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The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism

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Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew. The crowds who heard him, his earliest disciples, the apostle Paul—all were Jews. The holy days and sacred writings of the earliest community were the festivals and Scriptures of Israel. Yet, as it grew, Christianity became a community conspicuous for *not* living according to Jewish law and tradition. Gentiles, not Jews, dominated the movement. As a religion, Christianity came to be defined—and, indeed, defined itself—by its hostility toward Jews and Judaism.

How did this happen? And when did it happen? To try to grasp the answers, we need to begin at the beginning—which, in turn, brings us to yet another question: When does Christianity begin?

Before we can even start our inquiry, we have to define the object of our search, and decide what we mean by "Christianity." If we mean the religious community that worships the Triune God and that acknowledges Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man, then we would place its beginnings sometime in the fourth century. That would be a good answer, because by the fourth century so much of what would characterize Christianity for the next sixteen hundred years was finally in place: powerful bishops, great councils, and a philosophically sophisticated theology that could insist on both three-ness and unity in the Godhead. By the fourth century, the church recognized and patronized by the Roman emperor was an international Gentile community hostile to diversity both within and without: Christians outside the officially sanctioned church were persecuted as heretics; pagan nonparticipants increasingly became the object of legal harassment; Jews, though permitted their peculiar worship, were universally condemned as enemies of the prophets and murderers of Christ.

When we turn to the New Testament, however, a different and obvious answer presents itself: Christianity begins with Jesus of Nazareth and continues through his apostle, Paul. Many of the themes that define fourth-century Christian orthodoxy seem already present in the Christian canon. The high Christology (theology of Christ) of Nicaea is no more elevated than the claims made for Christ in the Gospel of John. "The Father and I are one," teaches John's Jesus (John 10:30); and the disciple Thomas exclaims before the risen Christ, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28). As for heresy, in the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—Jesus seems already to condemn some Christians as deviants. He warns against false insiders in the course of his Sermon on the Mount, cautioning his flock about supposed prophets "who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). On the last day, such so-called Christians will get their just reward:

> Not every one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers." (Matt. 7:21–23)

Paganism too is condemned, implicitly by Jesus, explicitly by Paul. The first commandment of all, Jesus instructs, is "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29): one Lord cannot admit of many. Paul, teaching to Gentiles who are former pagans, is more direct. "You turned to God from idols," he tells his community in Thessalonica, "to serve a living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods," he reminds his congregations in Galatia (Gal. 4:8). If one of his Gentiles-in-Christ slips back into idol worship, he is to be shunned by the rest of the church: "Do not even eat with such a one" (1 Cor. 5:11). Those who still worship idols are given up to futility, perversion, and death (Rom. 1:18–32). As for Judaism, Jesus and Paul speak with one voice: it is condemned. Repudiating the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus condemns the Jewish observance of the Sabbath, the food laws, and blood sacrifices, while Paul renounces circumcision, and associates Jewish law with the evil power of flesh and death.

The views just summarized once described opinions that churches and theological faculties held in common. But about two centuries ago, academic opinion began to shift as scholars started to apply the standards of developing scientific historical research to the New Testament, investigating it as they would any other ancient document. In consequence, the differences in tone and content among the Gospels emerged with increasing clarity, which in turn called into question their status as historical witnesses to the life and times of

Jesus. The evangelists in their individuality came to be seen more as creative interpreters of traditions from and about Jesus, and thus as witnesses first of all to their own communities and their own historical periods, rather than as historical witnesses to Jesus of Nazareth, who had lived and preached (in Aramaic, not in Greek) some forty to seventy years prior to these Gospels' composition. This linguistic gap between Jesus and the earliest documents about him highlighted another difference between him and later Christian tradition that was very significant theologically: Jesus would have been familiar with Semitic-language versions of the Jewish Bible (whether Hebrew or Aramaic), whereas Paul and the evangelists all drew on its Greek version, the Septuagint. Where these two biblical traditions diverged sharply—say, in the rendering of Isaiah 7:14, where in the Hebrew a "young girl" (*'aalmah*) gives birth to a child, but in Greek the new mother is a "virgin" (*parthenos*)—scholars hesitated to attribute to the historical Jesus what would have been possible, so to speak, only in Greek. The gap between history and theology began to widen.

The recovery of ancient manuscripts, a project initiated during the Renaissance, also complicated research. The good news was that more copies existed of the various canonical Christian writings than of any other Greek writings from antiquity (including those of Homer, Plato, or Sophocles). The bad news was that this superabundance of copies in effect eroded readers' confidence that they could know the original wording and contents of the biblical texts themselves. Each newly discovered manuscript or portion thereof brought with it another way to read a word or phrase or passage, and in this way innumerable textual variants accrued. Given the long history of the New Testament's transmission, no modern version of the text could ever be identical to whatever the original had been: too many generations of copyists stood between the scholar and the text's distant, ancient author.

Further, the discovery of buried libraries—most dramatically, in the mid-twentieth century, the Dead Sea Scrolls in Israel and the Nag Hammadi library in Egypt—increased scholarly awareness of the great variety within both ancient religious communities, Jewish and Christian. The best-known forms of each tradition, rabbinic Judaism on the one hand and Catholic orthodoxy on the other, had dominated the historical record—and therefore the historical imagination—in no small part because their great literary legacies were virtually the sole ones to have survived from antiquity. The texts of their respective competition, history's losers—Sadducees, Essenes, Hellenistic Jews; or Gnostic, Jewish, or millenarian Christians—had been suppressed, destroyed, or lost. But the two victorious communities had definitively established themselves only in the fourth century. To see their own definitions of their respective traditions as *the* standard or normative versions for any earlier period was anachronistic and, thus, distorting. Some historians, in light of this

realization, conjectured that the earliest forms of Christianity known in different parts of the Empire might well have been seen as heretical only in subsequent periods. Any absolute value to the concept of orthodoxy, in other words, evaporated. This, in turn, raised the question: Absent orthodoxy for the period before Constantine, what was the relation of Christian theology to its own origins, and where should those origins be sought?

Finally, as historians worked to reconstruct critically from ancient evidence the figures both of Jesus and of Paul in their respective religious and cultural environments, two issues grew increasingly clear: the importance of Jewish apocalyptic traditions as a religious orientation, and the importance of Greek-speaking synagogue communities in the Diaspora as a social matrix for Jewish-Gentile interaction.

