five hundred people, says Paul (1 Corinthians 15.3)—and his imminent, public, cosmic Second Coming. The returning Christ would then confront and defeat pagan gods, redeem both the living and the dead, and establish God's kingdom (e.g., Philippians 2.10–11; 1 Corinthians 15.20–58; Romans 1.4). According to the New Testament's Acts of the Apostles, this

community continued to proclaim Jesus's message of the impending Kingdom from the very courts of the temple itself.

Within a few years of their consolidation in Jerusalem, however, some members of this community took their message out on the road. Leaving behind their old territorial ambit in Judea and the Galilee, they struck out for the great coastal cities, Joppa and Caesarea; thence, further abroad, to Damascus and to Antioch. There, traveling through the network of diaspora synagogue communities webbing the eastern Mediterranean, they encountered a social reality that their earlier work in the villages of rural Galilee and Judea had not prepared them for: they met pagan God-fearers who were involved in the life of the synagogue. And these pagans, too, responded positively to the gospel message. This explains the second odd fact about this movement: soon after Jesus's death, his message of the coming Kingdom reached pagans as well.

Acts, an early second-century text, narrates a dramatic story about this moment. It stars the God-fearer Cornelius "who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally, and prayed constantly" (Acts 10.2). As a Roman officer, Cornelius (fictive or not) would also have been a pagan. Peter hesitates to deal with him, and it takes a lot of visions and angelic prompting to move the story along. Luke's apostle also says that it is "unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation" (Acts 10.28). This is nonsense, as we have just seen: Jews routinely associated with pagans—unclothed in the baths, in athletic competitions, in the gymnasium; clothed, in professional associations, in town councils, in the temple courtyard, and not least, in Jewish diaspora assemblies. And Acts elsewhere presents (pagan) God-fearers as a regular part of diaspora synagogue populations. Luke presumably gave Peter this line in Acts 10 for dramatic effect. We should not confuse it with historical description.

It was in the Diaspora, most likely in Damascus, that members of this movement first encountered Paul the Pharisee. Paul is the individual who, in his lifetime and certainly thereafter, would do more than any other figure to promote the spread of the gospel to non-Jewish listeners. Initially resisting this movement and trying to halt it, Paul abruptly changed from adversary to apostle when he, too, had a vision of the risen Christ. His experience proved to be a hinge of history. From that

moment on, Paul was himself a committed champion of the gospel message. But he deliberately broadened his audience. Paul proclaimed the coming Kingdom to non-Jews.

Paul's letters, written mid-first century, implicitly confirm what early second-century Acts repeatedly portrays: the already Judaized pagans of the diaspora synagogue provided the most likely non-Jewish population that would respond to the gospel message—or even understand it. "Messiah," "David," "Abraham," "the Law," "the writings," "the prophets," "resurrection," "Kingdom"—and for that matter, God the Father, the god of Israel—Paul fires off these terms in his epistles. They are invoked with the presumption of understanding and presuppose a fair degree of "biblical literacy," that is, at least aural familiarity, with these elements of Jewish tradition.

The Jewish scriptures in Greek, through the social matrix of the diaspora synagogue, thus enabled the spread of the gospel to the ethnē. And Paul taught to these already Judaized pagans a yet more radically Judaizing message: these God-fearers would have to abandon their domestic and civic deities, he urged, if they would be adopted, via Christ, into the family of Abraham, thus becoming heirs together with Jews to God's promises of redemption. In order to be received into the approaching Kingdom, insisted Paul, these non-Jews had to make an exclusive commitment to the Jewish god. These pagans listened.

What accounts for the appeal of the gospel? What persuaded listeners, whether Jews or gentiles, to trust in the good news of the coming Kingdom? Its message of eternal life, released from sin, certainly played a role. And in the meanwhile, members of the movement, according to Paul, received divine spirit, empowering them to prophesy, to work miracles and cures, to speak in the language of angels and also to interpret it, and to discern between good spirits and bad. The later Gospels, written at least a generation or two after Paul's lifetime, also depict Jesus as prophesizing, controlling demons and "unclean spirits," curing the ill, raising the dead, and interpreting scripture, abilities that Jesus confers on his traveling apostles. The spirit empowered both this movement's spokesmen and its hearers—another sign that redemption approached. "And it shall be in the last days," proclaimed the prophet Joel, quoted in

Acts, "that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2.28; Acts 2.17).

But this active pagan (or ex-pagan) interest in the gospel message created an internal problem for this new Jewish movement. On the evidence, Jesus had left no instructions for such an eventuality. The audiences for his teaching, according to the gospel accounts, were overwhelmingly Jewish. Arguments about *whether* to circumcise, which roil some of Paul's letters, could be relevant only to non-Jews. The fact that the question stirred controversy strongly implies that no "gentile policy" had ever been originally in place. The inclusive prophetic paradigm of Jewish scriptures, however, of Isaiah in particular, had proclaimed that, at the end of days, the pagan nations would renounce their idols and worship God alone. *Two* ethnic populations were thus anticipated in the Kingdom: not only Israel, restored to the Davidic plenum of twelve tribes, but also the nations, who according to these prophecies will have renounced their native worship for exclusive allegiance to Israel's god.

Christ-following non-Jews, on the evidence of Paul's letters, evidently committed to this allegiance. Their new behavior in turn validated this first-century movement's message: if pagans abandoned their own gods, then surely the Kingdom was dawning. These people were still *not* Jews—no circumcision for male ex-pagans. But they were no longer, in our terms, "pagans" either. They were not religiously neutral: their new allegiance was quite specifically to Israel's god through his messiah. Who or what were they then? They were *eschatological* gentiles, end-time others: non-Jews who had renounced their gods for Israel's god in anticipation of the coming Kingdom.

