

# The Ways that Never Parted

Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity  
and the Early Middle Ages

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## What "Parting of the Ways"?

Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City

by

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When was the "Parting of the Ways"? At what point did relations between Jews and (Gentile) Christians irretrievably, unambiguously break down?

Until quite recently, scholars of ancient Christianity, particularly of the New Testament, have frequently posed – and just as frequently answered – this question. The options available in the texts of choice have supported such answers as c. 28–30 CE, when Jesus proclaimed a supposedly startling new vision to an indifferent or hostile Israel; c. 50 CE, when Pauline communities are imagined as separate from and independent of Diaspora synagogue communities; c. 70 CE, when the Temple's destruction supposedly untethered Gentile Christianity from its awkward and lingering attachments to Jewish practice; c. 135 CE, after which point Jews were no longer permitted into Aelia, and the leadership of the "mother church" passed from Jewish to Gentile Christians; or, certainly by 200 CE, when Jewish persecutions of Gentile Christians and increasingly effective ecclesiastical organization combined both to articulate and to finalize the "inevitable" break.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The current essay draws in part on research and arguments advanced in an essay done in collaboration with Doctor Oded Irshai of Hebrew University: "Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies, from the Second to the Seventh Century," forthcoming in volume 4 of the *Cambridge History of Judaism*, edited by Steven T. Katz. I gratefully acknowledge support I received for that project from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<sup>2</sup> "Until recently" should not be taken to imply "but no longer." Much current work in New Testament generally, and in studies of Paul and of the historical Jesus in particular, still operates with this paradigm of separation. James D. G. Dunn's *The Partings of the Ways* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1991) may be usefully considered in this connection. Rejecting earlier views (such as Baur's, Lightfoot's, and, with a [huge] difference, Sanders') that located the split with Paul, Dunn ultimately settles on the year 135 (p. 238); and then collapses his own point by opining that Jesus, in rejecting distinctions between the righteous and sinners, thereby implicitly rejected the social and ethnic boundary between Jews and Gentiles, on which the vast majority of his co-

The historiography on this issue is now changing. Some scholars currently look much later – to Constantine, perhaps, or to Theodosius – to locate this famous split. That we even ask this question at all, however, is an oblique admission of failure. It gives the measure of the degree to which the concerns of ancient Christian orthodox writers, specifically as manifest in the *contra Iudaeos* tradition, continue to determine the line of approach taken by modern historians. From the vocabulary that we necessarily use to the texts that dominate our investigations<sup>2</sup> to the questions that frame our approaches to the presuppositions that shape our reconstructions, we still work within the terms dictated by history's "winners," those men who successfully finessed their churches' transition to a form of Roman imperial culture, who named their ideological and institutional forebears, and who shaped the canon, both scriptural and patristic.

How can we think outside their box? How can we come to a less anachronistic, less doctrinally determined view of the past? The short answer is also the obvious one: we need to work contextually. The analytical context of our enquiry coincides with the social context of our ancient subjects, namely, the Mediterranean city. To get some critical

religionists insisted (p. 248f). Second Temple Judaism, in brief, could not accommodate the radical inclusiveness of Jesus' message. The Jesus of many prominent "Third-Questers" rejects kashrut, purity rules, Temple offerings, and Jewish "nationalism," thereby functioning as a particular sort of displaced post-second-century Gentile Christian *malgré lui*; see P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000), xxiv–xxviii; *idem*, "What You See is What You Get: Context and Content in Current Work on the Historical Jesus," *Theology Today* 52 (1995): 75–97. Locating the "split" with Jesus or Paul, in what is arguably a pre-"Christian" phase of the movement, in part rests on misconstruing the normative coincidence of ethnicity and what we think of as "religion" in antiquity, about which I will say more above. Against reading Paul as breaking from Judaism in any meaningful way, see esp. S. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Archaeological, papyrological, epigraphical, and even numismatic data have salubriously confused the tidy picture available from literary evidence alone. See, e.g., on Jews and Christians, L. Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); *idem*, *The Jews of Late Antique Rome* (Leiden: Brill, n.d.); on Jews and pagan Gentiles, J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987); E. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1998); *idem*, *Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002); L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000); on Jews, pagans and Christians, R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1986); S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001); G. W. Bowersock, "Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 1–10; F. Millar, "The Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora between Paganism and Christianity, AD 312–438," in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians*, ed. J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak (London: Routledge, 1992), 97–123.

purchase on the ancient literature (and on its unfortunate ideological afterlife in some modern scholarly discussions), we need to re-incarnate the charged rhetoric of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition within the lived human context of ancient civic life.

The historical origins of the formal *contra Iudaeos* tradition seem to lie in the earlier half of the second century.<sup>3</sup> Its matrix was the intra-Christian disputes of educated, formerly pagan intellectuals. In their effort to make sense of the premier literary medium of Christian revelation, the Septuagint, these Gentile contestants shaped the potent and long-lived hermeneutical idea of the "Jew" – fleshly, hard-hearted, philosophically dim, and violently anti-Christian.<sup>4</sup> As a theological abstraction, this idea had great power, serving by means of the absolute contrast that it constructed between "Jews" and (true or correct) "Christians" to focus and define the desiderata of orthodox identity.<sup>5</sup> This rhetoric of invidious contrast that cast Jews as the Christian anti-type par excellence accordingly came to shape many different sorts of proto-orthodox and orthodox literature: apologies, sermons, heresiological

<sup>3</sup> By "formal" I mean an intellectually coherent, coordinate body of polemical and hermeneutical practices. Earlier, retrospectively Christian documents such as Paul's letters and the gospels actually target other Jews, whether Christian or not. Internal targets: false prophets (Mt 7:15–23); false insiders (2 Cor 11:4–5; Gal 2:4 and *passim*; Phil 3:2). The polemic against other Jews outside of this movement – scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and (especially in the Passion narratives) the Jerusalem priests – lies scattered throughout the gospels.

<sup>4</sup> Any number of fine studies of the hermeneutical Jew as a generative element of patristic theology now exist. I have found especially useful the essays collected in Ora Limor and G. G. Stroumsa, eds., *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996) and G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa, eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), and the study by J. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). D. Efronim analyzed the function of anti-Jewish rhetoric within proto-orthodox, specifically anti-Marcionite polemic in "The Patristic Connection" in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. A. Davies (New York: Paulist, 1979), 98–117. See further Fredriksen and Irshai, "Christian Anti-Judaism," part 1: "The Second-Century Seedbed: Theology, Identity, and Anti-Judaism."

<sup>5</sup> The proto-orthodox do not have the monopoly on such a construction. Both Valentinus and Marcion understood the god of the LXX – a lower kosmokrator identified with the god of Israel (some pagans, too, held this idea) – as Christ's (and thus the high god's) cosmic opposition. They also, accordingly, used "Jews" and "Judaism" as tropes for unenlightened – indeed, drastically mistaken – scriptural communities. But this negative stereotype of the Jew becomes a hallmark particularly of orthodox tradition, which eventually had (and continues to have) an enormous impact on subsequent Western culture. In the current essay, it is this latter community whom I keep especially in view.

tracts,<sup>6</sup> scriptural florilegia, commentaries, histories and historical fictions, martyr stories, conciliar canons, and eventually, should we chose to look at them this way, the legal compendia of the later empire, the *Codex Theodosianus* and *Justinianus*.<sup>7</sup> My question to this body of writing is simple: what relation does its rhetoric have to (social) reality?

I propose to proceed by looking at some of these writings within their native social and cultural urban setting. I organize my initial survey around three issues, often invoked as contributory to the formation of Christian anti-Judaism, that presuppose clear and principled distinctions, social and religious, between ancient Jews and their non-Jewish contemporaries: (1) pagan views on Jews and Judaism, (2) putative Jewish missions to Gentiles, and (3) pagan and Jewish persecution of (Gentile) Christians. My conclusion will argue what I hope my prior presentation will have demonstrated, namely, that to conceptualize relations between ancient Jews and Christians in terms of a "Parting of the Ways" is to misconstrue the social and intellectual history of Judaism, of Christianity, and of majority Mediterranean culture at least up through the seventh century, and possibly beyond.

### Gentiles on Jews and Judaism

The high-contrast orthodox construct of "Jews" versus "us," besides affecting historical work on ancient Jews and Christians, has also affected the historiography on Jews and Gentiles more broadly conceived. Historians gathering comments by ancient non-Christian Greeks and Romans have often distinguished these remarks as "pro-Jewish" or "anti-Jewish," with "anti-Jewish" occasionally characterized as "anti-Semitic."<sup>8</sup> A similar supposed clarity marks the categorization of ancient Jewish populations, imagined as "assimilated" or "Hellenized" versus (Jewishly)

<sup>6</sup> Thus Tertullian characterizes Marcion as "Jewish" (*adv. Marcionem* III passim); Origen, the *simpliciores* of his own community who understand apocalyptic passages of scripture in a millenarian, "fleshy" way (*de Principiis* II.xi.2); Ambrose, his ecclesiastical opposition (*Ep. Extra coll.* 5 [11].3; Augustine, his (e.g., the Pelagians, conjured briefly in *ep.* 196.1), and so on (and on). That the word "Jew" could convey such opprobrium within learned, purely Gentile Christian disputes reveals the degree to which its meaning became usefully, intrinsically, emphatically negative.

<sup>7</sup> Two invaluable compendia for this material, on which I rely here: A. Lindtner, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1987); idem, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Against such an approach as in principle "conceptually flawed," see Gruen, *Hellenism*, 42–72 and passim.