Throughout the nineteenth century, scholars seeking the historical Jesus had struggled with the meaning of the key phrase frequently on his lips in the Synoptic Gospels, the "kingdom of God." As long as the phrase could be seen as some kind of moral metaphor—by invoking the kingdom of God, Jesus really meant to say, "Love one another," or "Feed the hungry," or "Be kind to widows and orphans"—Jesus could be looked at primarily as a teacher of elevated ethics. Of course, an ethic of love and compassion is as effortlessly meaningful to moderns as to ancients. The liberal Protestant scholars who were then at the forefront of historical Jesus work saw Jesus precisely and primarily in this ethical mode. Thus, in preaching the kingdom of God, the great scholar Adolf von Harnack explained, Jesus was actually teaching "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." Such a reconstruction of Jesus' message took the prophetic writings of the Old Testament as the prime interpretive context for Jesus' message. In this view, Jesus was the ultimate spokesman for the great ethical tradition expressed in Isaiah and Micah and Hosea that emphasized righteousness and love, justice and mercy. This ethical stance (so went the argument) stood in stark contrast to the Temple cult, the "works of the law," and other such Jewish "distortions" of biblical tradition. Jesus' core message, in other words, happened to coincide exactly with the way that later (Gentile) Christianity saw and defined itself against what it perceived Judaism to be. This way of thinking restated as a seeming principle of doing history what was in fact basic to the structure of the Christian canon itself, wherein the gospel completes the Law and the Prophets, and the New Testament succeeds the "Old."

Scholars next began branching out of canonical Jewish writings into those much less familiar ones written in the period that fell roughly between the Maccabees and the Mishnah, from 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., which scholars referred to as the "intertestamental period." These writings, too, interpreted Jewish classical prophecy. Not infrequently, they too spoke of a coming kingdom of

God. But in these texts, it was clear, the kingdom was no timeless moral metaphor. It named a longed-for, energetically anticipated historical event. When the kingdom came, the God of Israel would reveal himself in glory. The righteous might at first be in travail (*Assumption of Moses*), but ultimately they would triumph, perhaps under the human leadership of an anointed leader, the Lord's messiah (*Baruch*). The dead would rise (*Daniel*), the scattered tribes of Israel would be gathered in from exile and reassembled in a renewed and resplendent Jerusalem (*Enoch; Tobit*). Perhaps one like a Son of Man would appear to judge the quick and the dead (*Enoch*). The Gentiles would finally abandon their idols and acknowledge Israel's God as the only God (*Isaiah; Tobit; Sybilline Oracles*). Knowledge of the Lord would radiate out from Zion to the whole earth (*Isaiah; Micah; Psalm of Solomon*). The strong theme in these intertestamental writings was apocalyptic eschatology: the conviction that God was about to intervene definitively in history, vanquish injustice, evil, and death forever, and establish his kingdom of peace.

Both thematically and chronologically, these writings stand much closer to the traditions from and about Jesus in the Gospels and in the letters of Paul than do the "Old Testament" writings as such. They thus enable us to glimpse how the canonical prophets such as Isaiah and Micah were heard and interpreted by Jews in the period just preceding and following the early Jesus movement. As scholars placed the New Testament writings within the interpretive context of these intertestamental apocalyptic ones, the apocalyptic accent of earliest Christian tradition sounded with increasing clarity. This trajectory of research culminated in the early twentieth century with Albert Schweitzer's great classic, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906). And this new emphasis on the earliest tradition's own apocalypticism in turn raised the question: If Jesus in his lifetime, and his apostles in theirs, had expected and preached the imminent arrival of this sort of divine kingdom, of what relevance was their message to the church so many long centuries after the fact? If they expected the end of normal time so long ago, how can they be thought of in any way as having *intended* to found a new religious community distinct from their native Judaism? And if they did not, then again the question arises: What is the relation of the later church to its own earliest history?

Finally, archaeological and historical work on the ancient Greco-Roman city, and the place of Greek-speaking Jewish communities within such cities, has powerfully affected the study of Christian origins. Earlier scholars, in part drawing on a particular reading of Acts, in part projecting a much later, idealized rabbinic model of separation back onto ancient Diaspora communities, had imagined Greek-speaking Jews as living apart and aloof from their pagan Gentile neighbors. Such supposed aloofness was in turn seen as the cause of the Greco-Roman anti-Semitism visible in certain Hellenistic and Latin

authors. According to this view, Jewish separatism provoked pagan anti-Semitism. Such supposed Jewish self-segregation in turn underscored the dramatic novelty of ancient Christianity, wherein Paul and the other apostles to the Gentiles were seen as accomplishing the unprecedented: dissolving the barriers between Gentile and Jew; bringing knowledge of biblical religion to Gentile populations; creating the circumstances in which, for the first time, Jew and Gentile might together worship the God of Israel without any pressure on the Gentiles actually to convert to Judaism and thus to keep Jewish law.

Recent work on archaeological remains, especially inscriptions, as well as on various sorts of ancient literature have altered this picture fundamentally. It now seems clear that, by the dawn of the Roman Empire, synagogue communities had long been a familiar fixture on the Mediterranean urban landscape. Much of ancient religious practice was communal and outdoors, and Jewish Diaspora religious practice was no exception to this general rule. The cultural habit of religious openness encouraged the participation of outsiders, so that Jews might be found enjoying the spectacles available in the amphitheaters, gymnasia, and civic centers of their cities of residence. These spectacles customarily began with public rituals honoring traditional deities and, eventually, the divinity of the Roman emperor: one inscription from an ancient city marked off the particular place in the stands reserved for Jewish viewers. Traffic went in the other direction too: Gentiles might be present during Jewish communal celebrations, whether on the Sabbath or other feasts, where they along with their Jewish neighbors would hear stories and instruction from the Scriptures delivered in Greek. Philo of Alexandria, in the first century, mentions the mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles who gathered annually to celebrate the local Jewish festival commemorating the Greek translation of the Bible. Later pagan magical papyri, in their recipes for casting certain spells, relate garbled versions of biblical stories, which magicians could easily have obtained by dropping in at the synagogue.

Diaspora Jews permitted and even encouraged sympathetic Gentiles to contribute more directly to synagogue life. Jewish donor inscriptions honor prominent local pagans—here a priestess of the imperial cult, there a town councillor—for their patronage in constructing, refurbishing, or beautifying synagogue buildings or contributing to Jewish charities. The huge and beautiful remains of the fourth-century synagogue at Sardis shows a Jewish house of worship literally at the heart of this ancient city, structurally integrated into the same architectural complex that housed the baths and the marketplace. One of the city's public fountains stood in its forecourt. This was no segregated community. Some sympathetic pagans even went so far as to adopt voluntarily some Jewish customs such as keeping the Sabbath, or the food laws, or observing other Jewish holidays, thereby annoying pagan writers like Juvenal and Tacitus.

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These pagan Judaizers, called "God-fearers" in Greek sources (*theosobeis* or *sebomenoi*), "fearers of heaven" in Hebrew (*yirei shamayim*), could be found in cities throughout the Empire, wherever a Jewish community lived.