As such, these eschatological gentiles represented a social anomaly. They were turning their backs to gods that were theirs by birth. Their nonparticipation in civic cult and culture thus occasioned pushback from pagan neighbors, worried that the gods, alienated by this lack of respect, would strike back in anger at the city. Diaspora synagogues, too, were occasionally less than welcoming: alienating the pagan majority in their cities of residence put synagogue communities at risk. Angry pagan mobs, anxious synagogue authorities, Roman magistrates working to keep the peace: Paul complains about his interactions with all

these people (2 Corinthians 11.24–27). And he also complains about active resistance on the part of pagan gods (2 Corinthians 4.4). But he—as his apostolic competitors—pressed on, convinced of history's impending happy resolution.

At a crescendo in his final letter, Romans, Paul invokes the full scope of this final redemption. Attempting to explain why, midcentury, the demography of the movement seemed weighted toward gentiles, he ventured an elaborate reinterpretation of apocalyptic prophecy. The gospel had indeed first come to Jews, he said. Then it had gone to gentiles. Then God had deliberately rendered much of Israel insensible to the message, so that Paul and other Jews like him would have more time to reach more gentiles. Only after the "fullness of the nations" was attained would God unblock Israel's ears. "Behold, I tell you a mystery," Paul concludes. Israel's partial insensibility was only a temporary measure. Ultimately "all Israel will be secured" (NRSV "saved"; Romans 11.25–26).

The "fullness of the nations" in Jewish tradition refers to the plenum of seventy nations descended from Noah, as described in Genesis 10. "All Israel" means the Davidic kingdom, the twelve tribes—which is appropriate, since Jesus himself, claims Paul, is the Davidic messiah (Romans 1.3; 15.12). Ultimately the "fullness" of Israel, he asserts, will receive the gospel as well (11.12). The current "remnant, chosen as a gift" (11.5) are those "Israelites," "God's people," with whom Paul agrees, and who agree with Paul—the same group that he elsewhere calls "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6.16). This current remnant is the down payment on the redemption of the whole: God does not break his promises (Romans 11.29; 15.8). The mystery of redemption concealed in prophetic writings has "now" been revealed, Paul proclaims, mid-first century. The final events, he insisted, will take place "soon" (13.11; 16.26, 20).

Jews and Jesus

In the mid-first century, Paul and his colleagues, propelled by their apocalyptic convictions, taught a radical form of Judaizing to ethnic others, a kind of Judaism for gentiles. Despite the social difficulties that their message occasioned, they pressed on, convinced by their very success among

(ex) pagans that the Kingdom was indeed at hand. And they argued loudly with each other about the correct interpretation of Jesus's message—arguments that shape both Paul's letters and the later Gospels.

By the early second century, however, gentile forms of Christianity begin to dominate our sources. How this transition occurred is still a mystery. From the first, Jewish generation of the movement we have no word other than Paul's few midcentury letters. We have no writings from the original Aramaic-speaking base; no record, preserved in the New Testament canon, of what ultimately became of Christ's original Jewish followers in Jerusalem. Presumably the Roman destruction of the city in 70 CE swept away the founding community there, whether through death, through captivity, or through forced migration. The fourth-century bishop and historian Eusebius relates that it fled to Edessa in Syria before the destruction, and eventually returned to Jerusalem. His story seems to be motivated, however, by his desire to construct an unbroken line of episcopal succession from the apostles to his own day (*Church History* 3.5.3; 4.5.2). In fact, we do not know the fate of this original group.

What of Jewish Christ followers in the Galilee? Again, we have no original writings from them. If they were living as Jews among Jews—why would they not?—they would be virtually invisible in our evidence, such as it is. Archaeological data are reticent: a room dedicated to special use might suggest the presence of Jewish Christ followers in Capernaum, perhaps as early as the late first century. And such Christ followers might very well have continued to frequent regular synagogues—again, why would they not? Jesus himself had done so. The invisibility of Christ-following Jews in our Galilean evidence is perhaps what we should expect.

What about outsider reports on such people? Non-Christian literary sources from this region, in Hebrew, are relatively late. The earliest, the Mishnah, a body of rabbinic traditions, was not edited until circa 200. It might provide us with glimpses of contemporary Christ-following Galilean Jews.

At issue is the interpretation of the rabbinic terms *min/minim/minut*. Often translated as "heretic/heretics/heresy," the word means "type" or

"sort." A rabbinic text redacted (probably) in the mid-third century mentions a *birkat ha-minim*, a "benediction against Those Other Jews." Within a liturgical sequence to be said in daily prayer, this text pronounces a malediction on Not-us, that is, on "them," the minim. May they be unrooted (that is, by God). Some scholars—triangulating between the late first-century Gospel of John, which speaks of Jewish Christ followers being put out of the synagogue (John 9.22; 12.42; 16.2); Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (a mid-second-century gentile Christian text), which claims that "you Jews" curse "us" (gentile Christians) in the synagogue; and the mid-third-century Galilean birkat ha-minim—conclude that John and Justin attest to earlier social fact. The rabbinic minim, in this interpretation, were Christian Jews.

One problem with this conjecture, however, besides the vagueness of the Hebrew term *minim* itself, is the mechanism of the malediction, which would rely on *self*-exclusion. The Jewish Christ-following male would have to recite the prayer in the synagogue, discern that it referred to himself and to his group, and then presumably walk away. Self-exclusion is not being "cast out." And we cannot say with any confidence that Christ-following Jews were the intended objects of this malediction: the profile of the minim is very hard to make out. All we can say with assurance is that the rabbis were drawing distinctions between their type(s) of Jewishness and the type of some other group(s).