"orthodox."<sup>9</sup> Actions advocated or taken against ancient Jewish individuals or communities are seen as a species of "religious persecution." And occasionally, their differences notwithstanding, pagan anti-Judaism (granting the construct, for the moment) serves as some sort of explanatory prelude to, or preparation for, later Christian genres.<sup>10</sup> Common to all these modes of thinking is a presumption that something about Jews and Judaism made them in some special way egregious in the ancient context and that this egregiousness accounts for negative remarks by ancient pagans, as well as for the inevitable split (howsoever identified and dated) between "Christians" (conceived primarily as Gentiles) and Jews.

A few general comments about ancient people and ancient religion, before I proceed to consider pagan remarks about Jews. First: in antiquity, gods were local in a dual sense. They attached to particular places, whether natural (groves, grottos, mountains, springs) or man-made (temples and altars, urban or rural).<sup>11</sup> And gods also attached to particular peoples; "religion" ran in the blood. In this sense, one's *genos* was as much a cult-designation as what we, from a sociological or anthropological perspective, see as an "ethnic" one: ethnicity expressed "religion" (acknowledging the anachronism of both terms for our period), and religion expressed "ethnicity."<sup>12</sup> This generalization holds from the micro-level of domestic deities and ancestors protecting and defining the individual household through the mid-level "family" connections between gods and cities to the macro-level confederations of kingdoms and

<sup>9</sup> Against which, J. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1996), 82–102.

<sup>10</sup> This material is collected in Menachem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy/Dorot, 1974–84). On ancient Jewish populations as "assimilated" or "orthodox," and on pagan anti-Jewish "bigotry," e.g., L. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993); cf. Rutgers, *Hidden Heritage*, 199–234; Barclay, *Jews*, 92–98 and passim. J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) sees pagan and Christian "anti-Semitism" as different in kind. The characterization of pagan-Jewish eruptions as evidence of pagan "anti-Semitism" is questioned both by P. Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), esp. 1–11 and 197–211, and by Gruen, *Diaspora*, esp. 54–83 on the tendency of some scholars to see Gentile Alexandrian actions against Jewish Alexandrians in the tumult of 38–40 CE as "anti-Semitic."

<sup>11</sup> A lively recount of this phenomenon: Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 11–261.

<sup>12</sup> See the essays assembled in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. I. Malkin (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001), many of which draw attention to Herodotus, *Histories* 8.144.2–3 (where Herodotus speaks of "Greekness" in terms of common blood, gods, cult, and customs). For the ways that political alliances within this culture naturally affected gods and kinship, see C. P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), esp. ch. 6 on Lycians and Jews.

empires, which added other gods as well as rulers, living and dead, to the pantheon.<sup>13</sup>

The very varied embeddedness of the divine in antiquity means that, in an age of empire, gods bumped up against each other with some frequency, even as their humans did. The greater internal peace and stability permitted by out-sized political units facilitated interior migrations of peoples, and when people traveled, their gods went with them. Also, since different peoples had different gods – as well as different ancestral practices and traditions for honoring their gods and maintaining their people's relationship with them – the larger the political unit, the greater the plurality of gods. In other words, ancient empires did not "practice religious tolerance"; they presupposed religious difference. Put differently: a mark of a successful empire (the subordination of many different peoples to a larger government) was the variety of gods it encompassed (since many peoples meant, naturally, many gods) and accordingly the range of traditional religious practices it accommodated.

Hellenistic and Roman ethnographers and historians commented upon Jewish practices, Jewish people, and the Jewish god. Some of their comments are admiring, others hostile. The positive ones tend to echo what pagans valued about their own culture. Thus, Jews are loyal to their *patria nomima*, as indeed each people should be.<sup>14</sup> They not only keep their traditional rites but know the reasons for them.<sup>15</sup> Further, they are a philosophical people, acknowledging the highest god *sola mente*, without images.<sup>16</sup> Numenius' oft-cited sound-byte sums up this theme tidily,

<sup>13</sup> Recent work on gods and families: A. E. Hanson, "The Roman Family," in *Life, Death and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, ed. D. S. Potter and D. J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1999), 19–66; on gods and cities, the essays in R. Buxton, ed., *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); on gods, rulers who become gods, and larger political units, S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984); on civic and imperial piety and the way that it combined especially with athletics and other dedicated competitions, D. S. Potter, "Entertainers in the Roman Empire," in *Life, Death and Entertainment*, 256–325.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Celsus *apud* Origen, c. *Celsus* 5.2.41 (Jews keep *ton idion nomon*), said while complaining that "others" (that is, non-Jews) abandon their own traditions to adopt Jewish ones; similarly Porphyry, *de abstentia* 4.11 (Jews' obedience to their *nomima*). The story of Plutarch, incubating in the temple of Aesclepius, who challenged the god's suggestion that he cure his illness by eating pork, makes the larger point, while alluding to Jewish custom in particular: pagans and their gods respected *patria*, *vita Isidori* (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 2, no. 549).

<sup>15</sup> Seneca the Younger *apud* Augustine, *de civitate dei* 6.11.

<sup>16</sup> Tacitus, *Historia* 5.5.4, comparing Jewish aniconism, arrived at through the exercise of the mind – two philosophical attributes – with messy Egyptian religion. Tacitus in general is no enthusiast of Jewish virtues. For the broader pagan perception

touching on the prestigious characteristics of wisdom, philosophy, and antiquity: Plato was just an Attic-speaking Moses.<sup>17</sup>

Yet comments on Jewish *amixia* and *deisdaimonia*, on the Jews' *mixoxenos bios* and *hostile odium*, likewise abound. Pagans in this connection indict Jewish ancestral practices as the reason for the Jews' odious behaviors and beliefs. Circumcision – a practice viewed with repugnance by majority culture – provided satirists with unending opportunities. The Jews' cultic exclusivism – their general and principled non-involvement with civic and imperial cult – irritated some observers and prompted accusations of impiety and atheism. Worse: In secret rites, claimed some, Jews practiced human sacrifice and even cannibalism. They were lazy (particularly one day out of every seven). Endlessly particular about food, they were sexually profligate. And so on.<sup>18</sup>

Putting insults to Jews within the broader context of insults against ethnic outsiders more generally conceived, historians now incline to interpret this evidence less as ancient anti-Semitism than as ruling-class xenophobia. Egyptians, Scythians, Gauls, Britons, Germans – all came in for similar abuse, because each (like the Jews) had their own ethnic customs which marked them, *eo ipso*, as un-Roman.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps then the term "xenophobia" also misses the mark; these writers were not fearful of foreigners, only scornful of them. Ruling-class contempt indexes patriotic pride: *our ways* are better than *their ways*, the identity of "them" shifting, as needed. Hence too the occasional praise of Jewish loyalty to the *patria ethē*: Romans (and Hellenes) especially valued that particular virtue too.

The premium placed on ethnic loyalty is also what stands behind the special vituperation occasionally heaped upon not Judaism *per se*, but on "Judaizing" and, *encore pire*, actual conversion.<sup>20</sup> Adherence to a variety of religious customs was compatible with the sensibility of Mediterranean paganism, which at a practical level was extremely capacious. And the

of Jews as a nation of philosophers, *infra* Schäfer, *Judeophobia*; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 201–32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ti gar esti Platon ē Moyses atikizōn*; *apud* Clement, *Stromateis* 1.22.150.4; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 2, no. 363a.

<sup>18</sup> Insults collected, organized, and analyzed in Schäfer, *Judeophobia*; see also Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 107–122 (popular prejudice), 123–176 (erudite prejudice). To be fair, Hellenistic Jews made similarly insulting remarks about Hellenistic Gentiles, using them as a "constructed Other" to think with in their own projects of self-definition (i.e., famously, Paul in Rom 1:18–32); see, most recently, Gruen, *Diaspora*, 213–31.

<sup>19</sup> In this connection, Schäfer specifies Tacitus' demeaning comments on Druids (*Hist.* 2.78), Gauls and Britons (4.54; cf. *Annales* 15.30, on human sacrifice), Germans (*Hist.* 4.61; *Germania* 39, on human sacrifice), and Egyptians (*Hist.* 1.11); *Judeophobia*, 187.

<sup>20</sup> By "Judaizing" I mean the voluntary and discretionary adoption of Jewish practices by Gentiles.

idiosyncrasy of any religious culture (special days, special foods, special gods, special rules) was what marked it as specific to a particular people. Seen in this light, the phenomenon of Gentiles' voluntary Judaizing – for which we have evidence in abundance, both well before and well after the development of Christianity – was unremarkable: Gentiles voluntarily assumed whatever foreign practices they wanted (as Juvenal, grumbling about the Orontes, famously complained). But making an *exclusive* commitment to a foreign god to the point of forsaking the gods of one's own people – a condition of conversion unique to Judaism in the pre-Christian period – could be perceived as an act of alarming disloyalty.<sup>21</sup> The prime pagan objection to "God-fearing" (that is, voluntary Judaizing) was not the particular Jewish practices themselves so much as the possibility that they could lead to conversion. And the problem with conversion to *Judaism*<sup>22</sup> was the principled renunciation of all other cult. Though Jewish cultic exclusivism offended, it was also, for Jews, for the most part, accepted, because it met majority culture's twin measure of legal and social respectability, namely, ethnicity and antiquity. But in the convert's case, this exclusivism – voluntary, not customary; adopted, not inherited; foreign, not native – was tantamount to cultural treason. It insulted the "family" (the blood/birth connection of *genos* or *natio*) and placed it at risk (since gods, when disregarded, grew angry).<sup>23</sup>

Despite these tensions, some pagans also evidently favored Jews with the ultimate accolade of intellectual culture: the Jews were a nation of philosophers.<sup>24</sup> Hellenistic Jews not only preserved such comments, but

<sup>21</sup> Hence Dio's remarks on Gentile converts who affect to *nomina autōn* (scil. the Jews), worship a single deity, and do not honor the other gods in *Historia Romana* 37.15.1–2; and, perhaps, Domitian's fury in condemning members of the Roman ruling class for "atheism" and for assuming the *ethē tōn Ioudaion* in 67.14.1–2: conversion is a species of treason.

