

HOW THE PROCESS OF DOCTRINAL STANDARDIZATION DURING THE LATER
ROMAN EMPIRE RELATES TO CHRISTIAN TRIUMPHALISM

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for

The degree of

Doctor of Theology

In the subject

Church History

At the

University of South Africa

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November 2013

Student number: **4633-266-9**

I declare that **HOW THE PROCESS OF DOCTRINAL STANDARDIZATION DURING
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE RELATES TO CHRISTIAN TRIUMPHALISM**
is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and
acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

My thesis examines relations among practitioners of various religions, especially Christians and Jews, during the era when Jesus' project went from being a Galilean sect, to a persecuted minority, to *religio licita* status, and eventually to imperial favor, all happening between the first century resurrection of Jesus and the fourth century rise of Constantine.

There is an abiding image of the Church in wider public consciousness that it is unwittingly and in some cases antagonistically exclusionist. This is not a late-developing image. I trace it to the period that the church developed into a formal organization with the establishment of canons and creeds defined by Church councils. This notion is so pervasive that an historical retrospective of Christianity of any period, from the sect that became a movement, to the Reformation, to the present day's multiple Christian iterations, is framed by the late Patristic era. The conflicts and solutions reached in that period provided enduring definition to the Church while silencing dissent. I refer here to such actions as the destruction of books and letters and the banishment of bishops.

Before there emerged the urgent perceived need for doctrinal uniformity, the presence of Christianity provided a resilient non-militant opponent to and an increasing intellectual critique of all religious traditions, including that of the official gods that were seen to hold the empire together. When glaringly manifest cleavages in the empire persisted, the Emperor Constantine sought to use the church to help bring political unity. He called for church councils, starting with Nicaea in 325 CE that took no account for churches outside the Roman Empire, and many

within, even though councils were called “Ecumenical.”

The presumption that the church was fully representative without asking for permission from a broader field of constituents is just that: a presumption.

This thesis studies the ancient world of Christianity’s growth to explore whether, in that age of new and untested toleration, there was a more advisable way of responding to the invitation to the political table. The answer to this can help us formulate, and perhaps revise, some of our conduct today, especially for Christians who obtain a voice in powerful places.

Key terms:

Patristic Period, Constantine, Jews, Christians, triumphalism, Council of Nicaea, religio licita, Donatists, heresiology, Edict of Toleration, parting of the ways, anti-Semitism, Marcion, Roman Empire, Great Commission, Judaize, proto-orthodoxy, The Great Persecution

DEDICATION

This doctoral dissertation is dedicated first to Diane, my wife, a woman with a precious spirit. She managed far more than her share of our life together during this project. I would like to include all of those who encouraged and even insisted that I pursue this, including Dr. Peter Fitch at St. Stephen's University in NB Canada, Dr. David Daniels at McCormick Theological seminary, and a host of scholars and friends. Finally, I dedicate this to the two congregations that I lead in Santa Barbara and Oxnard, California who have borne with me through this period.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

God is the strength of my life without whom I could do nothing much less at my age and with degree of responsibility. Many thanks to all the people he placed in my life during this period to guide me. My advisor, Dr. Paul Gundani, convinced me that he has done this a lot and is extremely competent. Also contributing to my research were the great people in the Humanities Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara including professors like Dr. Christine Thomas plus all the faculty, students, and guests who comprise the Ancient Borderlands Seminars.

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CHAPTER I
ANCIENT AND NEW RELIGIOUS FACTORS OF CHURCH FUNCTION, WHAT THEY
MEAN, AND THE ADVANTAGE OF RETROSPECTIVE

Introduction

Over the past six decades much effort has been given to clearing up misunderstandings of history, requiring new conversation and reshaping of the perception of history regarding Jews and Christians. If grand presuppositions can be successfully challenged, then it is plausible that their propinquity requires that we take another look at the relations among religious groups. Much of our recorded history has been handed down to us by the “orthodox” versions of Judaism and Christianity. Even the renewed conversation continues to be primarily between canonical versions, and commonly those versions on the Christian side include primarily Catholics, who are simultaneously revisiting the Bible and tradition, and to a lesser extent Protestants, who are turning to the Bible and community. These multilateral movements create an unpromising, if not impossible scenario in the eyes of Jews who tend to be better students of the history between the two faiths. The Holocaust has stirred thought in Jewish-Christians relations¹, reflected in the Second Vatican Council² in October 1965, as one example. The final draft was less favorable to Jews than one offered several months earlier.³

¹ Marcel Dubois, “Christian Reflections on the Holocaust,” *International Service of Jewish-Christian Documentation* vii, 2 (1974): 4-15

² Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965

³ 1. Judith H. Banki, “The Church and the Jews: Issues Resolved since Vatican II and Issues Remaining,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 3 (1997)

Secularists have effectively appropriated Christian triumphalism in the West, but like corporations suffering from management entrenchment requiring company-line loyalty, the triumphalist church has resisted across-the-board self-examination and reform. The age-old strife between West and East (including Africa) are factors in the development of Christianity, as we know it in the 21st century, in all its varied versions throughout the world. It is not as though nonwestern Christianity is inexperienced with political power, but we recognize that much of that power has passed on to Islamic cultures.

Also spurring the conversation are the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and perspective broadening due to strides in theory of human behavior. All of this is stunning. The fact that assumptions that have endured so long are being challenged raises enormous questions, and reveals that there is confusion on both, and perhaps many sides. How can Christians and Jews in the 21st century imagine that accurate and satisfactory conclusions about their origins can be reached via a new conversation if they have been so unclear for so long?

How well can we communicate with others when we are both unsure, not only of whom they are, but also of whom *we* are? What are the implications for Christians and Jews, who have other-ized for centuries, if they don't have an authentic self-identity, particularly for Jews who have suffered discrimination and sometimes brutality at the hands of Christians? Can they de-otherize one another if the layers that are pulled back through multicultural education or sensitivity training do not uncover an actual quantity, or will they be captives of tantalizing but torturously endless dialogue, however heartening the conversation has been that began in the second half of the 20th century? Diarmaid MacCulloch explains this futility.

Those who have no history are always on the verge of insanity. When individual people lose their memory, they find it a very distressing experience; history is like a collective memory, the recollections of a nation, of a culture, or of the entire world. When a nation forgets its history, or worse still, invents a history to take the place of the facts, the consequences are tragic.⁴

Scholars may need to “put the brakes” on aspects of postcolonial criticism which claims that we live in a time where, in place of a divine will ordering ethics, ethics have become the property of the postmodern individual who *encounters the other*⁵, but how does one encounter the other when the other is disoriented? It may be like seeking to elicit truly articulate, profound responses from a person in a chemically impaired state.

A multiplicity of the peoples of Late Antiquity deserve another hearing, for if their voices have been written out of history along with those who bore the name “Christian” and “Jew,” but were excluded as heretics or schismatics, thus being deprived of the political power needed to avoid literary extinction (consider the necessity of the Qumran Caves), conscience must call for the questioning of presuppositions.

Judaism is only one of the faith traditions that were rejected by state religion in Late Antiquity. Heterodox Christianities were systematically delineated and proscribed, as well as cults would come to be known as “pagan.” This study upholds the Marcionite Controversy as an example of church debate and survival without imperial involvement. We have no remnant of the teachings of Marcion, except as transmitted via the words of apologists who refuted him, rarely engaging him. I intend to show how the church that through much tribulation

⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christian History: An Introduction to the Western Tradition* (Great Britain: Epworth Press, 2006), 1

⁵ Olson, Gary A. “Encountering the Other: Postcolonial Theory and Composition Scholarship.” *JAC* 18 (1998): 45-55

outlived both exploitative teaching and government oppression, surrendered some vital aspects during later days of imperial sanction with its heresiological excisions. These were adaptations located outside of the audience of the emperor, costing all the diverse elements some of the fullness that makes the message compelling. I will discuss other heterodox movements, but if my thesis is true for the Church surviving Marcionism, it is true for the Church surviving in any political milieu.

I propose that, just as Marcionism was all but liquidated as a movement before the emergence of Constantinian Christianity, and later the development of the New Testament canon emerged from questioning dialogue, that these processes cast light upon decisions reached and enforced with imperial aid. On the other hand, Christians' relationships with Jews and Judaism itself have not spotlighted any civil dialogue that has been nearly lost to religio-political history.

Twentieth century conversations between Jews and Christians have been refreshing, but without Christians bringing other Christian voices to the table, they will continue to be strangers to one another, and this study will explore the contours of this desperately needed understanding. I note later how the same is true for need to include multiple Jewish voices. Some of the voices that speak from Late Antiquity are stronger than their counterparts, especially orthodox Christianity vis-à-vis Jews, but also as their traditions relate to other Christianities, no extant ones in particular. What are the reasons for this? Are there ways that church history is sanitized because of the triumph of Christianity? Are some sources more available than others, or do they meet with more skepticism than "authorized" thinkers?

One of the vices of organized religion is to give too many answers, and historians are not sufficiently skeptical, and being aware of this I will seek to be fair, even with those with

an uncritical approach⁶. I am confident that I can justify that there is radical relevance to Jesus' hope in spite of the forays into imperialism of his Church.⁷

1.1 Historiography

Christian historiography has been an interpretation of the world based on Scripture, and there has always been a quest to uncover the proper analysis. The massiveness of the conversion of Constantine is discernible in the abandonment of traditional eschatology, especially by Eusebius of Caesarea, the "Father of Church Historians." The Church was birthed with an apocalyptic vision of the future, and gradually adapted as time passed, but under Constantine it appeared that a golden age had dawned⁸. As a historiographer, Eusebius was something of an innovator, especially with the citation of documents, a previously uncommon practice. He became the prototype for many who followed, including those called synoptically church historians: Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. Although their approach was cutting edge, still our view of early Christianity is most certainly biased, as non-orthodox historians were usually banned and persecuted⁹. It is no new revelation to note that Eusebius' fealty to Constantine cannot but have prejudiced his opinion of the empire. In his panegyric

⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: the First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 2

⁷ Roman and later Christian imperialists would not be the first followers of Jesus to reckon violence as a solution. Luke 9.51-55 records, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them." It seems that Christianity is infected with impatience with nonbelievers, and further rebukes are needed.

⁸ Michael J. Hollerich, *Eusebius of Caesarea's Commentary on Isaiah: Christian Exegesis in the Age of Constantine* (Oxford, England: Oxford University, 1999), 94

⁹ M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold, editors, *Studia Patristica, 34 Papers presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999* (Belgium: Peeters, 2001), 112

to Constantine there is the use of the old pagan mythical picture of the Sun god on his chariot driving across the sky¹⁰.

Once more, having harnessed, as it were, under the self-same yoke the four most noble Caesars as horses in the imperial chariot, he sits on high and directs their course by the reins of holy harmony and concord; and, himself everywhere present, and observant of every event, thus traverses every region of the world. Lastly, invested as he is with a semblance of heavenly sovereignty, he directs his gaze above, and frames his earthly government according to the pattern of that Divine original, feeling strength in its conformity to the monarchy of God.¹¹

Eusebius saw the reign of Constantine as history's final epoch before the end of the world, and the next generation of Christian historians tended to view the Roman Empire as divine in a Christian sense beginning with the Constantinian era. Modern historians have sought to raise questions to such a presupposition.

Cristián Andrés Roa-de-la Carrera has noted that pagan historiography was occupied with the political and military actions of Greece and Rome. These would include Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Plutarch, Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Tacitus, and Suetonius. Christian historiography, on the other hand, developed a new philosophy of history. Historians such as Origen, Lactantius, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine engaged their pagan contemporaries who blamed Christians for the ills of the Roman Empire. These values-driven histories would evolve to make the empire part of the divine plan for worldwide Christianity. Constantine, with Eusebius as an advisor, favored Christianity as a religion in the empire. In this way, the history of an empire that dominated vast territories became essential for interpreting the ways in which the Christian God made his will prevail in human history.

¹⁰ Ibid. 265

¹¹ Eusebius, *In Praise of the Emperor Constantine* [Pronounced on the Thirteenth Anniversary of His Reign], 3, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2504.htm>

Roa-de-la Carrera is emphatic that there is an intimate relationship between historical writing and imperialism.¹² He sees historiography as both a literary art and a prodigious form of political action with surprising social consequences¹³. His chapter entitled *Historiography and Empire-Building* asserts that histories come to play an instrumental role in the administrative arrangements of colonial regimes because their authors have strong links to rulers.¹⁴

By the end of the fourth century it seemed that Eusebius' vision of a golden age mediated by the Roman Empire had arrived at last with the ascension of rulers like Theodosius, under whose reign (379-392) "Catholic Christianity" (Nicene Trinitarian) became the only legitimate religion of the empire. This effectively spelled the end of traditional Roman religion, which would no longer receive state support. The "golden age" in the words of MacCulloch, was a "mirage," with the "barbarians" collapsing the northern borders of the Western Empire, and the sack of Rome under Alaric the Visigoth in 410¹⁵.

MacCulloch recommends the liberal Western approach to history, which, in his words, "lacks a sense of ultimate direction." Instead of seeking to illustrate divine purpose it intends to explain¹⁶. He chooses this method against others, and in particular, what he refers to as the "Imperialistic Christian history" approach, which is akin to the biblical interpretation tradition mentioned above. This method sees the Christian historian's job as to relate high

¹² Cristián Andrés Roa-de-la Carrera, *Histories of infamy: Francisco López de Gómara and the ethics of Spanish Imperialism* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 79-80

¹³ Ibid. xi

¹⁴ Ibid. 32

¹⁵ MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 300

¹⁶ MacCulloch, *Christian History*, 6

purpose to the faithful as witnesses, in the tradition of ancient Israel, with Scriptures that are careful to present God as the main catalyst (not to mention the central character) of all event. This is the way early historians wrote; however, I consider it to be inadequate.

1.2 Research Methodology

Late modern writers' retrospectives of church developments in Late Antiquity amount to a deconstruction of what had been convention, inasmuch as they respond to 20th century geopolitical events and archeological discoveries. My inquiry raises the question of the likeliness of the need for more extensive deconstruction by providing the viewpoints of a wide array of post-World War II historians and their conclusions regarding church history. I revisit the same ancient sources that they have, in order to demonstrate that there are still open questions.

I have listed a wide selection of primary sources that advantage me in the preparation of this thesis. Until the past couple of century's historians, especially but not only Catholic, first considered their destination and filled in their historical perceptions in reverse. In other words, desire, obligation, or perhaps some other unction left them with methods that lightly regarded some sources and ignored others. Scientific and realistic concern for analysis of extant sources has grown, and with this, a respect for multiple voices. I intend to account for the nationalism often and easily not factored in generations of histories. Tatian was Justin Martyr's pupil and although of his writings we only have the *Address to the Greeks* he is manifestly a defender of other-than-Greek culture. Earlier historians might easily see the *Address* simply as an assertion of the worthlessness of paganism, and the reasonableness and antiquity of Christianity, a point often sought for a developed by the orthodox. This bias, however, completely ignores Tatian's preamble and purpose,

To the Babylonians you owe astronomy; to the Persians, magic; to the Egyptians, geometry; to the Phœnicians, instruction by alphabetic writing. Cease, then, to miscall these imitations inventions of your own. Orpheus, again, taught you poetry and song; from him, too, you learned the mysteries¹⁷.

Tatian, an Assyrian, shows an aspect of Christianity that merits further discussion: it is tangential to the enhancement of national identity and pride. The Gospel is a message of hope to the nations, and also, just as for individuals, offers dignity to people groups. This is why the Syriac *Diatesseron* was used widely for up to two centuries. Writings of Ephrem the Syrian will be helpful in showing the importance of language and culture to the spread and fortification of the church in a culture. This holds true for the influence of Nestorius, whose writings were destroyed in the realm of the orthodox, but preserved in Syriac, a factor in the migration and growth of Christianity away from the Roman Empire. Cultural or national pride is evidenced in Origen's Hellenism, or Tertullian, the father of both Latin and African Christianity. The distinctiveness of the African faith emerges through experiences and accounts of the Abitnian Martyrs, Perpetua and Felicity, Cyprian, and Donatus. The Donatus controversy would provide history with the first example of strife between state and non-state Christianity. It is my thesis that the collaboration of the emperor, Constantine I, with emergent Orthodox Church labored to form an imperial identity for the church, one, which would be distinctly Roman.

1.3 Author's Motivation

There remains the question of whether a Christian, as myself, will be more empathetic toward the church while researching and writing. This is similar to asking whether a

¹⁷ Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 1.1

nonbeliever's project might be more objective, if not hostile toward the church. My view is that it depends on the attitude of the subject. There are believers with axes to grind, just as surely as there are curious nonbelievers, or adherents of other systems. I admittedly look for God in history. My investigation is prompted by what has always appeared to me to be presumptiveness about the wedding of church and political power, and how abuses of church power are exponentially worse because the source grossly misrepresents the mission of Jesus. We, today, are at a disadvantage against those who lived in the fourth century as we seek to process developments, but only in some ways. Not only can retrospect offer poignant overviews, but along with rehearing the testimony of the witnesses, including not only the councils and canons but studying outcomes of verdicts. We today are empowered to evaluate the processes of the emerging church from the vantage point of latest historical outcomes, with less of a vested stake in the primary principals. With less to lose, I can reconsider the backdrop of an anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemicist like Celsus, whose copious fragments are preserved in Origen and the persistence and fearlessness (or fearfulness) of a church only prepared to defend itself against its own (Judaizers) but needed to produce apologists like Justin to survive in a culture where *religio licita* status would have to be at once sought and forfeited, not only because of composers of diatribes against Jews and Christians, but also because of the growing anti-Judaic atmosphere that befell the empire in the wake of the Jewish Wars. This requires me to review works such as those of Livy, Josephus, and Suetonius, to recreate the climate in which the embryonic church survived. This Church that struggled to survive would outlive the struggle but retained its fighting instincts, to the detriment of other cults.

Numerous early apologists were at one time or another occupied with Marcion, from Origen's and as late as Tertullian's time. I will, however, spend more time with the *Donatist Controversy*. I will also include Roman historians, including Julius Caesar himself, to define the first relations of Rome with North Africa and the effect of that history on the misunderstandings between orthodox scholars like Augustine and Optatus and those deemed to be schismatics, especially Donatus and later, Tyconius.

I continue to struggle with Christian triumphalism questions of the 21st century in my own nation where some conservative Christians want to overrule the Constitution with their understanding of biblical doctrine and eschatology. Many liberal Christians, on the other hand, seem willing to cede the state entirely to secularism.

1.4 Review of Literature and Presentation of Study

There was a time when scholars had to search for primary sources, but now it nearly seems that multiple media with copious sources are searching for the researcher. From my computer I have studied multiple secondary Late Antique historians, such as the iconic Peter Brown¹⁸, including those who covered the church, apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, and canonical scriptural texts, letters, ecumenical councils and canons, philosophers, theologians, apologists, theological and tannaitic literature, recently discovered primary sources, all juxtaposed with the research of scholars across the scope of history, especially that of recent decades, including leading names in Jewish Studies as well as noted Christian historians plus scholars of other Late Antique faith such as that of the Imperial Cult, astrology, and worship

¹⁸ Brown, Peter Robert Lamont. *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Roman World* (UK: 1997). Christianisation of the: Cambridge University Press.

of oriental gods like Isis and Serapis, Cybele and Attis, the Syrian Baals, Sabazius and Mithra. E.P. Sanders is best known as a significant voice on the New Perspectives, but additionally opens a window into Palestinian Judaism¹⁹.

This thesis examines relations among practitioners of various religions and especially Christians and Jews during the era when the Jesus movement went from being a Jewish sect, to a persecuted minority, and eventually to *religio licita* status. Christianity advanced to a place of imperial favor, all happening between the first century resurrection of Jesus and the fourth century rise of Constantine. I will show that the Christian message was intended by Jesus to be universal, but that the Roman Empire's Church's conception of catholicity was misshaped by its conception of orthodoxy. This fact does not obviate the legitimacy of a vision for global, but non-imperial Christianity. This global Christianity is partially but fundamentally defined by its capacity to capture the hearts of the very people who pay the highest price for empire, the *conquered*. In chapter three I exhibit this with an exegesis of Luke's portrayal of Jesus in his Gospel.

While North African bishops' influence faded, the communities that indeed were represented, at least those in the Roman Empire allowed their loyalties to factor into the debates. The Episcopal sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch competed for primacy. The Greek East and Latin West were always divided. Too, there were provincial identities. Anthropologists generally agree that submission to Roman dominance implied some degree of consent, accepting 1) that their gods allowed their annexation, and 2) the

¹⁹ <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/jesus/epsanders.html>

benefits of the Roman order²⁰. What had changed in the Late Roman Empire is that government power had become more centrally concentrated, held by the Augustus, and later with fellow tetrarchs, creating a sense of alienation in place of the belonging that made citizenship desirable.

Emperors had routinely made use of religion, in particular the imperial cult, to inspire and oblige unity. History had shown through the practice of apologists and growth of the church that even *without* doctrinal uniformity, the presence of Christianity provided a resilient exclusive opponent to and an increasingly intellectual critique of all religious tradition, including that of the official gods that had been seen to hold the empire together. Still, for the emperor and bishops, uniformity remained the goal.

Not only were there the aforementioned glaringly manifest cleavages in the empire, but conciliar acts took no account for churches outside the Roman Empire, even though councils were called “Ecumenical,” (οἰκουμένη the Greek term employed by Romans meaning the whole of the inhabited world). Attending the Council of Nicaea (325AD), for one example were around three hundred bishops (one-sixth of all those in the empire), mostly from the east. The church historian Eusebius is impressed with the fact that “there was also a Persian bishop,²¹” which should serve to remind us that this was an imperial, not truly ecumenical council. In chapter two I will discuss the absence of Jewish bishops, which whether an oversight or fully intentional, suggests at least incipient anti-Judaism. Along with possible travel difficulties and, to some extent a language barrier, that there were few bishops from the Latin West in attendance reflects their lack of interest in what was a controversy of

²⁰ Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 5

²¹ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Chapter 7

the East. The driving issue was the Arian controversy. The view of the West had been long settled, as contained in the words of Tertullian,

All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.²²

A similar view was preponderant in the East, at least as regarding the relationship of the Father to the Son, and as far as attendees could articulate it, but the Alexandrian church had experienced sufficient discord to attract the attention of Constantine (312-337), who had become sole emperor in 324 AD, and sent Hosius, bishop of Córdoba to Egypt to resolve the matter. When it was clear that Hosius would not gain any ground, the council was called.

Hosius likely presented the emperor with the idea of the council, himself having presided over the Synod of Elvira a few years earlier, attended by bishops, presbyters, and deacons and laymen from the southern districts of Spain. He seems to be the primary representative for the West at Nicaea. The Elvira Synod was a reactionary council after the time of Diocletian's persecution, pursued more harshly by his Augustus in the West, Maximian. Hosius, whose church supplied more martyrs than any other during the Diocletianic Persecution, was a survivor of this singling out of Christians.²³

Presumably the term “ecumenical” is prerequisite to conciliar certification, and as such explains why the numerous prior councils in Carthage, Hippo, Milevis, Elvira, Ancyra,

²² The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325 ed. Roberts, Alexander and James Donaldson. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), 3.2.18

²³ E. S. Bouchier, *Spain under the Roman Empire* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell Ltd., 1914), 132

Alexandria, Neo-Caesarea, Aries, and other locations are not included. If this is the case, then the Roman Empire defines canonicity for the Church, effectively debarring churches of other geographies from anything of apostolic succession. Several denominations claim biblical support for the claim, and trace their own traditions to the original twelve apostles of Jesus. For them it is a factor in determining the “true Church of Jesus Christ.” This study will indicate that authentic catholicity cannot be fully based on actions taken in connection to the Late Roman Empire.

1.4.2 Deconstructing Christian Triumphalism

The emperor and the bishops created sweeping policies that would have impact on the world for centuries, appearing in Christian triumphalism forms through a church-state vehicle that earliest manifested itself at the expense of Jews and heterodox Christianities, including those branded as heresies and those presumed to be so even if out of the line of vision of the bishops in the Roman Empire, because they functioned in other dominions.

The danger in exposing and deconstructing historic and ongoing triumphalist assumptions is that critical analyses may be construed as a categorical condemnation of persons and activities connected with the traditions, institutions, and practices in question. The fact is that whatever the movement, whether sponsored or oppressed by state, some constituents’ motives are self-serving, some are profoundly spiritual, and some are driven by an admixture of questions. This writer’s aim is not to salvage a faith that has been lost to history, poverty or power, but rather to elucidate the policies and behaviors of the Church so as to counter sweeping judgment of critics and untangle the web of misperceptions among believers.

Other periods and expressions of the Church, both earlier and later, from the Nazarene sect that became a movement, to the Reformation, to the present day's multiple Christian iterations, are framed by the late Patristic era. There is an abiding concept of the Church in the public consciousness that it is unwittingly and in some cases antagonistically exclusionist, one that reflects the periods that witnessed a developing formal organization and the establishment of orthodox creeds defined by Church council²⁴. One contemporary response has been to develop a corpus of studies with a vocabulary that includes terms such as "post-Christendom" and "post-Constantinian," or "non-Constantinian."²⁵ This view is pervasive to the extent that the conflicts, and solutions reached in that period provided necessary and lasting definition to the Church while in some cases silencing dissent²⁶. I refer here not only to the destruction of books and letters, but the banishment of teachers. How does the church history student know the degree of testimonial frankness among those who appeared before councils that were overseen by the emperor who is not only responsible for the Donatist martyrology, but also the deaths of his own son and wife, among others?

1.5 Study Objective

My fundamental objective is to cast light upon the viewpoints of 1) scholars of Judaic studies, 2) modern Christian historians and theologians, 3) what are known as "Ecumenical Councils," with their sometimes ruthless heresiological practices, but also in that 4) the

²⁴ George Weigel, "Papacy and Power," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, February 2001, 18

²⁵ Kathryn Tanner, "In Praise of Open Communion: a Rejoinder to James Farwell," *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 3 (2004)

²⁶ Douglas John Hall, "Confessing Christ in a Post-Christendom Context," *The Ecumenical Review* 52, no. 3 (2000): 410

constituting bishops were less than representative, and the councils are unmindful of earlier synods that took place on the African continent which do not share a place in the public consciousness²⁷.

1.6 Foreign Relations as a Factor of Church Function

It is not difficult to suspect that the imperial church developed its political agenda around the Councils, making it necessary for the Church to render as unofficial, not only earlier councils, but to establish a precedent to disallow some later councils, because of their blatant contradictions. These later councils tend to reflect the most immediate preceding period, and Elvira, held early in the fourth century, is a just one example.

Early in the fourth century nineteen Bishops and twenty-four priests from every province of the Spanish peninsula met at Elvira where they drew up eighty-one canons on ecclesiastical discipline that have come down to us. Though the competence of these synods was not as yet clearly defined, these assemblies were conscious of acting as witnesses to tradition, but their authority depended on whether the universal Church would accept their decisions.²⁸

The lapsed were forbidden the Holy Communion even in articulo mortis. Christians were forbidden to marry Jews, along with extreme sexual regulation. Elvira's stipulations are startling to the most devout of minds of other geographies and periods. The Elvira stipulations precede Nicaea, but clearly contain elements that would be at least embarrassing to a larger cross-section of bishops, and if there are weaknesses here, should it not be extrapolated that, for the latter council, the exclusion of any demographic would influence

²⁷ Cyprian led a council in Carthage in 257 to discuss the Lapsii, and Christians in Africa worked out policy in councils such as Circa in 303/305.

²⁸ Hubert Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: An Historical Survey* (New York: Paulist Press, 1961, accessed 2 May 2012), 13

decisions; if in fact representation and consensus are factors in orthodoxy? The Council of Elvira:

Excommunicated those who did not attend worship for three consecutive Sundays, while those who did not appear ‘per infinita tempora’ are ranked as apostates re-admissible only after ten years’ penance. Women are warned not to keep vigils at cemeteries because of the risk of immoral goings-on. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons are required to live with their wives without begetting children. Among bishops there is one who has ‘the first see’, presumably the senior by date of consecration, as in North Africa apart from Carthage and the Proconsular province.²⁹

If the Elvira canons are reactionary to the immoral climate of Spain, why shall we not evaluate merits of *other* councils, especially those called “ecumenical,” if not only for the possible taint of presumptiveness for having been sanctioned by an emperor who was, not only “bishop to the bishops,” but Pontifex Maximus, head priest of the Roman state religion. Chadwick sees vestiges of the Diocletian Persecution (303-311) with Christians now free to attend their churches. Indeed, this enterprise to establish order is forerunner to mandating ecclesial affairs based, not on the message of Jesus or the Apostles, but as a reaction to current crises. This, in addition to the reaction to moral conditions suggests that contemporary conditions must be accounted for in any church council. In the case of Elvira, some of the injunctions are extreme enough and discordant with other councils that it establishes a precedent for the possibility of blunders.

1.7 The First Ecumenical Church Council

The mood of the Nicaean Council was one of amazement. Many of the attendees had suffered imprisonment and torture before the Edict of Toleration (The Christian alternative for heresy would be exile, to which Arius and his supporters would be subjected at Nicaea.³⁰)

²⁹ <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/17567578/the-church-in-ancient-society/187>

³⁰ Socrates Scholasticus: The Ecclesiastical History, Book 1, Chapter 6

The senatorial arrangement of bishops was filled with political significance. It was critical to give weight to this event in the heart of what had recently been Licinius' domain, which Constantine had hanged earlier the same year.

In a bygone era that left an unforgiving memory one of the greatest dilemmas of Rome's Crisis of the Third Century had been the loss of what was known as the Palmyrene Empire (260-273), which took in the Roman Provinces of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and much of Asia Minor³¹. Emperor Aurelian (270-275) reconquered Palmyra, believing that the deity Sol Invictus (the Unconquered Sun) led him to victory. He built a temple to Sol in Rome and elevated him to premier status, seeking to extend his religious authority by encouraging a monotheism based on the cult³². The near-devastation of the empire had a lingering effect on future administrations, and Constantine retained the representation of Sol Invictus on the official coinage until at least 323³³. Charlesworth compares coinage with "wireless," considering the most effective propaganda form of the times³⁴. It may speak to Constantine's agenda, that the empire's union was uppermost in his thoughts. This may also account for him banishing Arius after Nicaea, and then reversing course to endorse Arius after the Council of Tyre in 335 CE. A few years earlier, Constantine still less that contented with the Council of Nicaea, received Arius who presented a statement of faith that did not include a commitment to homoousios (same substance). Constantine had required a council to be called

³¹ Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources, 209

³² Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, and Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Romans: From Village to Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 438

³³ *Ibid.* 454

³⁴ *The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief*. By M. P. Charlesworth. *The Raleigh Lecture on History*, 1937. From the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Volume XXIII, 31 London: Milford, 1937

in Tyre, and then the bishops, before the council had ended, went to Jerusalem because the emperor wanted them at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

1.8 Consolidating Imperial Power in the East

Constantine seems to engage in the intentional remake of Roman religion in Christ's name, finding that untenable in Rome, eventually relocates the capital to Constantinople. There were several advantages to this, if not the proximity of its construction site to Constantine's chosen place of abode in Nicomedia. From the beginning, he had expectations of the Council of Nicaea that would favor his administration. He planned to hold the council in Ancyra in 324, where he would have had the ready backing of the bishop there, Marcellus, Constantine having already adopted the position against Arius. Opponents of Arius, however, preempted Constantine and held their own council to choose a successor for the recently deceased bishop of Antioch from among their allies and to consolidate their party in condemnation of Arius' views³⁵. Then he switched to location to Nicaea, again, closer to home and now convenient for his personal involvement. For many, Constantine was authentically Christian, and this assessment may be accurate, and yet even what are lauded, as his noblest motives are questionable. Foxe's Book of Martyrs presents him as "Constantine the Great," referring to his letter of advocacy for persecuted Christians in Persia, ...Being informed of the persecutions in Persia, wrote a long letter to the Persian monarch, in which he recounts the vengeance that had fallen on persecutors, and the great success that had attended those who had refrained from persecuting the Christians. Speaking of his victories over rival emperors of his own time, he said,

³⁵ MacCulloch, Christianity, 214

I subdued these solely by faith in Christ; for which God was my helper, who gave me victory in battle, and made me triumph over my enemies. He hath likewise so enlarged to me the bounds of the Roman Empire, that it extends from the Western Ocean almost to the uttermost parts of the East: for this domain I neither offered sacrifices to the ancient deities, nor made use of charm or divination; but only offered up prayers to the Almighty God, and followed the cross of Christ. Rejoiced should I be if the throne of Persia found glory also, by embracing the Christians: that so you with me, and they with you, may enjoy all happiness.³⁶

The very document that helps cultivate Constantine in Christian consciousness as “Great” is one that served to imperil Christians outside of his domain, which I will discuss in chapter six. Over the passage of time during the reign of Constantine his militaristic imperial ambitions are more clearly unveiled in positioning the military epicenter in the East. This study will show that even the designation of the Council of Nicaea’s location fell under the aegis of the scheme to not merely fortify the eastern frontier, but to expand it.

Constantine’s letter may have reignited Persian hostilities, and occasioned further oppression of Christians, possibly pretesting Constantine’s intended campaign against Persia whereupon he died at Nicomedia³⁷. It is not mere conjecture that early on, when choosing ancient Byzantium as the site for “New Rome” that he was seeking to create a Christian capital, which would be less practicable in the shrine- and legacy-filled Rome. Rome was ironically religious and commanded the imagination of the empire. Even beyond Constantine’s lifetime, and the relocation of the capital city to ancient Byzantium, Classical education competed for dominance especially among the senatorial class. One example in Classical thought could be found in Cicero, who credited Rome’s gods for her distinction³⁸.

³⁶ Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, <http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/fox103.htm>

³⁷ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 336

³⁸ Project Gutenberg’s *Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations*, by Marcus Tullius Cicero. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877), 257

We may be assured that Rome owes her grandeur and success to the conduct of those who were tenacious of their religious duties; and if we compare ourselves to our neighbors, we shall find that we are infinitely distinguished above foreign nations by our zeal for religious ceremonies...

Under Constantine the senatorial class's power was systematically reduced by the imperial appointment of bishops to dioceses alongside civil governors. Clearly, the move of the capital city was an attempt at a takeover of not just government, but also history, religion and culture. Religious displacement was only a part of Constantine's operation. As a student of Octavian, he embraced the possibility to change a culture by changing its religion, finding more cause to erase the Classical past, as shown in Tacitus³⁹. No honor was left for the gods, when Augustus chose to be himself worshipped with temples and statues, like those of the deities, and with flamens and priests. On the other hand, it should not be ignored that Constantine was establishing a stronghold closer to more active frontiers, especially when it is considered that Persia's ruler, Shapur II was a boy of fifteen years when the construction of Constantinople began.

Alföldi writes that rulers' decisions take shape in a series of political acts, but the motives and feelings that give them birth are germane.

From the time that Constantine first made use of the magical initial letters in the great battle at the gates of Rome, he kept on intensifying his interventions in the interests of the Church. Both in his ideals and in his practice he moved farther and farther away from paganism until, in a quarter of a century, he had completely revolutionized the relations between the State and the rival religion.⁴⁰

³⁹ Tacitus, Annals Book 1

⁴⁰ Andrew Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome* trans. Harold Mattingly, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 25

Constantine's motives may never be understood, and it might be unfair to judge on the basis of his deathbed baptism, as it was a common practice, and we should bear in mind that his advisor was Hosius, known for, at least earlier in his tenure, the rigorist of Córdoba. What must be vigorously examined, even conceding merit to Alföldi's thesis, is the use of Constantine as a model for the Church, especially exhibited by his veneration in some traditions, having been canonized Orthodox Church and often referred to as "St. Constantine" in the Roman Catholic. No tradition commonly renounces him. If the above appraisal of Constantine's biography is accurate, it is diametrical to the model with which the Church was familiar in the Lukan account of Paul's conversion. Like Paul, Constantine testifies to an arresting vision, but unlike Paul, is encouraged to proceed with his enterprise rather than being disabled. Paul was blinded by his vision, Constantine empowered by his. They each would become proponents of very different governments, the former, Roman, and the latter, divine. Constantine held large imperialistic ambitions for the world, and the Church held large evangelistic ambitions for the world. A serious problem was in that they shared administrative ambitions for the world, as well.

1.9 The Church's Political Power Implies Military and Penal Power

The Church must continue to ask whether Constantine's exercise of violence to develop a movement that was supposed to favor Christians has contributed to the not only the countenancing, but a theology of violence in Christian cultures. Since the Emperor was now a friend to Christians, and Rome was Persia's mortal enemy, Christians in Persia began to be viewed as an undermining presence and became the recipients of Shapur II's wrath. Constantine's Christian glory *began* during a military expedition, at the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD in a battle for control of the Western Roman Empire, and his life *ends* ingloriously

during a military expedition, en route to Persia, for he is said to have regarded himself the protector of Christians everywhere. Eusebius writes,

Hence it was not without reason that once, on the occasion of his entertaining a company of bishops, he let fall the expression, “that he himself too was a bishop,” addressing them in my hearing in the following words: “You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: I also am a bishop, ordained by God to overlook whatever is external to the Church.”⁴¹

Constantine’s multifarious influence on the Church is a continual study, and this study will consider the influences in the light of triumphalistic tendencies. Wine had always been a part of Church liturgy, but combining it with the use of incense began under Constantine, as result of the marriage of church and state. Hitherto this was a way of honoring other deities and the genius of the emperor⁴². One need not regard it sinister paganism to question the practice. If burning of incense was a powerful communicative image, the employment thereof might be understandable in aiding the transition from the worship of one deity to another (but even that should be challenged). Incense burning is a small example of how the church enjoyed the privilege of enculturation, not unlike to eventual buy-in to the use of basilica architecture. Can it be that an otherwise passing cultural norm has been instituted as unchanging tradition to give a sense of historical cache, of authenticating authority and ancientness? This paper will explore the civil and/or pagan origins of other aspects of the post-Constantinian Church in the Roman Empire, and seek to find degrees of conformity or nonconformity and whether

⁴¹ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2-01. Eusebius Pamphilius: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, Ch. 25

⁴² Eg., Ovid Tristia Book EIV.VIII:1-48 To Suillius: Praying To Germanicus, “No matter how slight the breeze, so long as it aids me my foundering barque will rise again from the waves. Then I’ll offer sacred incense to the swift flames, and I’ll bear witness to the power of the divinity.”

liturgy, dress, architecture and other elements have to do with conciliar endorsement or resistance.

A significant component of this undertaking will study how varieties of religious conventions shaped each other. How did proto-orthodoxy become itself? The term, “proto-orthodoxy” has been adapted from Bart Ehrman. Ehrman uses the term to define what became orthodox, and that there was no unified orthodox tradition in the first and second centuries. I do not suggest that council decisions were altogether arbitrary or Constantinian, but clearly see that they will continue to come under question as long as are seen as theological and ecclesiastical norms while so closely associated with imperial sanction. Of particular weight in this paper will be the question of how the proto-orthodox were affected by Judaism of various sorts, but also by the Imperial Cult, Gnosticisms, and other Christianities such as rigorists like Novatians, Meletians, and Donatists. How did they relate to Marcionites, Bardaisans, or Manicheans? When, how, and why did they part with the New Prophecy? How were the proto-orthodox affected by dissident voices in the Church Councils? How considerate were they of Christians that would come to be known as non-Chalcedonic?

I am especially interested in raising the question as to the depth and in some cases, the authenticity of Christianity in lands where Christians predominate political offices, and compare it with Christianity in Asia and other places where it has been long present, and how the lack of power affects the spread of the message.