This was scarcely unusual. Intra-Jewish argument about the right way to be Jewish is a standard feature of Jewish texts, one rooted in the biblical story itself. From Exodus to Deuteronomy, Moses complains about and corrects his people. The prophets exhort, scold, and warn; Ezra and Nehemiah enact sweeping reforms. Much later, in the period of the Maccabees (160s BCE), Jewish diversity of practice in Judea eventuated as much in civil war between Jews over acceptable ways to be Jewish as in revolt against pagan Syrian Greeks. In Jesus's period, Philo of Alexandria criticized other Alexandrian Jews whose interpretation of the commandments to observe circumcision, Sabbath, and festivals differed from his own (*Migration of Abraham* 89–93). Spiritual understanding, said these people, was sufficient to fulfill the commandment. Philo heatedly disagreed. The Dead Sea Scrolls famously reviled unaffiliated Jewish outsiders, and

particularly the Jerusalem priesthood. "There was in Judaism a factor which caused sects to begin," commented a later Christian teacher, Origen, "which was the variety of the interpretations of the writings of Moses and the sayings of the prophets" (*Against Celsus* 3.12).

Mid-first century, Paul railed against his circumcising competitors within the movement, though he acknowledges that they, too, are also, like him, Hebrews, Israelites, and descendants of Abraham (2 Corinthians 11.22). A generation or two later, the Gospels present Jesus as arguing with all comers—scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests. John's Jesus reviles other Jews throughout that gospel ("You are of your father, the devil," John 8.44). John of Patmos—writing, perhaps, in the period of the first Jewish revolt (66–73 CE)—condemns those who "say they are Jews and are not." These false Jews, he says, belong to "the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2.9). All these intra-Jewish texts would have a long afterlife in the echo chambers of later gentile Christianities.

Perhaps the most consequential instance of intra-Jewish argument presented by the Gospels occurs in the Passion narratives, which date to the period after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. These stories shift the responsibility for Jesus's death from Pilate—the only authority, historically, who could have ordered a crucifixion—to the chief priest, Caiaphas, to the priestly council, and eventually to the population of Jerusalem as a whole. In the "seen-together" or synoptic tradition (Mark, Matthew, and Luke), antagonism between Jesus and the priests develops once Jesus is in Jerusalem and causes a scene in the outermost court of the temple precincts, overturning the tables of the money changers. But the same tradition also reports that Jesus was so popular with Jerusalem's Passover crowds that the priests had to arrange his arrest by night, in order to avoid tumult (Mark 14.1–2). The gospels nowhere resolve this paradoxical presentation. In John's gospel, the priests' motivation is practical and political: they want to avoid confrontation with Rome. The reason they fear such, however, is unlikely: they worry that Jesus's abilities to perform "signs" (like raising Lazarus from the dead) would trigger Rome's negative attentions (John 11.47–48).

However we parse these post-70 traditions, they do seem to attest to three historically plausible events: Jesus's popularity, Pilate's intervention,

and priestly cooperation with Pilate. Had Jesus *not* been popular with the restive holiday crowd, Pilate would have had no reason to move against him: Jesus could have been safely ignored. And given the priests' familiarity with Jerusalem, they could very well have cooperated with Pilate, to head off further Roman reprisals against those gathered in the city for Passover. Paul's puzzling statement in 1 Thessalonians 2.15 condemning those Jews "who killed both the lord Jesus and the prophets," may support this conjecture.

As these Passion traditions grow and develop, however, priestly agency becomes ever more pronounced as Rome's diminishes. Pilate as a narrative character waxes increasingly sympathetic—washing his hands of Jesus's blood in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 27.24), protesting that Jesus is innocent of any crime in John's (John 18.38). Matthew's Jesus indeed accuses Jews of murdering the historical prophets (Matthew 23.30–36), a bloody behavior that will crest, in Matthew's story, with Jesus himself. Luke's Pilate forthrightly declares Jesus's innocence three times (Luke 23.4, 14, 22: at issue is a false charge of sedition). John's Jesus, speaking with Pilate, is even more forthright: "He who delivered me to you"—that is, Jerusalem's chief priest—"has the greater sin" (John 19.11). In John's Passion narrative, the Jews seem to do the crucifying themselves (19.16, though in 19.23, the soldiers reappear).

Matthew's chilling malediction, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" (Matthew 27.25), is backlit by the fires of Jerusalem in 70. Jesus's contemporaries and their children had constituted the two generations present in Jerusalem during Rome's destruction of the temple and the city. The city's fall, in Matthew's view, had been their punishment. This passage in his gospel, written well after the city's downfall, was essentially a prophecy about the past.

Acts extends responsibility for Jesus's death to include Jews who were not present in Jerusalem at Passover: Luke's Peter, speaking to a crowd of pilgrims gathered for the next major holiday, Shavuot ("Pentecost" in Greek, observed fifty days after Passover), accuses them too of crucifying Jesus (Acts 2.22–23, 36). Again, these stories relate *intra*-Jewish arguments, not *anti*-Jewish ones. Matthew's own community seems to be both Jewish and Law observant. Acts presents a Law-observant Paul

who worships in the temple (Acts 23.26) and depicts an apostolic council that requires ex-pagan affiliates to keep some version of kosher food laws (Acts 15.20). These authors, writing in Greek, could very well represent communities of Jewish Christ followers.