<sup>22</sup> The point of A. D. Nock's famous and important distinction between "adherence" and "conversion": Judaism and, eventually (and, for contemporaries, confusingly), Christianity were the only two communities in antiquity that admitted of this particular form of voluntary allegiance; *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (New York: Oxford UP, 1961). Since Jews were an ancient *ethnos*, conversion could be understood on the ready analogy of political alliances (joining the *politeia*, e.g., Philo, *de leg. spec.* 4.34.178); see S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1999), 125–39, 156–74.

<sup>23</sup> Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 98, 180–95. Juvenal accuses Roman converts of *Romanos ... contemnere leges/ Iudaicum ediscunt ac servant ac metuunt ius* (*Sat.* 14.100f.); Tacitus, of having renounced the *religionibus patriis*, disowning their own gods, country and family (*Hist.* 5.1–2).

<sup>24</sup> The roll-call of such pagans – Theophrastus, Megasthenes, Clearchus of Soli, Hermippus of Smyrna, Ocellus of Lucania – is sounded in virtually all treatments of

indeed occasionally composed them. In learned forgeries, pagan sibilys hymned Jewish superiority to pagan cult in proper Homeric hexameters; historical fictions recounted pagan kings in quest of Jewish wisdom; literary lions of the classical curriculum – Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides – as well as minor comic writers "produced" Judaizing verses, in effect attributing the fundamental aspects of philosophical *paideia* to Jewish virtue, Jewish brains, or the Jewish god.<sup>25</sup> Scholars envisage different intended audiences for this literature, some arguing that it evinces efforts at Jewish "outreach," missionizing to pagan salon-culture, others that such products were for internal consumption.<sup>26</sup> Since I think, and will momentarily argue, that the idea of Jewish missions to Gentiles to convert them to Judaism has been one of the biggest historiographical mistakes of the past century, I incline to the latter position. This is not to say that interested Gentiles may not have picked up and read – or at least heard – such apologetic traditions. Indeed, authentic pagan acclamations of Jewish philosophical achievement may perhaps measure the penetration of such apology.

But I wish to draw attention here to a different point, namely, that such positive assessments of Jewish culture in pagan intellectual terms – be their authors genuine pagans, Jews under false colors, or educated Hellenistic Jews *tout court* – complicates our evaluation of the hostile accusations of Jewish *amixia* in interesting ways. This Jewish control of, and commitment to the authors, traditions, and values of gymnasium education restates in a literary key what we know as well from inscriptions, archaeology, and ancient historical writings: Jews lived, and lived thoroughly, in their cities of residence throughout the Diaspora.<sup>27</sup>

Hellenistic Judaism; where fragments exist, Stern gives them. See too M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:255–67 and 2:169–77 (notes).

<sup>25</sup> On the "Jewish" sibilys, see Goodman's discussion in E. Schürer, G. Vermes, et al., *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 3:618–54; on other such pseudonymous Jewish productions, see pp. 3:654–700. See too the lively appreciations of such "brazen inventiveness" in Gruen, *Diaspora*, 213–31; for analysis, Barclay, *Jews*, 82–102 (terms); 125–230 (texts).

<sup>26</sup> Recent statements: Feldman sees this literature as evidence of missionary effort (*Jew and Gentile*, 305–24); M. Goodman does not (*Mission and Conversion* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 78ff); so too Gruen (*Hellenism*, 221ff; idem, *Diaspora*, 135–231). On the extremely limited social scope of such *salon-culture* productions, and the way that militates against seeing them as "missionary," P. Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1–2," *JTS* 42 (1991): 533–64, at p. 538.

<sup>27</sup> So too, from a different angle, R. S. Bloch, who notes that neither Tacitus nor other ancient authors refer to Jews as "barbarians," despite being perfectly aware of their distinctive (that is, non-Roman or non-Greek) ethnic identity: Jews were too integrated to be "other" in this way. *Antike Vorstellungen vom Judentum. Der*

Since ancient cities were religious institutions, participation in civic life was itself a form of worship.<sup>28</sup> The workings of government and law, the process of education, the public experience of art and culture in various theatrical, musical, and athletic competitions – all these activities, which we think of as secular and thus religiously neutral, were in fact embedded in the traditional worship of the gods. The gods looked after the city, and the city's residents, to ensure its well-being, looked after the gods. Processions, hymns, libations, blood offerings, communal dancing, and drinking and eating – all these public forms of worship expressed and created bonds that bound citizens together and, by establishing or maintaining the necessary relations with powerful numinous patrons (both imperial and celestial), contributed to the common weal.

Jewish names inscribed as epebes or members of town councils, Jewish officers in Gentile armies, Jewish Hellenistic literati, Jewish contestants in, patrons of, or observers at athletic, dramatic or musical events (such as Philo and, probably, Paul) – all these give the measure of Jewish participation in pagan worship.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes the wheel squeaks (usually at the point of actual *latreia*: Jews notoriously avoided overt public cult, though essayed to camouflage variously through dedications, patronage and prayer); sometimes it doesn't (Jews attended theatrical and athletic events, got good gymnasium educations where they could, joined Gentile armies, and lived public lives as municipal leaders). Acknowledging other gods did not eo ipso entail apostasy; living

*Judenexkurs des Tacitus im Rahmen der griechisch-römischen Ethnographie* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), ch. 4.

<sup>28</sup> A lively description, with comments on how this fact made life complicated for Christians, can be found in H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2000), 88–93. (Drake curiously does not include Jews in his musings.)

<sup>29</sup> Primary evidence from the Diaspora is collected and surveyed by F. Millar in Schürer, Vermes, et al., *History of the Jewish People*, 3:1–149; see too Gruen, *Diaspora*, esp. 105–32.

There is no good word for characterizing the Jewish presence in such majority-culture activities. "Worship" underscores the intrinsically religious nature of these activities, but it too readily (and naturally) conjures the term and religious practice that it customarily translates, *latreia*: Worship as sacrifice was precisely where ancient Jews generally seem to have – and were thought to have – drawn the line. Christian encounters with the imperial cult present similar ambiguities. Before Constantine, the principled point of resistance or nonconformity seems to have focused on blood sacrifice; after, though all else remained – adoration of the imperial image, incense (a ritual indicator of divine presence or *namen*), priesthoods, feast days, and even the gladiatorial combats – the blood offerings went. At that point, Christians could and did "worship" the emperor. I thank Erich Gruen for helping me fret over this term; we came to no happier terminological proposal, but did see more clearly the problems with this one.

Jewishly did not require isolationism. Ancient Jews, as ancients generally, lived in a world congested with gods, and they knew it.

Hence the dangers of modern constructions of "monotheism" or "religious orthodoxy" when interpreting evidence from ancient Mediterranean monotheists, be these pagan, Jewish, or eventually Christian. In antiquity, the high god stood at the extreme pinnacle of a gradient; he or it was not the austere metaphysical punctilio of modern monotheistic imagination. Worshiping "one god" or "the highest god" or only "our god" did not mean that one doubted the existence of other gods, only that one construed one's obligations to them differently. Moschos son of Moschion, prompted (sometime in the first half of the third century BCE) by two local deities in a dream to manumit his slave, left an inscription attesting to his obedience in their temple. Was this a "defection to paganism or syncretism"? Millar thinks yes; Moschos, from his own perspective, considers and identifies himself simply as *loudaios*.<sup>30</sup> Showing respect to a god, by way of obeying a direct command, unquestionably demonstrates common sense; but is this "worship" in the way that Moschos worshiped his own ancestral god? I can only guess, but I would guess not.

To chide ancient Jews for not construing their monotheism in ways that conform to modern constructs – or to standards of rabbinical behaviors eventually enunciated in *Avodah Zarah* – cannot help us to understand them. Herod the Great – so notoriously fussy about food laws (not to mention filial piety) that jokes were made about him, so fastidious in interpreting purity laws that he had *cohanim* trained as masons for the interior sections of his gloriously refurbished Temple in Jerusalem, so personally concerned with purity status that he outfitted his villas with *mikvaot* – also bankrolled pagan temples and prestigious athletic competitions. Does that make him "assimilated"?<sup>31</sup> Was Artapanus – who

<sup>30</sup> Millar gives the text of this inscription in Schürer, Vermes, et al., *History of the Jewish People*, 3:65, and judges its religious orientation on p. 138.