Determined believers, including apologists and martyrs, were essential to the growth of the fledgling Christian movement but the fight to survive survived the fight and what had been a scorned, apocalyptic culture had to grapple with the sudden receipt of power after the

conversion of Constantine. Christianity gained unprecedented freedom to theologially define itself, unify, and grow even more rapidly. It would become a world movement and the facility to suppress belief systems—especially Judaism, Greco-Roman paganism, variant Christianities, and others, which became endemic. This bellicosity is antithetical to the nonviolent character of the faith and must be assiduously monitored and checked. Entrusting ourselves to the essence of Christianity, that Spirit of Jesus who triumphed over the empires of the world through surrender, we may be able to provide humanity clearer access to the costly but redemptive message that introduces them to the Empire above all.

1.10 Conclusion

There remains the question of whether a Christian, as myself, will be more empathetic toward the church while researching and writing. This is similar to asking whether a nonbeliever's project might be more objective, if not hostile toward the church. My view is that it depends on the attitude of the subject. There are believers with axes to grind, just as surely as there are curious nonbelievers, or adherents of other systems. I admittedly look for God in history. My investigation is prompted by what has always appeared to me to be presumptiveness about the wedding of church and political power, and how abuses of church power are exponentially worse because the source grossly misrepresents the mission of Jesus. We, today, are at a disadvantage against those who lived in the fourth century as we seek to process developments, but only in some ways. Not only can retrospect offer poignant overviews, but along with rehearing the testimony of the witnesses, including not only the councils and canons but studying outcomes of verdicts, we today are empowered to evaluate the processes of the emerging church from the vantage point of latest historical outcomes,

with less of a vested stake in the primary principals. With less to lose, I can reconsider the backdrop of an anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemicist like Celsus, whose copious fragments are preserved in Origen and the persistence and fearlessness (or fearfulness) of a church only prepared to defend itself against its own (Judaizers) but needed to produce apologists like Justin to survive in a culture where *religio licita* status would have to be at once sought and forfeited, not only because of composers of diatribes against Jews and Christians, but also because of the growing anti-Judaic atmosphere that befell the empire in the wake of the Jewish Wars. This requires me to review works such as those of Livy, Josephus, and Suetonius, to recreate the climate in which the embryonic church survived. This Church that struggled to survive would outlive the struggle but retained its fighting instincts, to the detriment of other cults.

Numerous early apologists were at one time or another occupied with Marcion, from Origen's and as late as Tertullian's time. I will, however, spend more time with the *Donatist Controversy*. I will also include Roman historians, including Julius Caesar himself, to define the first relations of Rome with North Africa and the effect of that history on the misunderstandings between orthodox scholars like Augustine and Optatus and those deemed to be schismatics, especially Donatus and later, Tyconius.

Today, the West has been awakened to the presence of contemporary religious societies through two significant events - the 1979 Revolution in Iran and the attacks of September 11, 2001. Between these incidents the Soviet Bloc dissolved alongside rematerialized religious conflicts. Yet, many parts of our world are increasingly post-religious, and to Christians in those cultures, this generally comes across as disappointing. There is an upside. People are less inclined to participate in religious communities because of

social expectations, which means people today who are in church are there because they want to be; this is good for the Christian witness. With a keener sensitivity to the separation of church and state, the door is open for pluralism and an environment in which the Gospel thrives.

In *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions*, Robert L. Montgomery reminds of us this essential condition for growth in history, pointing out that of the world religions, *monopolistic* Christianity has been under the greatest assault with the greatest success for the forces promoting pluralism, an assault coming from within Christianity itself in alliance with legitimating authorities. Religious pluralism was seen to be a very important factor in the spread of Christianity and of Islam and potentially all world religions, with religious monopoly being the greatest hindrance to the spread of world religions.⁴³

The revival and spread of Islamic fundamentalisms, the shrinkage of cultural Christianity, and the ensuing disorientation are making many readers to be realistic about themselves and the sense of religious entitlement that pervaded the past. Societies influenced by Christianity still conflate patriotism with sanction by God, but such a worldview is farther from unanimity than ever. The time has arrived when philosophers, theologians and historians may be freer to look at the past, no longer from beneath the massive weight of a church-state that promotes hard-to-explain relations with Jews and alternative theologies. New discourse is especially essential as we face the new wave onslaught of denunciation of

⁴³ Robert L. Montgomery, *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 133

faith on the part of the “New Atheists,”⁴⁴ and trendy conspiracies, cults and secret societies popular among celebrities and young people that persistently challenge institutions by preying on the searching, angry, or uninformed.

We are now amply wired via multiple media that those who are not avowedly post-religious are exposed directly or indirectly, filtered or unfiltered to these worldviews, making for the possibilities of a new global dialogue. Modernity has seen Christian triumphalism in the West effectively appropriated by secularists, but the triumphalistic church has been reluctant to cede. Chastened by failed prophecies both Christian and secular, those who are without agenda or vendetta can fuse their thought toward a more useful dialectic. This writer humbly requests a hearing with Christians.

There is a route for us to become more confident while simultaneously relieving ourselves of false guilt grounded in the misreporting of the past performed by those who in some cases were seeking a fuller accounting and in others sought to overthrow religion. (And yet, one person’s insurgent is another person’s freedom fighter). The value of the study of church history, for Adolf von Harnack, whose work was a reaction to the Tübingen School, is

...That it sets forth the process of the origin and development of the dogma, offers the very best means and methods of freeing the Church from dogmatic Christianity, and of hastening the inevitable process of emancipation, which began with Augustine. But the history of dogma testifies to the unity and continuity of the Christian faith in the

⁴⁴ Victor J. Stenger, *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2009). “New Atheism” is a term coined by Stenger. His earlier wrote, *God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist* (Prometheus, 2007), reviews and defends some of the key principles of the New Atheism published by authors such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens, and it includes a general response to some of its critics.

progress of its history, in so far as it proves that certain fundamental ideas of the Gospel have never been lost and have defied all attacks.⁴⁵

Harnack had more confidence in church historians like Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, the “father of modern Church history,” who “freed Church history from dogma to reveal its genuine historical dimension.”⁴⁶ He thought von Mosheim to be outside the bonds of confessionals among Protestants and, except for a few individual scholars, saw Catholicism as “not fitted for a critical handling of the subject.”⁴⁷ Harnack has, as do we all, *weltanschauung* limitations, but he reminds us that there is more than imperial Christianity and one does not need to be an iconoclast to understand this. For him, Augustine became the defender of the institutional church, an appraisal with which I agree but prefer to see the conflicted Augustine, *to an extent*, as powerless as Pilate, or any other imperialist. The view helps us to be wary of the sway of systems.

The sway of systems eventuates in the disastrous outcomes of triumphalism. Triumphalism is the natural result of a loss of respect for another, a certain hubris that follows a loss of respect for one’s own calling and mission. In chapter two I survey the deterioration of relations between Jews and Christians beginning in the first century CE, and various scholars’ perceptions as to historical and theological origins for actual tensions and others that are constructs of negligent historians and theologians.

Chapter three presents the story of church beginnings as recorded by the historian Luke. Luke’s Gospel speaks to a general readership with a large ambition and the resolving

⁴⁵ Adolf von Harnack, *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, Translated by Edwin Knox Mitchell (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1893), 7-8.
⁴⁶ Johann Gottfried Herder, *On World History: An Anthology*, ed. Adler, Hans and Ernest A. Menze, trans. Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 11

⁴⁷ Harnack, 8

of a local dispute. Any crisis addressed here is not occasioned by momentary circumstance, but by the very nature of the Christian movement's presence and historical movement.⁴⁸

Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24.46-48)

Chapter four maps the experience, anguish and hopes of Jewish people in the generations before the birth of Jesus to better understand the Roman Empire into which he was born, and how his message relates to it. This part of the study will help ascertain the ways in which the Church of the next centuries, covered in chapter five, stayed true to that message. We will also focus on the ways the Church deviated from the message, especially as it pertains to the collusion with state power.

Finally, chapter six studies the ultimate hazard for the Church that came to political power—the loss of a voice to speak to, and the loss of power to refrain from violence, military force in particular. A church in this position retained its desire to be catholic, but forfeited the mandate of Jesus to execute the mission through suffering.

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:21-22

⁴⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Minnesota: The Order of St. Benedict, 1991), 3

CHAPTER 2

THE VIOLATION OF TRUST AND DISSOLUTION OF TIES BETWEEN
CHRISTIAN AND JEW**Introduction**

This chapter considers what is classically known as the “parting of the ways” with reference to the stages of separation between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity. As a prototype, this split may be able to provide a case study for Christianity’s drift from identification with the dispossessed. There will be particular reliance upon early Christian documents that offer clues of the emergence and growth of this fissure. In the parting of the ways we may observe the most fundamental of estrangements pursuant to imperial Christianity, retrospectively known as Nicene Christianity, and other practices including heterodox Christianities.

According to their website, the Enoch Seminar is an “academic group of international specialists in Second Temple Judaism and Christian Origins, who share the results of their research in the field and biennially meet to discuss topics of common interest.” One of its eminent representatives, Marcello Del Verme, noted how the vitality of Judaism between the 3rd century BCE and the 2nd century CE is documented by the presence of groups and/or movements reflecting different ideological, doctrinal and political tendencies. He could only conclude:

...Proto-Christian literature as a whole, from the NT onwards—setting aside prejudices and distinctions in the historical perspectives informing the various corpora (both of those defined as ‘canonical’ and of the ‘apocryphal/pseudepigraphical’)—should be placed and studied in the context of the rich historical-literary phenomenon of the Judaism not only of the 1st century CE but also of the previous three centuries... I believe that the Christian movement in its initial phase and probably also after the year

70 CE, should be considered, from an historical point of view, as part of contemporary Judaism.⁴⁹

If Del Verme is accurate, then conclusions of conventional scholarship that date a “parting of the ways” as a phenomenon between earliest Judaism and Christianity are implausible. The struggle continued beyond the Patristic Period. The fight for Orthodoxy’s primacy can be distinguished by its doctrinal muscularity.

2.1 A Harbinger: Early Signs of Discord between Judean and Hellenistic Jews

Acts 6 reports of the fragility of communion among Judaea-Christians, between Hebrews and Hellenists. This dissension was only a foretaste of the potential and actual fractiousness among Christians, and a reminder of the differences that Jews had experienced for time immemorial. The end of the Second Temple Era would place new pressure on sectarian fissures, bringing some closer together, and forcing others farther apart. Among groups who would be separated were, especially so, those who worshiped Jesus as Messiah and those who did not. Those were not the only separations, and the Destruction of the Temple in the 66-70 CE War was not the decisive event to pull them apart.

What factors led to the “parting of the ways?” This question cannot be sidestepped in the pursuit of understanding the often wild, reckless, oppressive and highhanded conduct of persons and nations who fancy themselves to be Christians. Triumphalism is the natural result of a loss of respect for another, and following a loss of respect for one’s own calling and mission. How can the sacred part of one’s life be at once the force that breaches what is holy in the experience of others? What happened to the growing shared sacred space mapped out

⁴⁹ Marcello Del Verme, *Didache and Judaism: Jewish Roots of an Ancient Christian-Jewish Work*, (New York, 2004), 19

by the Apostles for the church?⁵⁰ In the wake of the Jerusalem Temple's destruction, why would not Jews move toward the people of Jesus en masse, seeing as he had long before anticipated its fall?⁵¹

Moreover, if Jewish purity laws, from biblical times, through the Classical Period and forward, served among multiple purposes that of defining boundaries with Gentiles, how came the day that (some) Jewish members of the Jesus Movement fellowshipped with their Gentile brethren? Jonathan Klawans and Claudia Setzer have analyzed Jewish purity codes vis-à-vis their relationship to Christians' concept of sin, while Paula Fredriksen takes up where they leave off with her article in *Bible Review*, "Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Laws?"⁵²

All of the above problems will be addressed in chapter 5. They are important to introduce here because they provide the setting for our discussion of Christian empire. In addition, we will examine the mutation of the political symbiosis between Christianity and Judaism and all belief systems and practices. These issues refer to the process in Late Antiquity with applicability to the present times, for it appears that church histories tend to give the idea that Jesus abandoned his heritage and required the same of his followers as something to be enforced even upon the unwilling. The time would come in the primitive church when the purity question would mark the divide between synagogues—some maintaining their Jewish distinctive, enforcing separateness, while others would touch the culture, while being touched by the culture, encouraging openness. Likewise, Jewish Christians began to emigrate from their homeland and joined Jewish settlements and

⁵⁰ cf. Acts 15.6-21, Mk. 13.1-4

⁵¹ cf. Matt. 24.1-2

⁵² "Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Laws?" Paula Fredriksen, *Bible Review*, Jun 1995, 18-25, 42-45

communities elsewhere which were presumably less hostile to them (The greatest portion of the Jewish population already lived beyond its own land in Roman times). Some even assimilated with Gentiles. Already having a large Jewish population, Babylonia swelled with refugees. According to Eusebius, one community of Jewish Christians relocated to Pella, a northwest Jordan village.⁵³

Daniel Boyarin, a self-described Orthodox Jew, provides refreshing insight to the common philosophical origins of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, asserting that Judaism is “not the mother of Christianity; they are twins, joined at the hip.”⁵⁴ Boyarin voices a hearty affirmation of Israel Jacob Yuval, writing of Judea’s conquest by the Romans in 63 BCE, who along with the other nations of the East, was subjected to a hitherto unknown form of political subjugation, one of unending confrontation with a global empire. Yuval’s analysis is most lucid and cogent. He writes:

In this way the deliverance of Judaea became dependent on the annihilation of Rome. The Destruction of the Temple, God’s sanctuary, in 70 CE reinforced the view that Jerusalem could not be rebuilt until Rome was destroyed. Once Rome became Christian, in the fourth century, the language of the struggle changed. The political struggle with empire gave way to a religious debate between Christianity and Judaism. For both religions, the idea of messianic divine vengeance was one of the cornerstones of religious thought. Christianity saw the “Savior” accordingly interpreted the Destruction of the Temple as a manifestation of God’s vengeance for the Crucifixion of his Son and Jewish Exile and subsequent subjugation as revenge. The Jewish explanation for the Exile was “because of our sins we were exiled from our land”; it was impossible to ignore the opposing Christian claim that “because of your sins, you were exiled from your land.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Eusebius, *The Church History*, 3.5.3

⁵⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 5

⁵⁵ Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 2008), 32

The result of the detachment of Judaism and Christianity was a distant drift from the elemental ideology contained in the teachings of Jesus that appealed to all who suffered under the yoke of the Empire. In the first and second centuries and sometime beyond, followers of Jesus were regarded by the general population and state powers as Jewish. In addition to their identification with Jesus and the Apostles and common cultic traits, they enacted a monotheistic prophetic critique to prevailing empire-centric norms. This characterization was true for the Judean and Diasporic Jew as well as the Christian. They held this in common despite their multiple deep differences. According to the world around them, they resembled one another.

The first extant Christian documents that follow those canonized as the New Testament are collections known as Apostolic Fathers and Church Orders genre. Jewish documents for the period are rare but we will take a look at the Talmud. The Talmud is the definitive artifact of early rabbinic Judaism. The oldest of these Christian writings is 1 Clement. 1 Clement happily refers to Abraham, Jacob, and others in the Hebrew Scriptures as “our father.” He fully adopted Israel as the ancestral people of God. There is nothing in the text that could lead to Marcionism, or anti-Judaic thought. This community sees no need to self-define against Jews. Indeed they would have been at that early point been an all-embracing Jew-Gentile community, with one possible exception. Milavec points out that Jews saw Jerusalem as the center of the world, where the Lord God intends to assemble his people in the last days. 1 Clement, however, makes no mention of it.⁵⁶ This fact could be

⁵⁶ Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: text, translation, analysis, and commentary* (MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 86

construed as anti-Judaic and certainly would be for those who search for clues to prove Christianity as categorically anti-Judaic at its core.

Rosemary Radford Ruether blames the anti-Judaic character of Christianity on Christology. She states:

As the church developed its Christological exegesis and found this opposed by the traditional midrash of the priestly and scribal classes, and especially by the Pharisees, who were the new leaders of the scribal tradition, an anti-Judaic midrash grew up to negate this negation given to the Church's messianic interpretation of the Scriptures by official Judaism.⁵⁷

Ruether sees in the New Testament incipient and inherent anti-Semitism. There is no way to rid Christianity of its anti-Judaism, which constantly takes social expression in anti-Semitism, without grappling finally with its Christological hermeneutic itself.⁵⁸

Ruether's case is that Christians divested the term Messiah of its Jewish meaning and appropriated it with a Greek idea of a divine savior. I view Ruether as being essentially correct. The Jewish idea of a deliverer from oppressive power was rejected concurrent with the adaptation of a new messiah-image isolated from a political role. I do not see it as necessary to negate the divinity of Jesus, however, to rightfully restore to him the elements of his identity that have to do with advocacy for the people crushed by the elite. Ruether sees Christians as having abandoned Semitic Judaism for Hellenism. I could charge Ruether with elitism and would argue that that just as Jews awaited a Messiah, so did Greeks and others anticipate a Savior. Ruether's contention is that Christology is the problem and the New Testament the source, especially in Paul. Thomas A. Idinopulos, and Roy Bowen Ward, rejoin.

⁵⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 64

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 116

It is methodologically important to recognize that the Pauline letters were addressed to Gentile Christian churches and to the problems largely internal to these churches. If he argues that the Gentile Christians are not bound by the requirements of the Jewish Torah (e.g., circumcision), it does not necessarily follow that he regards the Jews as freed from this Torah.⁵⁹

For these writers, the historical or political context of church-synagogue relations accounts for the devolution of Christian anti-Judaism into anti-Semitism, not some fateful, inner logic of Christology itself.⁶⁰

The writings of the early church were part of the tradition of Jewish polemic. The cause for it being deemed anti-Semitic is the historical retrospective of Christianity empowered by the state. Christianity developed a different kind of self-definition, one that is political, not of the Christianity of the people, but of the bishops. It is problematic and unjust to trace the hostility against Jews and their history of suffering at the hands of Christian empire to the desperate, humiliated majority Christians on the margins of society. That the church stood in opposition to priestly Temple authorities should cause no more disbelief than the position of the Qumran community.⁶¹ The Essenes and Christians both held a view and a hope of a different kind of Temple, one that fully welcomed them.

The simple explanation for the omission of Jerusalem's mention in 1 Clement is not necessarily that Jerusalem is immaterial to Christian thought but that in the milieu of this composition, it is remedial. Comforting to hark back to the assurances of Jesus rather than to

⁵⁹ Thomas A. Idinopulos and Roy Bowen Ward, "Is Christology Inherently Anti-Semitic? A Critical Review of Rosemary Ruether's 'Faith and Fratricide'" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Jun., 1977), pp. 198

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 193-4

⁶¹ cf. Paul, in Galatians 1.15-17 finds no need to give honor or lipservice to Jerusalem, "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus."

renew hollow hope for a replacement temporal Temple.⁶² This is verified by the outcomes of those who persisted in their Temple-hope and the ensuing Jewish war fifty years later.

We will not go into the details of all the Apostolic Fathers here, although it may appear that they are accountable, suffice it to say that the trajectory for Jew-Gentile relations has other reasons for escalating toward acrimony that will be addressed forthwith.

2.2 Those Who Do Not Play the Game of Power Still Give Hope of a Christianity that Does Not Seek Domination

“A lot of religion went on outside the walls,” writes Ramsay MacMullen in *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400*.⁶³ His statement is true not only for Christianity but also leading up to it. Necessarily, it would still be true after Constantine and his rival co-emperor Licinius legalized Christianity through issue of the Edict of Toleration in 213 CE.

MacMullen’s focus, in this his fifth book on ancient Christianity, is on the relationship between the out-side-the-walls Christians and the dead. The cities of the ancient world forbade the dead within their walls because they would defile and their presence invited disaster. Those suburban sepulchers, however, were venues appropriate for worship.

MacMullen presents the synagogue gatherings of the Christians as described by Justin Martyr.

And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or

⁶² cf. Mt. 24.1-3

⁶³ Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 104

the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.⁶⁴

MacMullen proceeds to present details from the *Didache*, which is from the same region (Syria/Palestine/Egypt) that elucidates the above proceedings. Members of the congregation read out of the Scriptures and offer thanks “in any way they wished,” revealing that not all participants were literate.⁶⁵

In this volume, MacMullen turns to unwritten sources. He excavates reports from the Eastern Empire, Greece, and the Balkans, North Africa, Italy and the North Western Provinces. He demonstrates that most Christians, what he calls the “Second Church,” worshipped in these locations. These are not the Christians of recorded official documents and are unimportant to Eusebius and other early historians. They far outnumbered those whose assemblies were restricted by the size of the house-church. They were the people who lived on the margins, as MacMullen points out, and could not have been very comfortable to join in worship in the imposing edifices built by the elite. They owned the churches they attended. They would not have related to the sermonology. As the subsistence-living underclass with no experience with overindulgence, they would have been less than enthusiastic for homilies that urged them to curb food intake, be modest in the use of

⁶⁴ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67 MacMullen here uses the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament,” a very common practice and useful for historians, especially for the benefit of lay readers, but nonetheless anachronistic. For this paper it is important to honor as much as possible to slow development of such designations and terminology.

⁶⁵ The *Didache* 2.3-4

cosmetics, or, more pointedly, give to the poor, which would have meant themselves.⁶⁶ These are people who enjoyed dancing as part of their celebration at shrines but their bishops frowned on it and “such activity was gradually suppressed.”⁶⁷

The striking conclusion is that the masses were drawn to the cult of the martyrs, not simply because their worship grounds served as cemeteries but because recognition of the virtue and power in a martyr required no official act. Augustine and other bishops tried to persuade their congregations to turn rather to the Triune God. Their efforts were in vain. The saints, the focus always of pride and veneration, took over as the active agents of divinity on a level that could be approached by Everyman.⁶⁸

MacMullen’s “Second Church” describes the subjects of *The Memory of the Christian People*,⁶⁹ wherein Eduardo Hoornaert highlights that the structure of early Christian communities was patterned after Jewish synagogues. The “Second Church” was comprised of the common people. Hoornaert is a Belgian who worked for nine years with the poor of Recife, Brazil. Indeed, just as the first Christians were Jews it follows that the next Christians came from among the “God-fearers,” people who were attracted to Jewish ethical and monotheistic principles. These were people like those in the early centuries of the church who were marginalized by the Empire who formed and were formed by the “little literature.” Among examples of such literature are the *Didache* (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles),

⁶⁶ MacMullen, *The Second Church*, 22

⁶⁷ Ramsay MacMullen and Eugene N. Lane, eds., *Paganism and Christianity, 100-425 C.E.: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), vii

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 106

⁶⁹ Eduardo Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People* (New York: Orbis, 1988), 5

Apostolic Constitutions, *Didascalia*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*; representative of the bibliography Hoornaert synthesizes to introduce the “rest of the church.”⁷⁰

The early second century *Didache* was composed within a Christian community in Syria toward the end of the first century. It provides evidence of a church that is moving away from free form, spirit-filled expressionism toward hints of structuralism that would be characteristic of the later centuries. In addition, it does so in a way that guards its Hebraic pedigree, rather than weighing against it. A Jewish reader might disagree with this assessment, understandably, because it gives early evidence of the institutionalization of the church. This assessment calls for a formal commitment to liturgical worship on the Lord’s Day, not on the traditional Sabbath. Its claim to be the document of the Twelve notwithstanding, it may have been the vision of worshipers in a single area that reached a wider audience than was intended. These writings expect their message to go to the nations but they tend to be parochial in scope. We must keep this in mind lest we read the literature as though large geographical swaths of people were aware of their composition at once. These currents notwithstanding, the treatise retains the high-thinking universal mandate. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: “In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.”⁷¹

A distinctly Jewish pitch to the document may elucidate the struggle between Pauline believers and “Judaizers,” indicated by the title, teaching of the Twelve Apostles. Moreover,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 5

⁷¹ *Didache*, 14

the pointedly longer title, *Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*.⁷²

⁷³Injunctions were made against practices that Jews found objectionable among Gentiles include pederasty, abortion, infant exposure, astrology, magic, and idolatry. Fasting two days a week was recommended. What is noteworthy is that, as we are reminded of in Jesus' commission to the first Apostles. Followers, however, understand the Gentile mission, whether or not the future is to look more "Jewish," the mission is unquestionably to the world.

The *Didache* provides instruction for living in community, calling the Christian to worship God and treat others properly. It speaks of the value of life and specifies murder to include abortion and infanticide but does not suggest that the church expects the state to meet this standard. It calls the church to honor true teachers and prophets but in no way imagines state support or sanction for them. The *Didache* does not deal with Christology and does not proscribe Jewish customs (other than the day of worship). The *Didache* is unconscious of a place for civil government in the management of church affairs. These generally fit well into a Late Antique Jewish non-Christian motif. The clear difference was that Jewish thought was temple-centered. It harbored a primary concern for its administration and cult, far more than for civil government, with which they had experienced generations of powerlessness. They perceived themselves to still be in exile and therefore Caesars' rule was hardly a change from that of the Babylonians long before.

⁷² The Apostolic Fathers: The *Didache*, Jonathan A. Draper *The Expository Times* 2006 117: 177

⁷³ The longer title is not unanimously accepted. In *The sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, (The Netherlands: Brill, 1989), 5, Clayton N. Jefford shows how Jean-Paul Audet vindicates Harnack's assertion that *Didache* predates the Synoptic. Audet based many of his views upon the then-recent discovered Qumran manuscripts wherein are themes and motifs which parallel those of the *Didache*. Audet, (*Didache*, 104-20), and proceeds to defend the longer title. Audet, 91-103

In The New Testament and the People of God, New Testament scholar and former Anglican bishop N.T. Wright describes the little beleaguered nation looked out at the military might of Rome and the cultural power of Greece, felt both of them making painful and lasting inroads into her national life, and longed for the day when her covenant God would act to reverse the present state of affairs and come, himself, to deliver her and dwell again in her midst.⁷⁴

The Jews who looked to Jesus employed the exile theme in a very different way. Instead of looking to the Temple, they looked forward to the New Jerusalem (Heb. 13.14). These divisions appear to have coexisted within the Jewish communion with their differences in attention concerning Temple and New Jerusalem. To one degree or another they functioned as protest movements against the dominance and exploitation of Rome and Herod, but especially the Temple Aristocracy. Some have postulated that the rift between the Jesus faction and other Jewish coalitions and factions was the shift to protest against “unbelievers” (Gentiles, and eventually Jews, and especially Pharisees).⁷⁵ The unbelieving in Israel’s history were the proud and oppressive rich (Job 18.21, Ps. 10.4-5, Jer. 10.25). Resistance to power had by now been embedded within Jewish culture, especially in the Levant. It would help to shape the faith of communities that would become Christian in the Gentile world around the Diaspora. Gentiles developed a fondness for the Hebrew prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Hosea who discredited the “false” prophets who fawned over kings and in the spirit of patriotism overlooked evil deeds. These who promoted the hope of the New

⁷⁴ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 271

⁷⁵ John H. Elliott, “The Jewish Messianic Movement,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* ed. Philip F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995), 81

Jerusalem would eventually become especially unpleasant for Jews who would not care to see their beloved Temple destroyed. Instead, the case made here is that there were other blasts of political winds. The most significant among them was the Gentile Christians' endeavor to justify their mission in terms that made sense to their culture. The *Didache's* apocalyptic ending does not validate their Temple-hope. The *Didache* is evidence of Judaea-Christian shared origins and offers a look at an apostolic community, the sort of which, due to its Jewish not-distant Jewish roots, and community epicenter, would fall prey to marginalization from a church eventually more universalized.⁷⁶

Further, the *Didache* is at the core of chapter seven of the Apostolic Constitutions, constituted after the Council of Nicaea. Books 1 through 6 are a version of the *Didascalía Apostolorum* (ca. 230 C.E.) and most of book 8 largely contains the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (ca. 200 C.E.). Being of likely Syrian orientation, it retained the character of independent churches and not a compulsory system. *Didascalía* provides a view of a community roughly halfway between the Sub-apostolic Age and the Council of Nicaea and proposes a polity that indicates more structural solidification. The central feature of the text is the exaltation of bishops and yet it retains something of the democratic synagogue organization. Bishops are called to lifestyles of quietness and humility and to call those who stray to penitence and fasting, and the noncompliant were to be excommunicated. There was no requirement for special position or title for members of the community to hold the bishop accountable in the same way.⁷⁷ Albeit, the older the documents, the more egalitarian the

⁷⁶ Draper, 181

⁷⁷ *Didascalía Apostolorum* 5.2.17

community and supportive of the needy.⁷⁸ The simplicity of the *Didache* begins to become subsumed in the developing formality of the *Didascalia*, and the document offers marriage advice with a particular concern for the threat of adultery.⁷⁹ The appearance of women in worship is tightly controlled.

Even this late in the church's history, Gentiles are sensitive to the Jews' recognition of Sabbath and instructs even the Gentiles how to employ the Sabbath in preparation for the Lord's Day.⁸⁰ The church here commemorates the Passover as well. The language against heresies and schisms is strong but the strongest penalty is excommunication and the threat of being condemned "to Gehenna of fire who split the churches, like Korah and Abiram. They wished to split Israel."⁸¹ Being Ante-Nicene, no church actions were monitored or enforced by the state, neither to create a chasm with Jews, nor for church discipline.

In the *Shepherd of Hermas* the church is made younger and stronger through repentance, not state vindication or support:

Now, in the third vision, you saw her still younger, and she was noble and joyful, and her shape was beautiful. For, just as when some good news comes suddenly to one who is sad, immediately he forgets his former sorrows, and looks for nothing else than the good news which he has heard, and for the future is made strong for good, and his spirit is renewed on account of the joy which he has received; so ye also have received the renewal of your spirits by seeing these good things. As to your seeing her sitting on a seat, that means that her position is one of strength, for a seat has four feet and stands firmly. For the world also is kept together by means of four elements. Those, therefore,

⁷⁸ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 156

⁷⁹ *Didascalia* 1.1, 2.1

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 21.18

⁸¹ *Ibid*. 23.6.1

who repent completely and with the whole heart, will become young and firmly established.⁸²

The *Epistle of James* brings order to the church as an extended family. He writes, what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (James 2.14-16)

Hornaert attributes the ability of Jews to fashion a collective memory stronger than that of any other people to the Exodus event, which helped them to develop an irreversibly linear history headed toward a consummation. Christianity inherited its memory quality from Jews, except that the memory begins with the events as pertain to Jesus. Remarkably, Hornaert does not concentrate on the Jewish people in his study of the 2nd century church. He concludes that because of Paul’s foresight, he found it expeditious to cut ties with Judaism, whereas Peter remained a traditionalist, interested in following the Law. This thesis agrees with Hornaert that the Jewish wars of 66-70 and 130, eventuating in the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem, contributed to the formation of what would be seen as Pauline Christianity (whether true to Paul cannot be presumed) and establishment of Christianity unconducive to Jews.⁸³ Nonetheless, there are dynamics that long preceded the birth of Christ continuing into the ensuing centuries that demand a hearing. This thesis finds elements within

⁸³ cf. Daniel Stokl Ben Ezra, who contends that at least the Luke-Acts community was still observing Yom Kippur towards the end of the first century, that most Judaeo-Christians observed Yom Kippur at least up to the seventh century, and that Paul’s proviso against festivals in Gal. 4.8-10 and Romans 14.5-6 pertained to pagan festivals, not Jewish, esp. since Paul warns against “special years” which would have only been valid in the Land of Israel, in *Shepherd of Hermas* 13.3. Therefore what is known to be Pauline Christianity would be foreign to Paul.

Israel that Hoornaert bypasses but are more significant indicators of the coming triumph of Christianity.⁸⁴

The one feature of Hoornaert's study that does account for the prominence of Jewishness in the early church is the synagogue model. He writes, between the Roman system, which cultivated a popular consent centered on the worship of the emperor—for the purpose of the maintenance its structures of servitude and tribute—and the synagogical system, with its deep roots in the people, there could be neither peace nor harmony.⁸⁵

The “memory” theory is restated and emphasized here, wherein Diasporic Jews sought to hold on their own, expressed in their clinging to the Torah so as not to lose their identity amid hostile powers. Since the synagogue was not endorsed by the Temple authorities, the movement had a life of its own, a life that would be reproduced by the early church. The movement would be true for the spread of Christianity both within the Roman Empire and elsewhere, with autonomous churches sheltering and nurturing marginalized people. The idea of a centralized communion under the oversight of the Bishop of Rome is unique to the West.⁸⁶ I will echo Hoornaert's claim that the autonomous primitive churches were in no position to “transform the social structure of the age.”⁸⁷ This recurring obsession in the West that the church is validated to the extent that it influences power has nothing synagogical about it. To this effect, the Roman Catholic Church is lost in its own sense of

⁸⁴ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 48-49

⁸⁵ Ibid. 139

⁸⁶ Ibid. 142

⁸⁷ Ibid. 143

temporal entitlement, issuing bulls, mandates, and encyclicals to the world or at least the entire Christian world as defined by the Vatican. This definition was another murky delineation, as though, all are obligated to observe. Protestantism, too, although fragmented, stakes its claims to governments, each hoping to “take back their country (or city) for God,” wherein lies a danger not present in Catholicism, that being a requirement for patriotism that was counterintuitive to the primitive churches.

Indeed, the earliest followers of the crucified and resurrected Jesus would not have known how to be without the synagogue model. Like the Jews’, the Christian synagogue was the gathering place of the community, a place of prayer, instruction, and inspiration. Synagogue worship included readings from the *Septuagint*, which was central, and prayers, many patterned after those of the Hellenistic Jews. Christians, like the Jews, prayed three times a day and fasted twice a week. The Christian fast days were Wednesday and Friday to commemorate Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, rather than Monday and Thursday as was the Jewish custom, especially of the Pharisees. Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection, became the holy day of the Christians instead of the Jewish Sabbath, which was Saturday.⁸⁸ Not only was the synagogue inorganically connected with the Temple, there was another reality that buttressed its autonomy: presence in the Parthian Empire. This factor alone meant that Jews could never fully assimilate into the Roman superstructure, being viewed as a national security liability.

Hoornaert explains how Eusebian church history takes advantage of the church’s need for memory by documenting the early centuries but by establishing Constantine as the

⁸⁸ Antonu+Cda Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 96

movement's new leader. It provides a theology that "can only be described as "imperial."⁸⁹ Eusebius makes Constantine successor to Moses and David thereby denying the memory or the non-dynastic history of the people of God.⁹⁰ Eusebius and his successors are seen to approve of Hellenism ascribing an "altogether positive and special value" to its encounter with the people of God. Hoornaert alternatively regards Hellenism's relationship with Christianity as situational and not to be seen as an organic or permanent component of the church's constructed.

The major defect in Eusebius' method, Hoornaert argues, is that he sees history to be the pure and simple recall of the past, which having been bequeathed to historians ever since. It obfuscates our ability to understand what really happened as our lenses have been handed to us from those who designed them with much care for the lens crafting. Instead of challenging us to seek an accounting of the persons in history we are trying to observe. These people were often subjects without property and thus without rights, including migrants of several types. Hoornaert cites Celsus to prove that Christians were known to be on the margins.

There appeared a new race, sprung from nowhere, without citizenship or traditions, hostile to all religious and civil institutions, fugitives from justice, universally infamous but glorying in their common execration. I refer to the Christians.⁹¹

Celsus appeals for Jewish support in his polemic against Christians it is purely tactical.

Christians are the threat for their newness and novelty, among other reasons. He has no love for Jews but they at least have the advantage of antiquity. Christianity's appeal is to smaller

⁸⁹ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 13

⁹⁰ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 1.12, 4.48

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 37

people with smaller minds. Those who were empire outcasts wrote the “little literature”— letters, gospels, apocalypses and texts of the communities sprinkled about the Mediterranean. Some of these communities included followers of those who would later be classified as heretics and for Hoornaert the official church’s reasons for this designation were as much political as doctrinal. They will never meet the standards of empire. This stands up to my thesis that there is a relationship between doctrinal standardization and Christian triumphalism. We cannot remove the focus from relational essentiality in favor of doctrinal orthodoxy prepared Christianity for alignment with colonial power and sacrifices the dialogue with paganism. Hoornaert sees paganism as having raised the great problems of humanity - health, life, justice, land, peace, and happiness, a conversation Christianity needed in order to connect with the culture. He sees the same Christianity that “assimilated European paganism,” as having refused a dialogue with the paganisms it eventually encountered in America, Africa, and Asia.⁹² For this writer, alongside Hoornaert’s seminal thesis, the sacrificed dialogue between Christian and Jew is closest to the epicenter of the triumphalism conversation than the one with pagans and demands further study.

Correspondingly, at the heart of this thesis are the growth of popular Christianity in the Roman Empire and the eventual exclusion of these voices for their inability and unwillingness to keep up with the politics of power. Hoornaert defines three principal mission cycles in the second century, the Asian, the Syrian, and the African.⁹³

⁹² Ibid. 264

⁹³ Ibid. 98

The greatest life-surge of the church was in Asia and one must point to the Jewishness and Pauline-ness of the Asian church to understand it. In order to illustrate its nature, we must appreciate the Marcionite church and Montanism, who held dialogue with paganism and were prototypes of popularity.⁹⁴ I will discuss this in chapter four as part of the emergence of world Christianity that Luke cast as the vision of Jesus and how doctrinal flaws were mitigated by open debate. While these movements also forced proto-orthodoxy to ask hard questions of itself, it ultimately found energy in aspects of these movements, which would one day be classified as heretical.

Like the Christianity of Asia, the Syrian variety incorporated Hellenized peoples but unlike Asia, it also included those of Semitic background. This incorporation made for a Jewish Christianity marked by asceticism. Eastern Syria (Edessa, Samosata) was able to mount some resistance to Hellenism, in which Hoornaert sees them toeing the line of the memory of the Christian people.⁹⁵ Manichaeism's ascent in the Roman Empire might be traceable to Syrian Christians' support by the Persian Christians as they declined to accede to Hellenistic philosophy, especially as pertains to its body-soul dichotomy.⁹⁶

The third missionary cycle was African, possibly introduced to the region by migrant Jews but certainly preponderant along the margins of the Empire.⁹⁷ From this region Donatism would emerge and this thesis treats it as a populist Christianity unwilling to sell out to the empire and thereby compromise its understanding of the true nature of the faith.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 99

⁹⁵ Ibid. 111

⁹⁶ Ibid. 241

⁹⁷ Ibid. 114

Hoornaert adds the later-developing Ethiopian cycle, a Christianity that accordingly prefers autonomy to imperial power. All of the cycle-models lead Hoornaert to the conclusion that Christianity was not only apostolic but also non-hierarchical. He argues that it was built from the “bottom up” through the families and other intact community relations. Hoornaert leaves his reader to reach more sweeping conclusions, although certainly he implies them.

A principal reason for Christianized cultures’ deafness to the voices of colonized peoples is the self-misperception that hegemony was critical to mission. It became a feasible model for missionary outreach, especially among the powerless. The outreach extended even among the powerful that could, at the hands of Christian governments, be rendered powerless. This writer finds it important to address this, although not within the chronological purview of this thesis... It is only for reference that I call our focus to the Patristic Period. Although a chronological referential, it is no more relevant than referring to the late 1990’s as the age of the decline of the Warsaw Pact to South Africans, or explaining to Rwandans or Serbians that the World War II Holocaust was the worst genocidal event in the 20th century.

