



### **Prayer Before Studying Theology:**

Blessed Lord you have caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning: grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, encouraged and supported by your holy Word, we may embrace and hold fast the joyful hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

--BCP, Advent 2

### **Class #3:**

- **Differentiation from Judaism**
- **Institutionalization: The Universalization of Faith and Practice & The Formalization of Patterns of Authority within the Church**

### **Jewish-Christian Relations from the Second to Fourth Centuries**

- **Influence of Judaism on the Ancient World and on Early Christianity**
- **Differentiation from Judaism: Jewish-Christian Relations from the Second to Fourth Centuries**

### **The Need to Define "Influence": What Counts as "Jewish Influence" in Ancient World?**

Judaism had a significant influence in the ancient world and not only on Christians. Some of this influence was not direct, i.e. through the Jewish community or Jewish texts, but rather indirect.

- Example: Is Meyer, *Ancient Christian Magic*, pp. 22-23 a Jewish text or not? Why or why not?
  - Read Meyer, pp. 56-57? Why is it important that these "names of power" that are invoked to get things done should be in Hebrew? Why is it asserted that ancient Hebrew has a special power/significance that everyday Greek doesn't have?
    - The ancient/exotic as a standard/preferred source of unconventional power/authority?
    - One can also see a version of this (running in reverse, i.e. the use of the name of Jesus as a source of commanding power by Jewish exorcists in Acts 19:13-15).
- Invocation and veneration of angels in popular apocalyptic literature and incantation formulae. (How much of this is strictly Jewish and how much of the appeal of angelic intermediaries is strictly dependent upon Judaism? Compare the *daimones* in the ancient world--a locus of divine power that was more accessible and anthropomorphic in nature--more susceptible of amoral manipulation? Even God brought down to this level in the magical papyri.)
  - For the role of angels as mediators of the divine, see Paul (Col. 2:18 on visions and the worship of angels; note the contrast with 1:15-16) and

Ignatius of Antioch (*Trallians* 5.1, where Ignatius says that as a martyr bishop he "can understand heavenly things, and the places of angels and the gatherings of principalities and 'things seen and unseen'" and hence can possess divine knowledge).

- The development of the Christian notion of the guardian angel (Mt. 18:10; Acts 12:11.15; compare Gen. 48:16 and Ps. 34:6-7)
- The heavenly worship of the angels a paradigm for the worship of the Church in book of Revelation (see e.g. 5:11-13; 7:11, etc.) and eastern liturgies (services of worship)
- Churches occasionally built in honor of Michael or Gabriel (though hardly worshiped there)

In cases like these, are we dealing with the direct influence of the Jewish community on the Christian community?

Or just noting the fact that symbols/beings originally associated with the Jewish community could be lifted out of their original context, put into general circulation within the broader culture, and then used by non-Jews (pagan and Christian) for particular projects?

- *Bricolage*=building something new out of diverse pre-existing pieces that just happen to be available.
- We'll return to this question next week when we look at the origins of Gnosticism.

#### Continuities Between Jewish and Christian Identities

Jesus and the apostles were Jewish, as were most of the earliest converts (Acts 11:19). Hurtado, Segal and Neusner have discussed the ways that claims made about Jesus unmediated authority to forgive sins and to have a unique relation to God stretched the outer limits of the pluralism existing in first-century Judaism

Paul also can speak of "my fellow Jews (Rom. 11:14) and use his Jewish birth and upbringing as one of the credentials for his authority (see 2 Cor. 11:22 "Are they Hebrews? So am I? Are they Israelites? So am I?" and Phil. 3:5 "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel").

Paul can also affirm that "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2) and always begins his mission in a place by going first to the synagogue to show from the Torah and Prophets that Jesus is the long-expected Messiah (Acts 13:5,46; 17:1-2; 18:5-6; compare Aquila in Acts 18:2).

The problem, as Paul sees it, is that "we Jews" (Rom. 3:9) have broken the law, so that it no longer can serve as a means of right standing with God, but places the Jew in the same place as the non-Jew, i.e. having sinned and being subject to the judgment of God which is coming against sin.