<sup>31</sup> On Augustus' reputed play on  $\delta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ , see Macrobius, *Saturnalia* II.4:11; on the mason-priests, Josephus, *AJ* 15.11.5–6; on the archaeological evidence for *mikvaot* in Herodian palaces, E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992); on his building-program of pagan (especially imperial) temples, see the copious references and discussion in Schürer, Vermes, et al., *History of the Jewish People*, 1:304–11; on sponsorship specifically of the (dedicated) Olympic games, Josephus, *AJ* 16.5.3; *BJ* 1.21.12. Schürer-Vermes judges "Herod's Judaism ... very superficial" (1:311); Herod and his family were "far removed from Judaism in observance," according to Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 157 (a curious judgment in light of the point Feldman ties it to, namely, that Herod insisted that the Arab suitor of his sister Salome first be circumcised [*AJ* 16.7.6]). For an altogether more appreciative, even sympathetic view, see P. Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia: U. of South Carolina Press, 1996).

proudly credited biblical heroes as founts of pagan learning, cult and culture – a “syncretist”<sup>32</sup> What then of the translators of the Septuagint, who altered the prohibition in Ex 22:27 (LXX Ex 22:28) from not reviling “God” (אלהים) to not reviling “the gods” (θεοὺς ὅς κακολογήσῃς)? What about those Jews who close pious inscriptions to their god by calling, in routine formulae, on the witness of sky, earth and sun: Zeus, Gē, Helios?<sup>33</sup>

Few ancient monotheists disputed the existence and the powers of other gods; they simply directed their worship particularly toward their own god. Put differently: no ancient monotheist was like a modern monotheist, because the ancient cosmos was imagined differently from the modern, post-Renaissance, disenchanting cosmos. Put a third way: all ancient monotheists were (by modern measure) polytheists.<sup>34</sup> For many Jews and, eventually, for various sorts of Christians, the etiquette for dealing with these other deities and their humans – which for Mediterranean culture meant showing, and being seen to show, appropriate degrees of respect – was necessarily improvised, and it varied across class lines, communities, and historical epochs. (Jews, for example, were always and everywhere exempt from imperial cult, whereas emperor worship, complete with priests, liturgies, gladiatorial contests, incense, adoration of the imperial image – but no blood offerings – continued well after Constantine, who was honored in his eponymous capital as late as the fifth century as ὧς θεός.)<sup>35</sup> Pagan

<sup>32</sup> Artapanus, claims Feldman, can scarcely have been “an observant Jew,” and on the basis of Artapanus’ claims (preserved *apud* Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica* 9.23.4 and 9.27.4, 9, 12) that Joseph established Egyptian temples and that Moses taught music to Orpheus and zoology to the Egyptians, he opines that Artapanus was more likely a Gentile (*Jew and Gentile*, 208); cf. Barclay, *Jews*, 127–32 (“a proud Egyptian and a self-conscious Jew”); against such anachronistic assignments of “orthodoxy” and “deviance,” pp. 83–102; see also Gruen, *Hellenism*, 87–89.

<sup>33</sup> Manumission inscriptions from the Bosphorus, J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, 2 volumes (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1936–52; repr. New York: Ktav, 1975), vol. 1, nos. 683, 684, 690; comments and literature cited in Levine, *Synagogue*, 114 and notes.

<sup>34</sup> For the ways that ancient metaphysics and astronomical science determined concepts of cosmic intermediation (including Christological ones) – and the ways that modern science has complicated the enterprise – see my essay, “What does Jesus have to do with Christ? What does Knowledge have to do with Faith? What does History have to do with Theology?” in *Christology: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, forthcoming 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Caligula famously resented this Jewish exemption (Philo, *Legatio* 349–67), which continued into the Christian phase of the cult. See esp. G. Bowersock, “The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 3, ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 171–82; idem, “Polytheism,” whence the reference, p. 7, to Constantine in Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl. GCS* (1972), 28. By the third century CE, Jewish exemption from public cult was so

monotheists, free of the constraints (howsoever interpreted) that bound biblical communities, had it a little easier.<sup>36</sup>

What relation can we posit, then, between pagan comments about Jews and Judaism and the later, specifically Gentile Christian *contra Iudaeos* traditions? Superficial similarities (such as insulting characterizations of Jews and Jewish customs) should not obscure their basic differences. For some pagans, Jewish exclusivism in particular is what offended; for Christians, such exclusivism, which they shared, could only be admired.<sup>37</sup> Further, pagans, no matter how repugnant Judaism might seem to them, maintained that it befitted Jews,<sup>38</sup> whereas most orthodox Christian thinkers (Augustine excepted<sup>39</sup>) held that Judaism in general and Jewish practice in particular had always and everywhere been religiously wrong, period. Pagan “anti-Judaism,” in sum, seems simply an occasional subspecies of a more general contempt for foreign customs and the obverse expression of Graeco-Roman patriotic pride. Converts, not “native” Jews, stimulated the greatest hostility.

By comparison, while Gentile Christian writers might avail themselves of themes first sounded by Gentile pagan counterparts, their negative critique was minutely developed and sweepingly comprehensive, their condemnation broader and more profound, their hostile characterization essential to their own view of themselves. And their ideological ideal of total separation – Christians should not even socialize with Jews, much

well established that emperors, attempting to recruit Jews into onerous service in civic *curiae*, stipulated that nothing religiously offensive to them could be requisite to executing the office, and they explicitly excused Jews from emperor-worship; *Digesta Iustiniani* 50.2.3.3, text with comments in Linder, *Imperial Legislation*, 103–7.

<sup>36</sup> See esp. the rich essay by S. Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypseistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians,” in *Pagan Monotheism*, ed. P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 81–148.

<sup>37</sup> The insistence, in Christian anti-Jewish writings, that Jews were perennially inclined toward idolatry means that the principle of exclusive worship was itself admired. Origen, c. *Cel.* IV.31, Jews never made images, nor worshipped heaven (the prohibition against which Origen deems “impressive and magnificent”); by hearing the Law on the Sabbath in the synagogue, the entire nation “studied philosophy”; V.7–9 praising Jewish aniconic worship, not to be confused with the worship of heavenly entities; V.43 “The philosophers in spite of their impressive philosophical teachings fall down to idols and daemons, while even the lowest Jew looks only to the supreme God.” Augustine, c. *Faust.* 12.13, “It is a most notable fact that all the nations subjugated by Rome adopted the heathenish ceremonies of Roman worship; while the Jewish nation ... has never lost the sign of their law.”

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Celsus *apud* Origen, c. *Cel.* V.25–26. More subtly, the insults make the same point: people like this deserve a cult like this.

<sup>39</sup> On Augustine’s continuity with, and radical revision of, the traditional anti-Judaism of his church, see P. Fredriksen, “Augustine and Israel: *Interpretatio ad litteram*, Jews, and Judaism in Augustine’s Theology of History,” *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001): 119–35.

less co-celebrate with them, much less adapt some Jewish customs (actual conversion was utterly, so to speak, beyond the Pale) – contrasted sharply with quotidian reality: Jews continued to be visibly, vigorously integrated in Mediterranean civic life; and Gentiles, whether within the church or without, continued to be drawn to the synagogue. In short, continuing Jewish-Gentile intimacy – which is to say, continuing Mediterranean civic life – itself fostered and amplified the stridency of orthodox rhetoric.

What more can we say about this intimacy, and these patterns of city life?

### Jews, Gentiles, and "Missions"

In the baths and in the schools, in the courts and in the curiae, in theatres, amphitheatres, and hippodromes – where there were Greeks (and, later, Romans) there were Jews.<sup>40</sup> But Jews in the Diaspora had another form of communal life that structured their time and their activities: Jews had the synagogue. A huge body of varied evidence – literary, epigraphical, archaeological – attests to the ubiquity and vitality of this peculiarly Jewish institution, remnants of which have been recovered in settlements stretching from Italy to Syria, from the Black Sea to North Africa. *Synagōgē* might designate the assembly of the local Jewish community itself; *proseuchē* certainly implies an actual building.<sup>41</sup> While no uniform pattern of organization can be teased from the historical record such as it is, certain common activities seem clearly attested. Synagogues served as a type of ethnic reading-house, where Jews could assemble one day out of every seven to hear instruction in their ancestral laws. Pagan rulers granted to some communities the right of asylum. Synagogues sponsored communal fasts, feasts and celebrations; they served as a community archive and as a collecting point for funds to be sent on to the Temple in Jerusalem. They settled issues of community interest – announcing the calendar of festivals, negotiating access to appropriate foodstuffs, adjudicating disputes – and served, as did local pagan temples, as places to enact and record the manumission of slaves. They housed schools, political assemblies, and tribunals. They had officers (women as well as

<sup>40</sup> Literary attestation of widespread presence of Jews throughout the Mediterranean, e.g., Strabo *apud* Josephus, *AJ* 14.114–115; 1 Macc 15:22–23; Acts 2:5–11. Archaeological evidence confirms this, on which see esp. Levine, *Synagogue*.

<sup>41</sup> Other terms for Jewish associations, also adapted from surrounding culture (from where else would Greek-speaking Jews get them?) include *politeuma*, *collegia*, *synodos*, *koinon*, *thiasos*, *communitas*. See discussion in Levine, *Synagogue*, 121ff.

men), administrators, and steering committees. They sponsored fund drives; they honored conspicuous philanthropy with public inscriptions.<sup>42</sup>

These donor inscriptions, taken together with our scattered literary evidence, reveal another important datum about Jewish life in the ancient city. Where there was a Jewish community, there was (always? usually?) a synagogue; where there was a synagogue, there were (always? often?) Gentiles, pagan as well as, eventually, Christian. Who were these people? What were they doing there? How had they gotten there?