Those historians regard this the period of Church Fathers overlooks the church that thrived beyond the boundaries of imperial power, such as the church in northwest Africa. Further, I find it important to observe that the primary growth cycles of the church were popular and instead the top-down polity of Rome/Constantinople (read Nicaea, Ephesus, Chalcedon). The church rather flowered within community, from the bottom up (read families/households, synagogues, shrines, associations and guilds). People are so much more concerned for what touches them most directly and to construct a hypothesis that a popular movement in any way flowed from a sense of loyalty toward the Roman Empire is

inconceivable. This is especially axiomatic when we consider the above populations Hoornaert identifies. He points out that Christian philosophers and writers concerned themselves with the defense of doctrine. These early Christian philosophers focused on the detail of family life as presented in the writings of Paul, Peter, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and the Apostolic Constitutions, including the *Didache*. The gospel, Hoornaert continues, subverts the primacy of men, and becomes a “rejection of authoritarianism.”⁹⁸

Next, Hoornaert cites sources such as the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the Epistle of James, Tertullian, and the *Didache* to prove that a “community of goods” was part of the church’s life as heirs of both Jewish tradition and the tradition of Jesus (if the two can be detached).⁹⁹ This assertion further validates a growing church as one that appealed to the people, and not only so, but the collective of necessary items as only necessary inasmuch as some members were impoverished. This approach to survival contributed to the appeal of popular Christianity.

The church that Hoornaert presents reflects the poor Christian communities he served in a poor part of Recife, Brazil, illustrating a communion that included the poor and marginalized. He does not deny the work of the great apostles but that of grass roots communities capture his attention for its resemblance to those that are transforming today’s church. This is a church less concerned about doctrine and more about compassion and orthopraxy. It would be impossible for these communities to become triumphalistic simply because they have no interest in political power and mostly because they have no access, either.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 242-3

⁹⁹ Ibid. 220-229

The thesis here intends to shed light on the tendencies of the church around the world and throughout history in the varied ways it responds to political power. Hooernaert's (natural) conclusion is to reference the phenomenon of martyrdom, noting that the vast majority of the martyrs were anonymous. These are lives "of whom the world is not worthy" and cannot possibly hold the value of the elite.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps ironically, here Hooernaert reveals that Christians' supreme value of life is displayed, including a brief statement regarding the protection of the lives of the unborn. He diminishes the value of the sensational martyr-stories and explains how smaller, plainer literature accounts for the nameless ones who did not seek out martyrdom but died in inconspicuousness with regard to the world.¹⁰¹ They died without power.

2.3 Recognizing and Cataloguing Reasons for the Devaluation of others and their Re-imaging

People do not persist toward death to defend dogma. They die to expose tyranny and injustice to demonstrate to those who matter most that they will protect them with their lives. The only way to "die for Jesus" is to die for the security of the beloved communion, to ensure that they are not violated or betrayed, and to provide courage to the unbelieving. When there is a betrayal, a statement is made that there is something more precious than faithfulness and relationship. Various parties in a family or society may at times injure its own members but it does not oblige the end of their solidarity, unless one or some members decide that the journey they share is no longer worth the costs involved—the hard work of practicing

¹⁰⁰ Heb. 11.38

¹⁰¹ Hooernaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 247-264

humility and exercising forgiveness.¹⁰² It may be true that both or all parties have played a causative role in the distress but the one who wins dominance over the other is responsible for clearing the path for a reunion.

Doctrinal standardization was not the lone force that drove Gentile- and Christian-Christian apart. This thesis does not hypothesize as much. However, there is a connection between the formation of orthodoxy and the disunion. These actuality Christian histories tend to overlook and Jewish histories cannot ignore. In any divorce, any breakup, a plethora of causes may be called, “the reason.” There may be numerous contributing factors and it will be helpful to specify seven of the Jew-Christian issues here. The last one is the one upon which I am focusing.

I. The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

The loss of the Temple brought radical changes to Jewish religious practice, first in Judea and to a lesser extent, in the Diaspora. One might imagine that it marked the end of Temple-centric Christianity, at least for Gentile Christians who held such affections and some Judeo-Christians. Not all responded alike but they remembered the words of Jesus. “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place...then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24.15-30

¹⁰² In John 15 Jesus teaches his disciples to “abide in me.” The discourse culminates in his vision for their life together, in vv. 12-13, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

The psychological eminence that Jewish Christians held among Christians in general would slowly begin to decline. Many Judeans who escaped death or enslavement fled to Mesopotamia, Parthia, Egypt, and other places where the groundwork would be laid. Consequently, the church would be exposed to an even wider variety of cultures. However, many Jews, empty-handed, stayed home. The difference between the Jews and Judaea-Christians is that the latter had a ready theological and eschatological framework in place. On the other hand, Simon calls these events the “victory of Pharisaism.” He credits them for Palestine’s quick adaptation to their new post-Temple conditions, for they had already organized their religious life around the synagogue.¹⁰³ Having less political cache than the Sadducees and more moderation than the Zealots, they would begin to define the kinds of Judaisms that the world we begin to know. Not long but perhaps centuries before the aftermath of the Jewish-Roman War eventuated in anything that could be called a “Victory of Pharisaism.” The role of the Pharisees in creating the catastrophe must be reckoned. The Jewish people were audience to the teaching of the rabbis and Zealots who were anxious to discredit the rulers of the Temple. They helped to foment apocalyptic ambitions that were unrealistic from the beginning. It would happen again sixty years later, to see that there was no miracle, no divine strategy to vindicate them in battle. The credibility quotient of the teachers was in question. Their position before the Bar Kochba Revolt reveals sharpened political sensibilities; they were leaving dreams of governmental power behind, as evidenced by the putative late 1st-century council of Yavneh.

¹⁰³ Marcel Simon, *Versus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425* (Portland, OR: 1996), 28

That loss of credibility would also slacken the bonds between Jews and Christians. Each of their modes of proselytization would speak much to their relative degrees of success. Rabbinic Judaism would work at making candidates into Jews, whereas Christians would offer a new memory, independent, or less dependent on ancient history and the nuances of a single society. The new Judaism, trying to leave Sadducean Hellenophilia in its wake, labored to Jewishness attractive to the world. Even though the Pharisees found certain elements of Hellenism appealing, they averred to convince their people of their faithfulness to Israel's law and prophets. Their defeat at Roman hands rendered them, however, powerless to acquire the credibility to sell to the world their history as the precursor to a desirable future. They were devastated, but not annihilated.

Since the end of the Temple did not affect the legal status of Jews, Simon notes that for those in the Diaspora there was something of an advantage with the loss of the Temple. No longer would they be viewed as second-class members of their community as non-residents of the Land, unable to keep the whole law.¹⁰⁴ Socially, Jews continued to stand in important places, as indicated by Berenice and Agrippa II in the imperial court, along with Josephus. In the rabbis' minds, their martyrs to who in reality could be described as taking on a folly rather than a mission were paying for the price for Jewish hopes.¹⁰⁵

The church, on the other hand, as it drifted from its Jewish identity drew increased attention as a new entity, *externa superstitio*, and thus, hostility, diverting trouble from Jews. Romans delineated religions as legitimate or foreign. Cities defined and protected their national identity by their gods. It is true that Cicero had long before declared:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 39

¹⁰⁵ Akiva ben Joseph and Hananiah ben Teradyon are seen as the most famous martyred rabbis.

...Neither new gods nor strange gods, unless publicly acknowledged, are to be worshiped privately — let the temples which our fathers have constructed in the cities, be upheld — let the people maintain the groves in the country, and the abodes of the Lares — let men preserve the customs of their fathers and of their family — let the gods who have been accounted celestial be worshiped, and those likewise who have merited celestial honors by their illustrious actions, such as Hercules, Bacchus, Aesculapius, Castor, Pollux, and Quirinus.¹⁰⁶

Notwithstanding, Christians would see in the Roman threat the same thing that Jews before them had. They summoned stamina, as did Daniel and so many other heroes who went before them.

Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.”¹⁰⁷

A season of respite transpired for Jews, while the trouble for Christians was merely starting. Jewish Christians had experienced extreme pressure in some places, as evidenced by the Epistle to the Hebrews, written before the fall of the Temple. Hebrews exhorts believers to endure suffering with joy but most of the troubles to date came, not from Rome, but from their Jewish brethren. A notable exception was what Nero did in 64 CE, in the words of Tacitus, to scuttle speculation that he was responsible for the great fire of Rome.

Therefore, to suppress the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, which the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of their name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus. The deadly superstition was checked for a time only to break out again, not only in Judaea, the source of the evil, but even in the capital itself....

First self-acknowledged Christians were arrested. Then, on their evidence, a large number were found guilty.... Their deaths were made an object of mockery. Covered

¹⁰⁶ Cicero, *On the Laws* 2.8

¹⁰⁷ Daniel 6.12

with the skins of wild beasts, they were torn in pieces by dogs or fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed, they were set alight to serve as torches by night.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, persecution of Christians had theretofore been a Jewish or popular phenomenon, not a thing with which government powers wasted much time. Pontius Pilate tried his best to avoid involvement in the uproar over Jesus. The injustice brought upon Christians by Nero was evidence that they were distinguishable from Jews. As generations passed, the differences became more noticeable, especially after the Destruction of the Temple and the Bar Kochba catastrophe. Nero was successful in carrying out his campaign against Roman Christians because of his exploitation of preexisting questions and derision among the people. Nero's campaign would have not been effective had Christians been able to maintain their cover behind Jews who had *religio licita* status. Furthermore, it was easier to expedite the cause to Christians because they were poor. This impoverished area is where the fire started. The Roman poet Juvenal wrote, "*Now, the grove with its sacred spring and the shrine are rented to Jews, whose worldly goods are no more than a basket and some hay. The wood has become the haunt of beggars.*"¹⁰⁹

When Vespasian entered Rome in 69 CE, he knew that the Judean War was costly, but the plunder was great. Still, the treasury he found in Eternal City was wanting. After the Temple's destruction, he established a tax on Jews, the *fiscus Judaicus*. His heir, Domitian would seek to multiply the tax base to those who "appeared to live a Jewish lifestyle," which would of course, mean Christians, who eschewed participation in the imperial and traditional

¹⁰⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44.27-9

¹⁰⁹ Juvenal, *Satires* 3.12-16

¹¹⁰ Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge, 1992), 115

cults. Brian Jones is troubled that this is a Christian invention inasmuch as no ancient pagan source make mention of Domitian's attacks against Christians¹¹⁰ There is an important response to that misgiving.

During the reign of this emperor the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians appears to have been a very important factor. In this respect it is not surprising that the word 'Christian' is not found in the short account of Suetonius about the *fiscus Judaicus*. Apart from the fact that not only Christians were prosecuted (but, e.g., also apostate Jews), it was found that Jewish Christians were prosecuted as Jewish tax evaders and non-Jewish Christians could be convicted and even executed as 'atheists' on a charge of 'living a Jewish life *improfessi*'. The punishment that both categories shared was the confiscation of their property in case of a conviction.¹¹¹

If Jewish Christians failed to pay the *fiscus Judaicus*, they could be prosecuted for non-payment as any other Jews. Non-Jewish Christians, however, were not liable for the tax but could be charged with the more serious crime of atheism. Consequently, we see the unease this could cause between Christians, Jews and Gentile. Each helped to self-define in different ways. The most important bond between Christians and Jews was the presence of Christian Jews in both communities.

II. The defeat of Bar Kochba

It is commonly held that one of the great causes of strain on Jewish and Gentiles relations in community as well as Jewish Christians with other Jews, religious and otherwise, was the Bar Kochba rebellion (132-6 CE). Both elevated a competing messiah and brought disgrace to Jews in the empire in a way that reduced incentive to identify with any Jewish community. The earlier war of 66-70 has been said to have a minimal impact on the status of

¹¹¹ M. Heemstra, "How Rome's administration of the *Fiscus Judaicus* accelerated the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Groningen, 2009), 109

Jews in the Diaspora. It had such an insignificant effect on intra-ethnic Jewish relations and between Jews and Gentiles, Reconsideration, however, is warranted as to how much the first war set the stage for the second, especially when the dynamics of relations between Jews, Christians and Rome are factored. Rome had seen the capacity that its Jewish population had to disrupt the civil state of the whole empire. Jews were a formidable presence throughout, occupying fully a quarter of one of the major cities, Alexandria. The newer subversive threat was the church.

Jerusalem was still in ruins and many Jews had high hopes of the emperor Hadrian. When he visited there in 130, he chose to rebuild it as a city dedicated to Jupiter. He had seen already how disruptive Jews could be. Hadrian had acceded to the throne after Trajan, who had expanded Rome to its farthest limits, except that he failed in Babylonia largely due to Jewish resistance there. Perhaps more significantly, while Trajan on the eastern front, Jewish rebellions broke out in several locations about the empire, namely Cyrenaica, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, known as the Rebellion of the Exile, or the Second Jewish-Roman War. All were ultimately crushed by Roman legions.

After his accession, Hadrian relinquished some of the lands that Trajan had acquired, among the reasons being unexpected attention required to violence around Jewish enclaves in Alexandria and Africa. Ironically, the Jewish question may not have been uppermost among Hadrian's concerns when he chose against rebuilding the city as Jerusalem and the greater concern may have been Christians. Although the habitation ban against Jews did not extend to Christians, Hadrian shared his predecessor Trajan's concern for the growing new faith around the empire. Jerusalem would not come to its own again under Constantine's Christian endorsements.

David Golan points to imperial suspicion regarding the growing Christian movement's loyalty to the state just a short time earlier revealed in the more generous Trajan's correspondence with Pliny the Younger (Plin. Ep., 10.97). By Trajan's time, they were already seen as subversives. Hadrian would have grown up in circles where the Christian problem was discussed. His largesse was rebuffed when he offered to place a statue of Christ in the Pantheon.¹¹² This was not a way of esteeming Christians so much as to bring this new dissenting creed from the East under the rubric of imperial convention. The Christians' non-response to Hadrian's proposal provides an incredible counterpoint to the Christians who, two centuries later, would become enamored of acceptance and images.

Golan notes:

Hadrian was well aware that Rome, during her long history, had entertained many and various faiths. Yet none had ever so utterly defied Rome, the empire and its norms, and at the same time so annoyingly pretended to replace them with practices and prejudices deriving mainly from Jerusalem. No less important for Hadrian's "choice-of-Jerusalem" was another argument, not to be overlooked. Even Hadrian could have known that the Christian savior had cursed the Jerusalem of his days (Mat. 23:37-8; 24:8), and on the other hand had promised a new unspoiled and purified Jerusalem in its place (John 3:12). By Hadrian's time Jerusalem had been lying in ruins for some fifty years, since the days of the emperor Vespasian Jerusalem of the destruction had also given meaning to a major tenet of Christianity: the first half of the prophecy concerning it was already fulfilled.¹¹³

It is arguable that Hadrian recreated Jerusalem in Rome's image because he was forced to out of fear of losing control of the province and the empire. His assessment might seem absurd except that Christianity was indeed a juggernaut rising more rapidly than the Roman star. The

¹¹² Hadrian's Decision to supplant "Jerusalem" by "Aelia Capitolina" David Golan, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1986), pp. 226-239

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 237

connection of the failed revolts of 70 CE and 135 CE would have an unforeseen Christian connection.

The sole source of suffering for Christians during Bar Kochba rebellion was at the hands of the Jews in revolt under Bar Kochba. The empire was benign towards them, as indicated in Hadrian's acknowledgment of advice received from his proconsul of Asia, Minucius Fundanus.

I have received the letter written to me by your predecessor, Serenus Granianus, a most excellent man: and it does not seem well to pass over this report in silence, lest both the innocent be confounded and an occasion for robbery is given to false accusers. Accordingly, if the inhabitants are able to sustain their accusations openly against Christians, so as to charge them with something before the tribunal, I do not forbid them to do this.¹¹⁴

This decree borders on being an edict of toleration and probably says much about Hadrian's skill for gathering intelligence and perceiving that Christians were not a part of the war. As such, it made them, in some sense at least, unlike the Jews in their orbit, good citizens.

Simon's analysis of the Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE under Vespasian is the "Pharisees' side of the story," in the opinion of Shmuel Shepkaru, for whom the telling is less reality and more memory. Rome's destruction of the temple marks the disintegration of the Jewish society instead of the beginning of rabbinic Judaism and the reemergence of sectarianism, the rabbis being but one of the sects. During crusade of Bar Kochba, whose vision it was to rebuild the Temple, the sages of priestly origin increased in influence while the rabbis' regressed. The people would be broken beyond description.

These divergent evaluations are not unlike the variation of worldviews in real time as the events unfolded. Some Jews had admired and contended for control of the Temple while

¹¹⁴ Eusebius, *Church History*, 4.5. 8-9

others saw it as a travesty awaiting judgment from a holy God. Roman Rule of *Eretz Yisrael* unleashed competing apocalyptic expectations, all of which were dashed. Hadrian, like Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey, Herod, and Titus before him, sought control of a people by violating their sacred space. The shame was unbearable not only for Jews, but also for their closest kinsmen and onlookers, Christians.

In a later era, when persecution of Christians was executed under Decius, Gentiles were targeted randomly and sporadically, while Jews (including Jewish Christians) were the onlookers, exempted from harassment.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, Christians placed a mounting premium upon martyrdom, as Jews began to question the value of the practice.¹¹⁶ Sadly, the time would come when that government would be Christianized and Jewish martyrdom would resume. The Christian legacy of martyrdom, inherited from Jews, would be a critical element in their ascent to dominion.

Now, Christians, and Jewish-Christians were viewed as unfaithful to Bar Kochba as Messiah, which would have belabored already weakened remaining bonds. At the end of this war, eventually, there was a diminution of prestige for Jews around the Empire. One reason being the fresh contempt over the deployment of so many Roman troops and lost military lives.¹¹⁷ The Jews, with aid from Arabia at least, and probably others (Parthia?) had so

¹¹⁵ 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, *History*, 6.12.1 (Gentile Christian considers converting to Judaism—thereby remaining a Christian? —to avoid imperial harassment).

¹¹⁶ Shepkaru, *Jewish martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds*, 1

¹¹⁷ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69.13.1-14.3

overwhelmed the two legions stationed there that Hadrian had to call up seven other legions, along with a large number of new recruits.¹¹⁸ It was a bitter victory for Rome.

The postwar ban against Jews living in Jerusalem and the name change of the province from Judaea to Syrian Palestine, among other penalties, spelled the end of Jewish bishops there. Eusebius records the successive names of fifteen until this point, but afterwards they would all be Gentiles, to his knowledge. This record would prove especially portentous for Jew-Gentile relations two centuries later, when no Jewish bishops (not just Judean) would be included in the Council of Nicaea. The Gentile church was either oblivious or indifferent to their presence, but there were at least eighteen bishops from Israel's interior and yet none were invited.

What cemented such a rift that Gentile bishops would not refuse to convene without their Jewish brethren, who would have needed to travel at less inconvenience than even those from Egypt? One factor could have been Constantine's contempt for Jews.¹¹⁹ Bagatti's research informs us that Jewish Christians returned to Jerusalem whereas those who were non-Christian Jews were forbidden. He explains, "This is explained by the fact that with the war a distinction was made between the Jews and the Jewish-Christians, and that the decree of expulsion, promulgated by Hadrian, concerned only the Jews."¹²⁰ The Jewish Christian community persisted for several centuries and Gentile Christians were unaffected by the ban.

¹¹⁸ Menachem Mor, "The Roman Legions and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135 A.D.)," H. Vetter and M. Kandler, eds., *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum*, 1 (1990), pp. 163–75; idem, "The Geographical Scope of the Bar Kokhba Revolt," in Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Tübingen, 2003), pp. 107–131.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 4.5.2-5

¹²⁰ Bellarmino Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judaeo-Christians*, *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, No. 2 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1984), 10

There was a more general population of Jews who settled in Upper and Lower Galilee, Diospolis-Lydda and its vicinity, perhaps Joppa and some scattered settlements elsewhere on the Mediterranean coast, the Golan Heights and fringe of Judaea.¹²¹ These were only portions of the Jewish population of the eastern Roman world, not geographically far from where most of the early official decisions of the Church would be made.

For the first time, a Gentile Bishop, Marcus (135-?), an Italian, would lead the church in Jerusalem. It is possible that the Jewish-Christians chose not to avail themselves to the Council of Nicaea, knowing they would be outnumbered and possibly ostracized, which soon they were, being considered heretics or followers of Arius, conceivably because some of the Judaeo-Christians would have been Ebionites. Not all Judaeo-Christians were Ebionites, however, and Bagatti observes, “Since the Nazarenes did not differ much in faith from the gentile Christians, they were considered without more ado as faithful, and albeit separated through national customs; all the other Jewish-Christians were considered heretics.”¹²² Little do we know if the Nicaean bishops would create the canons regarding Sunday worship and Easter if there had been a Jewish presence? By now, however, the gulf was nearly impassable, what with the impassible conception of divinity reached by Christians, who reflected the Greek influence of god who is free from the unworthy passions of pagan deities. This idea of deity contradicted that of the Jews who was, no matter their defeats and

¹²¹ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2001), 130

¹²² *Ibid.* 31

enslavements, the universal deliverer, even though some philosophically minded Jews held the sensibilities of the Greeks.¹²³

The profound effect of the defeat of Bar Kochba has lasted through the centuries, for it crafted in the minds of Gentile Christians that Jerusalem's fate was divine judgment that Jews brought it on themselves. The population around the empire would have heard the reports of how Galileans did not participate in the rebellion and were not debased like those who did. The Jews of Galilee would go on developing the Judaism of the future and even that would be costly. They, however, at least had not been annihilated. The mere continued existence of any Jews seemed to be fortuitous and to Christians, evidence that they should immediately turn to Jesus. The highly esteemed Rabbi Akiva had viewed Bar Kochba as a Messiah. If this was the best of Jewry, then indeed it was time to give up their vain religion. Jewish distinctive, to be adopted by Christians, would continue to generate public and governmental misgivings. For Christians, however, it was worth the losses they would incur to self-identify with greater assurance as the People of God.

III. Gentile Christian apologies

It is now easy to deduce that Christians were ruthless with the pen. Some call the Gospel writers, Paul, and the apologists anti-Semitic because we have so little of the documentation that represents to what they were responding. Philosophers and apologists wrote fiercely to establish and protect spaces within the Roman world. Everything novel was suspect, accounting for Josephus' writing of the Jewish Antiquities, which he wrote in Greek for his patrons' benefit, aiming to give account for the Jewish people. Antiquity was an advantage Christians were not seen to hold. Jews, especially in the wake of the Bar Kochba

¹²³ Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48

rebellion and Hadrianic penalties, would exploit Christianity's newness. The church had quietly grown while Jews adjusted to their new world without a religious homeland and capital. One of the ways that Jews could recover would be if public scorn were appropriated toward Christians.

The correspondence between Trajan and Pliny in the early 2nd century gives evidence of recognition of Christians as distinct from Jews but to what extent they were viewed as unattached is unclear. By the end of the second century at least those who studied and wrote about them, saw Christians as entirely separate. In Ferst's words, it was "not long into the second century before whatever constituted Rome's popular press, late night talk show hosts, and hate-radio commentators noticed these Christians." Of the non-Christian Roman writers remarking on Christianity, it is difficult to find any who did so favorably.¹²⁴ Although Jews were more conversant with Christians, the most formidable anti-Christian opposition would come from "Rome's popular press." Jewish op-ed *would* provide source material, but the names that mattered most included Galen, Marcus Aurelius, Fronto, Celsus and Porphyry. Most of the literary evidence, both Jewish and pagan, is lost to us except for vestiges in Christian writings.

Historians re-created Christians in the image of cultural critics in works such as Tacitus' *Annals*, Seutonius' *Lives of the Emperors*, and Pliny the Younger, along with the satire of Lucian and Apuleius. All of the above provided a cultural assault against Christians that gave rise to the Christian Apologists. Christians did by no means invent the practice of apologia or polemic. The vast array of cults and associations found themselves attacking and

¹²⁴ Barry Ferst, *Sunday School Sins*, (USA: Xlibris, 2010), 101

being attacked and in such an environment Christians imitated and developed a form of literary expression in common use. Hence, we find sharp and sometimes reckless claims against opponents real and fictitious, Jewish and non-Jewish. The anti-Jewish polemic may have been intended for a Gentile audience and even other Christian audiences. In apologia, we find the beginnings of heresiology. This emerging orthodoxy will define and exclude heterodox Christians. Rome's polytheistic norm was pervasive, enmeshed in the body politic, and associated with high society. It displayed in magnificent temples and statues and embraced and glorified by the Greco-Roman poets and sages. It is credited with creating and disseminating the glory of the Eternal City.

There is no earlier or more essential dialogue, however, for Christians, than that with Jews. Christians had to justify their existence, especially as their numbers increased with proportionately fewer Jews. The no-holds-barred hyperbolic nature of their apologetics would be useful to later generations in support of anti-Semitism, a phenomenon that became lethal after the political empowerment of Christians. We should keep in mind that during the rise of the apologists, Jews enjoyed greater cultural favor than did Christians. The second century philosopher Celsus, who harbored no affection for Jews, nonetheless addresses those among them who have turned to Jesus.

You have forsaken the law of their fathers, in consequence of your minds being led captive by Jesus. You have been most ridiculously deceived and have become deserters to another name and to another mode of life. What induced you, my fellow-citizens, to abandon the law of your fathers and to allow your minds to be led captive by him with whom, and it was not long before Mary was pregnant we have just conversed, and thus be most ridiculously deluded, so as to become, and it was not long before Mary was pregnant me deserters from us to another name, and to the practices of another life?¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Celsus, *The True Doctrine*, Book II

We have a preponderance of Christian sources. Celsus is an example of the reality that most pagan and Jewish polemic is derivative from Christian arguments, his coming from Origen. Jewish arguments are even rarer, except we must understand that there was oral tradition that would later contribute to the Sefer Toledot Yeshu did. More important is the Talmud's description of Jesus. In short, the story of Jesus' origins is by way of a very crude and colloquial paraphrase:

Mary, a Jewish teenage, earned her living by, some say spinning thread, a pretty low class profession, others claiming that she was a hairdresser, a nice way to say "prostitute." She was married to a much older fellow, but she was fooling around with a Roman soldier named Panthera. . . . [I]t was not long before Mary was pregnant by Panthera. Her husband forgave her, either because he was an absolute saint or because Mary had convinced him that God had inseminated her. The baby was known as Jesus ben Panthera.¹²⁶

This allegation is of consequence in that it is a Jewish discussion but its import is expanded when Celsus uses it for his invective, by attributing the words to a Jewish spokesman. Let us return, however, to the words put into the mouth of the Jew, where the mother of Jesus is described as having been turned out by the carpenter who was betrothed to her, as she had been convicted of adultery and had a child by a certain soldier named Panthera.¹²⁷

IV. Rabbinic Jews' abandonment of the use of the Septuagint, or Christians' continued reliance upon it.

The once-heated debate over whether Jews ever used the Septuagint is all but over.

Rarely, anymore, are the testimonies of Josephus and Philo dismissed. Both considered the

¹²⁶ Ferst, *Sunday School Sins*, 27

¹²⁷ Shabbath 104.20, Diversionarily posed as a debate, whether this "son of a fool" had one father or the other, "Was he then the son of Stada: surely he was the son of Pandira? — Said R. Hisda: The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. But the husband was Pappos b. Judah? — His mother was Stada. But his mother was Miriam the hairdresser? — It is as we say in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit., 'turned away from' — satath da) her husband"

Greek text an inspired document. Philo was not much read or highly regarded but all that has changed. With Septuagint traces discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, evidence for Jews' use of the translation is insurmountable. Now it is more intrepidly asked, "Why shouldn't Jews have produced Scripture for their own liturgy for the benefit of their own Greek-speaking population? And, too, would there not be an anticipating a Gentile audience?"¹²⁸ Then the recalibration of their cult in the wake of the loss of the Second Temple made the Torah more central but not the Scriptures used by Gentiles. Luke Timothy Johnson aptly observes.

In disputes between Jews and Christians over the fulfillment of prophecy nothing but frustration can be expected because the two parties are, quite literally, reading two different Bibles.¹²⁹

The reasons given for Jews' abandonment of the LXX are first its divergence from the accepted (what would come to be known as Masoretic) version of Tanakh. Secondly, Christians had adopted it as Sacred Scripture.¹³⁰ One can hardly blame Jews for the secondary reason when one considers Justin Martyr's exclamation.

But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers, who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another. And I wish you to observe, that they have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by those seventy elders who were with Ptolemy.¹³¹

The primary reason certainly played a more prominent role and yet to persuade Diasporic Jews to take leave of the version that was dear to them might have required more incentive than the accuracy argument. The church, meanwhile, had found success among the Gentiles

¹²⁸ The Jews among Pagans and Christians, edited by Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak (London: Routledge, 1992), 57

¹²⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 69

¹³⁰ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1035&letter=B#ixzz1ELYdIPIJ>

¹³¹ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 71.1

while relying upon the LXX and would have seen and would have seen any deviation on the part of Jews as proof of apostasy. The most controversial passage reflecting a possible incongruence was in Isaiah, “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,” in the LXX where the Talmudic version says “young woman” instead of virgin, which happens to agree with the Hebrew original.

V. Christian martyrology supplants Jewish martyrological traditions

The foremost Christian martyr story of the second century is that of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. According to convention, he was given the opportunity to renounce his allegiance to Jesus and join the common public practice of emperor veneration. “Swear by the fortune of Caesar,” he was advised. “Repent and say, ‘Away with the Atheists.’”

Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, “Away with the Atheists.” Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, “Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;” Polycarp declared, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?”¹³²

This quote is but an excerpt from a beautiful and moving tragedy. The saga, however, is sadly shaded by the taunts of Jewish bystanders among the pagans, all helping to gather wood to immolate the bishop. Yes, there was contention between Jews and Christians. There was also strife among Jews, and dissension among Christians. It was not constant and ongoing. In some cases, they were but family squabbles. Nations were ruthless and it was a violent world. Generally, the greater violence was inflicted by whoever held more power. This discord permeated every part of society.

¹³² *The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna, Concerning the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, 9

We must not overlook that the earliest Christian heroes and martyrs, including the apostles, were Jews. They were not merely Christian martyrs; they were Jewish martyrs. They were the beneficiaries of a faith-custom of heroes and were inspired by the stories of the prophets. Throughout their Exile, the Jews were an exposed people in Babylon, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Medo-Persia and as strangers in their own homeland.

When Caligula came to power in 37 CE, he was obsessed with hatred for Jews. This trait was introduced into the Roman system that, like a resistant disease strain, could never be fully shaken. He at one point even wanted his statue placed in the Temple, according to Tacitus, who employs a severe anti-Jewish polemic throughout, perhaps more so than the tone of his contemporaries, Suetonius and Dio Cassius, all cited often in this paper, along with Flavius Josephus.¹³³ This cultural contempt could generate an outbreak of persecution at any moment. Philo writes of a cruel outbreak against that took place following year under the Egyptian prefect Aulus Avilius Flaccus which took place in Alexandria. Some were stoned, burned or even crucified in the presence of their wives and children.¹³⁴ From 81-98 CE, under the reigns of Domitian and Nerva, circumcision was outlawed. After Trajan's end in 117, Hadrian renewed the ban.

Long before the time of Christians, Israel had a lengthy list of champions who stood up to wicked and unreasonable authorities, including hallowed names in Scripture. There were many heroes of the Hellenic Period, and the famous righteous during the time of Hasmonean kings. This tradition did not end with the emergence of the church. That it was a value of Jewish people is indubitable. Jews would willingly, if it were possible, endure ten

¹³³ Tacitus, *The Histories*, 5

¹³⁴ Philo, *Against Flaccus* 72, 84

thousand deaths instead of one, rather than submit to see any forbidden thing perpetrated with respect to their religion; for all men are eager to preserve their own customs and laws, and the Jewish nation above all others; for looking upon their laws as oracles directly given to them by God himself.

VI. The power and glory of the Roman Empire

In the middle of the second century CE, Roman Historian Cassius Dio reflected on his understanding of the Jews:

I do not know how this title [Jews] came to be given to them, but it applies also to all the rest of mankind, although of alien race, which affect their customs. This class exists even among the Romans, and though often repressed has increased to a very great extent and has won its way to the right of freedom in its observances. They are distinguished from the rest of mankind in practically every detail of life, and especially by the fact that they do not honour any of the usual gods, but show extreme reverence for one particular divinity. They never had any statue of him even in Jerusalem itself, but believing him to be unnamable and invisible; they worship him in the most extravagant fashion on earth. They built to him a temple that was extremely large and beautiful, except in so far as it was open and roofless, and likewise dedicated to him the day called the day of Saturn, on which, among many other most peculiar observances, they undertake no serious occupation.¹³⁵

A century earlier 49 CE, Suetonius' claim was, "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."¹³⁶ The general consensus is that this "Chrestus" is a corruption of "Christ." There would have been plenty of disharmonies in the 1st century CE in Jewry even if Jesus had not come then. The messianic factor was not so new or revolutionary to Jews but Paul's message struck at the core of Jewish uniqueness. Turbulence among Jews regarding Christians, but primarily Paul's adherents, was traceable to the Jews' need to negotiate their place in the Greco-Roman

¹³⁵ Dio, *History*, 37.17.1-3

¹³⁶ Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, 25.4

Empire without compromising their sense of identity. Doing this was a tall order to be sure, especially when their identity was being questioned.

Rome sought to control foreign cults—local rites could be continued if they were seen as part of a dominion’s culture. The imperial rites were an addendum to custom but in the case of monotheists. There was no amicable or workable meeting point. *The Roman Citizenship (1939)* is based on A.N. Sherwin White’s doctoral thesis, which became a standard work. White offers here his appraisal of civil conditions in the Roman Empire, two centuries removed from the conquest of Gaul and in the wake of the eventual Gallic accord.

White writes:

The other instances of dissent under the early Empire are on a decidedly minor scale, excepting always the national risings of the Jews. The attitude of the Jewish communities, with a few exceptions, seems to have been one of utter intransigence. Roman statesmanship completely failed, despite its multiple ingenuity, to solve the problem, for the simple reason that the Jews were not prepared to cooperate. They could not come within the *civitas*, because they would not; for the essence of the *Orbis Romanus* in the fullest sense is that it was produced by the willing cooperation of both sides—subject peoples and Rome alike.¹³⁷

As I noted above, the concept of an early “parting of the ways” is indefensible in light of the tremendous custody that Judaism had for Christianity. When Paul reports that he was beaten with thirty-nine lashes five times it shows that the synagogue officials were carrying out discipline upon someone who was one of their own. Even Paul, the self-proclaimed “Apostle to the Nations” was subject to the punishment of his own Jewish leaders.¹³⁸ God-fearers were not as beholden for compliance but the synagogue retained the right to hold expectations of proselytes. This is evident from the decision by the apostles in the Jerusalem

¹³⁷ A.N. Sherwin White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), 422

¹³⁸ 2 Corinthians 11.24

Council. Until then, it was presumed that all members of the synagogue would live as Jews but the distinguishing mark in Acts 15 was not circumcision, but the Holy Spirit.¹³⁹

The two faiths received similar treatment from the government throughout most of the second century after Hadrian. Israel Jacob Yuval argues that rabbinic Judaism was a response to Christianity while Christian perceptions of Jews were a response to Christian knowledge Judaism. The lengthy process culminated in the Christian-Jew polemic that has endured for centuries but in earnest began with the state's validation of Christianity.

...The early fourth century and the Christianization of Rome marked the end of this openness and the hope of cooperation. The hostility between the two "brothers" prevailed over their fraternity and was carried over into the raging channel of tense relations between Christianity and Judaism, a turgid stream that persisted in its course throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁰

A modern-day classic, *Verus Israel*, portrays the Roman authorities influencing attitudes of Jews and Christians one toward the other. To be sure, at first Rome viewed them all as Jews, and that not always so favorably. After 135, Jews around the Mediterranean had sporadic relief and so did Christians. Simon indicates that both religions were treated with similar benevolence under Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius detested both. Commodus largely ignored them both. The Severi, "were Africans who's Semitic sympathies were reinforced by their marriages," was being very friendly toward Jews.¹⁴¹ The Christians, also, were treated fairly. Jews and Christians experienced a symbiosis. Septimius Severus forbade Jews to proselytize and at the same time forbade Christian evangelism. Simon calls this century-long equilibrium between the two religions, which was the result of a general policy of

¹³⁹ Acts 15.8

¹⁴⁰ Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 12

¹⁴¹ Simon, *Versus Israel*, 102

toleration... decisively upset in the Jews' favor. For the Christians the period of anarchy that followed that followed the death of Alexander Severus... marked the beginning of a policy of active intolerance.¹⁴²

Things were so good for Jews that Septimius Severus and Caracalla ruled that Jews could hold public office and perform functions without violating their *superstitio*,¹⁴³ in spite of their disruption of homogeneity. While Jews would continue to enjoy imperial favor, conditions for Christians would change radically.

In Hadrian's time, for Rome, Judaism had been the enemy and the Church had been able for a while to believe that it could reap some advantage. After Decius it was the Christians with whom the empire was at war. During the interim, the Jews had not been slow to climb back into favor.¹⁴⁴

Simon's conclusion is that the empire did not have a fluctuant relationship with Jews and apart from the Bar Kochba revolt, remained tolerant if not benevolent, while the attitude toward Christians deteriorated, largely related to its growth. From this, Jews would gain an advantage, with a lessening of popular anti-Semitism.

VII. The Codification of Nicene Christianity and Subsequent Processes

Hoornaert's far-reaching vision applauds the clarity and decisiveness of the Nicene Fathers (325 AD) and that of those who completed their work at Constantinople (381AD) He insisted on the uniqueness of Jesus in history, in relation to God and to humanity, revealing the Father to us all, apparently especially as a response to the Alexandrian priest, Arius.

¹⁴² Ibid. 102

¹⁴³ Ulpian, *Digest* 50.2.3.3

¹⁴⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 103

Hoornaert proceeds to lament then the shortsightedness of the Council and ventures to explain why they may have failed to articulate the purpose for this uniqueness—the question lingers: “Why are Jesus and his Father One in thought, feeling, and way of being?” A slight remedy is added at Constantinople in the phrase, “For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,” and with these words we are reminded that it was the Roman Empire’s instrument of torture that was used against Jesus, and as a device to intimidate and oppress his people.¹⁴⁵

Hoornaert then skillfully uncovers the obvious, by ushering the student into the assembly of bishops, in the presence of Constantine the Emperor, using the account of Eusebius of Caesarea. The emperor facilitated this council, and participated in the proceedings. Could Rome be called to account, when Rome funded and produced the event? According to Eusebius, Constantine was indifferent toward the Arian controversy. His agenda was more comprehensive. He listened to them carefully, mollifying statements so that rancor would not prevail. He was interested in one thing: the unity of the empire and the unity in that room would represent his objective. They agreed to burn the documents of Arius and of other heretics. This was a new day, with a new memory of one church, one empire, one faith, and one truth. Next, Hoornaert raises the writings precious to the people who chose to identify with the Jesus described in the Councils. The Gospels, the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* cite their common mandate of justice and compassion for the poor. He concludes one may say that the symbol

¹⁴⁵ Faith to Creed: ecumenical perspectives on the affirmation of the apostolic faith in the fourth century: papers of the Faith to Creed Consultation, Commission on Faith and Order, NCCCUSA, October 25-27, 1989, edited by S. Mark Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 108-111

of Nicaea constitutes the first summary of the Christian faith that makes no allusion to the ethical imperative so characteristic of early Christianity.¹⁴⁶

Hoornaert is dismayed with the contradiction that the Nicaea-Constantinople text affirms that Jesus was “crucified under Pontius Pilate” or tortured and executed by the Roman state while being composed under the rule of the chief agent of that state. The Jesus of which F.F. Bruce writes grew into manhood in a land where the propriety of paying to Rome the tribute which it imposed was a live political and theological issue; it was a Roman magistrate who sentenced him to death and it was by a Roman form of execution that the sentence was carried out.¹⁴⁷

No purpose would be served to suggest that Rome was the evil empire. Brutality and violence went hand in hand with most powers of the era. Before Pompey entered Jerusalem the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus (107-76 BCE) crucified hundreds, including many Pharisees. His sons Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II fought against each other, shredding the countryside, and the poor were exploited.¹⁴⁸ Rome, in the experience of Jesus, is metaphorical.