We should pause to consider these voluntary Judaizers, because their existence tells us much both about pagan culture and about Jewish culture. Pagan culture itself was religiously pluralistic. Ancient peoples typically worshiped their own ancestral gods—in antiquity, religion ran in the blood—and these gods formed aggregates of larger pantheons as politics required. (When Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in the fourth century B.C.E., for example, he identified a chief Egyptian sky god, Amon, with the Greek's chief sky god, Zeus. Alexander himself, once divinized, was worshiped as the divine son of Amon-Zeus.) Further, simple courtesy and common sense encouraged showing respect to gods as they were encountered. Pagan interest in the Jewish god was thus one particular instance of the general pagan interest in any divinity. And Jews, a minority wherever they lived in the Diaspora, encouraged this sympathetic interest in their own God, while making no demands on the volunteer. Thus, in the innumerable synagogues scattered throughout the Empire, Jews made room for pagans, as pagans, to worship the God of Israel, just as in Jerusalem's great Temple, until its destruction in 70 C.E., the largest court was set aside for pagans to worship the Jewish God.

Those pagans who chose to Judaize, that is, to assume observance of some Jewish customs, did so on an individual, voluntary, ad hoc, and improvised basis. Other pagans complained of such Judaizing not so much because of the practices themselves—holy days, food protocols, and concerns with purity were native to all ancient religions, not just to Judaism—but because such Judaizing might and evidently did occasionally lead to conversion. Converts to Judaism by definition changed their status from sympathetic outsider to committed insider; for men, in addition, this meant being circumcised, a procedure regarded with revulsion by the majority culture. For any convert, male or female, conversion to Judaism required abstention from traditional worship. Becoming a Jew, in effect, meant changing ethnicity, choosing new ancestors; choosing Jewish ancestors meant renouncing one's own gods.

In other words, though Diaspora Judaism was inclusive with respect to outsiders, whose sympathetic involvement was encouraged, it was exclusive with respect to insiders: Jews in principle were forbidden foreign gods. Jewish religious exclusivism made life complicated enough for born Jews. Josephus gives ample evidence of the various concessions that Jews living abroad had to wrangle from civic authorities, such as permission not to appear in court on the Sabbath or another holy day, and exemption from public rites when offering testimony in court. One community had to petition authorities to set aside a certain number of animals not to be sacrificed to the gods so that resident Jews

could have access to meat uncontaminated by idolatry. (Echoes of this last concern show up in Paul's letters.) Some hostile pagan observers considered this exclusivism—which in the pre-Christian period was unique to Judaism—to be rude, if not downright seditious. Thus conversion to Judaism, for the formerly pagan convert, had immediate and serious social consequences, especially in light of the public nature of ancient religion: to take on Jewish exclusivism by choosing to convert wrested Gentiles out of their own culture and their own habitual patterns of participation in their own city. Nonetheless, pagan civic and imperial authorities by and large granted Jews the exemptions from civic cult that they sought out of respect for their *patria ethē*, the ethnicity and antiquity of Jewish ancestral law. Remarkably, this pagan acknowledgment of Jewish religious difference extended even to the point of honoring the special status of former pagans who, as converts to Judaism, sought the same rights and exemptions as "native" Jews.

By the same token, most Jewish communities probably avoided deliberate outreach to pagan neighbors with the specific intention of turning them into Jews, that is, converting them to Judaism. The effect of any such missionary outreach would have been to alienate these neighbors from their own gods, families, traditions, and culture, impugning the *patria ethē* of the host culture. To upset the religious and political ecosystem of the city in this way would have endangered the Jewish community itself. Instead, it seems that Jews outside their own land made their peace, religiously and socially, with their non-Jewish neighbors, who were, after all, the vast majority of humankind.

What then of the ultimate fate of their Gentile neighbors whose lives were so mired in the worship of false gods? Those Jews who worried about such things had prophetic apocalyptic tradition to draw on, according to which, at the end of time, through the display of his majesty, God would finally turn his pagan children to himself. The belief that Gentiles would in this way be "saved" was widespread enough to find expression in the *Alenu*, an ancient prayer that expressed the hope of seeing the false gods exterminated and all humanity (*kol benei basar*, "all the children of the flesh"), Jews and Gentiles, united in the worship of the God of Israel.

This Jewish inclusiveness toward outsiders was virtually the obverse of the Jews' attitude toward each other. Extremely tolerant of those outside the fold, Jews were rancorously, almost exuberantly, intolerant of variety within the fold. Battling with each other over the correct way to be Jewish was (one could say, is) a timeless Jewish activity, and at no time more so than in the late Second Temple period, precisely the lifetime of Jesus and of Paul. This last fact must be borne in mind if we are to understand the import of those bitter polemics against scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and publicans attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, and the startlingly belligerent remarks against fellow

apostles and other Jews that we find in Paul. In terms of the business of being Jewish, especially in the first half of the first century, such remarks are entirely normal. Indeed, when compared to some of the vituperation lavished on other sorts of Jews by the Dead Sea sectarians, these partisan statements seem rather mild.

The vivid and vital level of controversy among Jews about Judaism was the measure, and in some sense the consequence, of how widespread Jewish knowledge of Jewish Scripture was. "Should any of our nation be questioned about the laws," claimed Josephus, "he would repeat them all the more readily than his own name." Josephus probably exaggerates, but the point he makes is an interesting one. Because of the institution of weekly community gatherings on the Sabbath, Jews everywhere constituted a textual community of a special sort. By the simple expedient of reading the law aloud, synagogues, whether in the Diaspora or in the homeland, diminished both the need for literacy and the monopoly on interpretation that a literate elite might have exercised. Thus the individual Jew did not have to be literate in order to be involved in the interpretation of Scripture: Hearing the law at least once a week, completing the cycle of the Torah time and time again throughout one's life, provided text enough. The Bible, through the Jewish habit of weekly community study, permitted the growth of a secondary sort of literacy, whereby many Jews could be very familiar with a text without necessarily being able to read. (For all we know, this might have been Jesus' circumstance.) This secondary literacy in turn encouraged and intensified community life: any Jew could have his or her own opinions on the correct understanding of God's Word.

The vehement, interminable debate that so marks intra-Jewish relations attests not only to how widespread knowledge of the Bible was, but also to how seriously performance of its dictates was regarded. At stake was not *whether* the law should be observed—quarreling implies unanimity on this point—but *how*. Precisely this point is made in the Gospels' various controversy stories: the Pharisees maintain that a law (honoring the Sabbath, say, or offering at the Temple) is to be fulfilled in one manner; Jesus argues, in another. Neither says that the command is unimportant. At issue is the way to fulfill it.

Did anything like these controversies ever actually happen? The evangelists' presentation of some of them can be flagrantly contrived. Pharisees did not routinely spend their Sabbaths patrolling grainfields (Mark 2:23–24), nor does teaching that man cannot be defiled by external things (Mark 7:19b) mean the same thing as "Don't bother keeping kosher." But the general impression that the controversy stories convey is entirely plausible. Arguing about the correct way to understand the Bible, to fulfill God's laws, in short, to be Jewish, was one of the most typical ways that religious Jews in Jesus' age lived out their commitment to Judaism.