One answer, extremely prominent since the mid-twentieth century, has been that Jews mounted missions to Gentiles to encourage them to convert to Judaism.<sup>43</sup> This explanation has been invoked to account for (1) phenomena as huge and as sweeping as supposed surges in the ancient Jewish population across half a millennium (Where did all these Jews come from? Too many to have been born, they therefore must have been made);<sup>44</sup> (2) phenomena as ubiquitous and highly-charged as the *contra Iudaeos* traditions themselves (Whence all this vituperation? It must be the verbal and psychological run-off from tight competition for the limited Gentile market);<sup>45</sup> and (3) phenomena as minute and incidental as two sentences in the New Testament (Whence Matthew's remarks on

<sup>42</sup> Exhaustively: Levine, *Synagogue*; see also Gruen, *Diaspora*, 105–32. Millar points out that, at least in the fourth century in Rome, a synagogue could function as a sort of lending library; see Jerome, *Ep.* 36.1 ("Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora," in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians*, ed. J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak [London: Routledge, 1992], 97–123, at p. 115); further examples in Levine, *Synagogue*, 380–81. The Aphrodisias inscription literally showcases public acknowledgment of benefactions from all groups – native Jews, converts, and God-fearers – to a Jewish fund-drive of some sort; see Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Godfearers at Aphrodisias*, 92–123; so too Levine, *Synagogue*, 350.

<sup>43</sup> On the historiographical origins of this position, framed initially as a response to A. Harnack's characterizations of Judaism in "Die *Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theophilii Christiani* nebst Untersuchungen über die antijüdische Polemik in der alten Kirche," *Texts und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 1/3 (1883): 1–136, see M. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 7–45; J. Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 1 (1997): 195–225. In "Jewish Proselytism at the time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?" (*JSTN* 62 [1996]: 65–103), Carleton Paget provides a roadmap of the entire controversy.

<sup>44</sup> See Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 293, on what he deems "demographic evidence," on which more below.

<sup>45</sup> Two classic statements of this position: M. Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris: de Boccard 1948; English translation: H. Keating; New York: Oxford UP, 1986); B. Blumenkranz, *Die Judaeopredigt Augustins* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1946; repr. Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1973, with preface by Simon).



Pharisaic *proseltyoi* and Paul's on preaching circumcision? They must stand in a context of ongoing Jewish missions to convert Gentiles).<sup>46</sup>

The so-called "demographic" argument – one of the purest examples of academic *creatio ex nihilo* known to me – rests on the perception of a "dramatic increase in Jewish population" from roughly 150,000 persons at the time of the destruction of the first Temple to roughly four to eight million (*sic*, but who's counting?) in the later mid-first century CE. Birthrate alone cannot account for such an extreme rise, yet these figures "demand further explanation." Answer: aggressive proselytism.

Simply stating this case should be enough to dismiss it. These figures are so speculative as to be ethereal. And they rest on a foundation built by Baron (and before him, Harnack), who combined "a statement by the thirteenth-century chronographer Bar-Hebraeus about the number of Jews at the time of Claudius' census, a comment in Philo (*Flacc.* 43) about the Jewish population in Egypt being a million, and comments in Josephus about the population of Palestine."<sup>47</sup> We do not and cannot know enough about ancient demography of Jews or any group to make this sort of case, period.<sup>48</sup> Its foundation being what it is, the rest collapses: a hypothesis presupposing huge numbers of converts, and then a theory of energetic missionary activity to explain that.

What of the latter two arguments in support of the existence of Jewish missions, namely, intense Christian–Jewish market competition, and the "obvious" readings of Matthew and of Paul? I shall begin by noting that both generate their respective cases almost exclusively from literary texts. What looks like historical explanation turns out, upon examination, to actually be an exercise in exegesis. Rather than engage these arguments at their methodological level – this sort of interpretative argument is endless – I propose that we look instead at what we know of Mediterranean civic life and its culture, and in a sense ricochet off that construct back into the questions that these arguments raise, though cannot answer.

<sup>46</sup> Mt 23:15; Gal 5:11. A world of Jewish missions conjured to provide a comfortable context for these statements appears most recently in J. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> See Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 293, for "pro" quotations; observations about Baron's sources from Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 70; see also Rutgers' criticisms of Feldman on this point, *Hidden Heritage*, 200–5.

<sup>48</sup> R. S. Bagnall and B. Freier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 53–57 (with further bibliography) make this point nicely. Although expansion of Hasmonean sovereignty entailed consolidation by means of joining other local Semitic peoples, like the Idumeans, to the Judean commonwealth, such "conversions" (if that is the correct term) would still not be adequate to account for this putatively huge increase in the total number of Jews; see further discussion in Cohen, *Jewishness*, 110–19.

Both socially and religiously (co-extensive terms in ancient culture), in practice and in principle, the Diaspora Jewish community was extremely permeable. This was due to the visibility of ancient religious celebration generally. As with contemporary Mediterranean paganism, much of ancient Jewish religious activity (dancing, singing, communal eating, processing, and – as Chrysostom mentions with some irritation – building and feasting in *sukkot*) occurred out-of-doors, inviting and accommodating the participation of interested outsiders.<sup>49</sup> No special effort at recruitment, such as that presupposed by a theory of missions, was necessary.<sup>50</sup> The spectrum of this pagan affiliation was very broad. Through donor inscriptions we glimpse socially prominent pagans – Julia Severa, noblewoman and priestess of the imperial cult; Capitolina, a wealthy woman and self-identified *theosebēs*; the nine *bouleutai* among Aphrodisias' God-fearers – who made significant benefactions to Jewish institutions; some of these benefactors chose to involve themselves in the specifically religious activities of these communities.<sup>51</sup> At a lower end of the social spectrum, magicians invoked garbled biblical stories and "magic" Hebrew in recipe books compiled for serious professionals: this knowledge could have been easily picked up by hearing Scripture – read

<sup>49</sup> A tiny sampling: Philo mentions the celebration on the beach at Pharos, "where not only Jews but also multitudes of others cross the water, to do honor to the place [the site of the 72 translators' labors] ... and also to thank God" (*de vita Moyses* 2.41–42); Tertullian, in *de Ieiunio* 16, mentions that Jews gather on fast days to worship out of doors, by the sea. Chrysostom, in his notorious sermons *Against the Judaizers*, complains of Christians co-celebrating Jewish rituals, fasts, and feasts (4.376: "When have they ever celebrated the Pasch with us? When have they shared the day of Epiphany with us?"; 1.844: "Many who belong to us ... attend their festivals and even share in their celebrations and join their fasts"). On Jews dancing on Shabbat, see Augustine, s. 9.3.3; in *Ioh. Tr.* 3.19; in *Ps.* 32.2; 91.2. D. Sperber, "On Sabbath Dancing," *Sinai* 57 (1965): 122–26 (Hebrew); on the public celebration of the Purim festival, *C. Th.* XVI. 8,18.

<sup>50</sup> Noted rightly by G. F. Moore: "When [Judaism] is called a missionary religion, the phrase must ... be understood with a difference. The Jews did not send out missionaries .... They were themselves settled by thousands in all the great centers and in innumerable smaller cities .... Their religious influence was exerted chiefly through the synagogues, which they set up for themselves, but which were open to all whom interest or curiosity drew to their services." *Judaism in the First Three Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1927–30), 1:323–24.

<sup>51</sup> On Julia, Capitolina, and other such benefactors, see Levine, *Synagogue*, 111, 121, 479–83; on the town councilors, Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Godfearers at Aphrodisias*. On the general openness of urban Jewish culture, the essays collected in S. Fine, ed., *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue* (London: Routledge, 1999). Levine notes, "the interest of pagans in the synagogue is indicative of the institution's accessibility as well as its importance and centrality in the Jewish community" (p. 121). All these studies cite numerous pertinent collections of inscriptional materials.

in the vernacular – in synagogues.<sup>52</sup> Other, less socially locatable Gentiles, vaguely designated as “God-fearers” went even further, and voluntarily assumed certain Jewish practices; ancient data speak (or complain) most often of dietary restrictions, the Sabbath, and festivals.<sup>53</sup> Those pagans who did convert fully to Judaism (and, particularly during its first generation, to the Christian movement) most likely emerged from these voluntary Judaizers collected within the penumbra of Diaspora synagogues.<sup>54</sup>

For pagan Gentiles, multiple religious allegiances were entirely normal; indeed, traditional polytheism encouraged this sort of openness. These Gentiles freely assumed as much or as little of Jewish practice as they wished, while continuing unimpeded in their own cults. For the Jews’ part, welcoming the material support and encouraging interest, and even admiration, among those of the host Gentile majority simply made good sense, politically and socially. In the open city of antiquity, no fences made good neighbors. Exclusive for insiders (Jews in principle should not worship foreign gods), the synagogue was inclusive for outsiders (interested Gentiles were welcomed). Thus pagans as pagans could be found together with Jews in the Diaspora synagogue. So too, until 66 CE, could they be found in Jerusalem, in the largest court of the Temple, a house of *avodahlatraia* for Israel, a house of prayer for all the nations.<sup>55</sup> No formal constraint, whether from the pagan or from the

<sup>52</sup> E.g., *PM* II. 3,007–3,085; Origen, c. *Cel.* IV:33 asserts that the Jewish god was invoked not only by Jews “but also by almost all of those who deal in magic and spells”; cf. V:50. Philip S. Alexander, “Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and Magic, c. CE 70 – c. CE 270,” in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, *The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 1052–78.

<sup>53</sup> B. Wander, *Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten* (WUNT 104; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 483–501; J. Lieu, “The Race of the God-fearers,” *JTS* 46 (1995): 483–501; Cohen, *Jewishness*, 175–97.