Nicaea’s document “distanced it from the early Christian tradition and served to inaugurate a new Christian tradition that no longer demanded of Christians a firm and public stand toward the poor and their poverty.”¹⁴⁹ Hoornaert’s remedy is the recovery of memory for Judaism and Christianity which “Unlike other religions...are based on the memory of the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 115

¹⁴⁷ Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 1

¹⁴⁸ Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 119

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 115

faithful throughout the course of their history.”¹⁵⁰ To recover memory is to “determine what was camouflaged at Nicaea,” by revisiting the period to understand the testimony of the Christians of earlier generations, which is primarily a call to their literature.¹⁵¹

This writer agrees that the study of their literature reveals not only that they looked for no hope from the Roman Empire (cf. Letter to Barnabas 4.4-6) but also that the anti-Judaic pronouncements of Nicaea and later are a perversion of earlier concepts. It is unfortunate that so many scholars, including the esteemed Bart Ehrman, while referencing in 4.6-8 the claim that Barnabas’ “basic thrust is that Judaism is, and always has been, a false religion.”¹⁵² This tract is admittedly outside of the norm of first and second-century Christian literature in its impatience with Jews but there are numerous problems with Ehrman’s over-the-top conclusion. There were 24 sects of heretics at the time of the Destruction of the Temple, according to the Jerusalem Talmud, which begs the question, which Judaism is the false religion?¹⁵³ Here he makes little of the simple fact that the composition of the church still included many Jews who typically maintained traditions such as keeping the Sabbath,

¹⁵⁰ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 3

¹⁵¹ *Faith to Creed*, Heim, 113

¹⁵² Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did not Make It into the New Testament*, (New York: Oxford, 2003), 219

¹⁵³ The text reads, “Rabbi Johanan [third century C.E.] said, ‘Israel was not exiled until twenty-four sects [kithoth, “parties, classes”] of heretics [minim, “sectarians”] came into being.” That this reflects the pluralism in Jewish beliefs and practices in the first century is indicated by Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 1; Saul Lieberman, *Texts and Studies*, 199; and Ephraim E. Urbach, “Class Status and Leadership in the World of the Palestinian Sages,” 39. Ronald Reuven Kimelman, in “Rabbi Yohanan of Tiberias: Aspects of the Social and Religious History of Third Century Palestine,” 178–79, disagrees, noting that it was a popular rabbinic preoccupation, especially in the third century and thereafter, to speculate on the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that a third-century source discovered in Egypt in 1945 mentions a plethora of heresies that had spread among the Jews “to this very day.” He consequently concludes that Rabbi Johanan is reflecting a third-century setting. We may, however, suggest that he may both be reflecting a first-century tradition and be citing it because it is so relevant to his own day.

practicing circumcision, and commemorating Yom Kippur. Furthermore, not only is the word “Judaism” absent from the text of Barnabas, so also is “Jew.”

The document does, however, help Gentile Christians understand themselves in view of Scriptural history and to address their Jewish counterparts, celebrating the “eighth day” (15.8-9) as an invitation to both rest in Christ and to a celebration of the Resurrection and not a denunciation for Sabbath-keeping. The document is consistent with Scripture in outlining the hope of Christ in the face of the disappointment of Israel’s past and Barnabas was composed during what was arguably the most disappointing period they had ever known. I propose that Ehrman’s retrospective (not his position) is consistent with that of the Church Councils for whom anti-Judaic practice was based on an eisegetical approach to both proto-canonical and other popular Christian writings. Chapter ten elucidates Scriptural dietary proscriptions but is not a rebuke of Jews for their diet so much as to give significance to the Scripture for Gentiles who will never subscribe to terms of kashrut. Moreover, Barnabas tries to understand events surrounding Hadrian and the Temple, and contemporary actions of Judean Jews during the Bar Kochba Revolt in light of Scripture, Israel’s history. There is nothing anti-Semitic there. Furthermore He saith again; Behold they that pulled down this temple themselves shall build it. So it cometh to pass; for because they went to war it was pulled down by their enemies. Now also the very servants of their enemies shall build it up.

Barnabas 16.3-4

The author of *Barnabas* is likely an Alexandrian who appreciates to some extent the flagrancy of the Judean defeat. He obviously has some knowledge of non-Judean Jews, who may not have supported the revolt. Ehrman’s overstatement is the same as the imperialized bishops and much of the church to follow: they decided what Jews are and also finalized the

reasons for lost Judean wars, while a variety of Jews are still contemplating those answers. Can it be that the answers are all too easy for Gentiles to formulate and too difficult for Jews? The forging of a Christian Empire that strikes at Jews was not the enterprise of the communities on the edge of society who reconciled their existence to a greater kingdom than Rome.

One can blame *Barnabas*, the letters of Paul, or any number of other documents for the inchoate chasm between Jew and Gentile but none of these alone is accountable. There was far more severe invective between other Jewish sects. When Jews had sovereignty, internal strife led to Pompey's entry to Jerusalem. Not as much is said about the destructive domestic discord among Jewish factions during the first Jewish revolt. What makes the story between Christianity and Judaism compelling is the expansiveness of Christianity. Much liability is placed on Christians for making the Jewish Scriptures their own and yet the movement led by Marcion prohibited use of those texts.

The Council of Nicaea was a wedding between Empire and Church. The church, forsaking all others, would become obdurate and immune to discourse with Jews who held similar beliefs. Their own Jews, however, were the de facto first among heretics. Nicaea was ostensibly about the teaching of Arius of Alexandria but was in unuttered ways more about Jews. Bagatti notes:

Once the way was open, future councils followed the same track, ever widening the division among Christians. The point of view of the Christians-Christians, attached to their own tradition and devoid of Greek philosophical formation, was to remain firm on the Testimonia and therefore would not admit any extraneous word, homoousios included. The point of view of the Greek Fathers accustomed to the deductions of philosophical reasoning, and unburdened by traditionalistic Jewish baggage, was this, that the Holy Spirit had inspired this word, even though it were not biblical, because it

corresponded to the Christian truth of the nature of God; he was therefore a heretic who did not accept it.¹⁵⁴

2.4 Ecclesial Practices Developed against Jews are Executed against Non-compliant Christians

An authoritative scholar of the early Christianity and particularly the Donatists is W.H.C. Frend, whose mid-20th century observations about Africa's contribution to historic Christianity deserve another look and greater scrutiny. For example, Thomas Oden's work in *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* and the multiple works of Lamin Sanneh, including *Disciples of All Nations* have richly augmented my understanding of the conflict between Constantine and the Church of the Martyrs during the first decade of his reign. Church canons, especially those of the Nicene Council are helpful here, as well. It appears to me that Augustine's worldview is deeply influenced by political developments in his native North Africa, especially the Donatist Controversy. As far as I can tell, not enough weight has been given Africans' impact on Augustine and as such, the history of the Christianity. I will factor in his extensive written correspondence regarding the Donatists.

The Roman Empire's encounter with North Africa influenced its actions towards the rest of the world, starting with the Egyptian controversy relative to Arius, the Alexandrian presbyter, leading to what Rome called a "Worldwide" Council. This thesis will also look beyond the geographical borders of the Late Roman Empire to include the dynamics of relations among these religious groups. We will demonstrate that the version of Christianity that maneuvered its way to orthodox status, while providing leadership to the church world, also accounts for deafness toward other voices, some remaining extant. This deafness

¹⁵⁴ Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision*, 87

precludes a comprehensive dialogue between, not only Christians and Jews but also Christians and Christians. It affected Christian communicability with the world. The management of the privilege of power is a difficult, perhaps impossible undertaking. This thesis aims for a fair accounting of the stories of a wide array of participants so as to offer the opportunity for recognition of the advantages and casualties of Christianity in power essential to unblock channels of discourse for those who are willing.

In the same way that I compare Rome's activity vis-à-vis North Africa, I want to use Persia as another model. As Donatism formed a border, giving geographical and ideological shape to the Christianized Empire, so did Persia establish a limit to Roman Christianity?

2.5 Conclusion

It is important to this writer to better understand how and why Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean and then north into Europe but not to other parts with the same speed, with consideration of data and theses of Robert L. Montgomery.¹⁵⁵ In chapter 4 I turn to the *Didache*, which asserts that the faith was received as far as Persia in the Apostolic Era (further, the Book of the Laws of Countries shows a Christian presence in Afghanistan less than century later).¹⁵⁶ We will need to understand Armenia's role, and Aksum and Iberia, as well, all who became Christian empires, but not without the influence the Roman and Persian superpowers.¹⁵⁷ This thesis is cast in the light of my exegesis of portions of Luke-Acts to argue that Jesus (and his apostles) understood his mission to provide a political alternative for

¹⁵⁵ Robert L. Montgomery, *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions*

¹⁵⁶ Lund, Jerome. *The Book of the Laws of the Countries: A Dialogue on Free Will Versus Fate: A Key-Word-In-Context Concordance*. Gorgias Press, 11

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Haas, *Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia* in *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1.1 (2008 Spring), 101–126

the human race. His ministry was distinguished by his commitment to not concede to lesser patriotisms but rather to form in all of his followers a larger vision than those popular among his contemporaries.

CHAPTER 3

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE MESSAGE OF JESUS

Introduction

This chapter confirms the universal relevance of the mission of Jesus from its beginning. We would know little to nothing of Socrates without the work of his student. We know of Jesus because he intentionally deployed apostles with a clear mandate to teach all nations in his name. It is important to discern that the mission of Jesus is at once universal apart from being imperialistic or triumphalistic. It is easy to make the case that the Sermon on the Mount is a manifesto for the kingdom of God and that the kingdom is primarily the property of the underclass of any and all societies. Consequently, in this present age it will always be a marginalized community. I turn to Luke as the church's first and truest historian.

I utilize Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles as my foundation in order to investigate how very different Constantine's expansion of the church was from Jesus' vision and the Apostle's enterprise. I also assert that the Apostles, particularly Paul, clashed with powers throughout their lifetimes. I highlight Luke's emphasis on global mission, and how different that mission can be perceived by the non-churched, and churched. The kingdom of God lacked the apparatus to rule the world according to the terms of the dominant system. Their seizure of political power amounts to a forfeiture of the nature of the kingdom and Jesus' mandate for his apostles was to advance this domain to humanity.

3.1 The Church's First Historian

The goal of historians is to provide material that helps to constitute a memory for his or her readers in the present and perhaps more importantly to the scholar, the future. Those who cover early church history examine sources and compare them with how those sources have been evaluated. In one sense, this chapter continues in the tradition of the author of Luke-Acts, the first church historian. Though Eusebius of Caesarea is often credited with being first, Luke-Acts synthesizes accounts of apostles Peter and Paul, not ignoring their great dissimilarities and disagreements. Luke constructs a sequential narrative that highlights the complementary nature of their ministries. What this accomplished for the Christian mission is that Paul was validated as proclaimer of Jesus to the Gentile world and that Peter had preached to Jews first and eventually to Gentiles (Acts 10) before and concurrently with Paul.

I intend to review the mission of Jesus and the church from its beginnings in the first century up to the 4th century. During the 4th century, Christianity was legalized. Its imperial participation in efforts to regulate creeds helped to distinguish the church that Constantine

knew most intimately. I explore the effects that he had on his church and on others, both within and outside the Roman Empire. My understanding is that the mission of Jesus was a redemption proposal for all humanity that was/is part of a grand plan for the renewal of all Creation. Jesus intended for his apostles and church to carry out this design and that the imperialization of Christianity does not negate the reality of the trans-national and trans-political Church. The claim here is not that the Church is apolitical but that it is its own body politic. Some, such as Stark, conclude that the root causes of militaristic intolerance seen in monotheistic religions are their systemically embedded exclusiveness and particularism.¹⁵⁸ Using the Psalms, Garr argues, “From a certain perspective, it is a mark of Israelite monotheism and one of its tenets, that YHWH is king and that all other beings, including the other gods, are therefore subordinate to him.” Garr hereby asserts that monotheism implies a winner-take-all violent takeover of the world.¹⁵⁹ Both postulate that repression is a natural by-product of the Christian conviction to accept as illegitimate the worship of any god but their own. It has helped make, for them, the case that inherent Christian intolerance is the cause of their coercion, however, an accurate appraisal of the mission of Jesus repudiates all of this. In support of this thesis, Assmann asserts, “Only after the Christians had themselves come to power and Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire was negative intolerance transformed into positive intolerance.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 116-122

¹⁵⁹ W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 214

¹⁶⁰ Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism* trans. Robert Savage, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 20

Although the term “globalization” has several meanings, generally it applies to the process of increasing the connectivity and interdependence of the world’s markets and business through trade and capital flows. However, the term is too restrictive since the interest of the scholar of Church History is not “global” or “earthly” but cosmological.¹⁶¹

Nonetheless, Jesus’ message is appropriated to all humanity. The idea of “globalization” is most native to and may also be used to describe the phenomenon of the reign of God. This concept was originally associated with covenantal privilege assigned to Israel pushed forward among all nations in accord with the mission of Jesus. Of course, he would not have foreseen the particulars of the promulgation of the gospel over the ensuing centuries but he was convinced that there was no nation where it could not be efficacious. Those who followed Jesus went from comprising a Jewish sect, to a persecuted minority, to a *religio licita* status, and eventually to imperial favor. All of these things transpired between the first century resurrection of Jesus and the fourth century rise of Constantine. The last stage of imperial favor would be its greatest test and the chief question of this inquiry.

The gospel has always, in every time and place had the essential substance to provide the “something more” or “what is missing” and has universal relevance. The question we need to ask is, how did Christianity become triumphalistic? I do not mean to assert that all expressions of Christianity are so. Certainly that just as the world is affected by the vision that corresponds to Jesus’ vision that gives hope to the hopeless in Luke 4.18-19, it is also impacted by an aberrant version, one of triumphalism. Most connotations of “triumphalism” are closely related but one I find to be simple and accessible and adequate for this study is

¹⁶¹ In Romans 8.20-22 the Apostle Paul writes that creation’s subjection to futility corresponds to the redemption of humanity, in accord with Jesus in John 3.16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life—world is κόσμος here.

from the Cambridge Dictionary Online, i.e. “when you get pleasure and satisfaction from the defeat of someone else.”¹⁶² This sentiment did not begin with the legalization of Christianity but victories were not so dangerous (or lethal) to the losers. What does the church that is not triumphalism look like? Can we assist seekers in their honest pursuit of the kingdom of God if we develop dialectic? I believe that just as the church of the first two centuries needed apologists; the church of the 21st century desperately needs methods for addressing this, methods that inspire, in many ways, a languid and speechless church to reclaim the vision expressed in Luke 4.18-19.

3.2 Luke Presents Jesus’ Political Alternative

The preface to Luke’s Gospel (1.1-4) is Greek-style: the author’s name; dedication; observations about the topics covered; mention of predecessors; a methodology claim; and the transition to the body of the work.¹⁶³ The language, especially where we read that Luke sets out to provide “an orderly account” καθ’ ἑξῆς v.3 suggests that Luke does not see the style of his predecessors as adequate for him. I postulate that Luke identifies the mission of Jesus as far-reaching. The technique continued in his accompanying volume, the book of Acts.

Jesus and his apostles’ first revealed universal mission as his grand mission and eventually their voices were committed to print. This chapter surveys the Luke-Acts account. We may compare Luke with Mark’s Gospel, which is also outward looking, to see that Luke is the most international in scope between these Evangelists. Also, Luke follows the church’s infancy through the emergence of Paul. Romans 15.16 affirms what he claimed himself, “a

¹⁶² <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/triumphalism>

¹⁶³ 163 Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), 34

minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Luke-Acts presents the campaign of Jesus (and his Apostles) as a political alternative to the prevailing thought-trends of his time. Accordingly, the genius of the gospel of the kingdom throughout history has been and continues to be the phenomenology of the Holy Spirit binding together the unlikeliest of companions. In his gospel, Luke communicates the story of Jesus to a first-century audience that is very different from that of Matthew. It is widely accepted that Matthew and Luke relied on two sources, Mark and Q but others make a resurgent case for the older view that Mark used Matthew.¹⁶⁴ In either case, it is clear that Luke is not the first (Luke acknowledges he is a latecomer in 1:1-4). His intent is to adapt earlier sources to evangelize nations. Matthew writes as an insider to Jews, not explaining customs and frequently referring to the Mosaic Law.

Mark shows concern for the Roman reader, showing Jesus as supreme emperor, if indeed he writes for a Gentile audience in Rome (although he never states expressly his reason for writing). By the time of Jesus, the triumph had become the exclusive privilege of the emperor and Mark portrays Jesus' march to crucifixion as a triumph.¹⁶⁵ There is an ancient tradition from Irenaeus that Mark was written from Rome and that the author was informed by Peter, supported by the statement that Mark was in “Babylon” with Peter.¹⁶⁶ Bauckham demonstrates that Mark's Gospel not only has the highest frequency of references to Peter among the Gospels but also uses the inclusion of eyewitness testimony to indicate

¹⁶⁴ Lamar Cope, "The Argument Revolves: The Pivotal Evidence for Markan Priority is Reversing Itself" in *New Synoptic Studies* (Farmer 1983a: 143-157).

¹⁶⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (Book III, Chapter 10.5) <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103310.htm>

¹⁶⁶ 1 Peter 5.13

that Peter was its main eyewitness source.¹⁶⁷ Mark's Gospel does not merely venerate or denigrate Peter—it comes off as the real story of a disciple. Even if Mark was composed in a non-Judean context and he was Peter's interpreter, his vision was not as far-reaching as that of Luke, the companion of Paul. Mark's composition may have been concerned with the faithful in Rome, who were dealing with Nero's machinations. It is likely that Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome had been sorting out the future with fallout from reports of the Jewish occupation of Jerusalem, in the run-up to the evacuation of Christians there from and the destruction of the temple.¹⁶⁸ This thesis will later testify to the effects on Christianity of the strife between Jerusalem and Rome and uprisings of Jews elsewhere, starting in the pre-Christian era through the imperial rise of the church. The premise here is that crosscurrent relations between Christians and Jews, which were not inimical at all times or in every province, lost the mutual counterweight of common stigmatization and consequently the ensuing relief and euphoria of Christians caused them to distance themselves from the bygone humiliation of Jewishness they had long sought to flee.

If Mark's Gospel is a Petrine exposition and a buttress to the church in Rome, it serves an urgently needed purpose for believers in every generation. Whether they themselves are under siege from temporal powers or it is their neighbors who suffer for crossing authorities, justly or not. On the other hand, even if we accept the timing that the Gospel of Mark was written during these times of upheaval, the traditional view that it comes

¹⁶⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 155.

¹⁶⁸ S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church: A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A.D. 70 on Christianity* (Manchester: SPCK, 1967) 221-282.

from Rome is no longer unchallenged. One example is Kee, who sees the Markan community as a “radically alienated group” in southern Syria.

The open society of these Christians would have been repugnant and unacceptable to Pharisees and Essenes alike. Their rejection of the use of political power or physical force, as shown by Jesus’ denunciation of the power play by the sons of Zebedee (10.35-44) and their concurrent acquiescence in the payment of tribute to Caesar (12.13-17), would have enraged the revolutionaries. Significantly, the dilemma in which Jesus’ opponents sought to place spokesmen for the same curious coalition articulate him in Mark’s account that appeared in 8.15, the Pharisees and the Herodians. What we see in the Markan community, therefore, is a group, which claims to be heir to the prophetic promises concerning the new covenant (14.24) and yet is alienated from all the Jewish parties that lay claim to that heritage and that destiny.¹⁶⁹

What some would have seen as the prophetic quality of Mark’s Gospel might explain the Christians’ reasons for leaving Jerusalem early, before its destruction? I imagine, however, that the multiple social contraventions mentioned above could have been no milder there than in southern Syria and could have spurred an exodus anyway. In either case, the words of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel would have inspired or affirmed their action. Kee describes further claims the lack of precision in the prophetic description of the fate of Jerusalem in Mark 13, while not conclusive evidence, points to it having been written prior to the events that it depicts.¹⁷⁰ Whether Rome or Syria, Mark’s Gospel informs his hearers of the

¹⁶⁹ Howard C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977)100.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.101

imminence of the kingdom while at the same time preparing a church facing the threat of persecution for the very real possibility of martyrdom.

Those who may become apostate in that hour are warned of the consequence of this. And, those who hold fast are assured that they have only to endure, their reward will be near. So, the two sayings form a climactic antithesis of warning and promise.¹⁷¹ The contrasts indicated here are not intended to show disagreement between Mark and Luke but rather an area where they agree but comes across as more deliberate in Luke's Gospel. It is important to elaborate on Mark's Gospel here to distinguish it from Luke's. Since they resemble in the sense that they are both non-Judean, Luke is generally seen to be reliant upon Mark. The *telos* of Mark is not so universalistic in the manner of Luke. This fact does not diminish the value of Mark's. The presence of Luke (or Matthew) does not obviate the need for Mark. Even though only about thirty verses in Mark do not appear in either Matthew or Luke, it stands on its own merits, presenting a powerful account of the mission and message of Jesus. Nonetheless, Luke's distinction is in how he transforms Mark's drama to involve diverse characters. A select example is when Jesus chooses his first disciples. Mark's plain account tells us that Jesus saw Simon and Andrew fishing, called them, they complied, and James and John responded in similar fashion (3.13-19). Luke condenses the call of all the Twelve into this single chapter in the setting of a crowd of disciples. The Jesus of Luke is comfortable with more followers, who provide the pool from which Jesus chooses apostles. The descriptions of the Twelve provide the reader with an impossible team. The apostles speak to Jesus' ability to draw together as fellow men that would not in any other circumstance unite.

¹⁷¹ *The Composition of Mark's Gospel: Selected Studies from "Novum Testamentum"* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 31.

His band included a Zealot, known for contempt towards the Roman elite and also double-crossers. Jews would consort with and benefited from those oppressive powers seen in the Roman system, which is now a colleague with Matthew. Matthew had made his living exploiting his own people for his own benefit and that of the same system resisted by the Zealot.

The scene in Mark is followed by one with Jesus in Capernaum, teaching and driving out an unclean Spirit. This scene is typical of Mark's priority of advancing the Empire of God in the world by spiritual authority over the system of darkness (a message Luke employs likewise). Luke, on the other hand, continues the periscope of the selection of disciples with Jesus standing in the midst of a crowd. This assembly convenes on a level plain, a location that is more than a metaphor of accessibility and equality. The crowd is a mixed multitude of people from different regions including Jewish and Gentile districts (6.17). They are people who would not otherwise encounter one another, for not only are they diverse, but significant distance has been covered for them to gather. They include rich and poor (6.20-26) and as such comprise the assembly that reflects the vision of Jesus. This larger vision is what day in and day out, all about Galilee and eventually to Judea, holds together the Twelve who have already been identified as not all having much in common with their brethren. Jesus' ministry is distinguished by his commitment to not concede to lesser patriotisms. Jesus rather creates in his followers a larger vision than the prevailing voices of his times. That Jesus could gather these persons, taking into account that the concept of "individuality" is rather recent. We must see Jesus as convening representative groups. He helps them move beyond the petty, exaggerated, and imagined differences that are usually exploited by those in power to render them incapable of uniting.

Jesus is not even so interested in the disputes with those who are arch-foes. The character of his responses to their interrogations turns their questions back on them. Small-minded side taking does not appeal to him. In effect, he is often saying, “Go get your own answers, we have bigger fish to fry.” The Jewish religious have always acclimated themselves to fierce debate but those whom we tend to see as only opponents are people who shared beliefs with Jesus that he could take for granted. He could not engage in the kinds of dialogues they carried out. Jesus was one among Jews who could discuss kingdom of God, Son of Man, end of the age, age to come, without a glossary. Jesus never needed to define Father, Holy Spirit, Law, or will of God.¹⁷² Even his definitions were merely redefinitions (divorce became adultery, anger, and murder).

We continue in Luke 6 (v.17) to see Jesus address the multitudes by congratulating the poor, hungry, sad, despised, marginalized, castigated, and stigmatized “on account of the Son of Man.” He then denounces the rich, full, laughing, and popular categorizing them with the false prophets. Later (6.1, but for Luke it is earlier), Mark would portray Jesus as rejected at Nazareth, with distancing from family a necessary development for a universal movement,¹⁷³ as previously indicated in 3.31-35.

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

Still, it is hard to overlook that even if Mark’s Gospel bears the ministry of a figure as large as Peter, Paul’s companion. Luke moves to develop still more global themes. Even without

¹⁷² Henry J. Cadbury, *Jesus: What Manner of Man* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947), 103

¹⁷³ John Painter, ed., *Mark’s Gospel: Worlds in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1997), 97

deliberate intent on Luke's part to reach farther, his documents are used more profusely in the Gentile world, and with greater license. Even without intertextual implications, history's witness of the outcomes of the persistent international outreach of Paul would cause the scholar to suspect a more universalistic quality to Luke.

In the above-referenced Nazareth rejection sequence Mark provides a short-hand account that spotlights Jesus' oft-quoted response, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household."¹⁷⁴ David Hill notes that where Mark uses *ατιμος* Luke prefers *δεχτος*, the former conveying "honor" among people, but the latter, "acceptable" is before God. As such, Hill wonders if Luke is telling us that a prophet must go outside of his country to succeed.¹⁷⁵

We do see here, again, that Mark portrays Jesus' mission to be broad—too broad, in fact, for his compatriots to grasp. Luke's version, however, is more daring and elaborate. For example, only in Luke do we see the Nazareth rejection of Jesus as part of the launch of his ministry, Luke omits some, and transfers others of Jesus' actions in order to prioritize this event. There is plenty of movement on Jesus' part (neither Mark nor Luke obsesses with chronology) before the events of Luke 4. However, but here they stand as a moment of beginnings and he momentarily reads from Isaiah 61,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me
To proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

¹⁷⁴ Mark 6.4, ESV

¹⁷⁵ David Hill, *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 13, Fasc. 3 (Jul., 1971), pp. 161-180.

And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.
 He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”¹⁷⁶

The initial response of the people in Nazareth was positive. Mark’s version says, “Many who heard him were astonished” but again Luke is more assertive, telling us, “And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth” (v.22.). In Luke, crowds around Jesus are mostly a good thing, if not always explicitly welcoming and hopeful, at the very least; Jesus is at home among them (3.21; 11.29; 12.1, 23.5). In the synagogue, Jesus stood up to read. Although we cannot be certain whether he volunteered or was asked to do so, Luke’s example in Acts 13.15 shows Paul being invited to address the synagogue, so it is not hard to view Jesus as enthusiastic. After welcoming Jesus’ hope-filled declaration, something precipitated a potentially violent reversal.

Luke writes, “And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”¹⁷⁷ Jesus voices the audience’s next reaction since it is the year of release,¹⁷⁸ “Bring it on!” After Jesus explains that he will produce no healings, the crowd turns. It is not just that Jesus will not heal but his justification for not healing. He begins by responding to their expectation that he do in his hometown what he did in Capernaum, a town known as the home of Jews and Gentiles, boasting a synagogue built by a centurion. Capernaum had a scriptural connection with Gentiles (Matthew 4.13-16). Jesus takes his resolution farther, citing painful parts of their history where God preferred to execute his acts of mercy upon non-Israelites. He confronts

¹⁷⁶ Luke 4.18-21 ESV

¹⁷⁷ Luke 4.22 ESV

¹⁷⁸ *The Composition of Luke's Gospel: Selected Studies from "Novum Testamentum"* (Boston: Brill, 1999)

their sense of entitlement, which infuriates them while providing an apologetic for a messianic mission to the nations.

And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff¹⁷⁹

Jesus is rejected but he is not left alone. In contrast to the Markan account, Jesus finds himself immediately in the presence of people but this time in Capernaum (4.31). The telos is people, always more people. Then word of him spreads. Then there are more synagogues to visit. (4.37, 44).

3.3 The Conditioning for a Broad and Inclusive Mission

Now sufficiently trained, having been exposed to his words and works, the time comes for the Twelve to do what Jesus does. This commission is indicated in Matthew (10.1-4) and Mark (6.7-13) but Luke (10.1-12) tells us of another seventy,¹⁸⁰ or seventy-two.¹⁸¹ Much speculation has gone into the identity and purpose of the seventy-two beyond their task assignment in this chapter. In 3 Enoch the number of princes of kingdoms on high is seventy-two, corresponding to the seventy-two languages of the world (17.8),¹⁸² or more simply, the seventy nations of the world (Genesis 10). This passage has caused some to extrapolate the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 23-29

¹⁸⁰ Luke 10.1-17 Codex Sinaiticus.

¹⁸¹ Luke 10.1-17 Latin Vulgate.

¹⁸² Book of Enoch by R. Ishmael ben Elisha the High Priest, 1.6

intent of a Gentile mission. What is certain is that the Lukan Jesus allows us to see that the works he did were not limited to his inner circle of twelve Apostles (This is no minor fact, because it anticipates a larger culture of the repair of lives in the church to come that follows in the tradition of Israel's history and mandate. Luke's Gospel in general and the call of the seventy in particular were vital toward defining the nature and character of the church against heresies. The most notable was Tertullian's defense Against Marcion.¹⁸³ The patently anti-Judaic Marcion will be discussed in chapter 5).

Luke, whose first language was Greek, was a non-Jew who wrote for an educated non-Jewish audience. His language and style alone do not mean he was not writing for Jews because his documents clearly depict the Jewish world. Many Jews were Hellenized and striving to be even more Greek but Luke-Acts shows too much evidence of a transcultural thinker reaching out to his world to deny that his audience was Gentile Christians.

When journeying through Galilean villages en route to Jerusalem, Jesus expresses how different the reign of God is from the people's expectation:

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.¹⁸⁴

In the above passage, "people will come from the east and west." Where Luke has "people" Matthew uses "many,"¹⁸⁵ which again suggests that he was reaching farther.

¹⁸³ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, V4, (city: Kessinger), 79

¹⁸⁴ Luke 13:28-30

¹⁸⁵ Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 13:22-30. Both texts contrast "the sons of the kingdom" and "those who are outside." Matthew enumerates the "outsiders" by πολλοι whereas Luke's version is open ended. In other words, Luke does not specify the number of folks, by attaching a quantitative adjective, who will come into the kingdom of God and sit with the Patriarchs but leaves his as simply third person plural. Such construct of a verb, according to Daniel

Luke addressed both documents to “Theophilus,” an unknown person. Although it has been suggested that because the name means “friend of God,” that it might be a metaphorical addressee. In his text Luke does not use Semitic/Palestinian terms for architecture, weather, or geography. The term “lawyer” is substituted for the more Jewish “scribe” (10:25; 11:52) In chapter 22 we see two of many examples where he takes pain to explain Jewish customs, “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover,” (v.1) and, “Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.” (v.7) Luke, on the other hand, tends to sidestep matters of internal Jewish controversy, traditions, and commandments. For instance in the other gospels, the writers addressed the dispute over his disciples eating with unwashed hands, (Mark 7), divorce (Mark 10.1-12), taking of oaths (Matthew 5.33-37), Mosaic stipulations (Matthew 5.38), almsgiving, fasting (Matthew 6.1-4, 16-18), and the temple tax (Matthew 17.24-27).

People with common viewpoints can attract each other. As a traveling companion, Luke would have been an informative resource for the apostle Paul, which refutes rather easily the assertion that Paul preached a different Jesus from the one who is historical. (Unless, of course, one rejects that the Jesus of the Gospels is the historical one.) For those who cannot reconcile that the first disciples’ primitive tradition is one and the same as the Jesus of the Gospels and such scholars are legion, the Jesus of Paul is always dissonant.

Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond Basics*), is commonly called the *indefinite plural*. Wallace writes, “The indefinite plural is the use of the third person plural to indicate no one in particular, rather ‘*someone*.’” This could be the author’s style of writing. However, there is another category in which Luke’s “*they will come...*” might fall-- *categorical plural* or *generalizing plural*. Wallace writes, “The reason that the plural is used is that it more easily yields itself to a *generic* notion: The force of this usage, it seems, is to focus more on the *action* than on the actor. This is not to say that the actor is unimportant; rather, the actor is important only in a generic sense: ‘This is the kind of person who does this.’” In Luke’s “*they will come...*,” the actor is “those who are outside” the kingdom. It is arguable that Luke *left the door wide open* to include *all* who are non-Jews the possibility to enter the kingdom of God.

185 Robert H Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 26

185 Ibid.

These do not see a coherent narrative in the Gospels, much less the entirety of Scripture. The argument claims that there is not even continuity between the Gospels and the other 23 books of the New Testament.¹⁹³ Some are offended so at the Gospels to claim the authors immoral, for being “creating such a fictional narrative.”¹⁸⁶ Such critiques may be the default conclusion of one who admits to agnosticism or atheism.).¹⁸⁷ Neither Luke nor Paul saw firsthand the ministry of Jesus, as Luke recognizes his authorial antecedents, “those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us” 1.2. I do not agree that Luke, or the other Evangelists, redacted their sources with oblique intent. Rather they demonstrated such faith that they, and Luke in a far-reaching sense, all argued for a mission that advocated humanity, the measure of their honor being the disparaged.¹⁸⁸ Luke embraced women. He is the lone Evangelist who recognizes women in the role of disciple and them by name [10:38-42],¹⁸⁹ as well as Jews and Gentiles, the powerful and the voiceless, the wealthy and the impoverished is at the heart of this thesis. Any interpretation of the message of Jesus that is owned by one nation or class of people to the exclusion of others falls short of its mandate. Their diversity is a reflection of passion and vision and for the cosmopolitan author of Luke. These impetuses led him to compose documents that would eventually be the centerpiece of controversy among the religious, Christians in particular, in the 2nd century Roman Empire. Luke and Paul would be forever identified together.

¹⁸⁶ “On New Testament Scholarship and the Integrity of Faith”, *New Blackfriars*, 76 (1995), 127-40, at 135.

¹⁸⁷ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78.

¹⁸⁸ Without Luke we would not know of Elizabeth (1.24-55) or Anna (2.36-38), the vignette in the home of Mary and Martha (10.38-42), that Jesus’ ministry was financially supported by women (8.1-3) or of several other examples.

¹⁸⁹ Luke’s Gospel, as the others, is androcentric enough, but it is possible, too, that Luke 24.11 is an exposé of the male disciples’ concession to cultural sexism.

Empire building requires conceit, genius and ruthlessness. Perhaps no conglomerate has bound together all three like ancient Rome, the Eternal City who saw its domain as “the world” and is still described by many historians as “the known world.” Rome is not the alone in history when it comes to astonishing architectural feats. Organizational expertise and charisma do not offer enough incentive for the labor force to sacrifice their lives for even the stateliest of undertakings. Glory is nothing without power. The Roman Empire stands alongside and perhaps above all who use religion and slavery (and sometimes the two are indistinguishable) to achieve things so unimaginable that millennia later, archeologists and scientists struggle to uncover their secrets. Suetonius tells us of Augustus, “. . .He boasted, not without reason, that he found it of brick, but left it of marble. He also rendered it secure for the time to come against such disasters, as far as could be effected by human foresight.¹⁹⁰

Roman roads ran to every part of the empire and people followed. Who would not want to live where fresh flowed? Claudius’ tunnel-river is a glorious accomplishment among the many notable aqueducts before his own and there was the Cloaca Maxima, one of the world’s first sewage systems. The quality of Rome’s concrete met standards for modern construction¹⁹¹ and remains vital to 21st century construction. Rome absorbed the style and technology of the Greeks and Etruscans, while the Coliseum continues to provide a model for stadiums.

As great as Rome was, not all questions and longings were answered, as philosophers persistently showed. A century after Luke, Stoic teacher Epictetus observed:

¹⁹⁰ Suetonius, *The Divine Augustus*, 28

¹⁹¹ Henry Cowan, *The Masterbuilders: a history of structural and environmental design from ancient Egypt to the nineteenth century*, (New York: Wiley 1977), 56

For you see that Caesar appears to furnish us with great peace, that there are no longer enemies nor battles nor great associations of robbers nor of pirates, but we can travel at every hour and sail from east to west. But can Caesar give us security from fever also, can he from shipwreck, from fire, from earthquake or from lightning? Well, I will say, can he give us security against love? He cannot. From sorrow? He cannot. From envy? He cannot.¹⁹²

Luke's Gospel appreciates the grandeur of his times, identifying some of the champions of the reign, not failing to mention the names of Caesar Augustus (2.1-3), Lysanius, and Tiberius (3.1). His documents exonerate Rome in the death of Jesus, as well as the arrest of Paul. Pilate washes his hands of the matter, while explaining Herod's action (23.13-15). In Paul's case, Festus, Agrippa and Felix can all see his innocence (25:18-19, 26:32 and 24:23-27). The implications of this are astounding. Little effort is required to see how responsibility placed on the shoulders of the Jewish elite could be fallaciously assigned to Jews as a whole and turn to actual or perceivable anti-Judaism. During the first three centuries, CE Christians would see multiple seasons of suffering at the hands of this government that appears in Luke-Acts mostly as benign, whereas Jewish oppression of Jesus and his followers is a constant refrain. Herod's violence against the church in Acts 12 resulting in the execution of James, brother of John, intensifies as a political expediency approved and stimulated by Jews. The riot at Ephesus in Acts 19:23-41 more closely resembles the social disapprobation of Christians in early church history recorded elsewhere. Acts 23 reports an incident where a Jew (Paul) nearly lost his life for an alleged temple violation, an offense that could have fomented a Judean rebellion and so four hundred soldiers and seventy cavalry were deployed to escort this lone Roman citizen from Jerusalem.

¹⁹² Epictetus, *The Discourses*, 3.13.3

The power and glory of Rome came to Paul's aid in this incident but the same force could crush one who did not enjoy a place of privilege and even some who were among the elite. Well-known are the accounts of the maneuverings of those at the axis of rulership that sometimes led to dizzying successions of emperors but the power and glory of Rome were so transcendent that we have a verb for it; Romanticize. One must not conclude, however, that Luke can be counted among those who idealize the temporal kingdom. While it may appear that he neatly ignores the evils of the empire to the detriment of Jews and other victims, the reality is that Christians, then and now, are being informed that the powers are no threat to them. Luke-Acts is an understated declaration of war against the abusive character of the kingdoms of the world.

Nonetheless, this is not a war against the systems themselves. The power and glory of Rome made roads for travelers to travel safe from marauders, more and better harbors, and waterways safe from pirates. This meant freedom for trade and because the government permitted a significant degree of religious freedom. The pluralism that exposed provinces to a range of cultic forms allowed Paul and his companions, including Luke and others to move about the Mediterranean proclaiming the message of another Empire, the government of God. Taking this too far brings one to the conclusion that the gospel could not have spread or survived without Rome's help. The conditions for evangelistic success were perfect for Paul, who could gain an audience with Jews with the travelling security of a Roman citizen but it is revisionist to assert in retrospect that Paul's way was the only way. It would be impossible to account for the growth of the church in places Paul never visited. This mentality pervades Christianity even to the present. The Book of Acts in our Bibles chronicles Paul's westward progression. Consequently, we derive that Western values are favorable to the development

of the church. Western Christians are now noticing how this can and has become a subliminal pretext for the strategies for promoting Christian mission, one wherein messengers cannot imagine an evangelized community without Western acclimatization. This discovery is likely the consequence of both 1) pressure from disgruntled indigenous peoples and 2), prevailing trends among scholars seeking more historically and materially grounded histories. A re-reading of history that listens to subaltern voices has challenged theological seminarians and church historians to ask questions about Christian triumphalism. In 1985, a defining moment for indigenous peoples arose when Andean Indians wrote a letter signed by leaders of several Indian organizations to Pope John Paul II. It stated,

We, the Indians of the Andes and America have decided to give you back your Bible, since for the past five centuries it has brought us neither love, peace or justice. We beg you take your Bible and give it back to our oppressors, whose hearts and minds are in greater need of its moral teachings. As part of the colonial exchange we received the Bible, which is an ideological weapon of attack. The Spanish sword used it in the daytime to attack and kill the Indians, turned at night into a cross that attacked the Indian soul.¹⁹³

R. S. Sugirtharajah, Professor of Biblical Hermeneutics, University of Birmingham, argued in 2004 that European colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological inquiry in Western discourse despite the very substantial links between the churches of Britain and the missions of the colonial world.¹⁹⁴ In The Postcolonial Biblical Reader, Sugirtharajah continues

Western theologians have yet to offer a sustained theological analysis of the impact of colonialism. Colonialism has not received anything like as much attention as the Holocaust in

¹⁹³ 'Pope Asked to Take Back the Bible,' *The Telegraph* 7 (February 1985).