So also with Paul's letters. His negative remarks about circumcision are motivated entirely by his position on the question of whether it should be required of Gentiles-in-Christ. This question would have been much more pressing in the Diaspora than in the overwhelmingly Jewish setting of Jesus' mission in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. These particular Gentiles, again according to Paul's letters, had already forsaken their idols and made an *exclusive* commitment to "a living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9)—a decision, to repeat, that the Hellenistic synagogue never demanded of them. Why then, argued Paul, should they also convert to Judaism?

Paul certainly thought that they should not convert, and he did not hesitate to say that his Christian apostolic colleagues who thought otherwise were wrong. But the issue of circumcision *for Jews* was another matter. Circumcision was one of the defining privileges of Israel, part and parcel with the divine giving of the Torah and the other special dignities that God had bestowed uniquely on his "son", the Jewish people. "They are Israelites," Paul explains in Romans, "and to them belong the sonship, the *glory*, the covenants, the giving of the law, the *worship*, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen" (9:4–5 RSV, emphasis mine). The English translation of the words that I give here in italics blankets their very important and telling connotations. "Glory," in Greek *doxa*, rests in the context of Romans 9 on the Hebrew *kavod*: in Paul's "Jewish Greek," this word immediately recalls the altar of the Temple, which Paul's native religion regarded as the earthly abode of God's presence. We see this thought in the Gospels, too, when Matthew's Jesus says, "Whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it" (23:21). "Worship" disguises another "Temple" word: the Greek *latreia* translates the Hebrew *avodah*, meaning specifically, again in Paul's Jewish Greek, the cult of animal sacrifice mandated in the Torah and performed before God's presence in Jerusalem. In sum: To extrapolate from Paul's condemnation of circumcision for Gentiles-in-Christ a condemnation of Judaism in general completely misses his point.

Indeed, the targets of Paul's most intemperate invective—with the rhetorically lush exception of his resounding condemnation of Gentile culture in toto given in the first chapter of Romans—are almost invariably other Jews. Most often, the Jews he repudiates are even closer to him and his own highly individual beliefs than we realize: not Jews in general, nor even fellow Pharisees in particular, but rather and most specifically other Jews like himself who were also preaching salvation in Christ to Gentiles. These fellow Jews are the "false apostles" and the "deceitful workers" against whom Paul fulminates (2 Cor. 11:13). And the contest is conducted in particularly Jewish terms. Whose background was unimpeachable? Paul's was, he informs his Philippian

audience: he was born of Jewish parents, of the tribe of Benjamin, and circumcised when eight days old. Whose education and, thus, scriptural orientation was most sound? Again, of course, Paul's. (Hence his proclaiming himself a Pharisee "as to the law.") Whose level of religious observance was most praiseworthy? On this score, Paul claims modestly, he was "blameless" (Phil. 3:4–6). Who was most dedicated to the mission? Paul was. (For more examples of Pauline modesty, see 1 Cor. 15: 10 and 2 Cor. 11:23.) Whose teaching, then, was more authoritative? Obviously, Paul's. Any missionary with a different message—even if he were an angel!—is simply accursed (Gal. 1:8). Strong language, yes. But in the area of debate about correct religious behavior, all this is Jewish business as usual.

The core canon of the New Testament, in other words the Gospels and the letters of Paul, witness to that moment in the evolution of Christianity when it was still a type of Second Temple Judaism. The heated polemic against different types of Jews that they contain is exactly the measure of their Jewishness. But this polemic came to be read, understood, and used as a blanket condemnation of Judaism itself. By whom? Why? How? If we can answer these questions, we can glimpse the beginnings of Christianity as its own entity, a new, Gentile religion, distinct from and even antipathetic to Judaism. To do this, we must seek out the origins, specifically, of Christian theology.

Theos is Greek for "god." *Logos* is Greek for "order, reason, word." Theology is systematic, ordered discourse on the nature of divinity. As such, theology was not native to ancient religion, whether pagan or Jewish.

To the pagans first. The term "paganism" itself gives a false impression, because any "ism" presupposes some sort of organized thought. Paganism sounds like a body of doctrine, standing in contrast to Christianity, which had a different doctrine. The word in fact was a fourth-century Christian neologism, a derogatory term contrived by the victorious church to describe that part of the Empire's population—probably in that period still the majority—which was neither Jewish nor Christian. The phenomenon it signifies is the innumerable traditional, indigenous polytheisms of the ancient world. These defined themselves much more in terms of local and inherited practices (which varied, and were never systematically coordinated) than in terms of formal beliefs.

Ancient Judaism, too, for the most part lacked theology. God in the Bible is not the subject of systematic reflection, but another character in the narrative. He creates and he blesses; he forgets and then remembers; he has his enthusiasms, his disappointments, and his triumphs. God's *nature* in the Bible is communicated through story, or by simple declaration. ("You are a gracious

God," complains Jonah at 4:2, embarrassed when repentant Nineveh is spared ruin. "[You are] merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing.") Divine nature in the Bible is not the object of systematic investigation or abstract thought, nor are God's characteristics arrived at through a process of logical reasoning.

Theology began not in temples or around altars, but in the ancient academy. It was, in this sense, a secular subject, a special branch of philosophy, and philosophy was quite distinct from traditional Greek cult. The ways in which philosophers conceived the nature of divinity coordinated with their views on the nature of matter, time, nature, the soul, reason, and so on. God was part of a larger, ideally coordinated and rational system.

In the late fourth century B.C.E., these Greek intellectual ways of thinking began to be exported on a grand scale, thanks to the conquests of Alexander the Great. In consequence of his victories, in part as a deliberate policy of acculturation, he established Greek cities throughout his newly acquired territories, from Egypt and Asia Minor throughout the Middle East to the edges of Persia. Greek spread as an international language. An international form of Greek culture, called "Hellenism," was disseminated precisely through the social and physical structures of these new cities which, like the classical city that they interpreted and took as a model, contained the major organs for preserving and expressing that culture. These included the agora (a central public space, the commercial and social nerve center of the city), the civic temples (at whose altars animals for public feasts would be offered to the gods), the school (for primary education), the gymnasium (a public educational center first of all for adolescent male citizens, which taught literature, music, and mathematics and philosophy as well as athletics), the public library, a space for meetings of the boulē or town council, and perhaps a theater or amphitheater or hippodrome. Once Rome conquered the Greek world in the second century B.C.E., it adapted itself to Hellenistic culture too. Romans too built cities with public temples, libraries, baths, town councils, and theaters throughout the huge sweep of its westward territories: North Africa, the Iberian peninsula, Britain, France, and Germany.

As a result, educated urban elites from one end of the Roman world to the other shared a common culture mediated by gymnasium education. The curriculum for these young men was universal, and exceedingly stable: from one century to the next, they would be taught the great epic poets and the tragedians, modes of public speaking derived from classical models, music, philosophy. This high-cultural mix of rhetorical and philosophical culture was called *paideia*.