<sup>54</sup> So, famously, *Juvenal: Quiddam sortitii metuentem sabbata patrem ... mox et praeputa ponunt; ... Iudaicum edificant et servant ac mementes ius: the God-fearer father had not only kept the Sabbath, but also avoided pork, Satires* 14.96–101; Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 2, 102–7. Acts routinely presents Paul encountering Gentiles in Diaspora synagogues (13:16; 14:1; 16:14; 17:1–4, etc.). Paul himself nowhere mentions a synagogue context for his mission, but his reliance on arguments drawn from Scripture certainly supports the inference: in the mid-first century CE, the synagogue would have been the only means for Gentiles to have the familiarity with scripture that Paul presupposes.

<sup>55</sup> Blood sacrifices represented (and enacted) shared meals between gods and humans. Given the “kin” relationship between gods and their *genos*, the hot zone of ritual activity around the altar was often restricted, as in Jerusalem, to members of the god’s family. The shrine to the founder of the Delians, similarly, forbade entry to the *zenos*, though Delos was otherwise famous for religious tourism that attracted (and encouraged) hosts of non-Delians to its site. On this *us/them* distinction in

Jewish side, abridged this ad hoc, improvised, and evidently comfortable arrangement.

Faced with this great sea of already-interested potential recruits, why didn’t these Jews swing into action, turning their neighbors to the exclusive worship of the true god? For a moment, a tiny sub-culture of Hellenistic Jews did try. They seem to have been actively repudiated by their host synagogues, run out of town by irate Gentile citizens, and occasionally punished by Roman authorities attempting to keep the peace.<sup>56</sup> I speak, of course, of Jews like Paul, whose convictions (especially that of knowing what time it was on God’s clock, e.g., Rom 13:11) led him and other like-minded colleagues to attempt to convince Gentiles to make a unique commitment to the god of Israel and to cease their traditional practices, living as if they were Jews without in fact converting to Judaism. I’ll return to the first generation of this radioactively apocalyptic Jewish movement in a moment. For the most part, however, in the arc of centuries that span the period from Alexander to Islam and beyond, most Jews, evidently, made no such attempt.

Why not? Again we return to the ubiquitous respect accorded to antiquity and ethnicity as the bedrock of law, religion, and culture – and to the universal conviction that proper religion was an inherited characteristic. This respect was what enabled Jews to win the concessions to their own customs that they negotiated with their various local governments, mirrored eventually in later imperial (even Christian imperial) law.<sup>57</sup> Ancient Jews, themselves participants in this same

Mediterranean cult, see C. Sourvino-Inwood, “Further aspects of *Polis* Religion,” in Buxton, *Greek Religion*, 38–55; on Delos in particular, see p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> Paul lists his woes, variously from Jews, Gentiles, and specifically Romans, in 2 Cor 4:8–9; 6:4–5; 11:24–26; cf. Acts 13:50; 14:2, 4–6, 19; 16:20–24 (in v. 21, pagans complain to magistrates about Paul and Silas, “they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe”); 17:5–9; 18:12–17 before Gallio in Corinth; 19:23–41 a tumult in Ephesus. The relation of the scenes in Acts to the historical Paul is beside the main point: these are vividly plausible Jewish and pagan responses to such a socially disruptive mission.

<sup>57</sup> The Roman decrees cited by Josephus, *AJ* 16 passim, consistently name “ancestral custom” as the reason for cities in Asia Minor to permit funds collected by Jews to be sent to Jerusalem; cf. too his rendition of Claudius’ directives to Alexandria in 19.283–91. Centuries later, with the empire *de facto* divided, Honorius tried to prohibit the patriarch’s collection of donations from synagogue communities (*CTH* 8.14, in 399 CE); within five years he rescinded his own order in light of the antiquity of this privilege, a reference to protection of the Temple tax (*CTH* 8.17). The Syrian legate, Vitellius, coming to Antipatras’ aid in 39 CE against Aretas, took the long road around and avoided cutting through Judea lest his army’s standards, which bore images, offend Jewish “tradition” (*AJ* 18.120–22). Not everyone was as patient as the legate. “If the Jews wish to be citizens of Alexandria,” complained Apion, “why don’t they worship

culture, likewise respected pagan religious difference: as LXX Ex 22:28 implies and as numberless biblical and extra-biblical passages plainly state, the nations have their gods, the nation of Israel, Israel's god. This universal presumption, reinforced by daily reality – different peoples with their own gods, good relations with Gentile neighbors, the occasional hefty benefaction from a pagan sympathizer – sufficiently explains both why Diaspora Jews would welcome Gentile participation, and why they would impose no demand of exclusive worship (given to them alone by their god) on interested pagan neighbors.

Two last considerations, one more theoretical, one more practical, might provide more purchase on this question of Jews, Gentiles, and missions. The first relates to speculations concerning the ultimate fate of Gentiles, a theme arising within apocalyptic or messianic Jewish traditions. These traditions, and this theme, appear variously in literature ranging broadly in period, provenance, and genre: the classical prophets, apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, Philo and Paul, synagogue prayers, rabbinic disputes in the Bavli.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, this textual attestation cannot provide any information on whether and to what degree such speculations had any impact or influence on the day-to-day life of ancient Jews and their various Gentile associates. We cannot, for example, extrapolate Jewish missions from prophetic statements about Israel as a light to the nations, or about Israel's god as the god of the whole universe. Further, while speculations about the Gentiles' ultimate fate do appear throughout this literature, they diverge. Some texts speak of the ultimate subordination of Gentiles to Israel (or their destruction, dejection, defeat); others, of their participation with Israel at the End (such as worship at the Temple mount, or observing some mitzvot). These traditions – as we would expect – are not univocal, and single documents can express many, sometimes opposing, views.<sup>59</sup>

Those texts, finally, which do evince a positive orientation toward "eschatological Gentiles," speak only of Gentile *inclusion*, not *conversion*. The "righteous Gentile" of rabbinic discussion abandons his idols in this life; the proselyte, a former Gentile, "counts" eschatologically as a Jew.<sup>60</sup> But the Gentiles of these apocalyptic

the Alexandrian gods?" c. *Apionem* 2.65; cf. the similar complaint from cities in first-century Asia Minor, *AJ* 12.126.

<sup>58</sup> See citations and analysis in Fredriksen, "Circumcision of Gentiles," 533–48.

<sup>59</sup> Surveyed and analyzed in E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 212–21.

<sup>60</sup> Christianity aside, absent conversion, non-idolatorous Gentiles were theoretical Gentiles: rabbinic remarks on this score are speculative ("What would a 'good Gentile' look like, and for what scriptural reasons?") not prescriptive, b. *Sanh.* 56–60 (cf. *Jubilees* 7:20ff. and Acts 15:20). See D. Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (Toronto Studies in

scenarios cling to their idols literally right to the End, repudiating them only once the Lord of Israel has revealed himself in glory. And even at that point, these Gentiles *do not convert* to Judaism; rather, they turn from their own (false) gods and acknowledge, as Gentiles, Israel's god.<sup>61</sup> Far from serving as a likely inspiration for Gentile missions, then, this inclusive tradition may bespeak rather what Jews thought it would take to get most Gentiles to abandon their traditional worship: nothing less than a definitive and final self-revelation of God.<sup>62</sup> Taking this view in conjunction with the virtually universal Jewish opinion that the Law was the defining privilege of Israel (so too Paul, Rom 9:4), a theological impetus for mounting missions to Gentiles becomes difficult to reconstruct.

This theoretical consideration – that ancient Jews would have little ideological or theological reason to feel that they should attempt to convince Gentiles to become Jews – leads to a second, practical one: the balance within the religious ecosystem of the ancient city. Jews won exemptions from civic and imperial cult through persistence and negotiation. Majority culture tolerated their exclusivism out of its general respect for ancestral traditions. To have actively pursued a policy of alienating Gentile neighbors from their family gods and native civic and imperial cults would only have put the minority Jewish community at risk.<sup>63</sup> Pagan communities and civic authorities were for the most part willing to adjust to and respect Jewish religious difference, even to the point – remarkably – of tolerating former pagans who, as converts to Judaism, sought the same rights and exemptions as "native" Jews.<sup>64</sup> But,

Theology 14; New York: E. Mellen, 1983); cf. M. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000). On converts to Judaism "counting" as Israel in the eschatological round-up, see Fredriksen, "Circumcision," 545f.

<sup>61</sup> E.g., Tobit 14:5–6, Sib. Oracles 3:715–24; Justin, *Dial.* 122–23; Fredriksen, "Circumcision of Gentiles," 544–48.

<sup>62</sup> This is precisely Paul's point: that Gentiles-in-Christ now abandon idols and *porneia* is a sign that the End (identified with Christ's return) was at hand; the full argument can be found in P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 125–54.

<sup>63</sup> Valerius Maximus suggests that (some) Jews were expelled from Rome in 139 BCE because *Romanis tradere sacra sua conati sunt* or *Sabazi Iovis cultu Romanos inficere mores conati erant*. Does this refer to missionary activity? Astrologers were likewise expelled: see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1, nos. 147a–b and discussion on p. 359f. Gruen attempts to put this datum, together with the similar remarks of Dio on Roman Jews under Tiberius, in a political context: Dio, *Hist. Romana* 57.18.5a (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 1, no. 419); Gruen, *Diaspora*, 15–53. Also, receiving converts (which Jews undoubtedly did) is different from soliciting them (that is, missionizing).

<sup>64</sup> Again, keeping Domitian's actions in mind (above, n. 21), social rank – thus, civic and cult responsibilities – might set the limits of such tolerance.

as the early Gentile churches found out, when Christians began conspicuously to insist on exercising Jewish religious prerogatives without themselves becoming Jews, this tolerance ran out.