Later gentile Christian interpretations, however, will turn Jewish involvement in Jesus's death into a standing intergenerational indictment. Not only are all subsequent Jewish generations punished for Jesus's death, say these later traditions: they are actually personally guilty. Not only are Jews guilty of Jesus's death "in the background," as the Gospels depict: in later traditions—the *Gospel of Peter*; Melito of Sardis's sermon *On Passover*; in book three of Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*—the Jews are presented as themselves the agents of Jesus's crucifixion, displacing the Romans as Jesus's executioners. Noncanonical texts—*The Ascension of Isaiah*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*, *The Testament of Levi*, the Christian recensions of the *Sibylline Oracles*—all inculpate Jews. A fourth-century priest in Antioch, John Chrysostom, frustrated that members of his congregation continued to celebrate Jewish fasts and feasts, to frequent synagogue assemblies, and to avail themselves of Jewish healers, will heatedly exclaim, "Is it not folly for those who worship the Crucified to celebrate festivals with those who crucified him?" (*Against the Judaizers* 1.5). This toxic charge of universal transgenerational guilt for the death of Christ continued to mark Christian theology through the mid-twentieth century. It was renounced by the Catholic Church only in 1965, with *Nostra Aetate*.

Who Is Israel?

In the second and third centuries, gentile Christians will look to Judea's catastrophic revolts against Rome—in 66–73 CE and again, under Bar Kokhba, in 132–35—and see the punishing hand of God. Bereft of their temple, driven from their land, said these authors, Jews were in a perpetual second exile because of their role in Jesus's death. A cascade of later Christian theologians repeats this idea. "These things have happened to you in fairness and justice," Justin explains to his Jewish interlocutor Trypho, "for you have slain the Just One, and his prophets

before him" (*Trypho* 16, ca. 150). "Rome would never have dominated Judea," Tertullian asserts, in a writing ostensibly addressed to Roman magistrates, "if she had not transgressed in the utmost against Christ" (*Apology* 26.3, ca. 200). The Jews' greatest sin of all time, comments Origen a generation later, was their killing of Jesus. After that, God abandoned them entirely (*Against Celsus* 4.32, ca. 240). Meanwhile, Pilate continued his development as an appealing figure. "In his secret heart already a Christian," Tertullian writes, Pilate reported the whole story about Christ to another sympathetic Roman, the emperor Tiberius (*Apology* 21.24). Eventually, Pilate would become a saint in the Ethiopic Church.

Accusations of Jerusalemite agency behind the crucifixion had served the evangelists as a way to explain and to justify why God had permitted his temple to be destroyed: those representatives of the temple, Jerusalem's priests, had rightly been judged. Later Christian writers regarded the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE through the lens of the Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE, when the first temple had been destroyed and Judaeans indeed forced into exile. The memory of that catastrophe was hardwired in Jewish scriptures, especially in the writings of the prophets.

As with Babylon, said these later Christians, so too, again, with Rome: destruction meant displacement. Second-century Christianity, in other words, invented the idea of a punitive Jewish "second exile." In reality, however, the claims of later church fathers notwithstanding, the Roman destruction of the city had occasioned no "second exile." Jewish communities outside of the land of Israel had flourished for centuries prior to this period, and would continue to do so for centuries afterward. Jewish communities in the Galilee (thus, not "in exile") would thrive well into the post-Constantinian period.

The writings of the church fathers—"patristic" writings, from the Latin *patres*, "fathers"—went on to broaden the evangelists' indictment. The themes of God's punishment for the priests' and the people's failure to accept Jesus as the messiah, proclaimed in the Gospels, later swelled into lurid repudiations of Jewish tradition itself. Paul's angry insistence that gentile Christ followers should not start circumcising, in this new

context, transmuted into arguments that all Jews, themselves, should stop. The core texts eventually collected in the New Testament thus shifted from being instances of *intra*-Jewish arguments to statements of principled *anti*-Jewish arguments. Writing in Paul's name, the author of Ephesians (late first century? early second?) will state bluntly that Christ abolished "the law of commandments and ordinances," thereby making a new universal humanity—one that had no place for Jewish ancestral traditions (Ephesians 2.4).

Sometime in the second century, keyed off of Paul's writings, letters ascribed to Ignatius of Antioch give further evidence of this polarization. "If we continue to live in accordance with *Ioudaïsmos*," Ignatius warned the Magnesians, "we admit that we have not received grace. . . . For *Christianismos* did not trust in Ioudaïsmos, but Ioudaïsmos in Christianismos" (*Magnesians* 8.1; 10.3). The two groups are conceived as mutually exclusive abstractions. Less abstract—indeed, perhaps giving us a glimpse of Ignatius's social world—is his advice to the Philadelphians. "If anyone expounds Ioudaïsmos to you, do not listen to him. For it is better to hear about Christianismos from a man who is circumcised than about Ioudaïsmos from one who is not" (*Philadelphians* 6.1). Would the "circumcised man" speaking about Christianismos be a Jewish Christ believer? Would the "uncircumcised man" speaking about Ioudaïsmos be a pagan God-fearer? Perhaps. The very fluidity of his situation may explain the harsh clarity of Ignatius's ideological position: he insists that a person cannot be both Jewishly observant and Christian. Other Christians clearly thought otherwise.

Justin Martyr's mid-second-century *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* is a foundational text for subsequent patristic traditions *adversus Iudaeos*, "against the Jews." God, Justin said there, had never wanted blood sacrifices. He had only legislated detailed sacrificial ritual in order to distract Jews from their perennial attraction to idolatry. Sacrifice in itself, he insisted, was a practice characteristic of idol worship (*Trypho* 32). Further, Jews had never understood that the active deity depicted in their scriptures—"rather, not yours, but ours" (29)—was actually the eternal Christ, before his incarnation (e.g., 56; 59; 126). God the Father had never interacted directly with Israel, Justin insisted. It had always and

only been the pre-incarnate Christ, "the other god" (56), who had spoken to scriptural heroes and prophets—Moses, David, Isaiah.