¹⁹⁴ Postcolonial Theology Network <http://postcolonialtheologynetwork.blogspot.com/2009/01/ptn-purpose.html>

recent theological reflection in the West. There is no admission of the place of colonialism in the shaping of English theology.¹⁹⁵

Proponents of postcolonial theory do not have to be proved correct for us to appreciate their challenge to conventions of the study of church history. This is a claim that scholars cannot ignore. Concluding that Luke only endorses the power and glory of Rome is inaccurate. Richard Horsley blames, primarily, the modern Western separation of religion from politics and economics for the depoliticization of Judea and Galilee, which corresponds to the domestication of the idea of Jesus. Christianity and Judaism are thought of as “religions.” They are considered universal and spiritual Christianity having emerged and separated from a particularistic ethnic Judaism, with Jesus as the key figure who represents a conflict. He is not relative to political and economic matters, but between the emergent new religion and the old Jewish religious hegemony.¹⁹⁶ This is an oversight that is easier to make when one is blinded by power and glory. If assumptions are made about the unimpeachable prestige of empire, then it follows that the church that acquires that empire will be granted more than its fair share of gravitas, politically speaking. What happens when church politics mirror those of a powerful and glorious entity, or least one that is so perceived?

For Luke to idealize Rome would be counterintuitive. One must consider the conspicuousness of the Roman attitude toward the eastern provinces (Syria and Judea). Livy opines of them, “the meanest of mankind, and born only for slavery,” and “whose servile, cringing temper makes them much more like a breed of slaves than a nation of soldiers.” It

¹⁹⁵ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 19

¹⁹⁶ Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 9

was common knowledge also that the acquisition of new lands meant more slaves for Roman households and gladiatorial exhibitions. Latifundia, large estates which were formed after farmers burned their crops rather than surrender to Hannibal and then later bought up by wealthy Roman elites and were home to hundreds, even thousands of slaves and experienced frequent and sometimes massive rebellions.¹⁹⁷¹⁹⁸ The abundance of slaves, mostly captives, brought stress into the economy for freedmen in need of work. This made the grain-providing provinces, particularly vital, chiefly Sicily, Egypt, and North Africa. Judea was therefore even more geographically critical. It was not just a foreign (specifically Parthian or Aksumite) menace that concerned them. Tacitus explains why Augustus designated a lesser-ranked equestrian to govern Egypt rather than the customary senator.

That prince, among other secrets of imperial policy, had forbidden senators and Roman knights of the higher rank to enter Egypt except by permission, and he had specially reserved the country, from a fear that anyone who held a province containing the key of the land and of the sea, with ever so small a force against the mightiest army, might distress Italy by famine.¹⁹⁹

The containment that Rome required upon the eastern provinces as links to Egypt caused Jewish resentments to surface often. Jews hated the visible presence of ubiquitous occupying troops, and groaned under heavy taxation. Luke's Gospel reports that in 6 CE, Cyrenius, imperial governor of Syria, incorporated Judaea as a sub-province assessed a tax, and subsequently had to put down a rebellion led by Judas the Galilean.²⁰⁰ A later procurator (the

¹⁹⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 34/35.2.1-48

¹⁹⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, 6.2.6-7

¹⁹⁹ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.59

²⁰⁰ Luke 2.2

procurator's responsibility was mostly financial), Pontius Pilate, may have executed the most egregious imperial outrage of the generation.²⁰¹ Luke is anything but naive about the empire.

So, what does Luke see in Rome? Is he beguiled? Not at all. Harry Tajra's commentary notes that Luke "does not always succeed in obscuring how conflictual Paul's relationship to the Romans State really was." The very terminology Paul uses of the uniqueness and sovereignty of Jesus was subversive to the ideological bases of the Principate.²⁰² The achievements of the powerful are legitimate only to the extent that they serve humanity. On one hand, Powell suggests that Luke desired to help Christianity become established as a legitimate religion in a political sense²⁰³ but it is an unlikely scenario unless one accepts a composition date later than most, because until the persecution in Rome after the 64 CE fire most trials imposed on Christians came at the hand of Jews, who enjoyed a privileged national cult status accorded them that more or less covered Christians, and for most of the 1st century AD. A consideration of the history of Roman-Jewish relations is in order here.

3.4 Jesus Selects Men Far from Centers of Power

Second century Roman eastward expansion eventuated in their rule over Judea by 63 BC. Most of the Jews around the Mediterranean now fell under Roman rule. Both the Republican and Imperial government in Rome sidestepped direct actions against them but some privileges and concessions accorded them had the potential to precipitate contempt among provincials. Jews enjoyed the Sabbath, sent moneys to Judea, and were exempt from military service, even those who were citizens. To qualify my statement that the Rome was

²⁰² Harry Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul: Historical and Judicial Context, Traditions, and Legends* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1994), 36

²⁰³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.2
 Mark Allan Powell, *For the People: Introduction to the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 99

not hostile to them, it must be noted that there were frequent uprisings, as Jews could not easily stomach foreign rule. When Augustus installed Herod the Great as client king, the latter had to use force. The priestly aristocracy, mainly Sadducees, that he maintained were viewed as foreign rulers,²⁰⁴ a complex identity if ever there was one inasmuch as they carried out the temple cult for the masses, not only Judean, or Galilean, but Jews around the world. The professional scribal groups, mostly Pharisees who worked for the priests as administrators of the temple state helped to lend legitimacy to the entire system, required the favor of the Sadducees.²⁰⁵ These intermediaries that in some cases had, or at least claimed to have, familial connections to Jews amounted to a cabal that profited from the domination of the peasantry of Syria-Judea. As indicated earlier, Jesus had much in common with many of his debaters, especially terminologically but the gulf between the aristocracy and the poor could hardly have been greater. There was no Jewish ethno-monolith, not socio-political, nor religious. It is arguable that the three peoples of Israelite heritage in the southeast corner of the Roman Empire came to be known collectively as “Jews” over a period time and that previous to Imperial times they were Galileans, Samaritans, and Jews (Judeans). The transition was made in earnest with the emergence of Christianity. They were not all called “Jews,” nor could they be described as sects of “Judaism.” This could equally be said of Essenes or any other Israelite descendants.²⁰⁶ The Books of Maccabees describe an existence of resistance against sequence of imperial and local rulers on the part of the peasantry starting from the mid-second century BCE. The essence of Jesus’ respondents would come from

²⁰⁴ Julius Wellhausen, *The Pharisees and the Sadducees: An Examination of Internal Jewish History* (United States: Mercer University Press, 2001), 54

²⁰⁵ Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 24

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 25

populations like these, hence the irony that his first followers came from among those who would be called Jews by his followers centuries later. For Horsely this helps to frame the Christian theological picture of the immediate context of Jesus' ministry which, "instead of corresponding to historical realities block our recognition of the historical context in which Jesus worked."

The essentialism of conceiving the people of ancient Judea and Galilee as "Jews" without further qualification obscures the significant differences between them in social location and historical experience. Some belonged to the high-priestly and Herodian families who wielded power and privilege and were kept in their positions of power, wealth, and privilege by the Romans. The vast majority were economically marginal peasants living in villages. Some of those lived in Judea, which had been ruled by and through the Temple-state in Jerusalem for many centuries. While the Galilean peasants to the north had come under Jerusalem rule only about a century before Jesus, this is most significant for adequate historical understanding of the immediate social context of Jesus. Modern essentialist concepts such as "the Jews" block recognition of the extreme gulf that existed between rulers and ruled in the ancient world, which gulf has recently been more clearly discerned by classical historians.²⁰⁷

In Matthew, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (5.3) The Evangelists being conscious of their times, their geographies, and their cultures would not have known that two millennia later we would still be reading their texts in some five thousand languages.²⁰⁸ Had they known, they might have taken pains to synchronize the reporting of details. We are not

²⁰⁷ Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 11

²⁰⁸ Wycliffe Bible Translators <http://www.wycliffe.org/about/statistics.aspx>

sure if the Gospels can be harmonized, whether some narratives resemble but describe different incidents, or whether Jesus delivered so many sermons that it would be unreasonable to expect them to be identical. This thesis does not engage in the age-old debate over the differences between the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke), but merely underscores the measure of Luke's reach. In Luke 6.20, Jesus simply says, "Blessed are the poor." This is consistent with his declaration in chapter 4, when he informed the folk of Nazareth of the prophecy that had been fulfilled that very day. The Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to "proclaim good news to the poor." The captives, the blind, and the oppressed were the target.

If it seems that Luke is bewitched by the empire, a closer look, however, will reveal Jesus' concern for the poor. The poor are at first the Galilean peasantries, especially the sick. Luke does not, however, exclude the rich; Zacchaeus (19.1-10) was not a Gentile, even less a privileged Roman citizen, but we can here see the side of Jesus that has compassion for the despised wealthy. This rich man comes on Jesus terms and it appears that he is motivated by the compassion that Jesus has for him. Even the affluent can be outcasts and Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost (19.10). The theater of the Gospel according to Luke's opening scene crescendos with a song, titled appropriately for its first line, "The Magnificat." That name has ascended with meaningfulness and wonder. It is a song that with no orchestra, no score, and no choir shouts with ecstasy. It is a song for all who fear the Lord, described together as the humble, those who need mercy, the hungry, and the powerless. Their miserable rank is exchanged with the proud, the mighty, and the rich. Luke's record could be no clearer: this narrative knows Jesus to be the redeemer of the exiles. The untouchables will

now be touched and what grand story it would be? In just three centuries it would take show the true power and glory, because who could resist?

The centuries-later contraction of the Christian mission in lands like Persia, India, and China, that once hosted their influential presence suggests failure, a colossal setback, as though there is something inherently deficient in the message or something resistant to the gospel in some cultures. This chapter emphasizes that a primary reason the gospel spread so quickly is because of the many Jewish communities, not only in places like Italy, Iberia, and Egypt, but also, Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia. Just as Greek was advantageous, so was Aramaic, which was spoken from Egypt to India. Christians' relations with Jews reveal the character of an empire-sanctioned religion enfeebled by supports of government much like muscles in a human body weaken when allowed to remain in braces beyond the recommended length of time. The behaviors of the state-empowered church toward Jews are indicators of its relations with heterodox Christians and others.

3.5 The Final formation and launch of Early Apostles

Jesus selects his Apostles in Luke 6. He sends them on a trial mission in chapter 9 and sends a larger group in chapter 10. He convenes them for their final first stage of their ultimate deployment in chapter 22. "The Last Supper," it is called. In Luke's Gospel, we are told of their Lord's great anticipation for this occasion (22.15). Jesus was enthralled over the possibilities that this night portended. It would not have been his first Passover but the first with so much on the line. Judas had already arranged to give him up to the chief priests and elders. It was not from terror that Jesus sent his disciples Peter and John to reconnoiter a previously undisclosed spot to celebrate Passover (22.11-13). Only they would be present,

and what an unusual Passover it would be; customarily a family activity, these Galilean pilgrims' families were absent. They had been with Jesus enough to know that there were matters greater than convention. This small and tense gathering would be full of questions. In somewhat oblique language that outsiders would not comprehend, Jesus explains that the wine they are drinking and the bread they are eating are his blood and body; the pledge of the covenant he shares with them. Next he announces that he "will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." This statement can be taken as a pledge that his reign is so imminent that it will be instituted before the time of another Passover. Jesus was eager for this moment because from now on, everything will be different. His men can sense his zeal. He has been preparing himself and them for something historic, the details of which they have been slow to grasp.

The disciples are excited, afraid and confused. At least once before Jesus had to help them adjust their expectations of the reign of God, as they first thought it would appear upon his arrival in Jerusalem (19.11).²⁰⁹ Their conversation turns into a clash over which of them would emerge as protagonist (22.24). Jesus has been known to reprimand them but not this time. They are moving closer toward the effecting of the divine proposal and Jesus' approach is measured, knowing the weightiness of these hours. Not only have they not been here before but also everything of history has awaited this impending change. The instruction they have been receiving all along comes to Jesus' recapitulation (22.25-27).

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who

²⁰⁹ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: The Gospel according to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 257-61

reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

As a rule, lessons that have been difficult to process can be absorbed more deeply when those lessons must be lived out. He had earlier taught them, "...when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.' " (17.7). Here, Jesus affirms his calling and identity as "one who serves." He does not terminate their conversation here, as though their vigilance will be squandered. He proceeds with the affirmation "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials," (22.28) because indeed they would not have come this far with him were it not for their faith. This is heaven's applause for their perseverance. Affirmation is not all he provides, however, as he continues with the promise of a reward "and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." How can this be? Who can explain this defiance? Will he indeed appoint kingdoms to them? Will he not be detained within hours, to later be struck down? When Jesus recognizes their perseverance and promises rewards, he is announcing their vindication, which presumes his own. It is not simply that they have been assigned kingdoms, but as his Father assigned to him. Here we ascertain the order of heaven: the condition of their eating and drinking with him at his table is their being appointed a kingdom; the two concepts are conjoined. He had said already that he would "not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes," (22.18) and now he reveals that their drinking and eating together

will accompany their shared vindication. So, what of the disciples sitting on thrones “judging the twelve tribes of Israel?” Stein offers²¹⁰ an equitable perspective.

In light of the future dimension of the parallel sayings in 22:16, 18, it is best to understand this promise as referring to that time when the believer will share in the benefits of Jesus’ kingly rule (cf. 22:29–30a). Like the first promise in 22:30a, this one is best understood metaphorically as referring to participating in the consummated kingdom where believers experience the blessings of their Lord’s reign.²¹⁰

If one accepts that Jesus’ rule provides benefits for all believers and that the assurance extended to the Apostles is representative consistent with the way his Father confers the blessing of Jesus upon the people of God, then the promise of eating and drinking with him in his Father’s kingdom could be representative of the enjoyments of limitless living as partakers of his victory.

The end of Luke’s Gospel and the beginning of The Acts of the Apostles contain conceptual overlap in several ways. There is a command to stay in Jerusalem (Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4) to await the coming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24.49; Acts 1.4) so that they can become witnesses (Luke 24.48; Acts 1.8) and principally, for the purposes of this chapter, that the mission is expected to be universal (Luke 24.47; Acts 1.8). This universal mission is to be powered by the Holy Spirit, something earlier indicated by John the Baptist in 3.16.

If the Apostles had expected an immediate appearance of the reign of God earlier on, now that they have seen the resurrected Jesus, surely the time must be upon them. They ask in Acts 1.6, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Lest we view these Jesus-followers only as over-anxious patriots we must remind ourselves that their expectation was based on ancient prophecy, a practice that Jesus earlier endorsed, and conspicuously so

²¹⁰ Stein, R. H. (2001). *Vol. 24: Luke* The New American Commentary (550). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers

after his resurrection, in Luke 24.25-27, where he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning him.” Here there is inquiry about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel and was along Scriptural lines. However, they are in a state of disbelief. Disbelief comes from deep disappointment, from enduring long periods with no change, from being profoundly wounded.

This time, however, it is not they who had been wounded but Jesus. On the day of his resurrection, in the presence of their Risen Savior, these Jesus-followers had been “foolish... and slow of heart to believe,” even though they had just seen the incredible fulfillment of Isaiah 53, the victory, the vindication of the Suffering Servant.

As the reality of his resurrection settled in, they began to believe and even dream. Hence their question, “Is it time?” The Lord’s great reversal and triumph was astonishing to those who were present and has remained so throughout history. This recent turn of events had moved them to inquire again about the reign of God as it pertains to Israel and again Jesus needed to guide their thinking. He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” Acts 1.7

We should not be too surprised that his followers attempted to establish a timeline or deadline. They were conversant with their prophets, who frequently provided signposts for Israel and as such it might be counterintuitive to accept that they should not be privy to times and seasons. Unlike the hit-and-miss method of many later Christian, prophecy teachers, Jesus gives them no date. This is in line with the Father’s objective to establish that their mission goes beyond Israel and as such will not be accomplished within a revealed and

defined period that would constrict their imaginations. It will be difficult enough, as the Book of Acts will show, for them to imagine a restored Israel that includes all the nationalities of their world.

They needed an imagination that could not be bound by space or time. Then, they needed to know they had what it took, the wherewithal, to do something unimaginable. Nothing that we read here indicates that the primary aim is to secure favor or support from Jerusalem, Rome, or any other earthly power. Jesus tells them in Acts 1.8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

He mentions only one Source of empowerment and their environments do not provide variables. Nowhere does Jesus anticipate, much less require the backing of government, military or any other agency, to evangelize the nations. Systems are not irrelevant or useless but they are objects of redemption, not subjects. They are the ends of salvation, not the means.

We cannot tell how privy, or even complicit, Joseph and Nicodemus were to the proceedings that led to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, but they were not alone among influential people who sympathized with Jesus, as John 12.42 indicates, “Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.”

As insiders, they failed to avert the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was one of countless victims put down by empire, Roman and otherwise, where the sympathetic and the outraged did nothing for justice. Pontius Pilate “desiring to release Jesus” (Luke 23.30), offered to punish and release him. For Pilate, a measure of injustice is acceptable. Ultimately, he could

not conceal that immeasurable injustice was acceptable. When Joseph of Arimathea donated his tomb and provided the personnel for the conveyance of Jesus' corpse and Nicodemus gave a lavish amount of treatments, they were not in some condescending way lending their assistance. It became their honor that they are numbered among the Lord's benefactors.

Joseph and Nicodemus were part of the Jewish court, some would accuse them as co-conspirators in the plot against Jesus, but at every moment, God was at work. When the powerful conspire to crush the innocent, they do not have absolute ability to manage outcomes. They do great harm that results in much secondary damage even though they envision themselves beyond impunity and even justified in their actions. The world, the spirit of the world, can be ruthless. Jesus chose to enter this place of ruthless, sadistic pain as a victim, and thereby expose the capriciousness of bureaucracies and absurdity of human violence and oppression. In this manner he would seize jurisdiction over outcomes. Herein is the gospel's most attractive feature, one that institutes its appeal to both Jew and Gentile. His vindication of Jesus inspires hope in the human race.

After the resurrection and after Jesus had ascended into heaven, another man, another apostle would be appointed as Apostle. He would be the messenger to the nations. Some scholars assert that Paul preached his own gospel and started his own movement. They read so little of the earthly life of Jesus in his letters that help comprise the Bible. The Apostle Paul, with Luke as a fellow traveler, does not write of the life of Jesus on earth, for a couple of important reasons. Paul informs us more of the heavenly life of Jesus and what he does now that he has been. Secondly, Paul's letters don't duplicate the information given in the Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, not because he is unaware or deems it unimportant, as those important writings do demonstrate that Jesus in Christ, or Messiah, but Paul, in his letters,

emphasizes that Jesus, the promised Jewish Messiah is also Lord of Creation. It not so important for the Gentile world to know that the Jews have a Messiah and that he is Jesus, even though we know that such scriptural knowledge comprises the essential roots of the message. Never in Acts or in his Epistles does Paul show that he is inclined to deny his Jewishness? He is conscious of his own heritage and the background of the reign of God on earth. Paul always knows that the gospel is to the Jew first, but also to the Gentile, and yet he knows his own vocation is different from that of other apostles, and even Jesus. Paul does not diminish Jesus but rather magnifies him. When Paul refers to himself as the minister to the Gentiles, Paul is the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. When Paul refers to Jesus as the minister to the circumcised, it is, “in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (15.9). Thus, in order to fulfill his calling, Paul considers the advantages of his heritage only rubbish; even though his heart’s desire and prayed to God for Israel is that they might be saved. (Rom 10.1)

3.6 Paul Understands Jesus as a Post-resurrection (and thusly, post-imperial)

Phenomenon

Paul, with Luke as a fellow traveler, does not write of the life of Jesus on earth, but it is not because he is unaware or deems it unimportant, but because the promised Jewish Messiah is also Lord of Creation. It not so important for the Gentile world to know that the Jews have a Messiah and that he is Jesus and yet such knowledge comprises the essential roots of the message. Nowhere in Luke or in his Epistles does Paul show that he is inclined to deny his Jewishness. He is conscious of his own roots and the background of the reign of God on earth. In Acts 20:17-35, his farewell address to a Jewish-Gentile assembly in Ephesus, he streams his Jewish heritage into the explosive outreach of which his present has become a

part. Paul always knows that the gospel is to the Jew first, also to the Gentile, yet he knows his own vocation is different from that of other apostles and even Jesus. He does not diminish Jesus, but rather magnifies him. When he refers to himself as the minister to the Gentiles, Paul is the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Romans 15.16). When he refers to Jesus as the minister to the circumcision, it is “in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” (15.9)

Perhaps Paul’s hardest scrutiny was that which began to proceed from the ‘Tubingen School of New Testament Interpretation’ in the middle of the 19th century, which unleashed a deluge of historical-critical conclusions that seemed to be watershed. At first Baur’s postulations of conflict among early Christian groups and especially between Paul and Jerusalem apostles, were unpopular, but gained traction over time. Its founder, Ferdinand Christian Baur, lent authority to the Early Christian Ebionite sect, something of an alter ego movement to the Marcionites. For Marcionites, Jesus was only divine and for Ebionites he was only human. If only divine, he could not be Jewish. If only human, he could be only Jewish. Baur asserted from Clementine’s writings used by Ebionites in the 4th century that they rejected Paulinism as heresy and that they, the Ebionites, represented the tradition of Twelve Apostles. Baur could not hold his position without a low of Acts, else a fuller-orbed Paul would be revealed. For Baur, Luke’s Paul shows, “discrepancies...show very seriously the want of historical truth” in Acts.²¹¹ Later, Walter Bauer developed this viewpoint that conflict created orthodoxy in the respect that various doctrinal viewpoints existed contemporaneously and expressions that eventually came to be known as “heretical” were the organic Christianity of Jesus and the Apostles.²¹²

Although fascination with the Tubingen School’s take on documents attributed to Paul has abated, Higher Criticism lives in various form, as described by R. V. Pierard,

²¹¹ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul: the Apostle of Jesus Christ: his Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, Translated Eduard Zeller (Edinburgh:Williams and Norgate, 1873), 110

²¹² Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, translated by Robert Kraft and Gerhard Kroedel, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), Bauer sees the original faith at a disadvantage inasmuch as it could not gain the support of Rome. He writes “Rome... was from the very beginning the center and chief source of power for the "orthodox" movement within Christianity,” and “The course of Christianity was directed toward the West from the very beginning. One could almost say that it was driven straight into the arms of Rome by its development. Many a crucial matter might have been different if the actual Orient had not simply excluded the new religion for a long time, thus making it impossible for marked and undiluted eastern influences to become operative” 231, 232.

... the school with its emphasis on dialectical conflict within the early church, rejection of Pauline authorship of most of his epistles, and completely antinaturalistic outlook contributed significantly to the development of a historical - critical approach to the Bible that completely ignored the divine element in it.²¹³

Because the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Epistles do not share the same emphases, with Paul in Acts being a living out an evangelistic narrative while his Epistles' emphasis is freedom from the law and justification by faith, scholars whose approach is devoid of devotion cannot conceive of Paul's Gospel as consistent with that of the Twelve and for them it follows that Luke has deliberately reinvented Paul to fit him to the narrative that earlier relies on Peter's experiences.²¹⁴ It is this writer's belief that without faith in the veracity of the Gospel's subject and mission, it is impossible to clearly see the picture that Luke-Acts paints as more than a romantic portrayal of the church's beginnings that amounts to little more than propaganda. Among the matter that dirties the lens of the researchers who cannot see the splendid and justifiable universality of this redemptive mission is their knowledge of and frustration or indignation over injustice and atrocities with the complicity of systems of power in the name of Christianity. It is impossible to fathom the character of the mission and at once be antinaturalistic. The critics like Beare and Huck who of Paul's writings assert that, "there is not a word to suggest that he has ever heard the story of the empty tomb," reflective of the school that separate Paul from the Twelve, eventually move toward a denial

²¹³ "(Tubingen School, Tubingen)." BELIEVE Religious Information Source web-site. 2007. A Christ Walk Church Public Service. (December 26, 2010) (<http://mb-soft.com/believe/indexaz.html>)

²¹⁴ L. Keck and J. Martyn, eds. *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 330-50

of physical resurrection.²¹⁵ Paul's Gospel has to do with the resurrection, whose mandate and appeal transcend Israel,²¹⁶ but is completely consistent with the message of the Twelve. Identifying the empty seat left upon Judas Iscariot's defection, the Twelve sought a replacement to "become with us a witness to his resurrection."²¹⁷

Although we know nothing of Matthias' testimony, and many others of the Apostles, Paul, we know well. He stands tall in history and although the Gospel advances to many nations concurrently with Paul's lifetime. We know more of his story because of his biography in Acts and his epistles. He is known as the Apostle who takes the Gospel beyond Jewry, and the world would never be the same.

Alongside Paul are mentioned Augustine and Luther as champions of the justice of God and salvation by faith and grace. This comparison is not altogether fair to Paul because the overarching impetus for his preaching was the resurrection. If there was conflict among them, in this he is not the slightest bit different from the other apostles. Proclaiming the resurrection, Paul confounded Greek philosophers (Acts 17.18) and exposed the fundamental defect in the priestly order (23.6-8). Later before imperial authorities he explained the grounds of his arrest, "It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day." The fact that "we shall be certainly united with him in a resurrection like his" is the basis of his hope. The goal of the race that was his life was to "know him in the power of his resurrection and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." (Phil. 3.10) The only reason for being like Jesus in his death is because his death was

²¹⁶ Acts 17.31 Paul declares, "...because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."
²¹⁵ Francis Wright Beare, and Albert Huck, *The Earliest Records of Jesus: A Companion to the Synopsis of the First Three Gospels* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 241

²¹⁷ Acts 1.22

not final. Paul could embrace death because it no longer had a sting, the grave no longer a victory (1 Cor. 15.55-56). This truth was exhilarating and accounts for how Paul could even boast in death, the death of Jesus (Gal. 6.14). He exhorted the community to share in the boast corporately, in what we know as communion. Each time the gathering of believers ate their bread and drank their wine together it was a proclamation of that death, “until he comes.” (1 Cor. 11.26).

Paul taught many themes, but not even the best of them; justice, faith, and grace, they all mean nothing to him if there is no resurrection.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.²¹⁸

3.7 Conclusion

The mission of Jesus is persistently carried by the marginalized and principally for the marginalized (signified by “first to the Jew, and then to the Gentile”) throughout the world. When the Gospel links with political before the divine power, it will doubtless stray from its purpose and become subject to the vagaries of power. The Apostles’ plights, Paul in particular, cast light on how the politically powerful church not only is at variance with the mission of Jesus. Further, a politically powerful church obfuscates the perceptions of the constituents of the church, the people who presumably opt to identify with that mission. This development results in divided loyalties between eternal and temporal authority. It is devastating to all too many people and societies in such measure that demands the question of

²¹⁸ 1 Cor. 15.14-19

this thesis, inasmuch as Jesus claims that, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other...”²¹⁹

CHAPTER 4

THE TUMULTUOUS POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT INTO WHICH JESUS EMERGED

Introduction

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke paints the picture of the Church growing by way of Diaspora synagogues, in part with the ambitious design of Jesus. This grand narrative includes Jesus’ final words, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1.8. The objective of this thesis is to endorse the vision articulated above while critiquing the understandably euphoric but mistimed victory-lap approach of church historians. This approach started in the fourth century and reduced the understanding and fulfillment of the mission to the political and religious settings of the Roman Empire. It appraised its effects on the present and possibilities for the future. The dominant example is Eusebius, who saw the messianic prophecies of Isaiah and others who hoped for Israel

²¹⁹ Matthew 6:24

through the lens of events that were developing before his very eyes, thus remolding eschatology.

Immediately all the multitude of rulers among the Romans began to be abolished, when Augustus became sole ruler at the time of our Saviour's appearance. And from that time to the present you cannot see, as before, cities at war with cities, nor nation fighting with nation, nor life being worn away in the old confusion.²²⁰

Christians may bemoan the relativism, especially in ethics, of our times, but postmodernism can indirectly but justifiably credit Christianity for its expressions. Within Christianity very early fell afield of the very stimulus for humanity it previously claimed and sanctified. The mandate for the nations was compelling enough, but triumph in the Roman Empire deceived many Christians, at least those close to the center of power, that the goal was near. Never mind the Barbarians. Never mind the rest of the world. My argument is that the power and proximity of Persia was one key "other" contributing to the shortsightedness of the catholic church, which I will discuss later, but a different "other" was a much more significant protagonist in the triumphalism of Christianity: Jews.

Jesus was born into and lived in places and times that were filled with anxiety. Many Jews did all they could to withstand being overrun by Greek and later Roman culture. Others preferred to accommodate their conquerors. Those on the margins paid the greatest price both economically and in terms of their dignity. Jesus shaped his message to give hope to these victims of circumstance. The character of that message would eventually find a reception among, not only dispossessed Jews outside of Galilee and Judea, but also beyond all imagined borders and eras. This chapter revisits not just the days of the early church but we will travel back even farther in time and observe the fragmented people whose

²²⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 1.4

disillusionment provided the fertile soil for Jesus to proclaim that the kingdom of God was near. I show here how that despite the desperation of the people and how they might embrace a merely temporal change in government never did Jesus concede such a shortsighted longing. Accordingly, the earliest days of the church bore the same marks of humility and suffering.

4.1 Powerless Jews and the Hope that Encompassed Nations

Jews had done the early mission. They were forerunners, having evolved beyond their henotheistic past and retaining their unique cult in a way that commanded the respect of Romans. They accomplished this, not with a predetermined script but with centuries of give and take among Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Medes, Persians and Romans. It is impossible to hold a scholarly discussion about the spread of Christianity without knowing something of its Judaic beginnings. This history includes the people, the land, and their story in the years leading to the birth of Jesus and the emergence of the church. Any analysis of those Judaic beginnings will attest to the processes of testing Hellenization and grinding despotism. We keep in mind that autocracy was not exclusive to Jews, but was the common form of government of the age. Hellenistic kingdoms were won at the edge of the spear, and kings viewed the subjects as belonging to them.

In the spirit of Alexander of Macedon, Hellenization was pressed upon Jews by the opportunistic Seleucid king Antiochus IV who, in the second century BCE, detected the schism between hellenophile Jews and those who would call themselves more pious. According to the writer of 1 Maccabees, this effort, which included the erection of a

gymnasium and cosmetic reverse circumcisions, amounted to the abandonment of their covenantal charter with God.²²¹ The most demonstrative example of this breach is when Antiochus reportedly marched to Jerusalem, slew the last of the Zadokite High Priests, Jason (who bore a Greek name, but was apparently not Greek enough) and dedicated the Temple to Zeus, erecting a Zeusian image in his own likeness on the altar, and according to some sources, sacrificed a pig in the Temple in 167 BCE. This outrage carries with it an important message: the core of a people, their sacred space, cannot remain intact if essential change is to be effected, one way or another.

Globalization and colonization in later ages correspond to the Hellenization of the fourth into the first centuries BCE but Greek culture encountered an exceptionally complex challenge among many Jews because of their deep-seated outlook based on a theology of imperialism, and unequivocally, their God was king of the nations. “For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.” Psalm 47:7-8

Although they lived as a subject people, their history informed them that things would change.

4.2 Jews in Antiquity and the Non-negotiability of the Holy

Other peoples’ cultures often seem peculiar, if not bizarre, but we may even mimic one another’s customs, such as in music, dance, cosmetology, dress and language, where we are able to enjoy them with a certain embrace of their exotic quality. This is less true with foreign religions for a number of reasons, not the least of which have to do with mindfulness

²²¹ 1 Maccabees 1.3-5

for what is sacred (albeit what is sacred for one can directly countervail what is sacred for another). For competition and sportsmanship we learn their games. We can be quite at ease with foreign food, and wines (as long they do not involve ritual). On the one hand, there are examples of micro cultures where even casual expressions of things that are alien evoke cultic abhorrence, whereas cosmopolitans develop appetites for all things different, but an appreciation for religious diversity comes more slowly, perhaps last of all. Romans in Antiquity saw themselves as a sophisticated society, but had clear taboos against commingling the Roman and the Other. The esteemed politician and philosopher Cicero frames this for us,

For that all men will be the more pure and holy when they frequent the temples of the gods, for there, in a certain sense, they have the divine images, not only impressed, on their minds, but actually presented before their eyes.²²²

For Cicero, many elements of Greek religion were objectionable and yet he criticized (Persian) Zoroastrianism for its judgments of Greek temples.²²³ He acknowledges the civic nature of divinities that the Romans learned from the Greeks and saw as inseparable the gods and the cities they inhabit. One can only speculate whether Cicero could recognize at any point the xenophobia in his articulation of Roman religious views.

And for individuals to worship private gods, or new gods, or strange gods, would introduce a confusion of religions, and all kinds of unknown ceremonies. This is not the way in which gods accepted by the priests and by the senate²²⁴ should be worshipped, even if they approved of such regulations.²²⁵

²²² Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Republic and The Laws*, Translated by C.D. Yonge, (Digireads.com Publishing, 2009), Book II

²²³ Ibid. II

²²⁴ The Senate dealt with claims of divinities for recognition: Livy, 4.46

²²⁵ Ibid. II

Recognition by the state as a prerequisite for legitimacy was not uniquely Roman, in fact, much of what we see in Antique Roman religion is mirrored in the peoples who are primary subjects of this chapter, Jews and in the 4th century CE, Christians.

Although the idea of religious hegemony among people of Israel by no means began with the Hasmonean Dynasty, John Hyrcanus I is famous for exploiting the period of relief from Seleucid domination with his aims of first subduing rival regimes competing for influence, expanding Judean borders, and forcing Jewish religion upon conquered peoples in the region.²²⁶ The priestly Hasmonean family's patriarch was Matthias, followed by his son, Judah the Maccabee ("Hammerer"). Hasmonean dynasty lasted nearly eighty years and the kingdom regained boundaries close to that of Solomon's realm, reaching political consolidation under Jewish rule. Jewish resistance during this period helped to expedite the fall of the Seleucid Empire, which sustained attacks from the emergent Roman Republic and Parthian Empire, and as such, Judea was a legitimate geopolitical player, and at least as important as Armenia, Syria, Bactria, and Edessa, all of which succeeded the Seleucid Empire.²²⁷

Following the death of Antiochus VII in 129 BCE the stranglehold over Judea was loosened and Hyrcanus I, after reclaiming independence, extended Judean control over Palestine and Jordan. He captured Shechem in the North and destroyed the Samaritan rival temple. In the south, he made Idumeans accept Judaism, even requiring circumcision.²²⁸

²²⁶ I Maccabees 16

²²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.13.1

²²⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.9.1 Note: Idumeans were given the choice to convert to Judaism or leave the country, since they had settled in the area assigned to the tribe of Simeon.

Either Hyrcanus I or his son and successor Aristobulus I warred against the Ituraeans in Galilee and forced Judaism upon them, as well.²²⁹ It is significant that these conquered cultures will continue to aspire to Judaism long after their liberation, speaking to the later standing of Jews in the Roman Empire, especially Levantines in the eastern provinces.

Hyrcanus I arranged for his wife to be chief of state and designated Aristobulus I high priest. Aristobulus later had his mother imprisoned and all of his brothers, except one, whom he “loved,” but afterward had killed. Aristobulus I married Salome Alexandra and when he died, his 37-year-old widow released from prison his brother, Jonathan who took the name Alexander Jannaeus.

Josephus records that while officiating as High Priest at the Feast of Tabernacles, Alexander Jannaeus poured the water libation at his feet instead of the altar and greatly offended the Pharisees. The people arose, shouting, and pelted the High Priest with fruit. Alexander released troops upon the worshippers, leading to civil war. For six years the Pharisees fought against Alexander’s Sadducean forces, defeating them. The Pharisees, thinking Alexander had been sufficiently chastened, restored him to the throne, out of concern for national security.²³⁰ These developments were part of a steady decline of the Hasmonean Dynasty and Jewish independence.

Alexander died in 76 BCE and Alexandra became queen. She appointed her elder son, Hyrcanus II, to serve as High Priest, something of an irony as he was a Pharisee. Her other son, Aristobulus II, whom she appointed to be commander-in-chief of the military, was a

²²⁹ This is Josephus’ claim in *Antiquities* 13.301-23, but Smallwood thinks that Aristobulus’ reign was too short and it was likely Hyrcanus’ military action, and that by this time Jews were dominant in Galilee and so the Judaization applied to a minority. E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 14

²³⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.13.5

Sadducee. When their mother died, Hyrcanus II became king and his brother led the Sadducee army in a surprise attack against Jerusalem and Aristobulus II became both king and high priest. Peace did not last long, however, hostilities erupted that got the attention of Rome.

In 63 BCE, after Aristobulus rejected Pompey Magnus' support of Hyrcanus' monarchy, Pompey seized control of Jerusalem and brought the Jews under Roman control as a client kingdom. Aristobulus surrendered and was sent to Rome, favoring Hyrcanus II. Jewish prisoners-of-war were enslaved and carried to Rome as well and over time were manumitted, forming the first sizeable Jewish community there.

Judea was now part of the Roman Empire. In 48 BCE, Julius Caesar defeated Pompey and John Hyrcanus II switched to his side and reinforced him, after Ptolemy XII King of Egypt, in Alexandria, besieged Caesar. Caesar then confirmed Hyrcanus II High Priest and Ethnarch. Julius Caesar ruled Judea from 47-44 BCE and became a friend to all Jews throughout the empire and he even regarded them as allies.²³¹ Caesar entrusted civil government affairs in Judea to Jewish administrator, Antipater, who had been previously appointed by Hyrcanus II. Antipater promptly appointed his son Phasael governor of Jerusalem and surrounding territory and the younger Herod as governor of Galilee.

By the time Caesar's reign in Judea began, dissension among already-factious Jews in the Levant (Judeans having been separated from Galileans for centuries and hardly homogenous, with multiple ideological differences even among the Judeans) had been escalating for several years, in light of the Pharisees' view of Hyrcanus II as more a political

²³¹ C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *The Life of Julius Caesar*, 84.5

figure than spiritual. Hyrcanus found himself forced into alliance with the Sadducees,²³² widening schisms that would uphold Sadducean dominance in Judea for some time to come. Antipater, an Idumean, and father of Herod the Great, for whom the Herodian party was named, had aided Hyrcanus II. Herodians saw themselves as distinct from the Sadducees and Pharisees, and as friends of Herod. We know little, less of them than the Sadducees, except that they found political bedfellows of a sort among Pharisees.²³³

Another sect, even more separatist than the Pharisees took root in Qumran. The construction of the Qumran settlement, a community that conceived part of its duty to be the continuation of the functions assigned in the Torah to the Zadokite priesthood, emerged during the same period and was hegemonic, as well. The Qumran sect saw Israel as under divine judgment and was dissatisfied with Jewish orthodoxy and therefore themselves as the true remnant of Israel living on the verge of the End of Days. They were not fond of marriage or childbearing and were consumed with a pursuit of their understanding of purity.

An excerpt from the Dead Sea Scrolls' Halakhic Letter shows something of their meticulousness about ritual:

And also concerning flowing liquids: we say that in these there is no purity. Even flowing liquids cannot separate unclean from clean because the moisture of flowing liquids and their containers is the same moisture.²³⁴

Schiffman observes here that it might be hard for moderns to conceive that a schism could occur of minor aspects of ritual law; in this case, the pouring of a liquid from one vessel to

²³² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.10.5

²³³ Cf. Mark 3.6; 12.13; Matthew 22.16; Mark 8.15; Luke 13.31-32) The Jewish Encyclopedia regards them as the, "Priestly party under the reign of King Herod and his successors; called by the Rabbis "Boethusians," as adherents of the family of Boethus, whose daughter Mariamne was one of the wives of King Herod, and whose sons were successively made high priests by him. They followed the Sadducees in their opposition to the Pharisees, and were therefore often identified with the former.