To sum up this section: Jews and pagans lived amidst and among each other in the cities of the Diaspora. Their mutual awareness of difference did not compromise their equally mutual interest and participation in the activities of their respective communities. Jews did not need to advertise their activities to incite pagan interest, and the missionary position is both untenable and unnecessary as an explanation for it. Some scholars want to argue that, while perhaps not all Jews missionized most of the time, some Jews missionized some of the time.<sup>65</sup> Whatever this more modest proposal might gain in plausibility, however, it loses in explanatory value for our larger question: supposed Jewish missions that were only sporadic and local cannot have provided the white-hot competition that supposedly accounts (according to Simon Blumenkranz, *et alii*) for the ubiquity and hostility of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition.

### Hostility, Identity, and Martyrdom

This point brings us to our final question on the relation of Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric to social reality, and thus to the larger question of the so-called "Parting of the Ways." What role, if any, did Jews play in the (pagan) persecutions of (Gentile) Christians?<sup>66</sup> And how did this role, perceived or actual, contribute to the theologically-freighted *contra Iudaeos* tradition?

Historians conventionally divide the empire's anti-Christian persecutions into two phases, the first, roughly from the late first to the mid-third century CE; the second, from Decius in 249 to Diocletian in 303. In the later period, emperors mandated uniform participation in acts of public cult. Jews (and, thus, Jewish Christians) were explicitly exempted;<sup>67</sup> Gentile Christians who refused were targeted for harassment, imprisonment, even death. The persecutions of the first phase, however,

random and sporadic, arose at local rather than imperial initiative, and their actual legal grounds remain obscure.<sup>68</sup>

Popular rumors of the Christians' debauchery and cannibalism, and their self-exemption from imperial cult, doubtlessly contributed to the churches' local visibility. Visible, too, was their non-participation in the civic cults of those gods who were theirs by birth and blood.<sup>69</sup> Such behavior threatened to rupture the *pax deorum*, the pact or peace between heaven and the human community. Deprived of cult, the gods grew angry; when gods were angry, humans suffered. Thus, "when the Tiber overflows or the Nile doesn't," when plague or earthquake struck, Christians could find themselves sitting targets for local anxieties.<sup>70</sup> Once before the magistrate (frequently the Roman governor on his assize rounds), Christians would be ordered to sacrifice. Refusal often meant death.<sup>71</sup> The pagan context of these persecutions dominates the accounts; yet some historians claim that the Jews, "either in the background or in the foreground," also played an important role, spreading malicious rumors, stirring up trouble, participating actively and enthusiastically in local outbreaks of anti-Christian violence.<sup>72</sup>

Evidence cited in support of this claim includes some statements found in patristic writings, and some episodes given in *acta martyrum*. In his *Dialogue*, Justin accused the Jews of murderous harassment of Christians, extending back to the crucifixion itself: "Your hand was lifted high to do evil, for even when you had killed the Christ you did not repent, but you

<sup>68</sup> H. Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), lvii-lxiii; the now-classic exchange of de Ste. Croix and Sherwin-White, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?" *Past and Present* 26 (1963) and 27 (1964).

<sup>69</sup> Tertullian vividly (and disapprovingly) describes these festivals, during which residents brought "fires and couches out into the open air," feasted from street to street, turned the city into a tavern, made mud from wine (whether through libations or indecorous behavior), and in general celebrated a city-wide party; *Apology* 35.

<sup>70</sup> Tertullian, *Apology* 40.2; on Christian withdrawal from cult and the anxieties that it occasioned, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 123-26.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., the martyrdoms of Polycarp 9; Perpetua 6; Scillitan martyrs (where the proconsul complains of their forsaking the *mos Romanorum*); also the procedure sketched in Pliny, ep. 10.

<sup>72</sup> A. Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 64-67; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), e.g., 178 (malice), 194 (troublemaking), 215 (active part in persecutions). Taylor notes that Frend "so takes the hostility and malice of the Jews for granted, that they occasionally overshadow the pagan officials in his descriptions of the persecutions" (*Anti-Judaism*, 84). This interpretation continues, more recently, in Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 487, and G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 56. Cf. F. Millar's review of Frend in *Journal of Roman Studies* 56 (1966): 231-36; Taylor, *Anti-Judaism*, 78-114.

<sup>65</sup> Carleton Paget's proposal, "Jewish Proselytism," 102.

<sup>66</sup> The floggings that Paul both initiated (Gal 1:13) and endured (2 Cor 11:24) are not relevant to this discussion, since the principals in both instances were Diaspora Jews.

<sup>67</sup> J. B. Rives, "The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 135-54; Jewish exemption, y. Avodah Zarah 5.4.44 d; Eusebius, *HE* 6.12.1 (a Gentile Christian considers converting to Judaism - thereby remaining a Christian? - to avoid imperial harassment); A. M. Rabello, "On the Relations between Diocletian and the Jews," *JIS* 35 (1984): 147-67.

also hate and murder us" (133.6). Likewise, Tertullian characterized synagogues as *fontes persecutorum* (*Scorpiace* 10), and Origen suggested that Jews stood at the source of popular anti-Christian calumnies about ritual murder, cannibalism, and promiscuous sex (c. *Cel.* VI.27; cf. VI.40). Jews also figure prominently in the martyr stories of Polycarp and of Pionius: "the entire mob of pagans and Jews from Smyrna" roar, enraged, demanding Polycarp's death in the arena (*Poly.* 12); later, when "the mob" collects wood for his pyre, "the Jews (as is their custom) zealously helped them with this" (13). Later, the Jews together with their pagan neighbors frustrate the Christian community's efforts to retrieve Polycarp's body (17-18). A century later, again in Smyrna, Pionius and his companions are watched on their way to the tribunal by a great crowd of Greeks, women, and also Jews ("on holiday because it was a great Sabbath"; *Pionius* 2-3), who importune Christians in the crowd to come into their synagogues (13).<sup>73</sup>

This is a slim dossier, and one that reveals the rhetorical and retrospective nature of these indictments. These sources present contemporary Jews as standing in the long line of persecutors of the righteous extending back to the first generation of the church, to Jesus himself, and before him to the prophets. The Jewish presence described in these documents, in other words, is a narrative restatement of the "trail of crimes" motif in orthodox anti-Jewish hermeneutic,<sup>74</sup> wherein allegations of such persecutions serve to reaffirm orthodox Christian identity and the

orthodox understanding of contested biblical texts.<sup>75</sup> It is the rhetoric of these texts, "the literary and theological nature and function of such accusations" that demands investigation. "Thus the initial question must not be about the Jews - 'Did they persecute Christians?' - but about the Christians - 'Why did they perceive Jews as persecutors?'"<sup>76</sup>

Does this literary framing mean that real Jews were most likely not involved in these persecutions? No historical evidence can prove a negative, but consideration of other factors can help assess relative plausibility or implausibility. First, these charges of Jewish anti-Christian aggression arise specifically within orthodox Christian documents, which are the showcases of the erudite *contra Iudaeos* tradition. Here it must be recalled that more than the orthodox perished in these outbreaks of violence. "Heresies" - rival Gentile Christian churches with quite different orientations toward the Septuagint, thus with identities independent of Jewish constructions of "Israel" - also produced martyrs. It is difficult to frame a Jewish resentment sufficiently broad to account for both anti-orthodox and anti-Marcionite aggression.<sup>77</sup> Second, as attested by the cry awkwardly attributed to the Smyrnaean Jews in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*,<sup>78</sup> such anti-Christian actions focused on the issue of public cult. Were Jews on these volatile occasions to have made themselves so conspicuous, they would have risked emphasizing, on precisely the same issue, their own degree of religious difference from majority culture.

<sup>73</sup> James Parkes argues that the Smyrnaean Jews attempted to offer these Christians refuge in *Conflict of Church and Synagogue* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company 1961; orig. pub. 1934), 144-45; if so, this would cohere with Eusebius' report of Jewish sympathy toward persecuted Christians in *Martyrs of Palestine* 8.1. Others see evidence of hostile intent; e.g., Lane Fox, who paints a lurid picture of Jews and pagans together "gloating at the Christians from their city's colonnades" (*Pagans and Christians*, 487; full discussion on pp. 479-87); exhaustively, *Le martyre de Pionios*, ed. L. Robert, G. W. Bowersock, and C. P. Jones (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994). I warmly thank these last two colleagues for their efforts to dissuade me from the view I present here, and regret that I must defer a fuller consideration of their objections to a later essay.

<sup>74</sup> Thus, for example, Tertullian's famous remark on the synagogues continues, "before which the apostles endured the scourge" - a clear reference to episodes described or predicted in various NT texts. Parkes comments, "The statement of Jewish hostility in general terms is based on theological exegesis [of OT and NT texts] and not on historical memory"; *Church and Synagogue*, 148. For general discussion and analysis of this literature, see pp. 121-50; Taylor, *Anti-Judaism*, 91-114, cf. Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism," 215f; J. Lieu, "Accusations of Jewish Persecution in Early Christian Sources, with Particular Reference to Justin Martyr and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," in *Tolerance and Intolerance*, 279-95.

<sup>75</sup> E.g., "Anonymous" response to Montanism's challenge to "orthodox" identity and scriptural practices: "They used to dub us 'slayers of the prophets,' because we did not receive their prophets .... [But] there is single one of these followers of Montanus ... who was persecuted by Jews or killed by lawless men? Or were any of them seized and crucified for the sake of the Name? Or were any of the [ir] women ever 'scourged in the synagogues' of the Jews or stoned?" in *Eusebius, HE* 6.16.12; the passage resonates with references to Mt 23:31-37.