The forgiveness of sins and return to right standing with God can only happen when the God who is God not only of Jews but also of Gentiles (Rom. 3:29) calls members of both

peoples to be his own (Rom. 9:24; 11:18-19; 1 Cor. 1:24), making atonement for their sins through the Cross.

Jewish identity and Jewish practices can therefore no longer be used to achieve or maintain standing with God or to separate the Jew (as object of God's saving work) from the Gentile (as object of God's saving work). In this sense Paul can speak of "my *former* life in Judaism" (Gal. 1:13), can warn Titus against persons "devoting themselves to Jewish myths" (as a way to claim knowledge or standing), and can reject circumcision and purity laws as a basis for separation/division within the Christian community (Gal. 2:13-15).

Jesus-followers found their greatest success in evangelization among the Jews from the Diaspora (Acts 2:5-11) and particularly among

- those Greeks who were receptive to Judaism or were devout converts to Judaism ("God-fearers") (Acts 2:11; 10:22; 13:43; 17:4; compare 13:6-7; 14:1; 17:11-12,17; 18:4)
- those who were in mixed marriages or were children of such marriages (Acts 16:1; 24:24).

Because early Christians

(1) held that circumcision and observance of the law could not be a way to achieve standing with God and

(2) tended to recruit people of Gentile backgrounds

mainstream Jewish communities saw early Christians as an alien movement that was subversive of the customs and way of life that had bound their community together.

Cf. Acts 21:21: "and have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our laws.

Roman law aimed to achieve stability by allowing communities to perpetuate traditional customs of ancient origin and to discipline members who aimed to undermine traditional customs or commit sacrilege by profaning temples.

- Cf. the accusation against Paul in Acts 21:28: "the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. For he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place."
- and Paul's defense in Acts 25:8: "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the Temple, nor against Caesar, have I committed..."

Furthermore, to establish a new, non-traditional cult or to try to convert people away from traditional forms of worship was

- to create social instability (a perverse and extravagant superstition arising from hatred of humanity)
- in open defiance of the government (seditious and treasonous, hence needing to put down quite forcefully).
- Cf. Acts 16:20-22: "they advocate customs that are *not lawful for Romans to accept or practice*"

- Acts 18:12-15: "This man is persuading people to worship contrary to the law"
- Acts 25:8: "nor *against Caesar* have I committed"

In this environment, continued existence as a splinter movement within Judaism was unsustainable and Christians needed to find a new identity among the Gentiles who were increasingly the vast majority of converts.

By the end of the first century (90's), the Gospel of John will routinely assume that Jewish customs will be unfamiliar to his audience and will require explanation (Jn. 2:6; 19:42) and the book of Revelation will criticize Gentiles who attempt to maintain and practice Jewish customs (Rev. 2:9).

Certainly, Christianity was increasingly marginalized and alienated from Judaism even by the end of the first century (witness John's references to "the Jews") and denunciations of Christianity as a novel, illicit (non-ancestral) religion by Jews sometimes did lead to persecution by the Roman authorities (Stevenson, CCC, pp. 3-4).

Although the term "anti-Judaism" is too general to be useful as a descriptive term, it would be fair to say that by the end of the first century A.D., Christians tried to find ways of defining themselves over against (and in contrast to) Judaism. These strategies included:

(1) An exaggerated Paulinism in Ignatius (Stevenson, NE, pp. 13-14) and Marcion (Stevenson, NE, pp. 92-95) represented the Jewish heritage of the Church (Law, Sabbath, ancient observances etc.) as being in opposition to grace and opposed to God's perfect self-revelation in Christ and salvation by Christ's death (for which the Jews are also blamed).

(2) In Ignatius one can also clearly observe a commitment to supersessionism (prophets pointed to the coming of Christ and thus became his disciples; this has now resulted in the abrogation of the Law and the transition from the Jewish people to the Church). See Rom. 2:9-29, which is often discussed by early Christians in this context.