²³⁴ 4QMMT, B58-61

another. If the upper vessel is pure, and the lower is not, the source can be rendered impure when the stream links the two vessels. Pharisees ruled that the stream did not impart impurity to the pure vessel. The Halakhic Letter was written from the Dead Sea sect to the high priest in Jerusalem, constituting a warning to oppose the Pharisees.²³⁵ The letter may contain hope for a restoration of Temple worship to the administration to Zadokites, and in the view of the Qumran sect, to God. Schiffman reminds us that to many factions among the Jewish people in Antiquity, correct conduct of worship was the primary guarantor of their wellbeing.

The quest for purity in order to please God is not dissonant with Cicero's appeal to Romans for cultic concord, each with the wellbeing of their own people in view. Just as those who composed the Halakhic Letter viewed themselves as dissidents struggling against an unsympathetic minority, Jews in general, to differing degrees, consistently resisted Roman rule. These approaches were consistent with the approach to sacrificial systems in other nations. In order to prosper, the deities must be appeased. This approach only became a problem for Israel inasmuch as they were under the sovereignty of another state, and could not do well under their own sovereignty when worship was polluted, whether by an illegitimate priesthood or imprecision in sacrificial performances. Livy records that, during a time of plague in 433 BCE, the devout response was a vow to deity. The pestilence during that year afforded a quiet in other matters. A temple was vowed to Apollo for the health of the people.

²³⁵ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 86

They dedicated the temple to Apollo two years later.²³⁶ Romans took their religious ancestry serious but it did have elasticity. There were times when the transfer of a deity of a conquered city to the Pantheon was the result of conquest, such as in the cases of Juno of Veii, and of Juturna of Lavinium.²³⁷ Usually the incorporation of deity came as a result of disaster. The Phoenician goddess Cybele, for example, was introduced during the final crisis of the Second Punic War. To understand the parameters of the incorporation of deities in Rome, W.H.C. Frend says that one must seek the pragmatism of each case. Foreign deities would be suppressed if they appeared to threaten the prestige of Roman gods or if their rites gave rise to scandal (in which case their adherents would be punished).²³⁸

Cicero's statement against the practice of worship private, new, or strange gods was intended for the Roman citizen.²³⁹ Such cults for him were disgraceful for a Roman citizen. For a devout Jew who happened to be a Roman citizen, it created a dilemma. Their predicament was further inflamed when the state reached its fill of proselytization, as when Cassius Dio informs that, "As the Jews flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways. He [Tiberius] banished most of them."²⁴⁰ Further complicating the place of Jews in Rome was that their compatriots in Jerusalem "deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there."²⁴¹ These realities may not have constantly and directly touched the corridors of power but it could not but have been the theme of opinion makers and the public at large. Jews were ubiquitous and while there were imperial ideas of a domain that blended

²³⁷ Jesse Benedict Carter, *The Religious Life of Ancient Rome*, (Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2001), 41

²³⁸ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 13

²³⁹ Titus Livius, *The History of Rome*, 4.25 and 29

²⁴⁰ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 57.18.5

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* 69.12.2

Italian and Greek culture, with intentional interpenetration of the provinces seeking the absorption of barbarians, Jews, “might have claimed a place by the side of the other two...” but “stands in a relation of indifference to the state, clothes himself readily with any nationality, and is unfit to be a member of a governing hierarchy.”²⁴² Also in 41 BCE, Claudius would likely have expelled Jews from Rome yet again but they were too numerous. Dio records:

As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings.²⁴³

Jews around the empire were both practitioners and objects, or victims, of religious hegemony largely based upon a worldview that each nation’s welfare was in the hands of their respective deities and rituals were executed in accordance with their ancient traditions.

In 40 BCE, and four years after the assassination of Julius Caesar, Herod, was appointed “King of Jews” by Octavian and Antony.²⁴⁴ Hyrcanus II retained a titular role as Jewish Ethnarch. Much intrigue led to the Herodians’ noticeable rise in power. Although Herod was Idumean, he was a practicing Jew. After marrying Doris, he had become betrothed to Mariamne, whose grandfather, Hyrcanus II, used her in an attempt to secure Hasmonean supremacy in Judea. He did not realize that the day would come that Herod would execute Mariamne, and then, to establish his own reign, Hyrcanus, as well. It did not

²⁴² C. Bryans and F.J.R. Hendy, *The History of the Roman Republic: Abridged from the History by Professor Mommsen*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), 33

²⁴³ Dio, *History*, 60.6.6

²⁴⁴ Josephus, *War*, 1.284

hurt Herod's ambitions that she happened to be the granddaughter of Aristobulus II but this seems more than a marriage of political convenience, for Herod was truly infatuated.²⁴⁵

Antigonus did not acknowledge Caesar's appointment of Herod and his next gambit was to procure Parthian military support to rid Israel of the house of Herod and claim the throne for him. Pacorus, prince of Parthia, had lately arrived in Syria, and united with Antigonus to defeat the Roman army while Herod fled to Rome, inasmuch as many Judeans and Galileans rejected him.

Herod was an imperial insider, but, as Maier notes,

In fallow years or seasons of famine, Herod remitted taxes, and during one crisis he even sold his dinnerware to buy food for the populace. He also served as protector of overseas Jews in the Dispersion by conciliating their Gentile rulers.²⁴⁶

Comprehending Herod is no small undertaking. We must bear in mind that Josephus is unfavorable toward Herod and seeks to portray him as other than Jewish. Barton points up the significance that Herod was remembered by non-Jews as the epitome of Jewishness, noting that the general view is that Herod was deeply unpopular with his subjects, but that would have been truer for pro-Hasmoneans whose sentiments are preserved in Josephus and others. We may be inclined to overlook that the people were not partial toward the Hasmoneans during their rule.²⁴⁷ History does not remember him as "Herod the Great" without reason.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 1.22.1

²⁴⁶ Paul L. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 66

²⁴⁷ John Barton, *The Biblical World*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 469

²⁴⁸ Richardson sees no evidence that Herod was, or wanted to be called "Herod the Great." The adjective *great* is used once in Josephus (*Antiquities* 17.28) with reference to Agrippa I. Richardson postulates that it crept into usage first as a reference to Agrippa and only later transferred to his more important grandfather. Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 12.

Having married into the Hasmonean house (Mariamne) and becoming heir, Herod gained capital with some Judeans. He won the support of Augustus after switching his allegiance from Antony following the latter's defeat at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE and was crowned king of the Jews. That did not obviate the need to deal with Antigonus, Mariamne's uncle, who ruled Jerusalem. In order to rule Judea, Herod led a Roman army into a three-year war against Antigonus. Herod was able to drive Antigonus from Judea, while gaining the public support of Hyrcanus II. Still, the war raged on.²⁴⁹

Counteracting Herod's propaganda against the Hasmoneans, Antigonus spread the word that Herod was a half-Jew. This is ironic in that the Hasmoneans themselves held no heredity rights to a throne, especially the priesthood, but Antigonus raised questions over Herod's Jewishness. The Herodians were Idumeans whose ancestors had become Jewish in a context where Jews had historically self-referred as family into which outsiders were adopted. It appears that Judeans, and even Galileans, amongst whom Herod led a campaign to root out followers of the deposed Hasmonean Antigonus, and bandits who troubled his administration,²⁵⁰²⁵¹ accepted his Jewishness (until the family's decadent lifestyle damaged credibility). This fact reveals the nature of "religion" in Antiquity.²⁵² Gibbon would later write that he "described the triumph of barbarism and religion"²⁵³ when writing of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. He wrote from the shadow of a domineering church and does not see past the clouds of a world that had long dealt with faith and government as an integrated entity. Whether Hasmonean or Herodian, there was little royal about Jewish

²⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.12.1

²⁵⁰ Josephus, *War*, 1.303.

²⁵¹ Ibid. *Antiquities* 14.414-433.

²⁵² Christianity, especially, would later stress the importance of proper belief based on approved doctrines.

²⁵³ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1788), 16

leadership in these times, as they had completely lost allegiance to the kingly House of David, although it appears at least that the Sadducees saw themselves a descendants in the priestly line of Zadok. Herod, although he was no aristocrat and no priest, reserved the right to place whom he desired to be his lackey.

Herod kept public animus suppressed with his massive rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, one of the Roman Empire's greatest projects. He was a complex figure and expert at spearheading prodigious ventures, including the fortresses of Masada, Sabaste, Jericho, and Herodium, because he was always wary of an insurrection. Among his fortresses was Antonia (named for Antony), part of the Jerusalem Temple complex, and the Citadel, also in Jerusalem. Also in Jerusalem he built a theater and an amphitheater for forms of entertainment that would affront most Jews. He rebuilt the port city called Straton's Tower and named it Caesarea. His theater at Sepphoris, near Nazareth, may have been a workplace for Joseph and even young Jesus after Herod's death.

Herod can be considered one of the great builders in history. As gifted and astute as he was for building, he was equally capable at destroying. Herod devastated the morale of the people through forced labor and a lifestyle of shameless and profligate impiety but he also kept legions of people employed in his magnificent building projects and other public works endeavors. He stabilized the region, as no foreign power dared threaten his kingdom when he had Rome's support. He labored to avoid offending Jews.²⁵⁴ History usually portrays Herod unfavorably, and accurately so, for he was a savage and murderous man. He was much like antique Roman emperors, but perhaps because Jews were more diligent at recording their

²⁵⁴ Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice* (New York: Colombia, 2006), 111

history, and because of Jesus and his people, we are given more of a chance to notice the Herod's malevolence. Herod would have Hyrcanus II executed (31 BCE) and his brother Joseph killed as well as his wife Mariamne (29 BC) and mother in law Alexandra (28 BC). Over a decade later, Herod suspected that the two Hasmonean sons he had with Mariamne might overthrow him. He had them imprisoned and charged with treason. The brothers were, indeed, disgruntled and probably represented the disaffection of many residents. Herod's barber was among those who pleaded for moderation on his part but Alexander and Aristobulus were strangled to death in 7 BCE in Sebaste.²⁵⁵ Afterward, those who sought to intervene were stoned. This may be evidence that supports Josephus' assertions concerning Herod's failing mental health, because as Richardson notes,

Herod in fact had nothing to fear from his sons, for Augustus would never allow patricides to succeed to the throne, since it would be a threat to peace and stability. Herod's reign was secure as long as he lived, and his ability to name his successor allowed him to stymie undue ambition after his death. If they had fled, they might have sniped at Herod but could not dislodge him.²⁵⁶

Over the great gate of the Temple, to the great horror of the people, Herod had positioned a golden eagle, symbol of the supreme Jove, insignia atop the Roman standards that they carried into battle, and an emblem of his allegiance to Rome. The Jewish proscription against images of any living creature would have been sufficient to raise an outcry, but the humiliation of what was seen as a symbol of Roman might was unbearable.²⁵⁷ In 4 BCE, two learned men, Judas and Matthias who were likely rabbis, as the cult was the lone means of linking with community publicly began to attract daily a host of youth. They heard that Herod

²⁵⁵ Josephus, *War*, 16.392-4

²⁵⁶ Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 288.

²⁵⁷ Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 10.

was declining physically and mentally (Josephus calls it “distemper”) and inspired their following that it was time to cut down the eagle. Even if it cost them their lives it would be a far superior fate than to die after the manner of Herod.²⁵⁸

On March 12, some of the young men scaled the Temple and lowered themselves from the roof with cables and started chopping off the golden eagle. They were apprehended and when Herod interrogated them they confessed to the act. Herod was so infuriated with their happy demeanor that he ordered them to be immolated and the remainder of those arrested was executed.²⁵⁹ The golden eagle is emblematic of all that Herod did to desecrate what was deemed to be holy, and through arrogance and violence, he revolutionized his domain. Herod’s eagle was a variation on the effort of Antiochus IV to accelerate the Hellenization process.

Herod schemed to secure his choice of progeny to rule against any threat. All other would-be heirs to the throne, of eligible age, were executed. They were among sons and daughters born of ten wives, married primarily for political aims. His surviving sons, Archelaus, Philip II, and especially Antipas, would advance the family’s prominence in construction, if not contempt.

4.3 Herod and Jesus: Kings of the Jews

It is imprudent to study the beginnings of Christianity without looking at the Jewish cultic context in Herod’s world, because he casts a long shadow. There is more material evidence of Herod’s life than Jesus’, though it is in ruins. Herod’s family and actions easily reach the constellation of the Idumean, Jewish, Armenian, Bactrian, Iturean, Perean and

²⁵⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.149-67

²⁵⁹ Josephus, *War*, 1.33.1-5.

Arab. Further, the Seluecid, Parthian, Egyptian and Roman affect him. He was a cultured man, having developed a relationship with Rome that included his sons.

It was not unusual for kings to be groomed there. Livy provides an example.

They explained that the king had sent his son to be brought up in Rome, so that he might from his boyhood become familiar with Roman manners and Roman men. He asked that they would allow him to be not only under the charge of personal friends but also under the care and guardianship of the State.²⁶⁰

During this stage, the future king would learn to be Roman. Herod's sons would make Romanizing connections beneficial to their father. They would discover how to make the province more Roman, even as their father did, naming cities and monuments for Caesar, including the port city of Caesarea with its Augustan harbor. The most prodigious of towers was the Drusus, named for Tiberius' brother, on a mound overlooking the harbor was built a temple of Rome and Augustus containing a statue of each. Its shows featured gladiators and beasts. He built another glorious city in Samaria with analogous attractions, Sebaste, meaning Augustus in Greek. His building projects would threaten to surpass the splendor of those in Rome. Herod had his eye on greatness, including Messiah-sized aspirations. He was not a descendant of David. Of course he would need the emperor's approval but Herod was after the creation of a dynasty. He planned for his sons to succeed him, and such included Roman imperial names for his progeny, the first of which being Agrippa.²⁶¹

During his period, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to Matthew's Gospel. (Matthew 2.1) This narrative of Jesus' birth offers a portent of relations between his future followers, and later, Christians, with Jews. Jesus was born into the complex world of all the

²⁶⁰ Livy, *History*, 42.19

²⁶¹ David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, : The Character of the Client Kingship (Australia, 1984), 111

above categories, with Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. It was a *mélange* of competing hegemonies in a world that knew no separation between religion, politics, and economics. We must also take into account that when historical documents present us with people like Galileans, or Judeans, or even Jews, that these do not comprise a body politic, but mere residents. If Galileans, Judeans, or Jews take actions, representative rulers, or warlords, who in some cases and especially for rural Galileans, do not know the principals, perform those actions. Residents were often caught up in the maneuverings of those who had closer contact with civil friends or foes, whether local, Seleucid, Parthian, Roman, or other. It was, too, a world where male supremacy and slavery were givens.²⁶² All of these factors allowed for societies with economic oppression, military aggression, and sexual domination as the canons of cultures. The Judaeian military climate leading up until the birth of Jesus was relatively calm, until 6 CE, when the Roman senator Cyrenius, directed by Caesar, arrived in Syria to, “take an account of the substance of the Jews.”²⁶³ No other documents corroborate Matthew’s account, possibly because of the small population at Bethlehem.²⁶⁴

At a very early date the church began to regard these children as the first martyrs.²⁶⁵ They can be called Innocents but we cannot press the point of martyrdom when the victims are not consciously willing. The event is displayed against the backdrop of Herod, the “King of the Jews” and Judea in flux. Herod was the political leader, albeit a Roman functionary, and he was also the guiding hand of the priesthood.

²⁶² Cicero, *In Defense of Murena* 12.27 writes, “Our ancestors established the rule that all women, because of their weakness of intellect, should be under the power of guardians.”

²⁶³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.1.1

²⁶⁴ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. New Testament Commentary (181). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reads: “In a town as small as Bethlehem was at that time, even when the immediate surroundings are added as they should be (see 2:16) could the total number of those slain have been more than fifteen or twenty?”

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Herod and his family occupy a formidable place in history as pertains to Jesus and the Church. Antipater, His father, whose critical support for Julius Caesar in Egypt earned himself great favor and reward, would advantage Jews, and for that, Christians in the Roman Empire for generations. As mentioned above, Herod's friendship with Rome alongside his massive projects raised the profile. Hence, creating the level of safety for Jews around the Empire. It could be said that Herod brought Jewry, "into the 1st century." The massacre of a few babies would draw no compunction on his part, when Augustus is reputed to have said that he would rather be Herod's pig (ὕς) than Herod's son (ὕιος) after hearing the report of Antipater's execution, a play-on-words-reference to Judaic kashrut (dietary) observance.²⁶⁶ That Augustus did not say it is irrelevant and it probably means even more that the saying entered the social lexicon and continued, knowing that Antipater had lately left Augustus' company.²⁶⁷ Herod was known to keep minor Jewish ordinances but be ruthless with would-be rivals. One such rival had come to the besieged-with-rumors Herod in the form of visitors inquiring about the birth of the "King of the Jews." Bethlehem was less than four miles from Herodium, the site where the deteriorating Herod planned to be buried and Herod died five days after his son, Antipater.²⁶⁸

Herod represented the state²⁶⁹ and accomplished much in that vein. He was a voice for Judea to Rome and the face of Rome to Judea. In matters of religion, he was Jewish in the sense that today's political leaders present, and possibly understand themselves. They saw

²⁶⁶ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2.4.

²⁶⁷ Josephus, *War*, 1.609-12.

²⁶⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17.196.20

²⁶⁹ Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology* trans. H. P. Secher, (New York: Citadel Press, 1962), 122
Weber instructs that, "...only in recent times has the state achieved full maturity," as written above, the groupings mentioned herein do not comprise the modern concept of a body politic.

themselves as state crafters with an obligation to bring greatness to their domain (and to themselves), which invariably means participation in national cult, whatever commonly held adherence. The adjective “religious” for “tradition” is superfluous with reference to ancient cultures.

Herod was the advanced version of the concept of the ruler people of God imagined and that is precisely the problem. They looked for a “king to rule over us, and lead us into battle.”²⁷⁰ The dream is the nightmare. He is mirror reflection of the Roman imperial office, and also of all the emperors before him with which Israel had to contend. Israel was divinely called to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49.6), beginning with Abraham, through whom God clearly intended to glorify himself by bringing salvation to all on planet earth.²⁷¹ As a people, Israel’s problem was how to not mirror the nations. Their dream would become nightmare. For them there was no greater test—not even idol worship was harder to resist. Their elders pleaded with the prophet Samuel, “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8.5) He was given a rejoinder.

So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you

²⁷⁰ 1 Samuel 8.20

²⁷¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 2.

have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”
(1 Samuel 8:10-18)

Essentially, a king would ostensibly and eventually become an autocrat and slave master.

The nature of the reign would be warfare. National foes were not so daunting until they must be engaged militarily, at least for the ideal Israel. Samuel was instructed above to warn the people, and they responded. Samuel warned,

But the people refused to listen to Samuel’s warning. “Even so, we still want a king,” they said. “We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle.” I Samuel 8.19-20

As a word of consolation here, it should be borne in mind that God was not shown to reject his people as his people, even though they rejected him as their king. This recurring theme proves to be axiomatic regarding failure for the objects of redeeming love. Israel fails many times, as does the church, especially when reaching for imperial power. The monarchy in Samuel’s day was part of God’s will, even though it had its earthly origin in an act of human rebellion.²⁷²

To give perspective to what Israel demanded here I cite Max Weber, who in his article, “The Social Causes of the Decay of Ancient Civilizations”, after demolishing common conjectures, focuses on Rome and reaches the simplest and perhaps the most obvious of conclusions. Ancient Civilizations endured as long as they waged wars and took slaves.

Wars in ancient times were always slave raids; they continuously throw new supplies upon the slave market and so favor unfree labor and the accumulation of human beings as in no other period of history. The development of free handicraft, therefore, was arrested at the level of non-capitalistic wage-work for a narrowly defined local clientele... the economic importance of unfree labor in the oikos (the autarchic estate)

²⁷² John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 91

is all the time on the increase. Only slaveowners are able to satisfy their economic needs by division of labor, through slave labor, and so to raise their standard of living.²⁷³

Israel, here, continued her decline and fall, not because she rejected a messiah, but because she desired one.

Mary conceived her king in David's city, and Herod's world. The world that Herod had made life difficult for some and worse for others in his dominion, and mostly better for Diasporic Jews around the Roman Empire, at least for a period. We must not overlook the pro-Hasmonean, anti-Herodian bias of our main literary source, Flavius Josephus (he was of priestly and Hasmonean extraction).²⁷⁴ Not all Jews resisted what Herod would consider reforms, and what traditionalists would see as a call to reform. Israel, however, had always held kingdom aspirations. The existence of categories like zealot and Herodian tells they were not in unison.

For Jesus' birth, an immediate connection had made to Israel's most revered king, Joseph and Mary being directed, "to Judea, to the city of David, who is called Bethlehem" (Matt. 2:4). A thousand years earlier David had received a divine promise through the prophet Nathan:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
2 Samuel 7.12-13

²⁷³ Max Weber, "The Social Causes of the Decay of Ancient Civilization," *The Journal of General Education* Vol. 5, No. 1 (October 1950), pp. 75-88

²⁷⁴ Josephus, *The Life Of Flavius Josephus*, 1.1

There were times when their national hope all but vaporized, but in their tragic history Israel longed for a Davidic king.²⁷⁵ The principal question for us is, “What makes David the ideal?” In contrast to his predecessor, Saul, his readiness to recognize his own failures rather than overlook them is often mentioned. It is a quality very much in keeping with the desire and the expectation that their God sought to establish for his ruler and all his people.²⁷⁶ The feature, however, that makes David a prototype is most certainly not in the chronicle of his behaviors as ruler. Like Moses, David failed. What sets David apart is in the run-up, his accession to the throne; the story of his rise is one of suffering.

With Saul’s breakdown, David was truly disappointed. He mourned over what some might call bipolar, manic behavior of a would-be great leader, attributed to “an evil spirit from the Lord.”²⁷⁷ He held deep compassion for Saul’s family, and especially his son Jonathan, even when Saul tried to destroy David.²⁷⁸ While Saul pursued David, David saved Saul’s life.²⁷⁹ David showed the grace of God, the character of a divine ruler, against aggressive despotism.

Jesus was not born in the City of David; he was born in the (lower case) city of David. Jesus’ beginnings are identified with David’s birth instead of his reign, whereas Jesus’ death would be connected with the place of David’s reign. Jerusalem was known for the great and glorious fortress, a source of national pride and theme of Israel’s ballads and chants.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5.2

²⁷⁶ Prov. 28.13, Ps. 32.5, Ps. 38.18

²⁷⁷ 1 Sam. 16.23, 19.9

²⁷⁸ Cf. Is. 9.1-7, 11.1-9, Jer. 33.17, Ez. 37.24, Am. 9.11, Zec. 13.1

²⁷⁹ 1 Sam. 24.3-22

This young woman now gives birth to her firstborn son, wrapping him in swaddling clothes and laying him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. When first she knew of her pregnancy had exclaimed of her God.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
Luke 1.51-53

One does not need to try hard to imagine the ailing tyrant Herod as the part of the milieu of her song. She does not admire the empire. She does not sing praise to Caesar Augustus who has decreed that all the world should be registered, nor Cyrenius, whom Luke records as governor of Syria.^{280 281282} With all of Herod's machinations, including his juggernaut development projects and Sisyphean dealings to immortalize his legacy through his sons. Still he could not but be distracted by poor Nazarenes trying to fulfill the revenue practices of a Roman government that for them was distant only known through Herod.²⁸³

In the Roman Empire, the Senate generally appointed client-kings. Kingdoms, such as Mauretania, Cappadocia, Bosphorus, Armenia and Judea were usually on the frontiers, either an outlying area or one that Rome would find time-consuming and expensive to govern

²⁸⁰ It is only impossible to reconcile the dates of Cyrenius' reign with Luke's record, since it was not Rome's policy to introduce taxes in client kingdoms, if one does not see that Luke was calling Quirinius "governor" even though he was on a military campaign, yet to be installed. Josephus, *War*, 2.117-119, and can probably be attributed to Luke's ignorance of the facts.

²⁸¹ Luke 2.1-2

²⁸² Unfortunately, Ehrman's imperious tone comes at the expense of his own scholarly objectivity when he ridicules miscalculations of Archbishop James Ussher and Dionysius Exiguus and all who rely on Luke for devotional credibility. Ehrman scoffs to say, as relates to the likely 6-4 BCE birth range for Jesus, "This creates a problem, of course, for those who continue to work with the abbreviations AD (anno Domini: Latin for The Year of our Lord) and BC (Before Christ) -- since, as sometimes noted, according to the calendar we use Jesus was actually born four years Before Christ!" Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12

²⁸³ The purpose of the census was to establish catalogues that were used for taxation. Rome accommodated the practice of each country of the census, which explains why Jews were required to go to their ancestral homes.

directly. Herod was able to accomplish a great deal of his heart's desire without as much oversight as would be required for a province, and that without a relentless tax burden. If Augustus' anger against Herod over past events had not subsided, however, and knowing Herod's health and the volatile nature of Judean rule, this would have been not only an opportune interval but essential time for imperial intervention.²⁸⁴ It is likely that Augustus was already scheduling to make Judea a province (provinces were more tightly ruled and taxed), evidenced by the division of the kingdom into the Tetrarchy after Herod's death. What is certain is the sometimes-storminess of the relationship between Augustus and Herod, which was regularly agitated by the Syrian administration, the same administration that Luke would credit for the enactment of the census.²⁸⁵

Relationships of this sort can be found in every place in every age; not only were there disputes with the principal chiefs, but also among officials of different ranks within the governing body. There were, exclusive to these developments, epochal torrents converging in Herod's world that far surpassed determinable magnitudes. In short, Rome and Greece, along with the Levant, Egypt, India, and China are now recognized to have undergone a synchronous appearance of cultural innovation. This age blankets Greece's Classical Period and into the Hellenistic Period. Hellenism saw the disintegration of Classical Period values of the individual's affinity with the state, leaving a focus on the self with a void leaving humans struggling for a sense of connectedness with something larger. Humanity saw the arousal of a desire for universality theretofore unrecognized. 20th century philosopher Karl Jaspers codified the observation.

²⁸⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.9

²⁸⁵ Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.54

The most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period. Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to skepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the Philosophers—Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato—of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes. Everything implied by these names developed during these few centuries almost simultaneously in China, India, and the West, without any one of these regions knowing of the others.²⁸⁶

For other parts of earth, evidence remains too scant to integrate a reference. It is not hard to see a worldwide evolution of thought that reaches for enlarged community. Alexander the Great's expansionism launched Hellenism, the world's first imperial enterprise diffusing language, drama, philosophy, art, architecture and literature, throughout the Near East. A great political movement had worked itself out, almost unseen and unmarked. This was the impulse towards political universality, the drive towards a great world state--the cosmopolis of the Stoic philosophers.²⁸⁷ We cannot trace its direct effects to the Korean Peninsula the way we can to, say, the Balkans, but the objective of this thesis is to focus on the common utopian conceptions of Hellenism and Zionism.

N.T. Wright cites Neusner, Horsely, Hanson, Sanders and Schurer to establish that modern scholarship makes it clear that there was no "single, monolithic and uniform "messianic expectation" among first-century Jews. Most of the period literature has no reference to a Messiah, few clear statements about a coming Son of David who would

²⁸⁶ Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, Part I, Ch. 1.

²⁸⁷ Alban Dewes Winspear, and Lenore Kramp Geweke, *Augustus and the Reconstruction of Roman Government and Society* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1935), 64

execute the Lord's wrath upon the Gentiles, or rebuild the Temple or fulfill Israel's hopes.²⁸⁸ Generally speaking, the people, even though they had their Scripture as the screenplay, failed for hope and/or failed to recognize the arrival of hope. How could they know? There is much intrigue over the projections of Jews of the period. Was the "Son of God" or "Son of the Most High," mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a Messiah? Among others were names like Simon of Peraea, former slave of Herod the Great crushed by the Romans.²⁸⁹ If Josephus regarded even Vespasian a candidate, we can understand how wide open the field of possibilities was.²⁹⁰ These were times when Israel saw Messiahs come and go. A crucifixion was ample evidence of failure.²⁹¹ They longed for a Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18.18). Perhaps there would be two Messiahs, one, political like Moses, and the other priestly according to Aaron but of course he would be of the seed of David. The Qumran text foresaw a "teacher of righteousness."²⁹² More narrowly, if there were any validity, in Jews' view, to the claims that anyone was Messiah, the evidence would be the removal of Roman oppression and a restored Israel. It was a pressing need, and without consummating these things in his lifetime only meant failure. The disciples of Jesus, as I expounded upon in chapter three, held these same hopes after his resurrection. This was a very Jewish desire, and

²⁸⁹ Josephus, *War* 2.57-59 (and *Antiquities* 17.273-277 [Excerpted here]: "This man was elevated at the disorderly state of things, and was so bold as to put a diadem on his head, while a certain number of the people stood by him, and by them he was declared to be a king, and he thought himself more worthy of that dignity than any one else.")

²⁹⁰ Ibid. 6.312-13 "What more than all else incited them [the Jews] to the [1st Roman] war was an ambiguous oracle ... found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world. This they understood to mean someone of their own race, and many of their wise men went astray in their interpretation of it. The oracle, however, in reality signified the sovereignty of Vespasian who was proclaimed Emperor on Jewish soil."

²⁹¹ Gerard S. Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 49

²⁹² Henry Chadwick, *The church in ancient society: from Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 14

has not been extinguished as we have seen messianic figures arise across the past two millennia.

Jesus would be one among many claimants and the only one truly significant during the period of the Herodian dynasty. The birth of Jesus was announced to Herod by Magi; men under obligation to worship the Persian emperor, the “King of Kings.” How would it appear to Herod, client of Rome, aspirant Messiah, and King of the Jews that from the land of the Greco-Roman arch-foe would come, what, spies? Envoys? Whoever they were, they visibly represented their homeland, bringing tribute to another would-be monarch, unrecognized by the Roman Senate.

4.4 Two Kinds of Kingdoms, Two Kinds of Power

Before developing the theme of the God-as-king government, we must look at the sometimes-bloody way Israel became a nation. How do we regard the commands, “...you must completely destroy them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy?” (Deuteronomy 7.2) If God’s promise to Abraham is, “All the families on earth will be blessed through you,” And if Israel is a “light to the nations,” with no place for aggression and dominion, how do we understand, “destroy every living thing?” (Deuteronomy 20.16) If the elders of Israel in Samuel’s time are to be faulted for demanding a king to rule, and lead them into battle, how can we applaud Joshua’s military conquests? The first consideration in response to such questions is that Israel cannot be considered a successful project, except to the extent that their failure speaks to the righteousness of God in similar fashion to Moses’ being disallowed entry to the Promised Land.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!”
Numbers 20.12

Moses stands apart from all other figures in Israel’s history, and the laudatory language of Deuteronomy makes this clear. Readers were told, “There has not risen a prophet since in Israel like Moses,” (Deuteronomy 34.10) and that this deliverer was buried, not like others, but “he [the Lord] buried him... but no one knows the place of his burial...” (Deuteronomy 34.6) No record blames him for his failure and in fact it could be argued that his failure was the failure of Israel. God’s words to Moses and Aaron were, “You betrayed me,” and “You failed to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 32.51) The Meribah²⁹³ event is described in Numbers as being Moses’ error, whereas in the lamentation Psalm 106, blame is reassigned to Israel:

They angered him at he waters of Meribah,
And it went ill with Moses on their account,
For they made his spirit bitter,
And he spoke rashly with his lips.²⁹⁴

Much has been written about *cherem* and this is not the place for a thorough treatment of Israel’s entitlement to eliminate Canaanite peoples. In short, God embraced the reality of humanity’s vile heart. The question here is whether Israel’s narrative is the counterpart to Moses’. If Moses can be nominated the corporeal embodiment of Israel,²⁹⁵ and later, Jesus, it

²⁹³ Numbers 20.12-13

²⁹⁴ Psalm 106.32-33

²⁹⁵ Fretheim’s observation is that as Israel is saved by the shedding of Moses’ firstborn’s blood, and Israel’s firstborn are redeemed by the death of Egyptian firstborn, then Moses (as the embodiment of Israel as God’s firstborn) is placed at risk. The firstborn belong to God and are to be consecrated to God. Without redemption, their life is to be returned to God. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 80.

can be postulated that Jesus, by way of his victory, saves Moses by saving Israel. If so, then we must expose Israel's failure to complete *cherem* as part of their ongoing programmatic miscarriages. To entertain this perspective, we must conclude that no humanity was inherently deserving of life and only the divine covenant justified even Israel's existence.²⁹⁶ We see expressed here, therefore, two sides equally unmeritorious of life in Psalm 106.34-35. "They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, but they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did."

Their Torah tells them that their right to the land was not based on their righteousness, but rather the wickedness of the Canaanite nations.²⁹⁷ They have come short of the glory of God.²⁹⁸ They have not preserved the land as sacred space. Paul, ever the messenger of the resurrection, explains that failure is inevitability until Jesus comes.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 1
Corinthians 15:22-24

As Adam and Moses failed, so did Israel, and there is no more significant an indicator than Israel's desire to become an empire. To reduce the story of Israel to the Passion is as shortsighted as blaming someone's congenital disorder on the actions of a parent or their personal transgression.²⁹⁹ It cannot be that simple. When the Christian calls the Jew a "Christ-

²⁹⁶ Cf. Romans 9.15, "For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

²⁹⁷ Leviticus 18.22, "Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob"

²⁹⁸ Rom. 3.23

²⁹⁹ cf. Jn. 9.1-4

killer,” he misses the point in the dying of Christ. He fails to recognize Creation’s desperate condition. It has failed and dies apart from the renewing acts of Jesus, who conquers failure by the Spirit of Resurrection. This present age is replete with brokenness, disappointment, and death. These were things that Israel came to know intimately but Israel fell short long before Jesus entered the world. That said, it is morally proper for the world to regard Israel the way that Israel regarded Moses, and that is to, in our bewilderment and recognition of our profound immorality and failure, to esteem that nation. We are darker than we imagine and we are incredulous that we are as dark as those from whom came the ones who would “kill,” or “reject” Christ.

Israel’s failure is an archetype for human governments that aspire to be different from all the rest. At one level Israel’s story arouses hope because it pronounces a benediction on justice, and alternatively the same story, with the same cast of characters, deflates the illusions by reminding us all of the pervasiveness of injustice. This is how Israel points us to Christ. Would-be kings aspire to capital cities with ambitions for forming an ideal state. Jesus spoke of a city where he would be executed. He would one day ride a donkey into the city, in an age where the Senate generally approved the Triumphal processions in which, after thousands of killings. A victorious general entered the city in a chariot drawn by four horses, preceded by the captives (now slaves) and spoils taken in war, was followed by his troops, surrounded by musicians, ascended the Capitol to offer sacrifice in the temple of Jupiter.³⁰⁰ The Roman Triumph was a theatrical spectacle that glorified the empire in the face of those

³⁰⁰ Titus Livy, *The History of Rome*, 31.48, 34.10

conquered, but in fact it was a cover-up, an attempt to deflect the horror of crimes against humanity.³⁰¹

There is a sense in which the Roman triumph is an act of propitiation, a desolate gesture towards the gods to forgive the crimes committed in their name...There are evident lessons to be learned from the triumph. We shall see how conquest inevitably engenders conquest, hatred breeds hatred, and the ultimate crime lies in the self-regarding mind of the conqueror, which discovers too late that human pride shatters his humanity.³⁰²

Robert Payne stresses here that the Romans won their empire through carnage. Thus, the triumph was their answer to this immoral performance. This Messiah is not unlike that of expectations of some Jews, and is known to fill the misguided eschatological preaching of many Christians. Victory, according to these terms, is failure. The true Messiah would need to fail, because just as victory is failure, so failure is victory. The death of Jesus is not only physical death, but also his metaphysical identification with death, which we call "sin." His submission to the powers, which was ultimately a submission to principle higher than theirs, opened the door for his resurrection, which could not be a victory unless he faced the powers of the world, refusing to win on their terms. This explains why Israel not only did not accurately anticipate the Messiah of God, but also worked actively to discredit and countervail him. No matter his works and teachings; it was preordained that God's promise out measure their expectation.

³⁰¹ Article by William Ramsay, M.A., Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow on pp1163-1167 of William Smith, D.C.L., LL.D.: A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, John Murray, London, 1875.

³⁰² Robert Payne, *The Roman Triumph*, (New York: Abelard Schuman, 1962.), 18

While Herod reigned, the “other” King of the Jews was born to Mary in a stable. He would never live in, or visit Rome. In a much later age and a faraway place, another young girl received a diary for her birthday in 1942, and gave birth to a book famously composed during the Nazi terror while in hiding from danger with her family.

There is an urge and rage in people to destroy, to kill, to murder, and until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything that has been built up, cultivated and grown, will be destroyed and disfigured, after which mankind will have to begin all over again.³⁰³

The Holocaust and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls have together created a new lens for Christians and Jews to view the past. It looks extremely different. That these late developments could show the world how wrong long-held perceptions can be should be enough to inspire us to more fully develop the method of confronting imperialistic tendencies, which is the only way that the terror of empire can be diffused.

Israel’s idea of the Temple was prefigured in the violent confiscation of the land from the Canaanites, as sacred space, where “Promised Land” was to become “Holy Land.” God was reclaiming his sacred space, after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan; he gave them their land as an inheritance.³⁰⁴ His desire, however, was not limited to Canaan.³⁰⁵ The message in each of Israel’s psalmist encomiums for Zion, when allowed to approach the immeasurable elevations that the holy city represents is a device for the world to envision the God who is called “Most High.” Although both land and temple are inviolate, God gave them

³⁰³ Anne Frank, H.J.J Hardy, David Barnouw, Gerrold van der Stroom, *The Diary of Anne Frank: the revised critical edition* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 650

³⁰⁴ Acts 13.19

³⁰⁵ cf. Ex. 9.29

the land and sacred space. He allowed time and again for it to be desecrated. For Israel, as for all, the only way to expand the vision of those who have lost a sense of the holy is to violate what is sacred to them. God's message to Israel was a statement regarding, not their worship of foreign idols so much as their veneration of their own: the Temple.

The Passion narrative is often cited as the basis for Christian anti-Semitism,³⁰⁶ as Jews are seen to have at that point rejected their own Messiah. Who can forget the obtuseness of many Christians at the release of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004 over genuine fear in the Jewish community that a new wave of anti-Semitism could be roused? Though viewed around the world, it was mostly unseen in Israel, because "no Israeli distributor has yet sought permission to market the movie."³⁰⁷ Focus by Christians and Jews on betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus results in demarcation. If Christians understood that Israel was to be venerated by followers of Jesus in the way that Israel's response to and memory of Moses' failure was eulogical, we would judge instead of the Passion. Israel's much earlier decision to move towards becoming an empire and the protracted process of taking the land. Instead of remaining a project for multiplication, prosperity, life, mutual care and worship, it became holding that they needed to safeguard and

³⁰⁶ This has been a fiery debate that often goes out of bounds. Although many plausible cases are used to prove the Passion as at the root of anti-Semitism, Gaston's polemic is strained when arguing, "When Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus' body, Luke eliminates all reference to Pilate's giving him permission: since Pilate was not responsible for the execution he was also not in charge of the body." Lloyd Gaston, "Anti-Judaism and the Passion Narrative in Luke and Acts." In *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Paul and the Gospels*, edited by Peter Richardson with David Granskou (Ontario: Wlifrid Laurier University Press), 149.