What seemed to be biblical prescriptions for behavior, Justin insisted, were actually allegories, coded stories about Christ, as was evident to those (like Justin) who read these texts with "spiritual" understanding. But Jews, ever obdurate and carnal, Justin complained, understood their scriptures in a "fleshly" way: for that reason, Moses had also given them laws (the ones, that is, that could not be read as prefigurements of Christ) as punishment for their stubbornness (11–14; 18; 21–22; 27, and frequently). Failing to understand the "old law," Jews now failed to see that Christ has given a "new law" (11–12). "What then?" asks Trypho. "Are you Israel?" At some length, Justin answers, "Yes" (*Trypho* 123; 135).

This mode of "thinking with Jews" as the defining Christian "other" while claiming the positive prerogatives of "Israel" for the church became a drive wheel of patristic theology. Traditions *contra Iudaeos* or adversus Iudaeos went on to serve multiple purposes. By identifying Jewish interpretations and Jewish enactments of Jewish scriptures with (inferior) "flesh" and Christian understandings with (superior) "spirit," theologians pried these prestigious ancient writings loose from their communities of origin, eventually by the fourth century turning them into the "Old Testament" of the church. These interpretations validated Christian allegorical readings of Jewish scriptures as codes for Christ. They gave Jesus a huge biblical backstory, one extending back to creation itself. They explained why and how Christians could value Jewish texts while enacting so few of the ("fleshly") practices that they promulgated.

Anti-Jewish rhetoric could also serve in gentile intra-Christian fights, to articulate constructs of Christian "orthodoxy" against "heresy." Indeed, patristic writings against Jews and against heretics form a double helix of invective, the arguments against the one fortifying those against the other. And finally, by so effacing the Jewish context and content of core New Testament texts, by transmuting intra-Jewish arguments into anti-Jewish arguments, these later theologians understood Jesus and Paul as themselves teaching against Judaism. These two figures thus became, in second-century retrospect, the founders of the gentile church—in Justin's view, of Justin's church.

But there never was a single "gentile" church. Some gentile communities continued to observe aspects of Jewish tradition, to adapt and to adopt them. Still others actively—and variously—insisted on difference. Valentinus of Alexandria (fl. 130) who, like Justin, relocated to Rome, established another approach to Jewish scriptures, seeing in them highly symbolic codes for a mystical cosmogony and a spiritual redemption. Marcion (fl. 140), who also relocated for a while to Rome, urged that Jewish scriptures be left to the Jews, and that Christian revelation be sought specifically in the letters of Paul (including some of the current New Testament's deutero-Paulines) and in one of the gospels (a version of Luke's). Both theologians contended that the god revealed in Jewish writings was not the father of Christ. The biblical god was a different and a lower deity, they said, one who in fact represented Jesus's cosmic opposition.

A thick cloud of antiheretical rhetoric shrouds these latter Christian figures, making them harder to see. We do know, from the arguments of their Christian opponents, that they buttressed their insistence that the god depicted in Jewish scriptures was a lower god, not the divine father of Christ, by appeal to empirical fact: the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

The Jews' defeat by Rome's armies in 70—augmented some sixty years later by the defeat under Bar Kokhba—strengthened these "heretical" gentile Christians' case that Jerusalem's temple had nothing to do with the highest god. Had the temple really been allied to the highest god, they reasoned, it never would have or could have been destroyed. These political and military events suggested that the Jews worshiped a god other than the highest god, the one who was the father of Christ. And their theologies, standing at some remove from Jewish scriptures (which in their view did not reveal the highest god), seem less directly engaged with Jews themselves.

Justin and Tertullian, by contrast, in claiming Jewish scriptures for their respective churches, had to work harder to account for Jerusalem's destruction in a way that did not demean or diminish Jerusalem's god. Their answer was that God himself had worked through Rome to end the temple cult: God had never wanted blood sacrifices anyway. In destroying the Jews' temple, they explained, God had in effect repudiated the Jews.

But this argument was itself susceptible to empirical disconfirmation. It was all but upended in 361–63 CE, when, after some fifty years of patronage for one sect of Christianity, Constantine's nephew Julian assumed the purple. Raised Christian, Julian once he became emperor advocated a return to traditional pagan cult and culture. Besides ending the most favored status of orthodox bishops, he conceived a more serious threat: Julian determined to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

His motivation was less pro-Jewish than it was anti-Christian. Orthodox tradition—with which Julian was intimately familiar—had emphasized the theological importance of the temple's destruction, interpreting the Gospels' predictions of its downfall ("there will not be one stone upon another that will not be thrown down," Mark 13.2) to mean its permanent demise. By rebuilding the temple, Julian would undermine the authority of that prophecy and embarrass the church. (We can only speculate what Jews might have thought of the pagan emperor's sponsorship.) In the event, his plan came to naught. Julian died on the battlefield against the Persians; the rebuilding effort was stymied and, with his death, abandoned. But his efforts only made subsequent patristic insistence on the significance and the permanence of the temple's destruction—and of the Jews' "exile"—that much louder.