(3) Various systematic and unsystematic attempts were made to relate the Church to the institutions and people of God through Christian exegesis of the Old Testament and use of typology (OT type points to and finds its fulfillment in NT reality, e.g. person of Christ, Church, etc.).

These rationalizations of the difference between Judaism and Christianity were put to the test in the second century by the teachings of Marcion and his followers (Stevenson, NE, pp. 92-97). This forced the church to move from distinguishing themselves from Judaism to explaining what parts of the Jewish past were continuous with Christianity and authoritative.

- Note Marcion's *Antitheses* (Stevenson, NE, p. 94 #74) that opposed

- the just creator (demiurge) of the material world and the God of the Jews, who had limited knowledge/foresight and an impulsive, unmeasured desire to punish/engage in retribution when thwarted with
- the hidden, transcendent Father of Jesus, who was perfectly good and alone had complete knowledge

For a sense of how the Marcionite polemic worked, see Adamantius *Dialogue on the True Faith in God* (tr. Pretty, pp. 92-97, 100-101).

At the end of the day Christians

- validated the separation from Judaism, the Law as a means to achieve standing with God, and Jewish communities and practices
- persisted in reading the Old Testament and connecting the Old Testament and Gospel/ New Testament by affirming messianic prophecy and a promise/fulfillment scheme that was explained used a typological reading of the Old Testament.

### *Social Separation and Conflict Between Jews and Christians*

Although Christians and Jews continued to live near one another and have limited social and commercial interaction, ecclesiastical authorities increasingly sought to limit; cf. Canons 16 and 50 of the Council of Elvira [c. 305-306]; see handout),

- rejecting intermarriage [compare Stevenson, CCC, pp. 157, 358 #14] and table fellowship;
- Christians not to frequent Jewish assemblies.

The increasing alienation of the Jewish and Christian communities led to periodic outbreaks of violence and arson (Stevenson, CCC, p. 135), in which bishops and monks sometimes played a part.

- See Ambrose's appeal to Theodosius I in Stevenson, CCC, p. 135, which defends the imprudent actions of a fellow Christian and argues that he should not be forced to rebuild the non-Christian place of worship whose destruction he had supported; compare his remarks on the treatment of heretical Christian groups of ancient origin.
- Contrast the imperial legislation in the *Codex Theodosianum* (Stevenson, CCC, pp. 154-155), which punishes heretical groups quite severely but aims to protect the persons and property of law-abiding Jews and pagans, allowing Jewish masters to own Christian slaves but protecting the latter's right to practice their religion (Stevenson, CCC, pp. 157; this apparently reverses a policy of Constantine).

### *Longing for Closer Connection with a Partially Lost Jewish Past*

On the one hand there is a fascination among with the Hebrew language and customs of Christ and the Apostles

- study of Hebrew, esp. the meanings of Hebrew words and personal and geographical names, and the different renderings of the Hebrew text in the various Greek translations known to Greek-speaking Jews and Christians (Septuagint

- [LXX], Theodotion, Aquila, Symmachus) and collected in parallel columns in Origen's Hexapla (Stevenson, NE, p. 197)
- the idea that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew and still extant in that language in outlying areas; see Pantaenus (Stevenson, NE, p. 179) and Jerome
  - the appeal of Jewish blessings and invocations in the Hebrew language [Stevenson, NE, p. 292 #49]

*Continuities with Jewish Communal Use of the Scriptures Preserved in a Form Adapted to New Meaning in Christ*

- Sunday vs. Sabbath (weekly worship/day of rest not part of pagan tradition) (Sunday as day of resurrection/Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath)
  - Resetting of fast days in the Didache--kept the form, changed the meaning
  - Jewish cycle of synagogue readings→Development of a Christian concept of the liturgical year with major festivals correlated with the history of the life of Jesus
    - Advent→Pentecost=readings/ prayers correlated with life of Jesus and progress toward the Cross and Resurrection vs.
    - Ordinary Time=readings/prayers in Sundays after Pentecost (or in the English church, after Trinity Sunday) deal with applied moral teachings of the life of faith