³⁰⁷ Laura King (2004-03-15). "['Passion' goes unseen in Israel](#)". Los Angeles Times.

exploit.³⁰⁸ If we understand Israel's failure, then we will better appreciate the problem of Christian empire. Strangely, even in that acquisition of empire, God was willing and working.

God was willing and working because he has always encountered people in their age and culture with a redemption mission. He loved them when they were patriarchal, polygamist and slaveholders. He loved them when they nearly evacuated their promised land of fellow human beings. He loved them when they reached for empire.

The Church has in some ways duplicated Israel's choice to have a king like other nations for purposes of domination. The Church's call to conquest, however, is of a different sort, found in the two dominant imaginations drive Christians' worldviews today, consistent with early Christian communities; one is apocalyptic and the other is one of rapprochement.³⁰⁹ While they seem irreconcilable, they represent clearly the outlook of the church from the beginning. The Revelation was written to oppressed Christians in Asia, likely during Domitian's reign, who were encourage to endure until their survivors saw the fall of earthly government.

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

Rev. 2.26-7

Conquering here is not militaristic inasmuch the letters were written to unarmed people of a pre-imperial Christianity that was still decisively pacifistic. If it read that way, then "authority over the nations," and "rod of iron" must be read similarly. They convey to the recipients that, although powerless and voiceless, they are triumphant. This triumph is

³⁰⁹ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:18-19

³⁰⁸ Cf. Lev. 25:1-55 is where God ordains sabbatical years and protection of the poor. Ez. 20 is but one example of the profaning of Sabbath-days and years is linked with materialism and oppression of the needy.

anything but triumphalistic, which helps us to make sense of Christian rapprochement with society. The Church is good for the world, but only when it embraces this powerlessness and voicelessness. The church is powerful, indeed, having been ordained to wield a “rod of iron,” but of an otherworldly iron. Who would think for a moment that Paul’s exclamation in Romans 8, “we are more than conquerors,” is militaristic, considering that his chosen context is a quote from Psalm 44.22. For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. (Rom. 8.36)

Rapprochement in the first centuries helped the church see its greatest increase in followers among people who negotiated their survival and existence within the Roman Empire, not unlike Christians, and perhaps with more resistance than met by Christians at certain times in Persia, India, Ethiopia, and among the “barbarians.” We know little of the aftereffects of the message carried by Jews and proselytes mentioned in Acts 2, including Arabians, Cappadocians Egyptians and more, but the bearers may have met with more than the usual share of anti-Judaic opposition.

Rapprochement was not viewed as a political goal but where it was required with the state or with the culture it required the labor of apologists and the lives of martyrs. The churches developed within their own languages and sociocultural contexts, which often brought them into conflict with churches in other places. Still, the churches “fought it out” without state power.

There was much diversity, as is today, among Christianities, which is not to assert that they are all equally viable, but neither that any form is universally relevant and useful. In a recent attempt to justify the conclusions of the Councils, Kostenberger and Kruger’s book, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity Has*

Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity takes on Walter Bauer and Bart Ehrman and overstate their complaint. They are on to something to reject the Bauer thesis, that heresy preceded orthodoxy, but not fully accurate. If orthodoxy is defined in terms of Council Creeds and Canons, then heresy precedes orthodoxy in the respect that some of the terms of orthodoxy were not formulated or documented as such.³¹⁰ That the emperor had no agendized role in Council conclusions is not reasonable. He wanted unity.

Suddenly tolerance of theological disagreement and ecclesiastical particularities, which had been a given since Saints Paul and James had reached a *modus vivendi* at the Council of Jerusalem in the first century, was now deemed unchristian.³¹¹

Constantine had clearly learned from his failed mission into North Africa in an attempt to force the Church there into religio-political compliance. We do not know when North Africans first heard the Christian message, but if true to global patterns of the time. It developed in synagogues in order to spread to the larger culture. Its spread did, growing so much and intensely that Constantine was forced to concede that the conviction of that church was greater than the force of his legions. When he needed later, leading up to Council of Nicaea, to deal with the Meletians, who were essentially eastern Donatists. He understood that he needed to develop fuller church consensus. In other words, Constantine had evolved, but to claim that what has evolved has reached perfection is unsustainable. I will go on record to say that the debate between these aforementioned scholars (Bauer and Ehrman,

³¹⁰ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Michael J. Kruger *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 15-40

³¹¹ James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: a History*, (New York: Mariner Books, 2001), 188

Kostenberger and Kruger) is helpful to the church, and note with alacrity that no state involvement is required.

An understandable outcome of the Diocletian Persecution that preceded Constantine was a sense of solidarity among churches, a feature Constantine may have found intriguing in Africa. This unity, however, came with unusual devotion. The North African Tertullian's most famous is, *semen est sanguis Christianorum*,³¹² and in a region that withstood Rome's worst. It was his pupil Cyprian who argued more for the unity of the church, being called the "Ignatius of the West." Yet, he was an embattled bishop who clashed with the bishop of Rome, even calling him the Antichrist, and that notwithstanding, has been canonized in the Catholic Church. Stephen had written several censures of Cyprian, but the Bishop of Carthage inspired not only the church of his era, but future generations imbued with the dignity of African Christianity. The interchange between the Bishop of Rome and Cyprian was an example of the difference between African and Roman traditions, except that Novatian, at Rome, had earlier embraced a similar policy of strictness toward the lapsed. Cyprian desired church unity, but also, against Stephen's judgment, more austere required rebaptism for the lapsed. This fracture presages the schism to follow but Cyprian gives evidence also of the African church's desire for agreement. Still the backgrounds and cultures had caused two very different churches to emerge. This I discuss further in the section on Donatism in the next chapter but it must be stated here that no province was more important to the Roman Empire than North Africa by the time Diocletian and Constantine came to power. Susan Raven describes the flourishing region.

³¹² Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50.13

By the third century, there were five or six hundred cities. Two hundred of them were in the rich farmlands of northern Tunisia. In places they were no more than six or eight miles apart, and in the valley of the River Bagradas (Medjerda) there was almost a kind of ribbon development along the main road from Carthage to Theveste (Tébessa).³¹³

Not only was North Africa important to Rome, but too it was also very Christian.

By the third century AD the northwest African provinces were the most Christianized in the west.³¹⁴

It is reasonable to think that the persecution of Christians in North Africa had a comparable effect on Constantine as the martyrdom of Stephen on the Paul, the Apostle, but too, it was politically pragmatic to seek to bring the region into tighter compliance.

Those who insist that there was unanimity among Christians are unrealistic. Their common identification with Christ caused them to be recognized as “Christians” by outsiders much like Herod was perceived to be a Jew by the Roman world, even if some Jews rejected his pedigree. Indeed, the churches and their leaders mentioned in the New Testament were often at loggerheads. Creating uniformity among all the churches of the world was far more of an undertaking than Constantine or the bishops could possibly understand. They overreached by formulating grand statements, not only about the most important of controversies, but even minutiae.

Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord’s Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing.³¹⁵

A momentous consensus was reached at Nicaea without the voice of Jewish bishops or Christians. Political uniformity and control ultimately undermine the glorious beauty the

³¹³ Susan Raven, *Rome in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 101

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* 151

³¹⁵ First Council of Nicaea, 325 CE, Canon 20

Creator sees in diversity. Catholicity in terms of temporal governments is a non-divine invention and doomed to disaster. Centuries earlier, Israel faced monumental obstacles and overcame frequent hostilities with God as their king; still they wanted an earthly king. Seeing the Creator as king remains the church's calling, and to look to any earthly king is opposed to her charter.

4.5 Conclusion

Rather than taking advantage of the pervasive dismay in the Galileans among whom Jesus lived he raised their hopes. Even his closest disciples found it difficult to envision the promise that he represented. Time and again Jesus had to correct their statements and revise their ambitions.³¹⁶ Jesus raised their hopes in order to cause them to desire and reach for more than the world was refusing them. That he had to frequently reprimand those most loyal to him shows how unsuited people are for the Kingdom of God.

The inevitable clashes that take place when the proud grasp for power are untrue to the King of glory who offers an alternative way for participating in his rule. In Matthew 18.1-5 we read,

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'

³¹⁶ One of most illustrative examples is Mt. 20.20-23, "Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.'"

Jesus declined to build his following on the resentments of the masses. He did not incite them to overthrow and displace their earthly oppressors because he knew that they would hardly perform any better. When his disciples became angry with James and John for their ambition for supremacy, Jesus taught,

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mt. 20.25-28

The next chapter shows that acceptance and rank are limited in measure. The approval and perquisites of the world are not like the blessing of heaven. Heaven offers sufficient prestige to all who come but it is a difficult thing indeed to resist the temptation to aim for ephemeral loftiness. Jesus offers the status of the child—the child of God.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH BEGINS TO COME OF AGE AND IN SOME WAYS BECOMES
CAPTIVE OF THE AGE**Introduction**

The struggle for ideological primacy included the Jews, Christians and the Roman. They contended for popular loyalty with each other, and with other practices. This chapter observes the competition as evident in dialectal forms. Christians used strong language to overcome Judaizers, the parties who sought to bring the burgeoning movement of Gentile followers of Jesus into line with Judaic traditions. Among other practices, they asserted that in order to be legitimate, males needed to be circumcised and they all should observe holy days and dietary regulations. There was little uniformity among these churches but they warded off Judaizers. Efforts ensued to implement a form that was free from Judaizers as a standard around the empire. The point arrived when more Christians were Gentile than Jewish. As they drifted further from Jewish identity, they also forfeited the special status of Judaism under Roman imperial rule. This shift brought new pressure upon Christians to establish themselves and coexist with Roman religion. Complicating the effort to become established was the diversity within Christianity wherein fomented multiple factions vying for validity.

This chapter traces how Christianities sought legitimacy within the Roman Empire, the Jewish past, the uniquely Christian apologetic, or all of the above to varying degrees. The message of Jesus encountered multiple forms of resistance, and continued to grow. It was not

until Constantine's rise in the 4th century that it employed constabulary force to gain or retain adherents. My thesis is that the Orthodox Church, as it pushed toward self-definition and viability in the Roman world, lost contact with just what it was seeking to become. Instead of being an extenuation of Israel, it assayed to become the replacement of Jews. This thesis compares these forms, paying special attention to the determinative and judicial role among all Christianities. The tendency to evaluate expressions of the faith was not unique to any Christian sect but some acquired special significance upon winning the status of *religio licita*, that is, a tolerated religion.

We will first look at two of the larger movements in the early Christian era, more or less versions of Christianity, or at the least borrowers or reflectors of Christian concepts. The protagonists are Marcion and Mani, which both seemed to exploit the anti-Jewish rhetoric that arose in the Ante-Nicene period. I include a short examination of Apollonius of Tyana, a neo-Pythagorean philosopher regarded as a miracle worker. This section also investigates the role of Mithraism, a mystery religion practiced in the Roman Empire.

5.1 Christians Embrace the Robust Style of Dialectic

The language of castigation was the standard in the Hellenistic world, being a part of rhetorical education from early times. Called "declamation," it was the first major literary movement of the Roman Empire, becoming the customary method for public discourse.³¹⁷ Roman law courts became the venues for attack and defense; careers were made here.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Egbert J. Bakker, *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language* (UK: Blackwell, 2010), 475

³¹⁸ W. Martin Bloomer, *Roman Declamation: The Elder Seneca and Quintilian: A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, Dominik, William and Jon Hall, Editors (Blackwell Publishing, 2007. [Blackwell Reference Online](http://www.blackwellreference.com.oasis.unisa.ac.za/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781405120913_chunk_g978140512091325). 17 March 2011 <http://www.blackwellreference.com.oasis.unisa.ac.za/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781405120913_chunk_g978140512091325>)

Extreme rhetoric became common practice. By the end of the fourth century in the Christian Roman Empire, there was no more memory of this custom. The biblical language for Pharisees, “hypocrites,” had been folded into the psyche and attitudes of Christians. This rhetoric came at the expense of Jews, whose remaining cultic form was Pharisaism. Jesus was understood by Christians to be anti-Pharisee, even though in his time many Pharisees esteemed him.³¹⁹³²⁰

There were true culture wars, parties vying for survival among various peoples of the Roman Empire to offer them significance. Although there would be seasons of violence, the wars were generally waged with pen and tongue. The dominant voice was that of the state but people clung to what to they knew was their own.

A number of new cults arose in the Late Roman Empire, and the East was known as their supplier. Ancient Rome had long worked at maintaining unity of worship and state, and ensuring that the same persons in the employment of the cult also worked for the other.³²¹ This had been true for the College of Pontiffs, who wielded the right to punish all who disobeyed their injunctions. They subjected themselves to no court of law or punishment; other priests including the *rex sacrorum* and *regina sacrorum*, augurs, flamens, and the vestal virgins, whose vow of chastity allowed them to concentrate on rituals of state.³²² Most prestigious was the *Pontifex Maximus*, who ruled the College and other priests. The primary duty of the priests was to maintain *pax deorum* and peace with the gods. Over time, the posts

³¹⁹ Hershel Shanks, editor, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of their Origins and Early Development* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archeology Society, 1992), 309

³²⁰ Cf. Luke 11.37, 13.31

³²¹ Cicero, *On His House*, 1.1

³²² Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, William Smith, LL.D. (London: Taylor and Walton, 1848), 940-1

became increasingly politicized, Julius Caesar being elected *Pontifex Maximus* in 63 BCE. Ultimately it became one with the emperor's office under Augustus.

When looking for an advocate for the Roman state among the philosophers and historians, options are numerous, but Celsus wrote with specificity regarding Christians. He was a Greek philosopher sympathetic to the state cult who wrote in the mid to late second century. He gives insight regarding the worrisome multiple Christian sects he saw debating one another. Celsus stole Jewish anti-Christian polemic, one example being the tale of the Roman soldier Panthera being the Jesus father. The Talmud does not specify the name of the child but Celsus "fills in the blank." Celsus had respect for neither Jews nor Christians, but sought to build his case against Christians by comparing them with Jews, but not without denigrating Jews.

There is to be found among many nations a general relationship of doctrine, as among the Egyptians, Assyrians, Indians, Persians, Odrysians, Samothracians, Eleusinians, and Hyperboreans. There is an authoritative account from the very beginning, respecting which there is a constant agreement among all the most learned nations, cities, and men. From which of these ancient and learned nations will the Jews find a concurring opinion?

By singling out Jews for their failure to see eye-to-eye with those that Celsus, their culture was affirmed. He goes on to ridicule both Jews and Christians:

There is nothing of importance in the investigations of the Jews and Christians: for both believe that it was predicted by the Divine Spirit that one was to come as a Savior to the human race, but do not yet agree on the point whether the person predicted has actually come or not.

We, unfortunately, have no Jewish rejoinder to Celsus, if ever there were any. In fact there is a paucity of Jewish literature from the period, rabbinic forms being nonexistent. One might imagine that if indeed there were Jewish apologies against Celsus, the authors would

have to have skillfully employed language that rebutted him while agreeing with his assessment of Christians.

Born nearly a decade after Celsus' death, Origen of Alexandria would receive a copy of Celsus' *Alethes Logos* or The True Doctrine, from Bishop Ambrose. Its title implies that Christians' Logos was false.³²³ Origen went on to compose an apology determined to create a space for Christianity in the Roman-Roman world, and also, to demonstrate that the church was the Israel of God. In *Against Celsus* Origen finds himself defending Jews, but only for the sake of the argument.

It is proper, therefore, to ask him why he gives credence to the histories of Barbarians and Greeks respecting the antiquity of those nations of whom he speaks, but stamps the histories of this nation alone as false. For if the respective writers related the events, which are found in these works in the spirit of truth, why should we distrust the prophets and the Jews alone?³²⁴

The insertion of Jesus' name into the story of Panthera and Mary returns "complete" to Jews, along with other pedagogic material. The account is of Jesus learning magical power during his stay in Egypt.³²⁵ The accusation of being a magician seems to be what Justin Martyr has in mind in his Dialogue with Trypho, wherein he challenges Jews for giving license to one magician while condemning Jesus as another.

There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto, who in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him.³²⁶

³²³ Origen, Celsus, *Alethes Logos*

³²⁴ Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998), 52

³²⁵ Peter Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007), 19

³²⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew* 26

This three-way debate illustrates how each perceived in the other(s) a threat to survival or wellbeing. The one, very large, difference is that Celsus voices the *Weltanschauung* of those in power.

What has been seen as the Church's dilemma is how it could be the biblical people of God while non-Christian Jews are still present, albeit over the passage of time with an adapted cult and in various forms. Nonetheless, he was very much alive. Fifteen centuries earlier, the homeless people with whom God entered into covenant were not a race or a religion, but an abused family-nation that he adopted for himself.

It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deut. 7.7-9

Doctrinal standardization would become a formidable force helping to drive a wedge between Judaea- and Gentile-Christian, and alienating the Jewish people. There is a connection between the formation of orthodoxy and the disunion. The central characteristic of God's people has never been formalized theology. At the heart of their identity and expression was worship, not dogma. In fact, it is impossible to provide examples of unanimous creeds prepared by priests, prophets, or kings from any point in the history of Israel. Gerhard von Rad distinguishes Israel's confession of faith as the historical narrative of a once-landless people, unlike the Apostle's Creed, which are stamped with promulgated revelations, promises, and teaching.³²⁷

A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And

³²⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 122

the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
Deut. 26.5-9

These are the people of the Covenant and the people for whom Jesus was born, to “save them from their sins.”³²⁸ Like the God of the Exodus, Jesus found solidarity with the people whose “backs are against the wall.” Von Rad’s reminder is that “Israel was always better at glorifying and extolling God than at theological reflection.”³²⁹ The most ancient traits of this people are circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, the Passover tradition, and repeating the Covenant, which are heavy on worship. The Covenant’s core behavioral values were consistent with any ethical code, such as prohibitions on murder and theft, but especially emphasizes justice, concern for the needy, brotherhood, womanhood, family order, and happiness.³³⁰ Is this the people of God whose place Christians were seeking to complete, and if so, would they endeavor to occupy this place as Covenant allies with Jews?³³¹ Who indeed are the people of God?

N.T. Wright’s volume entitled The New Testament and the People of God sets out to recover for Christians the Jesus who is both the Jewish Messiah and Son of God. Wright reveals the Church as having stripped Jesus of his Messiahship with an eye on the people

³²⁸ Mt. 1.21

³²⁹ Von Rad, *Theology*, 122

³³⁰ John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 135-41

³³¹ cf. Ephesians 2.18-9 “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...”

Jesus redeems.³³² Who were the people who longed for, desperately needing, and a deliverer? Three years to the day after Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. Judas Maccabeus cleansed and reconsecrated it, adding a new festival, *Hanukkah*, to the calendar. Joy was far from unanimous even with Israel's new found autonomy. Most Jews—the ones who wrote no literature, led no marches, had no voice—struggled to maintain their livelihood and their loyalty, under the social pressures of warring theologies.³³³

Here, Wright would do well to elaborate on who these people are, and their presence throughout Israel's history. The reader can easily make their connection with people of every nation. These people never vanished. Moses' command to Israel was for there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.' The poor were not an embarrassment, nor an inconvenience, but rather part of the family. Without them, it is not Israel. The poor would not be attracted to well-sculpted creeds or apologies, but the power of welcome that made them part of the worshipping community. Easy access was offered, because, who knows?³³⁴

Hard times can befall any part of the family. Furthermore, the national welfare system did not appear to expect the dependent or destitute to tithe with the general population. A part of the process for those who did tithe was to "say to the LORD your God," which was another act of worship.

³³³ Ibid. 309

³³⁴ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 169. cf. Lev. 5:9 makes a way for the poor, and v. 11, the very poor. "But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering." "But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering."

When you have finished paying all the tithes of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. Deut. 26.12-13

The people who were sustained by community aid, or at least should have been, are the people who met Jesus in masses. He is not Messiah if not redeemer, and not a redeemer if not subversive. Who needs redemption besides the voiceless and powerless? Twentieth century theologian and civil rights advocate Howard Thurman's plea for the modern church is not for clearer dogma, or better enforcement of canons.

The solution that Jesus found for himself and for Israel, as they faced the hostility of the Roman-Roman world, becomes the word and work of redemption for all the cast-down people in every generation and in every age. I mean this quite literally. I do not ignore the theological and metaphysical interpretation of the Christian doctrine of salvation. The underprivileged everywhere has long since abandoned any hope that this type of salvation deals with the crucial issues by which their days are turned into despair without consolation. The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed.³³⁵

The Christianity that stood in solidarity with the outcast Jew, or Gentile, whether Christian or not, is the message that created resonance across lines of difference. Wright is correct to affirm:

[It] should be quite clear that what united early Christians, deeper than all diversity, was that they told, and lived, a form of Israel's history which

³³⁵ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon, 1976), 28-9

reached its climax in Jesus and which then issued in their spirit-given new life and task. Their diversities were diverse ways of construing that basic point; their disputes were carried on not so much by appeal to fixed principles, or to Jewish scripture conceived as a ragbag of proof texts, but precisely by fresh retellings of the story, which highlighted the points at issue.³³⁶

Wright's brilliance can be built upon by drawing the focus to the character of these people. The people who carried and who were carried by the story were nourished by the vision of the Redeemer, and are celebrated by Hoornaert as experiencing the "fascination of the splendor of the imagination," with worship. It was steeped in an atmosphere of wonder. They nourished their Christian commitment by enjoying apocalypses and Apocrypha.³³⁷ As MacMullen notes, "stories upon stories supplied a flood of testimony," for this *second church*.³³⁸ The clash with Jews would be inevitable as Christians told their story. However inconsistent the memories of each culture were with one another, still there was inexorable similarity between the two.

5.2 The Church Learns to Resist Judaizers

There is no widely known or accepted Christian equivalent to the Noachide Laws. These are prohibitions against idolatry and blasphemy, the injunction to establish a legal system, commandments against bloodshed, sexual sins, theft, and a seventh law, not applicable to Adam but added after the flood and based on Genesis 9.4, forbidding anyone to eat flesh cut from a living animal.³³⁹

This code, which essentially made the historic Hebrew faith two religions in one, is the universal allowance for Gentiles to have access to the coming age. It appears from the

³³⁶ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 456

³³⁷ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 156

³³⁸ MacMullen, 22

³³⁹ Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 126

council of Acts 15 that the Apostles discovered that proselytization, the recreation of Gentiles as Jews, was not the intent and goal of the Gospel. Therefore, they resorted to a schema by which they could gain acceptance as people of God, not as abrogates of the Mosaic Law. Moses was seen as the author of Torah. This assertion gave sanction to the preexistent Noachide Laws. If this interpretation is an accurate accounting, then the Jerusalem Council may be seen by some as the moment when Christianity was given the power to disallow Judaism. The reverse, however, is not true, at least in theory. Judaism seems to have an escape clause for non-Jews to participate in the life to come. Christianity does not promote a similar option. The understanding of the uniqueness of Christ is to this day upheld in movements like the Lausanne Convention, which describes itself as, “an international movement committed to energising ‘the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.’”³⁴⁰

Christianity was not just the smaller faith, but for a long time a subset of the Jewish religion. It had all of the factors that gave freedom of existence and movement to Judaism in the Roman Empire. Those whom Paul called “Judaizers” saw the discipline of Jewish Christians as self-correction. The form of punishment, thirty-nine lashes, was standard in the synagogue, and most likely exercised by Paul against Christians before his conversion. For Paul, Judaizers were intruders. If one imagines that Paul forbade Jews practice of his or her own tradition, then Paul is a renegade. If one understands, on the other hand, that Paul only protected Gentiles from being proselytized to Judaism, this would be consistent with what has

³⁴⁰ cf. Erwin Fahlbusch et al., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 205

been called, “The New Perspective on Paul.”³⁴¹ The New Perspective opens the door for renewed understanding of the Christian mission that repudiates traditional Roman Catholic and Lutheran understandings of both Paul and Judaism that envisage him as anti-Judaic.

Christian expressions of anti-Semitism cannot fairly be traced to the writings of Paul, any more than the misogyny or slaveholding that appear in Christian cultures throughout history. The misuse of Paul’s term “Judaize” is largely responsible for much in the way of anti-Judaic governments and churches. As Shaye Cohen notes, Paul used the term with reference to circumcision, observance of Sabbath and other Jewish holidays, *kashrut*, and such. By the third century CE, Christians wrote of Judaizing as observance of “Old Testament” laws and the denial of Christian spiritual Scripture reading. By the fourth century, they associated Judaizing with the adherence to non-orthodox Christology.³⁴² Rosemary Ruether disagrees with Cohen, seeing the foundations for anti-Semitism in the New Testament, most acutely in the Gospel of John, where “The Jews” are “programmatically identified with this false principle of existence of the world of darkness below.”³⁴³ In my view, generalization of “The Jews” bursts later with new and unintended significance in the same way that does Judaize. As Paul did not know of a future conciliar debate over Christology, John did could not have imagined Gentile anti-Semitism rooted in Christianity.

Dealing with Judaizers was the early church’s first challenge when it came to facing the threat of teaching contamination and provided the paradigm for dealing with others to

³⁴¹ “The New Perspective on Paul” James D.G. Dunn, in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 65, 1983, pp. 95-122.

³⁴² Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 193-5

³⁴³ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 64

follow, such as Gnostics and Marcionites. Confusion, however, over the term Judaize was the source of considerable conflict. Ignatius of Antioch is seen to be one who, familiar with the Gospels and Paul's letters, understood the opposing interpretations of the term and urged his congregations to be faithful to Christian teaching but also to avoid misinterpretations of religious behavior and thought.³⁴⁴ Benjamin Bacon delineates different uses of the term.

There were:

1. Judaizers who insisted on complete submission to the Law as the condition of salvation, for both Jews and Gentiles.
2. Imitators of Cephas, who considered believers of Jewish birth to be "under the Law," but asked of Gentiles only such consideration for it as the special conditions seemed to require.
3. Paulinists, who held that neither Jews nor Gentiles are under the law, yet felt that consideration should be shown for the scrupulous when asked not as of right, but as of charity.
4. Radicals, who recognized no limits to their freedom save the one new commandment.³⁴⁵

It is easy to see how misapplications could take place, and in sometimes-heated debate between Jew and Christian, a hostile and dangerous tone could be taken. Not all disputants would behave like James and Paul in Acts 15, entrusting themselves to what "has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." In that case, two parties who did not see eye-to-eye chose to avoid dissension for the sake of the larger mission.

³⁴⁴ Virginia Burrus, ed., *Late Ancient Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 83

³⁴⁵ Benjamin W. Bacon, *The Making of the New Testament* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1912), 47

5.3 The Church Learns to Cope and Contend with New Varieties of Christianity

Immediately following his resurrection, followers of Jesus emerged as a new Jewish sect and launched a movement with the vision to take their proclamation to the world. What began as an oral phenomenon was committed to print in the form of the Gospels. Their message's spread is attributable, in part, to its ability to adapt to the cultures of the empire's population centers. In Antioch, Jewish understandings of the message became prominent especially after the destruction of Jerusalem. Hellenic believers, Jewish and Gentile were able to convert it into philosophy in Alexandria. The gospel in North Africa became a populist manifesto. In the imperial capital, where minorities had long dealt with temperamental rulers, the message developed a sense for the affairs of state, becoming official and hierarchical. The early church had both devotional and political incentives for maintaining affiliation with Jews but Christians became vulnerable on several fronts as their message found new specializations and membership became less Jewish.

5.3 Marcion

The charismatic Marcion of Sinope (ca. 85-160),³⁴⁶ in the second century CE during the lifetime of Marcus Aurelius, relocated to Rome and after some period of being an asset to the church broke communion and began a cult that attracted an empire-wide following, especially in the East. Marcion's success worried Tertullian that this anti-Judaic system

³⁴⁶ The dates of Marcion's birth and death are Harnack's and have been widely cited but Moll makes a clear case for later dates, between 110 and 120 for birth and c. 165 for death. If Marcion arrived in Rome in 144/145 then he would have been already sixty. It would have been exceptional for him to have the mindset to start a movement so ambitious. Ireneaus states that Marcion gained influence under Anicetus (ca. 155-166) and thus was still active. Moll combines this with Clement of Alexandria's claim that Marcion's main era was during the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. Sebastián Moll *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 26

would become the dominant form of Christianity.³⁴⁷ Tertullian graphically shares his fear: “As wasps build honeycombs, so also the Marcionites make churches.”³⁴⁸

He does not approve of Tertullian in this but Sabine Baring Gould writes:

It is not probable that Tertullian passed over any passage in the “Gospel of the Lord,” which could by any means be made to serve against Marcion’s system. This is the more probable, because Tertullian twists the texts to serve his purpose, which in the smallest degree lend them to being so treated.³⁴⁹

Marcion’s personal wealth and financial acumen may be a factor in the success of a movement that threatened the apologists more than any other. He certainly captured the attention of significant historical figures. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-c. 236) grouped him with Gnostics.

For those men, indeed, either profess that Christ came into our life a mere man, and deny the talent of His divinity, or else, acknowledging Him to be God, they deny, on the other hand, His humanity, and teach that His appearances to those who saw Him as man were illusory, inasmuch as He did not bear with Him true manhood, but was rather a kind of phantom manifestation. Of this class are, for example, Marcion and Valentinus, and the Gnostics, who sunder the Word from the flesh, and thus set aside the one talent, viz., the incarnation.³⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that the sixth-century Chronicle of Edessa, except for the mention of the birth of Christ, is a notice of the apostate Marcion, which it dates at 138 CE.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ S. Baring-Gould, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels: on the Toledoth Jeschu, and the Petrine and Pauline Gospels of the First Three Centuries of which Fragments Remain* (London: O. Green and Son, 1874), 247

³⁴⁸ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.5

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 247

³⁵⁰ Hippolytus of Rome, *Fragments of Discourses or Homilies*, 10

³⁵¹ Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500* (New York: Orbis, 2008), 61

It is difficult to conceive of Marcionism apart from the degeneration of relations between Christians who were Jewish and Gentile. Although Marcion appears to advocate Paul, his promotion is selective and hence, a misrepresentation. Marcion's Bible did not include Romans 11.26, "all Israel shall be saved."³⁵²

Marcion fused parts of pseudo-Paulinism, Hellenism and Gnosticism in order to package an extremely marketable product for his times. It was one example of the attempt to apply Greek philosophy to Christian beliefs, and helped set the stage for the consideration of intellectual environment.³⁵³ If Marcion wanted wide acceptance, he would have had little cause to renounce being called a "Gnostic," but he was not. It is unlikely that he would have been so influential, however, without borrowing their concepts, for he lived in a time when Gnosticisms were ubiquitous, many of which had a Jewish or Christian component. He had no use for the complicated Gnostic mythology with Aeons emanating from an original divine being but he did depict the God of the Jews as a Demiurge. According to Marcion, the true God sent Jesus Christ, without birth and without a material body, to destroy the Demiurge, who was the false god.³⁵⁴ Gnostics' anti-matter ideas were incorporated in Marcion's preaching to the extent that they helped him distinguish between the Creator-God of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of Jesus. For Marcion, sexual acts were loathsome and so his followers were expected to remain celibate, unless already married. Further, Marcion rejected the very Gospels that were responsible for the spread of Christianity, except for portions of

³⁵² Alan J. Avery-Peck, Daniel Harrington, and Jacob Neusner, eds., *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2004), 92

³⁵³ Steven K. Ross, *Roman Edessa: Politics and Culture on the Eastern Fringes of the Roman Empire, 114-242 CE* (London: Routledge, 2001), 121

³⁵⁴ Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1*, 62

Luke, as a follower of Paul, combined with much of Paul's epistles, excluding the Pastorals. These comprised Marcion's Bible. He rejected the Jewish Scriptures.

Arguably, the greatest threat that the church has ever perceived itself having was in Marcionism, even worse than the first severe persecution occurring during this period under the auspices of Marcus Aurelius (161-180). Marcion was a faith teacher. He asserted that Christ was not Jewish, nor the Messiah promised in what became the "Old Testament." His prominence eventually pushed Tertullian to coin the term "New Testament" with reference to a collection of Christian writings.³⁵⁵ Marcionism was a major causation for the tradition of Christian apologetics. The first reason was Jews; apologists tried to show the continuity between the Jewish Scriptures and the beliefs and practices of Christianity.³⁵⁶ Another reason was to educate and reassure the Church, as such articles as Tatian's Address to the Greeks (Christians did not have careers as orators).³⁵⁷ The Church was in need of literate men to help sort out the many teachings they received. Christians also wanted to know that they were "law-abiding" in a culture that mocked their ethics and it was indeed their accusers who were out of touch or negligent when it came to abiding by commonly accepted standards.

Athenagoras, Justin, Theophilus of Antioch and Tertullian employed the language of Second

³⁵⁵ I would argue strenuously that traditional usage of "Old" and "New" is inconsistent with Tertullian's reasoning, and are artificial divisions. In *Against Marcion*, 4.6, Tertullian declares that it is Marcion's idea to dismember Scripture. "But we now advance a step further on, and challenge (as we promised to do) the very Gospel of Marcion, with the intention of thus proving that it has been adulterated. For it is certain that the whole aim at which he has strenuously laboured even in the drawing up of his Antitheses, centres in this, that he may establish a diversity between the Old and the New Testaments, so that his own Christ may be separate from the Creator, as belonging to this rival god, and as alien from the law and the prophets. It is certain, also, that with this view he has erased everything that was contrary to his own opinion and made for the Creator, as if it had been interpolated by His advocates, whilst everything which agreed with his own opinion he has retained."

³⁵⁶ Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price, and Christopher Rowland, eds., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 8

Sophistic to show the virtue of the Christian community to counter charges of immorality, cannibalism, incest and atheism.^{358 359}

Marcionism, however, gave cause to raise to new heights the polemic of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, and others.³⁶⁰³⁶¹ Justin, writes that Marcion had drawn many followers from “every nation,” and were “called Christians.”

And there is Marcion, a man of Pontus, who is even at this day alive, and teaching his disciples to believe in some other god greater than the Creator. And he, by the aid of the devils, has caused many of every nation to speak blasphemies, and to deny that God is the maker of this universe, and to assert that some other being, greater than He, has done greater works. All who take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians...³⁶²

Marcionites resembled many churches, and were organized to draw followers from other groups. They performed baptisms and celebrated the Eucharist.³⁶³ Their baptismal formula was like that of the proto-orthodox according to Augustine.

Accordingly, if Marcion consecrated the sacrament of baptism with the words of the gospel, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” the sacrament was complete. Although his faith was expressed under the same words, he held opinions not taught by the Catholic truth. It was not complete, but stained with the falsity of fables.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁸ Athenagoras, *Legatio*, 32.2

³⁵⁹ Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum*, 3

³⁶⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.6.2

³⁶¹ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1-5

³⁶² Justin, *I Apology* 26

³⁶³ Moll *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, 125

³⁶⁴ Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, 3.15.20

We have no remnant of the teachings of Marcion, except as transmitted via the words of apologists who countered him. The scope of this study emphasizes that while the Church through much tribulation outlived both the most extreme expressions of exploitative anti-Judaic teaching and government oppression, it also surrendered some vital aspects of generosity and humaneness during later days of imperial sanction with its heresiological excisions.

5.4 Christianity Comes into Fuller Definition

The emergence of Marcionism during the sub-apostolic age (from the death of John, the last Apostle to the death of Polycarp, and 155 AD) may be seen as an extreme expression of the hostility developing between Christians and Jews. It most certainly exacerbated the strife inasmuch as in the early days Marcionism was widely seen as Christianity, and was perceived by Jews and some Christians, as well as many others, as Christianity or Christianity evolved.³⁶⁵ John Clabeaux wonders what Marcionites would or would not have done to Jews had they prevailed. Although we do not have a record of their harassing Jews, they did not obtain positions of power in the Roman world. The proto-orthodox would one day attain those positions, and indeed trouble Jews.³⁶⁶ Another question to consider is what would Jews have done or not done to Christians had they prevailed.

Jews moved toward self-definition in response to questions about their self-identity. The loss of the temple virtually spelled the end of the Sadducees. The Zealots faded away after Bar Kochba. The Jewish context was just one in which Christian beginnings emerged.

³⁶⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 23. Boyarin cites an example of a Jew for whom “Marcionite” and “Christian” (Greek word) meant the same thing, and yet he was a worshipper of Jesus as Messiah himself.

³⁶⁶ Avery-Peck, Harrington, and Neusner, eds., *When Judaism and Christianity Began* 92

There were also Roman and Greek settings. The Roman Empire was the governmental, legal, and economic context. Hellenism was the cultural, educational, and philosophical context. The Jewish world was the immediate religious context.³⁶⁷ (It also had a powerful secondary Graeco-Roman environment).³⁶⁸

It is not that Judaism imitated Christianity, but as long as Christian groups had viewed themselves as Jews, the “heretic” category was unnecessary because Judaism was inclusive—there was no need for one to define himself as a Jew. The “heretic” category was nonexistent in rabbinic discourse until the late second century. Over time, Christians defined themselves from Jews (they also defined among themselves) and later Jews defined themselves from Christians (and they also defined among themselves).³⁶⁹ Not only were there many Judaisms but the reductionist term “pagan” also arrives in the imperial lexicon for the convenience of Christians. Tertullian was first to use it to refer to non-Christians. Paganus originally meant “rustic,” “villager,” “peasant.” There was no global, cohesive idea of a “religion” before the Patristic period and that is true for the “civic religion.”³⁷⁰ Boyarin explains that when Christianity separated religious belief and practice from Romanitas, cult from culture, Judaism as a religion came into the world.³⁷¹ “Judaism would not exist as a religion for the Church without the construction of Christian orthodoxy.”³⁷²

³⁶⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1

³⁶⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2009), 32

³⁶⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity*, (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 66

³⁷⁰ Justo González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas in the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1990), 152

³⁷¹ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 12

In chapter two, I quoted Boyarin to say that Judaism is “not the mother of Christianity; they are twins, joined at the hip.”³⁷³ Time has settled this for Jewish scholars. Alan Segal says,

According to conventional wisdom, the first century witnessed the beginning of only one religion, Christianity... So great is the contrast between previous Jewish religious systems and rabbinism that Judaism and Christianity can essentially claim a twin birth.³⁷⁴

The model of a twin birth is what Israel Yuval employs in his work *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. He deliberately studies Jacob and Esau, twins, as opposed to Isaac and Ishmael because, “The greater the consanguinity, the more intense the quarrel.”³⁷⁵ The renewed interest in Judeo-Christian beginnings is credited to the human trauma of World War II and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whereby much needed interdisciplinary dialogue could flourish.³⁷⁶ The newly discovered sources reveal the stunning diversity in Second Temple Judaism and its connection with both Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. We claim that the War and the Scrolls are the causes for the curiosity, but in verity it is a conversation that was inevitable.

Twins in a womb, tussling with each other, striving for separation, surely not separate until they’re born, and even then, never sure of their sovereign identity...³⁷⁷

³⁷² Ibid. 13

³⁷³ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 5

³⁷⁴ Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989), 1

³⁷⁵ Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 4

³⁷⁶ Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 13-14

³⁷⁷ Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 126

Boyarin proposes that late antique Judaism and Christianity are points on a continuum; the Marcionites were on one end and Jews for whom Jesus meant nothing on the other. In the middle of the continuum were gradations that provided social and cultural mobility from one end of this spectrum to the other.³⁷⁸ If Boyarin is right, as I think he is, then I would assert here that the measures that delimited that freedom of mobility are unfortunate.