Philosophical thought (especially in those forms that owed most to Plato) complicated traditional religiousness in interesting ways. The revered ancient

poems and dramas that conveyed the gripping myths and stories of the adventures of gods and men clashed directly with philosophical modes of conceiving divinity. The curriculum of the gymnasium saturated young men with both the mythological and the philosophical literatures. The principles of paideia organized reality on a continuum that expressed tensions between its extreme ends. Matter, for example—mutable, gross, intellectually inert, perceptible by the senses—contrasted with spirit, which was thought of as matter's opposite: eternal, nonmaterial, rational, perceptible only through the mind or reason, the "god" or divine principle or "eye" of the soul. To see matter as "bad" since spirit, clearly, was "good," was a temptation inherent in the Platonic system itself, one that many Platonists strenuously attempted to avoid.

The physical cosmos (Greek) or universe (Latin) expressed through the very fact of its organization a sort of negotiated settlement between these two extremes. Here matter existed with form, thus expressing or in a sense reflecting the beauty and order of its superior, the divine realm. But according to philosophy, the highest god, the ultimate cause of everything else, radically transcended even the more perfect, more beautiful parts of cosmos, such as the heavens and the realm of the fixed stars. This highest being—also referred to as the One, the Being, the Father—was absolutely, radically stable, free of body of any sort (even of the very fine, rarefied, perfect bodies possessed by astral intelligences), impassable, eternal, unchanging. Everything else was contingent or dependent on him, in the sense that he or it was its ultimate source.

Still, and it is extremely important to hold this thought in mind, the High God, though the ultimate source of everything else, was in no sense its "creator." Creating or even ordering, indeed any sort of "making" or "doing," would have at least implicitly involved the One in time and change. Worse: both ethically and metaphysically, it would have implicated God, the ultimate Good, in the problem of evil, given the rank imperfections of the physical universe, especially in that realm where earth stood, below the moon. Thus in pagan systems, as eventually in Jewish and Christian ones, divine intermediaries, such as a demiurge ("craftsman") or Logos (a personification of divine creative intelligence) or angels did the job.

How, then, could thinkers of good education reconcile the culturally revered depictions of divinities that they read in Homer or Hesiod—wherein gods bred, brawled, raped, cannibalized their own offspring, and in general behaved in ways one would not tolerate in humans—with the theological principles conveyed through paideia? Through allegory. The ancient myths could be enjoyed and appreciated as the terrific adventure stories they were. If contemplated for religious significance, however, and thus related to the categories of theology, they had to be understood at a deeper, or spiritual, level as narrative symbols for metaphysical truths. Thus, for example, the story of Zeus turning himself into an eagle in order to seize the beautiful boy Ganymede could be understood allegorically as a description of the rapture felt by the soul when it is seized and carried "upward" by its intellectual contemplation of the One.

The philosophically educated were *not* atheists. They were not, in their intellectual allegiance to paideia, denying that the traditional gods existed or that their worship was important. Indeed, precisely this class of men populated the councils of cities throughout the Empire, and thus as part of their municipal responsibilities they financially underwrote and publically celebrated, with games, animal slaughter, and public feasting, the traditional cults of these gods. But seen from the perspective of philosophy, divinity, like the physical universe that in some ways reflected it, was organized as a hierarchy. The perfection of physical body and rational intelligence (according to ancient astronomical science as well as paideia) was visibly evident in the Milky Way, the luminous and immortal band of astral beings at the edge of the universe, which were thought to have independent life. The lowest levels of matter and intelligence (as was plainly observable in everyday life) were sunk at the universe's bottom or center, the earth. So too divinity stood in ranks from lowest to highest, from the familiar sublunar beings, the demons and family and local gods that lived close at hand, to the higher gods of the classical pantheon who dwelt in and directed the heavens, and finally, at the apex of reality, to the purely spiritual, absolutely perfect and unchanging Father, the One.

Those pagans who thought in these terms may properly be thought of as monotheists, because for them everything else, including lower deities, devolved from a single, highest god. In exactly the same way, ancient Jews and, eventually, Christians may also be said to be monotheists. These last two groups certainly did not deny the existence of the pagan gods; rather, they denied their power and moral status relative to that of the Highest God, whom these two later groups identified with the god whom they worshiped. Alternatively, they dismissed the pagan gods as malevolent powers or demons. But for all three groups—pagans, Jews, and Christians—the lower gods were real.

Hellenism affected Jewish culture profoundly. Jews living in the Hellenistic cities of the Mediterranean Diaspora absorbed Greek as their vernacular, as the very existence of the Septuagint attests. They also lived within the god-drenched environment of these cities. They thus had to make their peace with the gods of these other nations, around whose cult pulsed their city's social and religious life. Jews did not deny that these gods existed. Rather they avoided involving themselves in pagan worship, particularly if they wanted to be traditionally pious. How this worked out—what constituted involvement—

undoubtedly varied among individuals within a single community, and across Jewish communities within different cities. Young Jewish men in Egypt, for example, gained access to a gymnasium education, and thus joined the ranks of the city's *ephebes*, the name for these adolescent males. How do we know this? Because Jewish names appear in inscriptions among those listed as members of the ephebate. But ephebes had municipal obligations. They would sing hymns to the gods or compete in athletic competitions as part of some civic activities. Such festivals invariably involved sacrifices and communal feasting. How did Jewish ephebes manage? Did they sing hymns to their city's gods, while telling themselves that they did not "mean" what they sang? Did they stand around the city's altars, but not eat during the meal? Would they eat during the meal, but bring their own food from home, or eat only bread or fruit, and avoid, also, the wine? We don't and can't know. I suspect that behavior varied.

Intellectual, classically educated Greek-speaking Jews also applied the principles of paideia when interpreting their own most sacred text, the Bible. They were aided in this effort by the fact that the text, by the end of the second century B.C.E., existed in Greek translation. But the descriptions of the god of the Septuagint were no more philosophically acceptable than the descriptions of divinity in Homer. The first sentence of the entire collection, if understood literally, got things off on the wrong foot by proclaiming, "In the beginning God made . . . ." Either the creator god doing the making was not the Highest God, or, if he were, then the word "making" had to be interpreted allegorically. In the numerous commentaries of the learned first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, the biblical stories about God transmute into allegories relating philosophical truths through the application of paideia's interpretive principles. Thus it is within the erudite, literate streams of Hellenistic Jewish culture that we find, for the first time, what might properly be called a biblical theology.