Still, such theologies adversus Iudaeos do not tell the whole story. Other Christ-following communities were more positively engaged with Jewish sensibilities. We catch glimpses of these in now-marginalized texts: the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*; the *Didascalia Apostolorum*; the *Epistle of Peter to James*. These fourth-century writings perhaps rest on earlier second- or third-century foundations. Some remain in their Greek original, some in Syriac translation; one, the *Recognitions*, exists in full in an early fifth-century Latin rendition. Their emphases are interestingly different from what we encounter in "proto-orthodox" Greek and Latin fathers. "Clement," for example, the protagonist of *Recognitions* and *Homilies*, is presented as a student of the apostle Peter. Paul is nowhere mentioned, but perhaps referred to obliquely as Peter's "enemy" (*Epistle of Peter to James* 2.2). And indeed, this literature seems free of Paul's contentious comparison of "law" to "gospel."

This Clementine literature foregrounds Jesus as "the prophet," one whose transgenerational activity stretches from Moses to himself—though Jesus, as messiah, is also superior to Moses (e.g., *Homilies* 3.20). Salvation is preached by Moses to Jews, by Jesus to gentiles (*Recognitions* 4.5): each pathway is legitimate and efficacious for each people group. (Intriguingly, the word "Christian" nowhere appears with reference to Christ-following gentiles, who are identified rather with the repurposed term, "God-fearers.") Indeed, "Jesus is concealed from the Hebrews who have taken Moses as their teacher. . . . Moses is hidden from those who have trusted in Jesus" (*Homilies* 8.6; cf. *Recognitions* 4.5). Peter and James are the central apostolic characters (with a strong cameo appearance by Barnabas). And proper practice—concerning purity, marriage, food, community discipline—is emphasized, perhaps paralleling the same concerns that appear in contemporary rabbinic literature. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* even criticizes other Christians who evidently observed Jewish food laws and traditions concerning menstrual purity. Clearly for some communities, then, keeping "the law" was a vital part of Christian praxis.

Who were these people? Are they ethnic Jews who also revere Jesus? Are they Judaizing gentile Christians? The ambiguities of our evidence collapse the question. Despite the clarity with which Law-observant "Jewish-Christian" groups are denounced as heretics by Constantinian and post-Constantinian authors like Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, they are evidently alive and well, evincing alternative voices in the contest over definitions of right teaching (orthodoxy).

Contestations over the identity of "Israel" long continued. Passages in the Old Testament and, in the New, Paul's insistence on the redemption of all Israel and the permanence of God's gifts and promises to Israel continued to trouble thoughtful churchmen. In the early decades of the fifth century, Paulinus, bishop of Nola in Italy, wrote of his puzzlement to his North African colleague and correspondent Augustine, bishop of Hippo.

Addressing Augustine as "blessed teacher of Israel," Paulinus cited several problematic passages in scripture. "Slay them not, lest they forget your law," sang the Psalmist. "Scatter them with your might" (Psalm 59.12). Why, asked Paulinus, did Psalms speak of scattering "them"—meaning "the Jews"—"*lest* they forget your law"? If God had repudiated the Jews, "what

good does it do them not to forget the Law," since salvation is acquired "solely by faith?" (*Letter* 121.1, 7). Further, Paulinus asked, how can Paul state that Jews are "beloved of God because of the forefathers" (Romans 11.28)? If they are damned for being enemies of Christ, how can they be "beloved"? "If the Jews are beloved of God, how will they perish? And if they do not believe in Christ, how will they not perish?" (*Letter* 121.2, 11).

Augustine himself had long wrestled with these passages, and with the deeper question of the theological status of the Jews vis-à-vis Christian revelation. In *Letter* 149, he summed up his conclusions for Paulinus. The Jews indeed, he says, had been "scattered" with the temple's destruction in 70. But this scattering had been to the benefit of the church. Jews providentially continued not to "forget the law" because their attachment to their ancient books meant that, as they wandered, they spread the Bible everywhere they went. Jews thus served as witness to the church, since (in Augustine's view) the law itself had predicted that the Jews would not receive the gospel. The prestigious antiquity of their books, their continuing attachment to them, their wide dissemination of them thanks to their eternal exile: all served to convince skeptical pagans of the gospel's truth—*that* was the utility of the Jews' "not forgetting" their law.

As to Paul's statement on the redemption of "all Israel," Augustine explains, that cannot refer to Israel *secundum carnem*, fleshly Israel, but only to Israel *secundum spiritum*, spiritual Israel, the church (*Letter* 149.2, 19). And God's "call," further, is irrevocable only with respect to those whom he *both* called *and* "chose" (nodding to Matthew 22.14: many are called, but few are chosen; *Letter* 149.2, 21). Redeemed Israel, "spiritual" Israel, are those few from within the church who are so predestined. According to Augustine, not even all within the current church were redeemed, only those whom God had "foreknown."

Rhetorical "Jews" and Historical Jews

The patristic image of Jews is most often a still life sketched from biblical sources. It does not represent a social portrait of Jewish contemporaries, but a scripturally generated depiction that could be deployed for various ends.

The Christian critique of Jewish blood sacrifices provides a premier example of this rhetorical technique, whereby gentile writers used Jewish scriptures to criticize and to repudiate (a defunct) Jewish practice. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, a pseudonymous second-century sermon, inveighed heatedly against blood offerings. According to the author, Israel had never received the true covenant at all: Moses in his fury at Israel's idolatrous adoration of the Golden Calf had shattered it (*Barnabas* 4). Christ is the true, the uniquely effective blood offering (*Barnabas* 5). Food laws are not about food, but expressions of ethical allegories. "Do not eat swine" censors wallowing in luxury; "do not eat hare" warns against sexual profligacy; "do not eat hyena" condemns adultery (*Barnabas* 10). Circumcision is about the heart, not about body parts (*Barnabas* 9). The temple's destruction proved what is evident from a right reading of scripture: God had never wanted blood sacrifices anyway, as is obvious to anyone with spiritual understanding (*Barnabas* 16). The true temple is the community of (right) believers (*Barnabas* 16).