<sup>76</sup> Lieu, "Accusations," 280. I would rephrase the question: not why did these authors "perceive" Jews as persecutors, but why were they compelled to present them in this way. See too *idem, Image and Reality*. Perhaps the target of this rhetoric was internal, i.e., synagogue-going Christians: E. L. Gibson, "Jewish Antagonism or Christian Polemic: The Case of the *Martyrdom of Pionius*," *JEGS* 9 (2001): 339-58.

<sup>77</sup> Pionius is burned next to a member of Marcion's church, 21.5; "Anonymous" complains about the "immense number" of martyrs from "heretical" churches, naming specifically Montanists and especially Marcionites; Eusebius, *HE* 5.16.20-21. See also R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, AD 100-400* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), 29f. and n. 13.

<sup>78</sup> "The whole crowd of Gentiles and Jews dwelling in Smyrna cried out in uncontrollable anger and with a great shout, 'This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, the one who teaches many to neither sacrifice nor worship!'" *Pionius* 12.2; D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 127-130.

Finally, to either side chronologically of these persecutions, we consistently find vigorous complaints of excessive intimacy between Gentile Christians and their Jewish neighbors. These thread throughout orthodox writings of many genres – sermons, letters, commentaries, conciliar canons. These sources speak regularly of Christians frequenting synagogues, keeping Sabbath or feast days with Jewish friends, soliciting Jewish blessings, betrothing their children to Jews or, indeed, marrying Jews themselves.<sup>79</sup> This is not to say that relations were always sunny, and Jewish anti-Christian polemic dates from this period, too.<sup>80</sup> But polemic is not persecution. If Jews had actually played – or even been commonly thought to have played – a vigorous role in the persecution of Gentile Christians, then this abundant and continuous evidence of intimate social interaction becomes extremely difficult to account for.

When focusing on ancient Jewish-Christian relations, the lived social context of these relations too often falls outside of consideration. These two minority communities lived within cities that were both structured and celebrated by the majority religious culture. An abiding aspect of that culture was its deep respect for the *mos maiorum*, inherited religious tradition, the cornerstone of both law and piety.<sup>81</sup> It is this deep respect alone that accounts for the extraordinary privileges and exemptions granted uniquely to Jewish communities in virtue of the ethnicity and antiquity of their own ancestral way of life. And these exemptions in turn allowed Hellenistic Jews, without compromising those things fundamental to their own religious identity, to attain their remarkable degree of social and cultural integration in the ancient city. Despite the evidence of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition – indeed, on the evidence of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition, including the ways in which it is manifest in the law

<sup>79</sup> Christians going to synagogue, e.g., Origen, *In Lev. hom.* 5.8; *Sel. in Exod.* 12.46; notoriously, Chrysostom's sermons against Judaizers, Christians keeping the Sabbath, Augustine, *ep.* 54.2, 3; going to a Jew for a cure, *de civ. Dei* 22.8.21. Conciliar canons continuously legislate against Christian intermarriage in Judaism and interactions with Jews, e.g., Elvira (303 CE) condemns intermarriage (c.16), soliciting Jewish blessings for fields (c. 49), accepting Jewish hospitality (c. 50), and sexual relations (c. 78). For such legislation, attesting to Jewish-Christian mixing well up through the Visigothic period, see Linder, *Legal Sources*.

<sup>80</sup> Horbury, *Controversy*; on the *birkat ha-minim*, besides Horbury, see S. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians, 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 183–193; Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism," 217 n. 98, 221. Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 93–126; J. Z. Pastis, "Jewish Arguments against Christianity in the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*," in *A Multifirm Heritage: Studies on early Judaism and Christianity in honor of Robert A. Kraft*, ed. B. G. Wright (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 184 n. 4; for the earlier period, see C. Seltzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians: History and Polemics, 30–150* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

<sup>81</sup> T. D. Barnes, "Legislation against the Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 32–50.

codes of the late empire – Jews retained their place on this social map for as long as the ancient city remained relatively intact. And this placement meant that their non-Jewish neighbors, whether pagan or Christian, continued in their social (including religious) interactions with them.

## Conclusions

When, then, did "the ways" part? Our answer – and indeed, the question itself – depends upon what evidence we consider. An awareness of separation, even a principled insistence upon separation, seems clearly attested in some early to mid-second century writers (Ignatius, Marcion, Justin); equally clearly, we see strong indications of persistent, intimate interactions. Despite the tendencies of imperial law, the eruptions of anti-Jewish (and anti-pagan, and anti-heretical) violence, the increasingly strident tone and obsessive repetition of orthodox anti-Jewish rhetoric, the evidence – indeed, precisely *this* evidence – points in the other direction: on the ground, the ways were *not* separating, certainly not fast enough and consistently enough to please the ideologues.

While Constantine's patronage eventually empowered orthodox bishops, the conduits and authors of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition, they had little effect on long-lived civic social patterns. Religious and social mixing between different types of Jews and Christians, between Christians of different sorts, and between Christians, Jews and pagans all continued.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the vitality of this habitual contact accounts in part for the increasing shrillness of anti-Jewish invective. As orthodox identity, enabled especially under Theodosius II, becomes enacted in Mediterranean cities, the volume and the vituperation of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition increases. Together with the laws preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the canons in various conciliar corpora, this literature at once relates the prescriptions of the governing elites and provides glimpses of the social reality that they condemn or attempt to regulate: Jews, pagans, and Christians of many different stripes continue

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Constantine's efforts to break up the "interfaith" fair (pagans, Jews, and Christians of various sorts) held at Mamre; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.51–53. Laodicea (fourth century), c. 37 attempts to prevent the orthodox from receiving festival gifts from Jews and heretical Christians; Vannes (465?) tried to legislate against orthodox clerics eating with Jews, c. 12; Eponee (517), forbidding clerics to fraternize with heretical clergy and with Jews, c. 15. The Piacenza pilgrim's story of the miraculous bench in the synagogue at Nazareth may very well be evidence of sixth-century Christian-Jewish co-operation for the benefit of the tourist trade; *Antonino Piacentini Itinerarium* 5 (CCL 175:130–31); J. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 228–29.

to mix and mingle.<sup>83</sup> Church and state did collaborate in the Christianization of Late Roman culture, but no direct correspondence between law, theology, and society can be presumed. Indeed, the constant reiteration of civil and ecclesiastical legislation suggests the opposite: legal prescription cannot yield social description.<sup>84</sup>

Squeezed by Visigoths and Franks in the West, and eventually by Muslims in the East, Mediterranean society in the fifth through seventh centuries became increasingly brutalized as ancient traditions of urban civility waned. In this new climate of violence, the church's tremendous moral prestige legitimated the coercion of all religious outsiders. By this point, in learned Christian imagination, "the Jew" represented the religious outsider par excellence. In time, within this changed context, the rhetoric of the ancient *contra Iudaeos* tradition would create a new social reality; and, indeed, the social experience of Jewish communities within Roman culture seems to change more dramatically in the century and a half between Augustine and Isidore of Seville than it had for the seven plus centuries between Alexander and Augustine.<sup>85</sup> But actual, effective segregation (which will facilitate targeted aggression) lies outside our period, well off into the Middle Ages.

By controlling the transmission of earlier texts and traditions, the orthodox ideologues of separation not only (eventually) changed the future; they also changed the past, which we still see, despite ourselves, too much from their vantage point. The ideology of separation was initially an optative principle, intimately and immediately allied to textual practices, articulated and developed by an intellectual minority (redundancy intended) beginning, perhaps, in the early second century CE.<sup>86</sup> It was an ideal vociferously – or, depending on our degree of empathy for

<sup>83</sup> Summarized in Parkes, *Conflict*, 379–86.

<sup>84</sup> Except, perhaps, à l'inverse. So too Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 195–99, noting a sixth-century inscription from Calabria attesting to a Jewish *patronus civitatis*; David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), vol. 1, no. 114; M. Williams, "The Jews of Early Byzantine Venusia: The Family of Faustinus I, the Father," *JJS* 50 (1999): 47–48.

<sup>85</sup> Fredriksen and Irshal, "Christian Anti-Judaism," part 5: "The End of Mediterranean Antiquity."

<sup>86</sup> Intolerance of its own diversity characterizes late Second Temple Judaism, and accounts for much of its sectarian literary production. The intra-group vituperation and intense debate about authority, behavior, and biblical interpretation that marks canonical and extra-canonical paleo-Christian texts (Paul's letters, the gospels, Barnabas [perhaps], Revelation) are some of the most Jewish things about them. These texts were read in support of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition by later Gentile Christians; they do not directly witness to it. (Cf. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, criticized on exactly this historiographical point by the authors assembled in Davies, *Anti-Semitism*.)

figures like Chrysostom, perhaps plaintively – urged in the fourth.<sup>87</sup> It was a policy ineffectually legislated, in pockets of the old Roman world, in the sixth.<sup>88</sup> It was never in this culture, for the entire period from the coming of Christianity to the coming of Islam, a native reality universally lived. How, then, can we best respond to the question, "When was the Parting of the Ways?" Only with another question: "What Parting of the Ways?"

<sup>87</sup> The continuing value of Simon's great *Verus Israel*, thus, is less its historical reconstruction than its comprehensive review of this literature, which Simon took as socially descriptive rather than prescriptive.

<sup>88</sup> For this later legal material, see Linder, *Legal Sources*; for continuities in Roman culture, R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); discontinuities in Iberia, P. D. King, *Law and Society in the Visigoth Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972); P. Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); on the decline of urban culture, the magisterial study by J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).