By the early second century C.E., the penetration of the Christian message into the educated classes of the Hellenistic world becomes evident by the types of learned intra-Christian disputes that we glimpse in our sources. Formerly pagan Gentile intellectuals who converted to Christianity took on the relatively recent revelation attributable to Jesus. In so doing, they struggled with an intensified form of the same problem that troubled educated Jews about the depictions of God in the Septuagint, and that troubled educated pagans about the texts of their cultural canon (Homer, Hesiod, and so on). Theology in all three modes, Christian, Jewish, and pagan, was the varied expression of a more general intellectual struggle to make philosophical sense of religion. In the case of Christianity, however, the struggle was additionally complicated by the fact that Christians had no sacred Scriptures of their own. Paul's letters and

the gospels (many more gospels than would ultimately be preserved in the early third-century anthology known to us as the New Testament), various apocalypses and revelations, and a rich assortment of pseudonymous epistles all circulated widely; but these texts did not have the status of sacred scripture. For most Christian communities, throughout most of the second century, the only Bible was the Jews' Bible, the Septuagint. This simple fact ultimately had enormous theological and social consequences for both groups—and for pagans as well.

One of the earliest Christian theologians whose name we know was Valentinus (fl. 130 C.E.). As a Christian who believed that the knowledge of salvation came through Jesus Christ, and as an intellectual imbued with the principles of paideia, Valentinus attempted to make systematic, religious sense of the Septuagint. He did so by reading it, so to speak, in reverse. Clearly, decided Valentinus, the god who appeared in the opening chapters of Genesis was not the Highest God, precisely because he was involved in material creation. (Philo, earlier, had finessed this problem by attributing the actual work to God's Logos and his angels.) Further, this god was an ignorant god, which also enunciated his lower status: He could not find Adam when he went looking for him, but had to call out to him, and he did not know what had transpired in the garden until he asked (Gen. 3:9, 13). Further, he was not good, but malevolent. What else could explain his desire to keep Adam and Eve from the knowledge of good and evil? And so, Valentinus concluded, the two real heroes of the story were the serpent and Eve.

The god of Genesis, Valentinus argued, was a low, jealous deity of the material cosmos. What could the relationship of such a god possibly be to the Lord Jesus Christ? Here philosophy's prejudices against the status of matter—it was inferior to spirit, in some sense its opposite metaphysically and thus, perhaps, morally—combined with the way that Valentinus, and gnostic ("knowing") Christians generally, interpreted the Christian message and understood the Septuagint's relationship to the Jews. Jesus, they maintained, had been sent into this lower material cosmos by his Father, the true High God. To accomplish his mission, Jesus appeared in the likeness of flesh, in the form of a human being (cf. Phil. 2:7–8). But of course he had not actually had a physical body, because matter was the evil medium of the evil lower god. It was this lower god, the god of Genesis, who was Jesus' dire opponent. The Jews, entangled in myriad fleshly customs (like circumcision, and endless fussing about what to eat), in their error confused this creator with the High God. But the Christian knew better, Valentinus maintained. He could read the Jews' book as the coded revelation of Christ that it actually was, because he had the *gnōsis* ("knowledge") to interpret it aright, *kata pneuma*, as Paul said, with "spiritual knowledge." Only some of Scripture's laws were from the lower creator god

of Genesis, and some were from the Jews with their endless traditions. But some, discretely, were related to Christ. Christians with the true knowledge of salvation imparted to them by Jesus—unlike carnal-minded, false, or inferior Christians, and certainly unlike the Jews—were able to see these distinctions.

Through this knowledge of salvation, the gnostic understood the universe, and how he himself, through Christ, would be saved. His physical body was not actually part of himself: it was the gross and sinful fleshly trap by which the wicked creator held his soul captive. After death, free of matter, the gnostic, like Christ, would ascend in his spiritual body to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15). The resurrection to eternal life, thus, was about nothing so crude as raised fleshly bodies (another unphilosophical, indeed carnal, Jewish belief!). Resurrection was eternal life before the Father, dwelling with him forever in the purely spiritual realm of the highest heaven.

Valentinus's theology was coherent and systematic. It articulated salvation in Christ in terms that made sense to the sort of morally sensitive, intellectually creative religious thinker that Valentinus was. It also made sense of the Septuagint, and in so doing defined the relation of Judaism to Christianity. In brief, the Jews had systematically misinterpreted their own book.

Another equally thoughtful, equally vibrant Christian theology was the work of a man named Marcion (fl. 140). Like Valentinus, and like many of his well-educated peers, Marcion also regarded matter as inferior, both morally and metaphysically, to spirit. Accordingly, he too held that the Highest God had nothing to do with matter; that the god whom the Jews worshiped, the god of Genesis, was a lower cosmic deity; that Christ had only seemed to have a fleshly body, but of course did not really have one; and that the Christian believer, redeemed through Christ from matter, the flesh, and sin, would pass through this material cosmos after death to the spiritual realm of the Father. But unlike Valentinus, Marcion approached the problems posed by the Septuagint differently. The letters of Paul, rather than the stories in Genesis, provided his interpretive plumb line; and this made all the difference to the subsequent history of Christianity.

Marcion took the contrasting pairs that characterized Paul's rhetoric—flesh / spirit; law/gospel; works/grace; sin/grace; circumcision, or the works of the flesh/baptism, or the works of the Spirit (remember, in this last case, that the historical Paul was concerned with Christian Gentiles being circumcised, not with circumcision as such)—and polarized what Paul had contrasted. Accordingly, he insisted that there was no relation, of any sort, between Judaism and Christianity: they too were opposites. Nothing if not consistent, Marcion then applied this principle to sacred Scripture itself. The Septuagint, as the Jews always claimed and as people generally perceived, was indeed, Marcion agreed, a Jewish book. He therefore concluded: Let the Jews have it. The new

community, the church, would have its own Bible, not the "old testament" of the synagogue, but the *new* testament. By this time, the first half of the second century, there were enough specifically Christian writings in circulation to provide Marcion with good texts. He chose as the Christian canon a single gospel (we do not know which one), and the body of Paul's letters. These Marcion first "corrected," purging all the places where Paul had seemed to say something positive about Jewish law—that it was holy, and just, and good (Rom. 7:12), that it set out the standard of decent community behavior, even for Gentiles (Gal. 5:14–15), or that the Gentile in Christ should strive to keep its commandments (1 Cor. 7:19; Rom. 8:4; 13:8–10). These statements had obviously been planted in copies of the letters by Paul's enemies; Paul himself, Marcion was certain, would never have said anything positive about the law.