Belabored though Barnabas is, it displays a good training in Hellenistic rhetorical technique, using parts of a text to undermine a different reading of that same text. And, like Justin's *Trypho*, its antisacrificial arguments undercut a Marcionite perspective. Marcion, another second-century gentile Christian, had argued that the highest god, the father of Christ, had never wanted sacrifice: only lower gods, *daimones*, sought them out. Therefore, Marcion concluded, the highest god could not be the deity described in Jewish scriptures, who did go on at length about what offerings he required. The Jews' god was a lower god. That god clearly could not be the father of Christ.

Against Marcion, appropriating Jewish scriptures positively for their churches, allegorizing Christians like Justin and Tertullian infused them with new meaning while repudiating sacrifice as well. The Jews' god, they insisted, *was* the father of Christ, but he had never *really* wanted sacrifices, either. Then why all the detail about sacrifice in these texts? Tertullian, around the year 200, agreed with much of Marcion's position. He, too, held that Paul himself had repudiated Judaism, and that blood sacrifice was intrinsically bad worship, linked invariably to the worship of idols and demons. But, Tertullian explained, a bad god had

not given bad laws in a bad book (the interpretation that he attributes to Marcion). Rather, the good god had given bad laws to a bad people, to distract them from their ever-active proclivity (as proved by the episode of the Golden Calf) to worship idols.

Tertullian's rhetoric against sacrifices obscures three points. First, Jews in the Diaspora—those Jews who were immediately proximate to these Christian writers—had not been sacrificing to begin with. Offerings being in principle restricted to Jerusalem, Jewish sacrifice abroad did not exist. And after 70, even in Jerusalem, sacrifices had ceased: the temple was no more. That Jews were constitutively obsessed with blood sacrifices was an image generated by hostile readings of ancient Jewish biblical texts. It was primarily useful as a polemical trope, to lambast putative Jewish literal-mindedness as incipient idolatry—and to accuse Christian competitors of the same.

Second, surrounding contemporary cultures in the second and third centuries *did* actively sacrifice: offerings were made before the images of gods. This social context underscored gentile Christian accusations that Jews were themselves inclined to the premier pagan sin, that is, idol worship. Only pagan gods were receiving such cult. No wonder God had allowed the destruction of Jerusalem's temple: he had wanted such sacrifices to cease. To this argument, patristic authors appended another. If Jewish sacrifices were ended, then by definition the practice of all the rest of Jewish law should end as well. This ancillary argument was aimed not only at Jews, but also against those other gentile Christians who, like their pagan contemporaries, continued to frequent Jewish communities and to adopt some Jewish practices.

Third and, in some ways, most interestingly, the scriptural generation of arguments against sacrifices masks one foundational source for this rhetoric: *pagan* arguments against animal sacrifice. Centuries before this period, Platonic philosophers had critiqued the anthropomorphic deities, their cults, and their defenders, the Stoics. The highest god, they insisted, had no use for such worship: he (or it) should be approached not through cult but through mind alone. Only lower gods, said these philosophers, were attracted to blood sacrifices. (Porphyry, a third-century pagan critic of Christianity, had himself repeated this ancient

argument contra animal offerings.) In short, tried-and-true verbal ammunition on the general topic against sacrificing lay ready to hand. Educated Christian authors easily repurposed it for use against their scripturally sketched representations of Jews—as indeed Hellenistic Jews, also well educated in the pagan curriculum (the only one there was) had earlier repurposed this same pagan argument against pagan sacrifices.

Eventually, "rhetorical Jews" will wander into all forms of Christian literary production. They will be conjured in martyr stories, there teamed up (no matter how improbably) with pagan mobs howling for the death of the martyr (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*). They will be presented as obsessed with blood sacrifices (thus Justin). They will be described as infested with demons (so John Chrysostom). They will serve as a constant counteridentity in Christian sermons, invoked in constructions of Christian identity—especially in arguments with and against other gentile Christians who, as "heretics," will be denounced as "just like the Jews," "worse than the Jews," or indeed, most directly, as "Jews."

Yet for all this, there was a type of *pro Iudaeos* stream within imperial ecclesiastical rhetoric as well. Judaism and knowledge of things Jewish were sometimes conjured as validation in intra-Christian contestations. In popular stories about the recovery of relics in the Holy Land, a "Jew" would often appear as the guide to the holy object: he served as a narrative device, testifying to the relic's genuineness. Jerome in Bethlehem, translating parts of the Old Testament not from the traditional Greek text but from Hebrew, appealed to the *veritas Hebraica* in support of his controversial effort. And he authorized his endeavor by publicizing how he had learned the language from local Jewish instructors. Augustine, against the Manichees, repeated the older polemic equation of "Jews" with "flesh"—and then stood that polemic on its head, arguing that the fundamental message of (true) Christianity focused precisely on the flesh: its creation by God, its assumption by Christ, and its redemption in the Resurrection. The Jews, he argued, had therefore been correct to interpret the law secundum carnem, not allegorically but "literally." Only the Jews' fleshly circumcision, urged Augustine, could have adequately foretold the mystery of fleshly resurrection. Only actual blood sacrifice adequately foretold the crucifixion of the incarnate Christ.