Both the Valentinian and the Marcionite forms of Gentile Christianity spread broadly throughout the Empire, and established long-lived and vigorous churches. When pagan cities began to persecute Gentile Christians, members of these churches were among the martyred. But there were other Gentile Christian intellectuals who did not concur with their theologies. This third group insisted on a positive relationship between material creation and the High God, between (to phrase the same principle differently) the god of Genesis and the revelation of Christ. The same god, a good god, they insisted, stood behind both the giving of the law and the establishment of the church. Their theology (as their gnostic and Marcionite opposition was quick to observe) seemed "Jewish" to the degree that they insisted that Christ had had a fleshly body, that he had indeed descended from the house of David, and that the entirety of the Septuagint, understood correctly, actually referred to Christ and his church. Christ's flesh, they further argued, did not compromise his goodness because (again like the Jews) they did not think that flesh itself was evil. Further, they urged, both Christ's resurrection and the final redemption of his saints meant that the fleshly body itself would be saved. Yet more "Jewish" still: when indeed the saints did rise, when the kingdom came in the flesh, when Christ returned also in his glorious fleshly body, then, said these Christians, Jesus and his saints would gather together and celebrate a thousand-year-long Sabbath in a renewed and resplendent Jerusalem, just as the prophets had promised.

This third Gentile Christian group thus found itself in a much more complex polemical situation than did the first two. Like Valentinus and like Marcion, so too these Christians repudiated Jewish practice, renouncing circumcision, Sabbath observance, food laws, and so on as merely "works of the flesh" unnecessary for salvation. In their view, too, these practices were wrongheaded because they were based on an unintelligent reading of the Septuagint. But in contrast to Marcion or Valentinus, these Christians held on to

and prized in a positive way those Scriptures enjoining the very practices that they renounced. Their more consistent competitors held that the Bible, its god, and the Jews who valued them were fleshly, unintelligent, and wrong; this third group, on the contrary, held that the Jews alone were fleshly, unintelligent, and wrong. Understood correctly, read not for what it said but for what it meant, read in other words *kata pneuma*, with spiritual understanding, the Bible was actually a (Gentile) Christian text. Circumcision was never about foreskins and other such fleshly matters; it was a moral metaphor for circumcising the heart. Purification by immersion actually referred to baptism. The food laws were not about food: understood spiritually and allegorically, they referred rather to certain sexual practices. Hare, for example, was forbidden not because God cared about food, but because he cared about sex. Known to be sexually profligate and to shift between male and female gender itself, the hare obviously symbolized homosexuality. And so on.

The god of the Bible was likewise redeemed. These Christians, consistent with the principles of paideia, granted the Valentinians and Marcionites their point: The busy deity talking to Abraham at Mamre and to Moses at Sinai, the god who wrestled with Jacob at Jabbok, *could not* have been the High God, God the Father, the radically transcendent, serenely immutable One. It was, instead, the Father's Son, Christ before his incarnation. Christ was the god who spoke at Sinai, who spoke through Isaiah. Those Christians who thought that the Jews' law came from the lower god but that Christ came from a different source, the High God, had made a fundamental error. The lower god, the cosmic god through whom all things were made, the god who gave the law, *was* Christ himself.

So the Bible was fine (once one knew how to read it correctly), and the God of the Bible was fine (once one knew his actual identity). The problem, this third group thus maintained, was with the Jews themselves. God, through his Son, had tried to work with them, but as Moses and their own prophets had complained, they were a hard-hearted, stubborn, and carnal people. They did keep the law, but in a carnal way, interpreting it literally rather than allegorically. This accusation would have surprised Philo, who had kept the law "literally" but also allegorized it. What for Philo was a both/and situation—both keep the law according to tradition and understand it philosophically, as Moses (Philo was sure) had always intended—for these later Gentile Christians was an either/or. Either fleshly understanding or spiritual understanding, but not both. Either Jewish practice or christological allegory. In short, either Judaism or Christianity.

That the Jews did not see this themselves, said this third group of Christians, only confirmed the strength of their terrible obduracy, which their own Scriptures unendingly condemned. Some of the laws that defied allegorization

had clearly been given to them as a punishment, because of this "hardness of heart." And when the prophets rebuked them, they had responded by murdering the prophets. (Here these Christians drew on what were originally Jewish pseudepigraphic writings, *The Lives of the Prophets*, wherein each prophet died a martyr's death. These texts still exist, but only in Christian recensions.) The Jews' trail of crimes stretched from their murder of the prophets to the murder of him who spoke through them, namely, Christ. Not only did the Jews (not Rome!) kill Christ; they repeatedly rejected the opportunity to repent of this crime held out to them for another forty years, until at last God definitively, publicly, and permanently rejected them. How so? By destroying their Temple, driving them into exile, and forbidding them access, forever, to Jerusalem. Yet despite all these clear signs, and the realization of Jesus' prophecy that the Temple would be thrown down, the Jews, incredibly, refused to realize the error of their ways. They still lived according to their traditions, still awaited the messiah, still refused to be converted to the Christianity that their own Scriptures plainly proclaimed and that Jesus and his apostle Paul had taught—the Christianity of this third group, the "orthodox."

This is the group, ultimately, that won. We know the names of their chief thinkers and have most of their writings: Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Hippolytus. Marcion's work, by contrast, has been utterly lost; until the discovery at Nag Hammadi, so had Valentinus's. What then, in this context, does "winning" mean? It means: This was the church that, in 312, Constantine chose to patronize. It means: This is why more Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire after 312 than before; the orthodox specifically targeted Valentinian and Marcionite churches for imperial suppression. It means: By the late fourth century, Christian emperors sent out armies to forcibly close pagan temples. (Rejecting the social model of the Diaspora synagogue, orthodox bishops instead imitated the biblical model of the prophets' destruction of Canaanite idols.) It means: Beginning in the European early Middle Ages, bishops often put local Jews in the position of having to choose between conversion or exile; in the High Middle Ages, between conversion or death.

Not all the points of second-century orthodox theology prevailed. After Constantine, for example, the orthodox church attempted to distance itself from Christian millenarianism, eventually asserting that when the final redemption came, resurrected fleshly bodies would dwell in the heavens, not on earth in Jerusalem. The anti-Judaism of their interpretive position, however, survived and flourished, becoming definitive of orthodox identity and theology. Once they established their anti-Jewish reading of the Septuagint, the orthodox easily read those documents that eventually comprised their own New Testament in the same way. Christianity's message, in their view, was

especially clear. In proclaiming the gospel, Jesus had taught against Judaism. So had Paul.

History, apparently, confirmed the orthodox view. Rome indeed destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Rome did defeat Bar Kokhba after the last Jewish revolt of 132–35. Rome did erase Jewish Jerusalem thereafter by erecting on its ruins the pagan city Aelia Capitolina. Jews were indeed "in exile" in the sense that they no longer had a country of their own. To the orthodox, the theological import of these historical events was unarguable. Indeed, they amounted to empirical proof of the truth of orthodox Christianity.

History, of course, has a way of lying in wait with surprises. The church had a bad year in 361, when Constantine's nephew, the emperor Julian, converted from the orthodox Christianity in which he had been raised to traditional Greco-Roman polytheism. Julian had had his fill of the church's proofs and decided that he would rebuild the Jews' temple in Jerusalem, in no small part to spite and to silence the bishops. (The project ran aground the following year, when Julian died on campaign.) The church had another bad year in 1897, on the eve of the first World Zionist Congress: A reconstituted state of Israel, centered around a rebuilt Jerusalem, one Jesuit spokesman averred, was flatly impossible, because it was contrary to the prediction of Christ himself. (I just want to note in passing, if this sort of thing matters to anyone, that the text of Mark 13:2 and parallels says only that all the Temple's stones will be thrown down, not that they will never again be lifted up. The passage was *read*, however, as symbolizing a permanent punishment: That is the point.) For some people 1948, when the state of Israel was established, was another tough year. So, for related reasons, was 1967, when Jerusalem was reunited under Jewish sovereignty. Is anti-Judaism, then, the same as anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism? I do not think so. The first is a theological position; the second, a racist one; the third, a political one. But, without question, the long centuries of Christianity's anti-Judaism soaked into the soil of Western culture, preparing the ground for these more recent avatars.

I opened our inquiry into early Christian-Jewish relations by posing three questions: How, given Christianity's origins in Judaism, did Christianity come to be so anti-Jewish? When did this happen? Or, to address the same issues differently: When did the form of Christianity most familiar to Western culture begin? Our narrative review of the history of this period has introduced some answers.

Christian antipathy toward Jews and Judaism began when Christian Hellenistic Jewish texts, such as the letters of Paul and the Gospels, began to circulate among total outsiders, that is, among Gentiles without any connection to the synagogue and without any attachment to Jewish traditions of practice and interpretation. At that point, the intra-Jewish polemics preserved in these

texts began to be understood as condemnations of Judaism *tout court*. The next stage intensified the process, by taking this outsider's perspective to the text of the Septuagint. By the early second century, the engagement of intellectuals enriched the controversy by putting it on a philosophical basis, thereby integrating what otherwise might have remained secondhand name-calling into comprehensive, rational, total worldviews. Christian theologies of many different sorts were thereby born.

Orthodoxy's anti-Judaism was the most strident, because orthodoxy's stance was the most complicated, both offensive (against Jewish claims to the Bible as well as against other Christian interpretations of it) and defensive (why claim the Book if they would not, in a sense, practice what they preached, and start living according to Jewish law?). But then why, by the fourth century, did imperial patronage not soften their tone? After all, by then this church had won. Its Christian competition was on the run; its communities were subsidized by government largesse; its bishops had powers that their secular counterparts (whose tenure in office was at most a few years; bishops, by contrast, held life appointments) could only envy. What was true in the second century was still true—save for the few bad moments in 362—in the fourth: the Jews had no temple and no territory. Why then, at this point, does the *contra Iudaeos* tradition only become worse—more strident, more comprehensive, more furious? It metastasizes through all known genres of surviving Christian literature, including systematic theologies, biblical commentaries, martyr stories, church histories, antiheretical tracts, preaching handbooks, sermons. Why?

It spread, I think, because of the Diaspora synagogue. Although we might expect that Jewish communities, now persecuted, should be shriveling up, the archaeological record states the opposite. Synagogues are thriving; in places like Sardis, they are monumental. Gentiles keep dropping by, cocelebrating Sabbaths and holidays, picking up the occasional Jewish practice, hearing Bible stories read and psalms sung in Greek (or, in the West, in Latin). Infuriatingly for the bishops, some of these Gentiles are not pagan (though some are), but Christian. The complaints in the sermons, the legislation—endlessly repeated—in the canons of contemporary church councils, give us a surprisingly vivid picture. Fourth-century Gentile Christians, despite the anti-Jewish ideology of their own bishops, kept Saturdays as their day of rest, accepted gifts of matzo from Jewish friends at Passover, indeed still celebrated Easter according to when the Jews kept Passover. This last was particularly aggravating to bishops, and even to emperors. Gentile Christians made the effort to take oaths in front of Torah scrolls, tended lamps for Jewish friends on the Sabbath and on Jewish holidays, had rabbis bless their fields, and let their children marry one another. Occasionally, and despite heavy penalties, these Christians even converted to Judaism. We can still hear the frustration

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and plaintive anger that this behavior inspired in a sermon, preached in August of 387 by the orthodox bishop of Antioch, John Chrysostom. Bracing for the imminent onslaught of the autumn high holidays—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot—Chrysostom cried out to his synagogue-going congregation, "Don't you understand that if the Jews' way of life is true, then ours must be false?"

The anti-Judaism of the ideologues, the theologians and the bishops, increased in volume. Their pitch rose with their frustration. As long as Mediterranean social life was still intact, however, as long as the culture of the Hellenistic city with its long tradition of religious openness still lived—and it did live, well into the late Empire—Jews and Gentiles still mixed and mingled, saw each other at the baths and at the theaters, worked with each other on town councils, lived together, and, on Sabbaths and the holidays, occasionally heard Scripture together. When this changed, in the early Middle Ages, this tradition of civility changed too, and Christian anti-Judaism led more directly to violence, even murder. But this falls well outside the scope of my story.

How did Christian anti-Judaism happen? Gentiles interpreted the intra-Jewish disputes of the earliest Christian movement as the condemnation of all Judaism by those parties to the dispute with whom these Gentiles now identified. When did this happen? Toward the turn of the first century through the first half of the second, when warring Gentile Christian intellectuals staked out their territory and systematized their convictions into theologies. When, then, does Christianity begin? It is twice-born, once in the mid-second century, and again after Constantine, in the fourth. And in that second birth especially, orthodox Christian anti-Judaism increased in range and in intensity.

The answer to a fourth, and more important question, I leave to you: What, knowing this history, is today's Christian to do?

2

Jesus, Ancient Judaism, and Modern Christianity: The Quest Continues

E. P. Sanders

Discussing anti-Judaism and the historical Jesus is quite different from discussing anti-Judaism in (for example) the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke, unlike the historical Jesus, is a text that lies before us and that we can repeatedly study. The author wrote things about Jews, and those explicit statements can be analyzed in the context of the completed document. Jesus, however, left us no writings. We have, instead, diverse actions and sayings that are attributed to him in several Gospels. There are many minor disagreements among the Gospels, and occasionally major ones. These differences result from the fact that the material about Jesus was handed down from person to person and was put to use in various ways by early Christian teachers and evangelists. Moreover, the teaching of Jesus was translated from the Aramaic that he spoke into the Greek of the New Testament. The result is that a degree of uncertainty attaches to the material attributed to him. If we want to ask whether or not Jesus himself was an anti-Jewish Jew, we must first sift the material attributed to him and reconstruct his life and thought, while recognizing that all our decisions are somewhat tentative. The reconstructed Jesus, however, never becomes a text whose precise words can be studied and restudied.

Any historical reconstruction involves a subjective element. Thus we can also ask whether or not some scholars who have written about Jesus betray their own anti-Judaism. This is a slightly easier question to answer than are questions about Jesus, though it too involves some difficult issues, as we shall see.

In what follows, I shall assume that most of the material in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) goes back to the historical Jesus, even