More radically, Augustine insisted that Jesus, all his disciples, and even the apostle Paul for this reason had continued to live traditionally Jewish lives and to observe Jewish law. This was a matter of pastoral principle, he said, precisely to serve as a lesson for gentile Christians. The source of their former religion, he explained, had been demons, but the source of Jewish law was the true God. (Jerome, convinced that Jesus and Paul had renounced Jewish law, pushed back against this reading. Augustine stood his ground.)

In denying the title "Israel" to Jews, the fourth-century imperial church appropriated the idea of Israel as a "chosen people" for itself. This enabled the church to coherently reread the (now) Old Testament, referring positive statements about Israel to (orthodox) Christians, and negative statements to "the Jews." And by seeing Christ as encrypted in Old Testament figures, expressions, and events, theologians could draw on an interpretive pattern of prophecy and fulfillment, putting these notionally contrasting, notionally bounded communities in a developmental relationship to each other, with the new, "Christianity," superseding "Judaism," the old.

The Jews themselves, and the idea of Israel, however, could never be left alone. The originary Jewishness of the imperial church's double canon—the Old Testament, and much of the New—meant that Christians were constantly dealing with representations of Jews and of Judaism whenever they turned to their own sacred texts. In the canonical gospels, read regularly in community service, Jesus of Nazareth appeared as an observant Jew, frequenting synagogues; keeping the great Jewish pilgrimage festivals; reciting Judaism's central prayer, the Shema; wearing the Jewish prayer fringe on his garment; giving instruction on fasting and prayer, on offerings at the temple, on the appropriate dimensions of Jewish ritual objects. The supersessionist rhetoric of the contra Iudaeos traditions notwithstanding, many gentile Christians evidently saw Jewish practice as continuous from the Old Testament through the New Testament to their contemporary Jewish neighbors—or so Christian sermons complain. Indeed, some Judaizing Christians justified their voluntary observance of some Jewish law by pointing precisely to the example of Christ, whose practice they wanted to imitate.

The continuing existence of flourishing Roman-period Jewish communities attracted both clergy and laypeople, even after Constantine. We hear the reproaches to these behaviors in sermons as well as in the canons of church councils and in the provisions of imperial legislation, all of which attempt to regulate and to minimize such "interfaith" socializing. These prohibitions reveal the situation on the ground. Some Christians kept the Jewish Sabbath as their day of rest and worked on Sundays. They received festal gifts from Jews, accepting matzah and participating in Jewish "impieties." They shared in Jewish fasts and feasts, tended lamps in synagogues on feast days, joined with Jews in prayer, and gave their children to Jews in marriage. And the lunar Jewish calendar—especially the date of Passover—long continued to influence Christian communal celebrations of Easter.

In Sardis, a huge synagogue, capable of holding upward of a thousand people, was integrated into the town's central gymnasium complex. Non-Jewish God-fearers contributed to its upkeep. It flourished until flattened by an earthquake in the seventh century. In Aphrodisias, in the fourth or fifth century, a monumental inscription proclaimed the active membership of converts and of non-Jewish God-fearers in the Jewish community. In the Galilee, large and well-furbished synagogue buildings continued to be erected well into the post-Constantinian period.

In Roman Palestine, pre-Constantine, the mysterious institution of the Jewish patriarchate emerged, headed by sages who claimed Davidic lineage. Acknowledged by Rome, the patriarch collected taxes, ruled on community issues, and (according to Origen) even exercised judgment in capital cases: "The power wielded" by the patriarch, wrote Origen in 240, was so great "that he differs in no way from a king of a nation" (*Letter to Africanus* 14). The position only ceased—for reasons obscure—in the early decades of the fifth century. In the broader social sphere, the continuing presence of Jewish town councilors and magistrates, of Jewish civic patrons, and of sought-after Jewish exorcists, ritual experts and healers, all problematized the insistent patristic pronouncements of Jewish decrepitude. Perhaps, indeed, because of this very gap between negative theological depiction and positive social interaction, the rhetoric of separation and supersession boomed so loudly in the literature of the church.

Fourth- and fifth-century Roman imperial legislation was itself marked by the ecclesiastical rhetoric of contra Iudaeos tropes. Laws characterized Judaism as a "feral" and "nefarious sect" and as a "polluting contagion." Jews were increasingly barred from positions in the military, in law, and in imperial service. But the harsh rhetoric to one side, these laws also protected Jewish religious assembly and forbade the appropriation or destruction of synagogues. "The sect of the Jews," ruled Theodosius I, "is prohibited by no law" (*Theodosian Code* 16.8.9).

Relations between Jews and (various sorts of) Christians were not always sunny. As the empire ages in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, as bishops become increasingly empowered, as their urban base becomes increasingly radicalized and codes and councils strain to regulate acceptable Roman *religio*, Jews will be increasingly lumped together with pagans and heretics, two other groups that demarcated the limits of religious respectability. Christian Roman law will demote Jewish ancestral tradition to a *superstitio*, and to a "perversity . . . alien to the Roman Empire" (*Theodosian Code* 16.8.19). Orthodoxy meant not only the right way of being Christian. It increasingly came to mean the right way of being Roman. Depending on the temperament of the local bishop, Jewish communities and property—like that of heretics and of pagans—could become the targets of opportunistic coercion: the seizure of synagogue buildings, the intimidation of populations, the choice between forced baptism or exile.

Yet there was a difference. In the rhetoric of Roman law, heretics were denounced as "insane" false Christians, pagans as clear outsiders. The legal rhetoric itself sought to establish clear and stable boundaries between groups. But unlike paganism and heresy, and despite certain legal disabilities, Judaism itself was never forbidden. Legally, socially, religiously, Jews within a now-Christian society retained an ambiguous status and experienced an unstable and inconstant tolerance, one that would follow them into the Middle Ages and beyond.

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