5.5 Christians and Jews Must Still Coexist with the Roman Religion and Other Practices as They Develop Definition

The third century in the Roman Empire is known as a time of crisis, attested to mostly by the dearth of sources for the era, but also because of skillfully led Gothic invasions across the Rhine and Danube and the rise of bellicose Sassanians on the Eastern border.³⁷⁹ What is clear about the third century is that hardly an emperor died a natural death. The first emperor of the period was Septimius Severus, from Africa, who came to power out of civil war and agitation during the “Year of the Five Emperors.” He and his sons were ruthless dictators, not unusual for Roman emperors except here it seems to reflect the restlessness of especially dark times of military unrest, and border trouble. The third century was not devoid of prosperity. The empire reached its greatest geographical extents but the state faced the dilemma of keeping the military paid.³⁸⁰ Expansionist wars to the east overextended military resources and logistical capacity, so the successes created the problem.³⁸¹ The imperial armies were supported by taxes and the devaluation of currency led to rampant inflation and a stressful

³⁷⁸ Ibid. 8

³⁷⁹ M. P. Charlesworth, *The Roman Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 7-8

³⁸⁰ Alaric Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1

³⁸¹ Ibid. 6

economic environment. The third century was a time a change, even though some, but not all, historians have moved away from the term “crisis.”³⁸² I argue that analyses of the period do not comprehensively factor that it was a time that the people of the empire were brought to consider the Gospel, more widely now than at any time before. The writings of apologists and bishops were gaining more exposure. Later in the third century Christians were involved in imperial service, with senior Christian officers and influential Christian officers in the Emperor’s court. In some locations, the churches were conspicuous public buildings. Provincial upper classes were now providing some of the converts.³⁸³

What more is known is that during this period, great portions of the population sought solace in philosophy and personal religion. It was also marked by the rise in interest in new thought, including Neo-Platonism, and the Philostratus’ biography of Apollonius of Tyana. Neo-Platonism was a development of Plato’s thought that stressed its religious aspect. Apollonius’ story is that of a miracle working ascetic philosopher who was known for a confrontation with Domitian (51-96). According to Eusebius, Jews and Christians were heavily persecuted toward the end of Domitian’s reign and there is speculation that he was the beast of John’s Apocalypse.³⁸⁴ In any case, Apollonius became an exemplar of what it meant by tyranny and oppression, and is seen as Philostratus’ attempt to upstage Jesus.³⁸⁵

Although the Church was moving toward a place of prominence and influence, it was a minority constituency, with various pagan cults together forming the mainstream. Along

³⁸² Crisis and the Roman Empire: Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Olivier Hekster, Gerda de Klejn, and Danielle Sloopjes, editors. (Brill: The Netherlands, 2007), 11

³⁸³ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 107

³⁸⁴ Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge, 1992), 116

³⁸⁵ MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 169

with Christianity, other eastern cults grew across the empire. Next in order of historical importance, in MacMullen and Lane's estimation, was Manichaeism, and third, Mithraism. It makes more sense to support the thesis of Lewis Moore Hopfe and Gary Lease (because of its support from the state) that Mithraism was a stronger contender for superior standing than Manichaeism.³⁸⁶

Mani called himself the "Apostle of Jesus Christ." He was born around 216 near the capital of the Parthian Empire, traveled extensively and organized a system that combined Persian dualism, Christianity, including Gnostic forms, Hinduism, and Buddhism. He portrayed the world's suffering as the symptom of unending struggle between the forces of good and evil. A feature of Manichaeism that must play prominently in third century culture of the Roman Empire was not only the hostility toward magicians, but also the anti-Judaic character of its devotional Psalm-Book. A notorious passage is especially scornful. O Magicians the priests of the fire that you seized my God in your foul hands, impious men, mad and godless, the brothers of the Jews, the murderers of Christ.³⁸⁷

Of course, Diocletian's motives for instituting his persecution of the Manichaens in 296 had nothing to do with their posture toward Jews. Earlier in the year, the Persian ruler Narses had defeated Diocletian and his colleague, Galerius.³⁸⁸ His action against Manichaens had to do with the cult's Persian background, even though Diocletian's commitment to traditional religion would have been motive enough. It was Diocletian's first persecution of

³⁸⁶ Lewis Moore Hopfe and Gary Lease, *The Caesarea Mithraeum: A Preliminary Announcement* in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Mar., 1975), 2-10, The American Schools of Oriental Research

³⁸⁷ *Manichaean Psalm*, Charles Alberry, Translator (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938), 25

³⁸⁸ Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226-363): A Documentary History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3

an organized religious body. He directed his attack against the leaders. He decreed that they and their sacred books be burned and that subordinates be beheaded, or sent to the mines with the loss of all their property.³⁸⁹ Papyrus discoveries in the 1990's show that Manichaens fancied themselves to be Christians, which explains why the proto-orthodox church despised the Manichaens and sought to eliminate them as competitors once it came to power. MacCulloch points out too that the Church did not challenge Diocletian's provision for burning Manichaens alive. Centuries later the Western Latin Church renewed the practice against other Christian "heretics."³⁹⁰

Mithraism's beginnings are traced to an early epoch when the ancestors of the Persians were still united with those of the Hindus. It is mentioned as least as early as 1400 BCE in a Hittite text indicating worship in both India and the Iranian plateau.³⁹¹ The central image in Mithraic reliefs usually shows Mithras in a cave, kneeling on the back of a bull. He is shown pulling back the bull's head by its nostrils while stabbing it with a dagger, and from its blood came grain. In cultic practice, the bull would be killed in a way that the worshiper would be bathed in blood, placing himself beneath a screen upon which the dying bull lay.³⁹² In addition to the killing of the bull ceremony, Mithraism valued a pact and sacred meal between Mithras and Sol, where they share bread, drink, and other food. Some have made a connection in meaning between the blood cleansing of the bull with the Christian Passion. If

³⁸⁹ Michael Gough, *The Early Christians* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 52

³⁹⁰ MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 171

³⁹¹ Franz Cumont and J. Thomas McCormack, *Mysteries of Mithra* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 221

³⁹² Georgia L. Irby-Massie, *Military Religion in Roman Britain* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 77

anything, Mithraism here borrowed from Christianity.³⁹³ A mystical significance corresponded to the very common activity of sharing meals in Judaism, Christianity, Mithraism, Manichaeism, and pagan rituals in general, although the meals held different meanings.

Although Mithraism, like Manichaeism, was intimately connected with Persia, it was much older. For Rome, age was a considerable factor toward legitimacy, and yet Mithraism was relatively new to Romans.³⁹⁴ Mithraism first took root among Roman soldiers, which explains how it began its spread in earnest under the Flavians.³⁹⁵ Two centuries later, another emperor who rose to power through the military, Diocletian, called Mithras a state god and “guardian of the empire.”³⁹⁶

Diocletian would be another formidable rival to Christianity, spreading rapidly after appearing in the empire at the end of the first century CE. Diocletian consisted of nearly all males who met in artificial caves.³⁹⁷ Although Mithraism was Iranian, it was embraced and developed by Roman soldiers, being one of the army’s favorite cults.³⁹⁸ It is not easy to overstate the reach of the cult. This distinctly Persian cult being the favorite of emperors in

³⁹³ Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 64

³⁹⁴ The earliest mention of the Mysteries of Mithra for Romans is in Plutarch’s *Life of Pompey*, 24, pointing to 68 BCE

³⁹⁵ Cumont and McCormack, *Mysteries*, 41-42

³⁹⁶ Michael Patella, *Lord of the cosmos: Mithras, Paul, and the Gospel of Mark* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 10

³⁹⁷ Ramsay MacMullen and Eugene N. Lane, editors. *Paganism and Christianity, 100-425 C.E.: A Sourcebook* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 72-73

³⁹⁸ Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000), 168

the Late Roman Empire, including Julian (360-363), the last of the pagan rulers.³⁹⁹ Franz Cumont observes of Persians who had earlier fought the Romans. These warriors worshiped Mithra as the protecting genius of their arms and this is the reason why Mithra always, even in the Latin world, remained the “invincible” god, the tutelary deity of armies, held in special honor by warriors.⁴⁰⁰

Bigg reminds us that men of war in any age are strongly susceptible to religious influence. The standing army of Rome was no exception to the rule.⁴⁰¹ Cumont, however, does not explain how this cult from Persia could become so prevalent among Romans but the solution is not so difficult to find. We need only to consult human instinct, which has from ancient time acknowledged greater power in times of conquest. Alliance with triumphant divinities is always a proposition if not a settlement.⁴⁰² In ancient times, whether for nations, religions, or deities were commonly exchanged. We can recognize in Catholicism’s cult of the saints the presence of Hindu gods.⁴⁰³ It was not unusual to adapt worship practices in the wake of wars, and even victors might make alterations. Interestingly, it was also regarded as an imperialist strategy in which the Roman emperors, by appropriating the foreign cults of those they conquered,⁴⁰⁴ so Mithraism was adapted and fully assimilated into Romanitas.

The conception of the god, who was originally a member of the Iranian pantheon, seems similar to that of other Near Eastern divinities in that he was now seen as the savior of

⁴⁰⁰ Franz Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (Chicago: Open Court, 1911), 144

³⁹⁹ Hans A. Pohlsander, *The Emperor, Constantine* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 16.
⁴⁰¹ Charles Bigg, *The Church’s Task under the Roman Empire: Four Lectures with Preface, Notes, and an Excursus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 48

⁴⁰² Jon Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 210

⁴⁰³ David Mosse, “The Politics of Religious Synthesis,” in *Syncretism / Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* ed. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (London: Routledge, 1994), 91

⁴⁰⁴ Wolfgang Kempf, “Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism,” in *Syncretism / Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* ed. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (London: Routledge, 1994), 4

mankind from evil. The astrological symbolism associated with his cult suggests that the founders of the movement had drawn upon Greek astrology as part of their effort to explain what the god had done. It was to contextualize their vision of the god as the sun. Their cult was thus neither Greek nor Iranian nor Anatolian. It was rather the product of the fusion of traditions to create a divinity that would be comprehensible because he partook of the multiculturalism of the empire.⁴⁰⁵

Judaism, Mithraism, Christianity, and Manichaeism lived alongside one another in the Roman Empire, and commonly sharing many of their traits. Easily, however, the closest two cults were Judaism and Christianity. The only one of these that the empire recognized as being truly ancient was Judaism. If a tradition can be seen as the archetype for the others, it has to be Judaism. It is often argued that Christianity is the ideological offshoot of paganism. However, traditions such as baptism and communion have Judaic precedents.⁴⁰⁶ I will not go as far as to renounce completely the idea that Christianity and even Judaism were influenced by pagan cults. If one were to take that position, it instantly ignores the susceptibility of all of those religions to be influenced by Greek philosophy, an unrealistic contention. Any number of culture factor assist in producing the religions of any era.

[R]esemblances do not necessarily suppose an imitation.... Many correspondences between the Mithraic doctrine and the Catholic faith are explicable by their common Oriental origin. Nevertheless, certain ideas and certain ceremonies must necessarily have passed from the one cult to the other; but in the majority of cases we rather suspect its transference than clearly perceive it.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay: AD 180-395* (London: Routledge, 2004), 35

⁴⁰⁶ Gary Lease, "Mithraism and Christianity: Borrowings and Transformations," in Wolfgang Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Vol. 2*, page 1316

⁴⁰⁷ Cumont and McCormack, *Mysteries*, 194

Within the empire Judaism was given legal concessions, as discussed above, and still faced occasional threats from the state. The only “safe” religion was state religion. If Judaism, Christianity, or Manichaeism could uproot prevailing systems and obtain that status, then it would of course need to suppress any system that did not fully support the reigning cult.

5.6 Conclusion

To the question of how these Eastern religions became the primary competitors for the heart of the Roman Empire, Cumont answers in a word: traffic. People traveled westward from the Levant. First, there were merchants who relocated to Italy, Gaul, the Danubian countries, Africa and Spain. He compares the spread of these religions to the phenomenon of Christianity’s spread in Jewish communities. Along with grain, men came to Italy, and slaves from Phrygia, Cappadocia, Syria and Alexandria.

Who can tell what influence chambermaid from Antioch or Memphis gained over the minds of their mistresses? At the same time the necessities of war removed officers and men from the Euphrates to the Rhine or to the outskirts of the Sahara, and everywhere they remained faithful to the gods of their faraway country.⁴⁰⁸ All of these accounts for how the cults of the East displaced those of the West. Even after the rise of Christianity, the battle of the divinities would go on. Constantine is known well for his promotion of an alternative to Christianity.

In the *Sol* of the *Soli invicto comiti* Augusti nostri on coins of Constantine, men could not possibly see anyone but the imperial patron, Mithras, also called the Sun-god.⁴⁰⁹ In this

⁴⁰⁸ Franz Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (Chicago: Open Court, 1911), 24

⁴⁰⁹ Alföldi, *The Conversion of Constantine*, 56

heavy traffic, Christians made their way. They still bore powerful resemblances to Jews. They clashed, but their war was a cultic civil war. Each lacked significant power to injure the other. Christians required apologists (like Justin, and later, Tertullian) to differentiate from Marcion, but more so from Jews. It was often difficult for some to see the differences. Boyarin calls this group of Christian writers in the second century heresiologists who established borderlines and inspected religious customs.⁴¹⁰

It became increasingly expedient as a matter of safety for Christians, especially Jewish ones, to distance themselves from Jews in the wake of Jewish insurrections. It is not surprising to assume that Christian Jews were destroyed with other Jews in early second century Alexandria but Boyarin presents a bolder suggestion.⁴¹¹

[U]ntil the end of the fourth century, if we consider all of their varieties and not just the nascent “orthodox” ones—Judaism and Christianity were phenomenological indistinguishable as entities, not merely in the conventionally accepted sense, that Christianity was a Judaism, but also in the sense that differences that were in the fullness of time to constitute the very basis for the distinction between the “two religions” ran through and not between the nascent groups of Jesus-following Jews and Jews who did not follow Jesus. Thus, one of the most characteristic differences between Judaism and Christianity as we know them is the belief in or denial of complexity within the godhead, but in these early centuries non-Christian Jews who believed in God’s Word, Wisdom, or even Son as a “second God,” while there were believers in Jesus who insisted that the three persons of the Trinity were only names for different manifestations of one person. The practices by which these differences within became reconstituted as differences between represent an important part of the narrative construction this book attempts.⁴¹²

It is unfortunate that the arguments of Jews and heterodox Christians did not survive. For Boyarin, the invention of heresy was a perceived necessity, forasmuch as the writers, the

⁴¹⁰ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 2

⁴¹¹ William David Davies, Steven T. Katz, Louis Finkelstein, *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The late Roman-Rabbinic period* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006), 64

⁴¹² Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 89-90

religious rulers, sought to identify trespassers as “Judaizers” or *minim*.⁴¹³ It was actually a political expedient that carried over into doctrine. Fierce as was the method of debate that included name-calling, these were not matters of state.

As we look closer, we see that there was disagreement, not only between Christians and Jews, but even those communities were non-homogeneous. In many ways, Boyarin states, non-Christian Jews might share more in common with Christian Jews than their cultic counterparts.⁴¹⁴ I established in chapter two the great diversity among Jews leading up to and during the lifetime of Jesus. The most flagrant differences had to do with various communities’ or classes’ response to Rome. These differences were at least as visible after the destruction of the Temple (70 CE) and later, the crushing of their people in the aftermath of the Bar Kochba revolt (135 CE). Any idea of a period of complete unanimity is fantasy. What would Ezra or Nehemiah, who required those who had married non-Jews to abandon their families, say to Boaz, or Ruth, a famous mixed-marriage couple treated with honor for producing the ancestor of King David? The multiple voices in the Hebrew Scriptures are not a threat to Jewishness.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah can speak opposite messages because they address very different situations.... The differences between them are not to be toned down. It arises from the directness with which each is responding to a particular context. Their oneness relies in the way they are doing this in Yahweh’s name, not in a unity at the level of the content of their messages.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. 23

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. 2
Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament*, 33

During the days of the emergence of the Church, there were Jews who expected divine judgment to fall upon Rome, and others who saw Rome as God's functionary of vengeance against those who did not trust him, but rather in their might and weaponry. Philip Harland points to both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch as examples of how the destruction of the Temple (70 CE) was related in the code of the first (586 BCE). Here we can see 4 Ezra still condemning the Roman Empire in similar fashion to John's Apocalypse.⁴¹⁶

You will surely disappear, you eagle, and your terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it.⁴¹⁷

Jews knew insurrection. In 165 BCE they overcame the Seleucids and established the Hasmonean dynasty. Internal disputes, however, led to their fall to Rome in 63 BCE. The character of their current quarrels was not violent, and as such attracted no attention from the state. Among the disputants were also Jews who followed Jesus, and eventually Gentiles who followed Jesus. Among the parties in contention, their goal was for credibility and survival, which implies a contest for converts. People were the stakes—no longer was there a land or Temple for which to fight, and even an apocalyptic dream lacked the power to completely erase the present realities; no community wanted to see their constituency erode, or possibly expire.

Harsh persecution had provided incentive to not provoke the state. This persecution was a powerful reality. When the only stakes are the people, it makes for the conditions that Christians in every place and every time have recognized to be the core of their mission.

⁴¹⁶ Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 215-216

⁴¹⁷ 4 Ezra 11.45-46; translated by B.M. Metzger

Nevertheless, in this period, the Jewish infrastructure, including synagogues, was vital toward sustaining the Church. There were hazards, however. While the Jews' *religio licita* status gave them some asylum, there was never a time when Jews were beyond suspicion and completely secure.⁴¹⁸ Their immunities were cause enough to rouse envy among Gentiles, while also attracting others to investigate becoming a fearer of the Jews' God, if not proselytization.

The state had no way of knowing what each synagogue preached, but did know that their autonomy made them different from other associations and guilds. It was important to practice diplomacy with the state as did other associations. This might mean following the custom among communities and associations by passing an honorary decree for the emperor, or other Roman official. We know of at least one case where such an action on the part of a synagogue was forwarded to Augustus. He ordered copies of his own and the Jews' honorary decree to be placed in a prominent location in the imperial cult temple of the provincial assembly of Asia.⁴¹⁹ Hoornaert notes that throughout the Diaspora, in the synagogue, a theology of opposition to the Roman state developed. I pointed out in chapter two that the Temple authorities also never supported the synagogical movement. Hoornaert calls it the place where Jews held on to their "memory" in the large Hellenized cities of the Roman Empire, as well as the lesser cities, and as in the interior of Syria, Africa, and Gaul. Primitive Christianity inherited this approach to doing life and worship. Two aspects of the synagogue

⁴¹⁸ Josephus says that Augustus' decree gave Jews the right to "follow their own customs," including sending sacred funds to Jerusalem, and Sabbath-keeping. (*Antiquities* 16.162-65)

⁴¹⁹ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 220

were particularly important for nascent Christianity: its non-territorial or group aspect and its family aspect.⁴²⁰

Because synagogues were mobile and kept close family ties, the early churches reflected the same character. The three elements that Hoornaert sees that made Christians' abandonment of the synagogue model inevitably are:

1. Christians' pursuit of universality.
2. Christians' rejection of the Jewish people.
3. Christians' enchantment with the organizational efficiency of the Roman imperial system.⁴²¹

Christians were not content to remain in the synagogue. They wanted to lead the Jewish world to Jesus. Although these were the bases where they first obtained a hearing, they did not reap a great harvest. MacCulloch has a simple explanation: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots found different parts of the message unacceptable. The Sadducees were complicit in the arrest and execution of Jesus, which made the message disturbing for them. The Pharisees wanted better adherence to Jewish law. The Essenes led a more cloistered life. The message was anti-violence, something to which the Zealots could not subscribe. MacCulloch thinks that Christianity would not have flourished had the Jews embraced it.⁴²²

Hoornaert's second cause for Christians' abandonment of the synagogue model is Christians' rejection of the Jewish people. One must be cautious to not oversimplify this

⁴²⁰ Hoornaert, *The Memory of the Christian People*, 140-141

⁴²¹ Ibid. 146

⁴²² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Groundwork of Christian History* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1987), 37-38

labyrinthine and elongated process that we in some ways continue to see developing. The third cause for the abandonment of the synagogue model is the organizational efficiency of the Roman imperial system. With so many Jews already holding that Jerusalem could not prevail until Rome was destroyed, the wars of 70 CE and 135 CE only confirmed for them, Jewish apologists for Rome, like Philo and Josephus, notwithstanding. Christians and especially Gentiles did not have an expectation or eschatology that was so Jerusalem-centric. In fact, because many Christians strictly viewed the destruction of the Temple as God's vengeance for the crucifixion of his son, the debate stiffened. It was not the only debate among the multifarious Jews. In time, Christianity, at least the conventional forms established at Nicaea and later church councils, would side with Rome over Jerusalem. They would become history's "winners," described by Paula Fredriksen as:

Those men who successfully finessed their churches' transition to a form of Roman imperial culture, who named their ideological and institutional forbears, and who shaped the canon, both scriptural and patristic.⁴²³

Before their triumph, however, Jews and Christians would continue their struggle, their "wrestling in the womb."

Wrestling would include heresiology and canonization. The effects of these enterprises cannot be overstated. Daniel Amram suggests that the heresiological process employed by Christians to define authority was mirrored by the tannaim.⁴²⁴ For Adam Becker, the forces that drove proto-orthodox Christians to create their boundaries of orthodoxy not only precipitated the same response in rabbinic Judaism, but also contributed

⁴²³ Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 36

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.* 212

to the restructuring of the Zoroastrian priesthood and development of Zoroastrian orthodoxy in Persia.⁴²⁵ The changes in Persia can be seen to presage the persecution of Christians there, which I discuss in chapter six. Heresiology would mark the turning of the corner for Jew-Christian relations. Conflict was nothing new in Jewish-Christian relations, and rhetoric seems less cordial than some would like.

Both Jews and Christians have misinterpreted the New Testament's many uncomplimentary references to Jews. The argument between Judaism and Christianity was at the beginning largely a family affair. After Christianity separated from Judaism, the polemical passages in the New Testament were read in an unhistorical way, as testimony of hatred between two separate religions, when they should have been read as strife between two sects of the same religion.⁴²⁶

Robin Lane Fox paints a picture of a Late Antique world filled with pagan cults and beliefs but devoid of debates or "refutations of views of which were 'heretical.'"⁴²⁷ Pagan philosophers did not travel from cities to small townships to explain the meaning of Greek texts. The bishops did.

The idea of orthodoxy comes into the world sometime in the second century with a group of Christian writers called "heresiologists," the anatomizers of heresy and heresies, and their Jewish counterparts, the Rabbis.⁴²⁸

In addition to the practice of heresiology, both Christians and Jews sharpened their contrasting doctrines by augmenting their jointly held Holy Scriptures. While Christians

⁴²⁵ Ibid. 375

⁴²⁶ Segal, *Rebecca's Children*, 142

⁴²⁷ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians: Religion and the Religious Life from the Second to the Fourth Century A.D., when the Gods of Olympus Lost Their Dominion and Christianity, with the Conversion of Constantine, Triumphed in the Mediterranean World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 265-266

⁴²⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 2

debated over what would comprise the New Testament, rabbis added the Mishnah, later the Tosefta, and eventually the Talmud.

The rise of the bishops, along with apologists and heresiologists would fashion the beginning of a new era for Christians, Jews and the Roman Empire. The time would come when the emperors could no longer overlook their influence. This era would show that the bishops, apologists, and heresiologists were armed also with the stories of the martyrs. They all began by defining or defending a powerless minority pushed to the margins of society, met their challenge superbly while shaping their arguments after the models of that society.

Very significantly, the debate over the central beliefs raised by apologists, paid for by martyrs, formulated by bishops, and deliberated over in church councils are directly related to the triumphalist stance that the proto-orthodox would occupy. This third element in the triad, the bishops, would link the emperor and the church.

By the fourth century CE, Christianity was granted the full rights of a legal religion alongside the older cults of the state. Instead of being threatened and terrorized by the state and of living with the derision of practitioners of other religions, some of their greatest conflicts continued to be with variant Christianities. Throughout the fourth century, emperors had exiled bishops who had disagreed with them. The end of that century saw the use of imperial troops to enforce orthodoxy against recalcitrant heretics and schismatic sects.⁴²⁹

Constantine had seen the unique place that Christians had begun to hold in society. He got on board, appointing considerable subsidies for virgins, widows, and the clergy.

Constantine did not foresee how it would backfire, because bishops could not be easily

⁴²⁹ Robert Doran, *Birth of a Worldview: Early Christianity in Its Jewish and Pagan Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 118

bought. They had other assets, including lifetime tenure.⁴³⁰ They were pastors who held special relationships with their flocks. Bishops rose to such power that they would often intimidate emperors. Christians gained imperial prominence and favor, however, internecine disputes wage on unnoticed by the powers. This thesis contends that Jesus' mission operates efficiently in an environment where such battles take place without government intervention.

⁴³⁰ Ibid. 397

CHAPTER 6

THE HEADINESS OF TOLERATION

Introduction

The second century rise of the bishops and their influence beyond their own communities was evidence that the Church was spreading. This growth won the attention of Roman officials, which is why some educated Christians took to the pen to defend their practice. They employed classical rhetoric techniques, using ideas from Greek philosophy.⁴³¹ This chapter seeks to show that Christianity's political ascent opened the door to parlay the long- and well-crafted strengths of bishops, apologists, and the legacy of the martyrs. The suffering church became an administrative regime mightier than anything Rome had seen.

Until these days in the Roman Empire when Christians spoke of victories, they meant those of Jesus Christ and the martyrs. Something was happening, though, among Christians and in their relationship with the world. They began to hold government positions. They started sitting on local city councils, even Rome's Senate, and some were held in honor at the imperial palace. They were granted high appointments in the military. In the early half of the third century, certain prominent members of the church had been prone to court the favor of

⁴³¹ George Alexander Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (USA: The University of North Carolina, 1999), 153

the rulers.⁴³² Very early, Church Fathers like Tertullian and Cyprian were uncomfortable with the prospect of Christians serving under a heathen ruler but those Church Fathers were no longer present.⁴³³ Men who served capably in these offices would pave the way for the day when Christianity would be the preferred religion in the empire.

6.1 The Progression Toward Toleration of the Church

From the birth of the church until the Edict of Toleration in 312, there had been periodic times of state-sponsored terrorism against Christians. It seemed to increase in both frequency and intensity as the church grew along with the influence of her bishops. In the second half of the third century, the emperor Gallienus reversed the policy of his father Valerian, ceasing Christian persecution and recognizing the church's corporate status, thereby opening the door to ownership of cemeteries, churches and other properties.⁴³⁴ Of Gallienus, Eusebius writes that he immediately restrained the persecution against us by public proclamations, and directed the bishops to perform in freedom their customary duties, in a rescript.⁴³⁵

More than two decades after Gallienus' reprieve, Diocletian, whose reign began in 284 CE, saw the church continuing to thrive for nineteen years until the mood of the state changed and he inaugurated the worst and farthest-reaching repression in the Roman era for Christians to date. Rome itself had faced and overcome immense threats, but among the

⁴³² Shirley Jackson Case, *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933), 134

⁴³³ Ibid. 137

⁴³⁴ Eusebius, *The Church History*, 7.10

⁴³⁵ H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 114

demons remaining unexorcised by Diocletian. The constant Persian menace is the memory of their capture and humiliation of Valerian.⁴³⁶ (Not to be overlooked is that on some of Diocletian's campaigns against the Persians, one of the military leaders was a young Constantine.)⁴³⁷

Dread of its Persian origins accounts for one reason that Diocletian formed a resistance against Manichaeism for a season, because it was “not right to oppose these (the ‘immortal gods’ and ‘old religion’)”. The underlying motivation for his actions was, however, a commitment to ancient Roman values, and accordingly, Roman gods, two years before the rescript against Manichaeism. In 294 CE, Diocletian proscribed astrology in the whole empire.⁴³⁸ Not long after beginning to put down the Manicheans, the state's attention turned to Christians. Although often referred to as the “Diocletian Persecution”, early historians saw its impetus as having come from Galerius, Diocletian's Caesar, and according to Eusebius, Constantine acknowledged Galerius as the instigator of the Great Persecution.⁴³⁹ Diocletian, along with his designated co-emperor, took the titles of Jove and Hercules. These titles reaffirmed ancestral religion, and insinuated to their subjects that they had divine patronage. It also furthered the agenda to capture the minds of the empire in a manner that combined religion and state.

⁴³⁶ Eusebius, *History*, 7.13.1

⁴³⁷ Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 62

⁴³⁸ Paul Magdalino and Maria V. Mavroudi, *Dumbarton Oaks, The occult sciences in Byzantium* (South Africa: La Pomme d'or Horatius Press, 2006), 166

⁴³⁹ Constantine, *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints* 22, Lactantius, *On the Death of the Persecutors* 10.6, 31.1; Eusebius, *Church History* 8.3

Diocletian retired in 305 while the persecution raged on. In 311, from his deathbed and perhaps hoping for a health-reversal at the hands of the Christian deity, Galerius issued an edict that may reflect the ancients' respect for triumphant deities.

Wherefore it will be the duty of the Christians, in consequence of this our toleration, to pray to their God for our welfare, and for that of the public, and for their own; that the commonweal may continue safe in every quarter, and that they themselves may live securely in their habitations.⁴⁴⁰

Two years later, Constantine and Licinius reigned as co-emperors, and jointly issued the Edict of Milan, providing an empire-wide legalization of Christianity. Constantine had been converted the previous year (312) and would eventually raise the status of Christianity to enjoy the power previously held by traditional religions. Christianity would increase numerically and in prestige, expanding throughout the administrations of Constantine and of his sons Constantine II (337-40), Constans (337-50), and Constantius II (337-61), eventuating as the official state religion under Theodosius I (378-95).

Triumphalism was not the invention of Christians, for they derived their form and method from Hellenistic and Roman models before them. They adopted from them three significant themes, which of course would be challenged in a later era when the empire would face defeats.⁴⁴¹

- i) Victory was an expression of divine power
- ii) Divine favor guaranteed victory, and

⁴⁴⁰ Lactantius, *On the Death of the Persecutors* 34-5

⁴⁴¹ David M. Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 30

iii) The emperor was the state's mediator for, and personal recipient of divine favor.

Christians would come to define victory in military terms in place of martyrdom. The beloved emperor who prevailed did so because of Christ's love for him, and because his foes hated Christians. During combat, in the skies above the soldiers, it was Christ and his angels against the demons that the Christian-haters worshiped, "Maxentius relying on magical schemes".⁴⁴²

As the "empire within an empire," Christianity in Rome was built largely by the contributions of apologists, martyrs and bishops as they gained influence and became organized enough to gain Constantine's notice. The machinations, politics and conflicts that brought forth Christianity's eminence are threaded throughout this paper and much of usual church histories. However, another significant factor has long been overlooked because of the emphasis on the West, and especially Latin Church.

While we are preoccupied with what happened from Nicaea (325) to Chalcedon (451), there is a part of the story without knowledge of which we are left with a plaguing vacuum. At the same time that the fracture between the Latin and Greek worlds persisted; Constantine worked to hold his domain together. The Persian national church's numbers increased as it accepted the Nestorian conventions that under Constantine became heresy when he failed to create consensus among bishops.⁴⁴³ Persia's and other churches lack of mindfulness helps to explain why the West and the world still find difficulty in distinguishing between Christianity and imperialism. Canonical churches monopolize the consciousness and

⁴⁴² Eusebius. *Eusebius--Church History: A New Translation with Commentary*, Maier, Paul L. trans. (Grand Rapids, MI: 1999), IX.4.2-3, IX.9.1-3

⁴⁴³ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement: Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (New York: Orbis Books), 195

define the message. These are churches that have become artful (in some cases) at statecraft but cannot conflate their own dominions and temporal governments beyond their borders.

Christian triumphalism is the animation of the Latin West and Greek East.

“Christendom,” where church and state were practically one and the same eventually became a European reality. This reality was not the experience of millions of Christians living in places like the Late Antique Persian world. There was no Christian triumphalism in lands where there was a minority faith, holding no stake in power centers. Power-intoxication is partially accountable for Christians’ collusion with Constantine. We cannot say that Constantine or the bishops should have known better when he, two decades later under the overtures of war, presented himself as the defender of Christians in Persia,⁴⁴⁴ and one is tempted to think that even Constantine was naïve. It would have to be extreme naiveté considering that Roman and Persian regimes had been at war for a millennium, longer than any in all of history. Peter Leithart portrays Constantine as conscientious, rejoicing in the great number of Christians in Persia and wanting to help administratively.⁴⁴⁵

It would also be hard to deny that eventually the Roman Christians’ sense of humanity caused them distress, knowing their counterparts in Persia suffered so greatly but dogma and superstition have the capacity to override compassion. The Persian Christians would suffer, but then, they were not part of the empire’s Church. As such, they were unworthy of the blessing that had come to Rome. During their first two centuries, Roman Christians had known terrors such as those of Nero (64), Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Septimius Severus

⁴⁴⁴ Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds. *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226-363): A Documentary History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3

⁴⁴⁵ Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010), 246

(193-211), Decius, (250-1) Valerian (253-8), and of Diocletian (303-11), but not approaching the pain in Persia.

The persecutions under Decius and Diocletian are a well-known feature of the story of Christianity of the Roman Empire. The Christians of the Persian Empire knew still fiercer, and more sustained, pressure. At least 16, 000 Christians were put to death by the Persian Emperor Sapor II [Shapur] in one forty-year period of the fourth century. A cause for this particularly savage attack on Christians was a direct response to the increasing favor shown by Constantine to Christians. Anything so appealing to the Roman state as Christianity had now become could hardly appeal to Rome's perennial enemy. The critical difference between the story of Christianity in the Persian Empire and that in the Roman Empire is that the Persian Empire never had a Constantine. Eastern Christianity never knew steady imperial favor or predictable political security.⁴⁴⁶

The early fourth century Diocletian crackdown on Christians is known in the West as The Great Persecution, but by the end of the fourth century as many as 190,000 Persian Christians had died, "worse than anything suffered in the West under Rome."⁴⁴⁷ It would not be hard to trace the Persian Christians' calamity, at least in part, to Constantine's letter to Shapur II, containing an appeal for clemency for Christians in Persia, excerpted here.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Walls, Andrew F. "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July 2000)

⁴⁴⁷ Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia Volume 1: Beginnings to 1500* (New York: Orbis, 2008), 145

⁴⁴⁸ Another defensible position is that the rise in Christianity's visibility in the Roman Empire, even before Christianity's establishment in Rome, may have begun to jeopardize Persian Christians what with earlier periods of Roman Christian reprieve, particularly with the 311/313 Edicts of Toleration.

This God I invoke with bended knees, and recoil with horror from the blood of sacrifices, from their foul and detestable odors, and from every earth-born magic fire: for the profane and impious superstitions which are defiled by these rites have cast down and consigned to perdition many, nay, whole nations of the Gentile world. For he who is Lord of all cannot endure that those blessings which, in his own loving-kindness and consideration of the wants of men, he has revealed for the use of all should be perverted to serve the lusts of any.⁴⁴⁹

Noel Leski sees two things in this letter. First, it is a record of Roman-Sassanian relations and, second, a theoretical model for Constantine's new universal Christian empire. It is an empire governed by the supreme God he invokes and mediated by Constantine.⁴⁵⁰

Less than three decades before the date of this letter, Galerius, Caesar for Diocletian had resoundingly defeated Shapur II's grandfather rendering the west and north vulnerable to brutal Arab campaigns. When in 337 Constantine marched eastward, it could not but have alarmed and outraged the Sassanid ruler. Exacerbating tensions would be the fact that the ruler of Armenia, King Tiridates III (287-330), had earlier converted to Christianity, whose land bordered Rome to the west and Persia's east.

Garth Fowden exposes the disparities between Eusebius' and earlier historical accounts of developments. Only for Eusebius is the military campaign not a prominent feature of Constantine's final days, because the reality that he died at war was embarrassing. It is not that it goes unmentioned by Eusebius, but his focus is on the emperor's baptism in the River Jordan, promising to behave more like a Christian should he survive. He had ventured eastward with a retinue of bishops and a mobile church.

⁴⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4.9

⁴⁵⁰ Noel Emmanuel Lenski, *The Cambridge companion to the Age of Constantine, Volume 13* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 390

A different historian, Sextus Aurelius Victor, a distinguished imperial servant from Africa who happened to be present in Rome to witness the public's anger when Constantine was buried at Constantinople (instead of the Eternal City) reports:⁴⁵¹

Thus in the thirty-second year of his reign, after he had controlled the entire world for thirteen years, he died at the age of sixty-two, while marching against the Persians, who had reopened hostilities. He died in a country villa very close to Nicomedia – they call it Anchryona, as the star so fatal to empires, called the comet, had predicted this death.⁴⁵²

Upon taking rule in 355, Julian delivered a panegyric to Constantius II, his predecessor and cousin. The oration included praise for Constantius' campaigns against the Persians, which he considered the unfinished work of his father, Constantine's son "That peace they somehow contrived to disturb and break during your father's lifetime but they escaped punishment at his hands because he died in the midst of preparations for a campaign."⁴⁵³ Another question for study is whether Constantine, from the beginning, chose Christianity with the conquest of Persia in mind.

We cannot overlook that there had been a shift in the balance of power from the early days of the Roman Empire and now the Persians had the upper hand. With the Germanic tribes invading from the north as well, Diocletian before him, now Constantine recognized that during this dire time every move had to be calculated. Through the evolution from

⁴⁵¹ *Liber de Caesaribus of Sextus Aurelius Victor*, Translated with Introduction and Commentary by H.W. Bird, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), vii

⁴⁵² Garth Fowden, "The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and Their Influence" *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 146-70

⁴⁵³ Julian the Apostate, Oration 1.18, *Panegyric in Honour of Constantius*

Principate to Dominate, emperors had come to perceive that a powerful hand in domestic and foreign matters was required for the survival of the empire.

Although the result of Constantine's actions would result in a net loss for Christians worldwide, his immediate concern was a single domain, and as such, his priority included the Christians of the Roman Empire. One could argue that the eventual problems of Christianity in eastern culture and failure to develop, or in some cases maintain, wide influence, especially in the face of Islam, might be traced to the triumphalistic character of Christianity the west.⁴⁵⁴

The price for the tensions would be the beginning of persecution of Christians in Persia, persecution that had been unknown to them before. For the Imperial Church, however, the only authentic Christians were part of the church that was theirs, perhaps a portent of historic church exclusivism.

Heresiology played a prominent role in imperial politics. The bishops' intuitions were for the defense of the faith, and Constantine's were for the preservation of the empire. The contest between sees and theologies had a long history. However, it took on new consequence in the crossroads with power. Historically, Christians had experienced conflict in at least four areas, including those with,

⁴⁵⁴ Peter Iver Kaufman, *Church, Book, and Bishop: Conflict and Authority in Early Latin Christianity* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 103. Here Kaufman notes something that I would say might undermine early Islam's authority in at least one sense. "Had Augustine rid Christianity of neopaganism, the faithful might have accepted that the highest righteousness resided in heaven. On earth, they might have cherished, above all, their greatest expectations -- those for the next life -- lavishing fewer funds on, and less faith in, those monuments sheltering the remains from this one. But Augustine did not purge neopaganism. The Christians of the fifth and sixth centuries were not all that sure about the distinctions between the hereafter and the here and now. It seems they were reluctant to believe that no god or godly spirit lived in those impressive buildings that patrons and church executives were constructing around Christian worship."

- a) Jews, battles with whom had been underway in some form from the time of Jesus, albeit persecution at that early point came from those complicit with power.
- b) Various kinds of Christians, Jewish and Gentile.
- c) Their communities, including other cults who might blame them for non-performance of the gods due to Christians' unwillingness to satisfy traditional divinities.
- d) The state.

Now that the fourth opponent was eliminated, it would be insufficient to state that things would change for orthodox Christianity, because what would come to be known as orthodoxy owes its existence, in part, to its alliance with the state. Additionally, relations for orthodox Christianity and the state with and among opponents 1-3 would be re-demarcated. To illustrate, the debate between eight years after the Edict of Milan and four years before Constantine became sole emperor. The most prominent of ecclesiastical conflicts of the Late Roman Empire broke out in Alexandria. It is difficult to tell whether what is known, as the Arian Controversy would have been as defining as it was but it is mentionable in that it emerged just before Constantine consolidated power. These were ecclesiastical party politics that gained government participation. The most conspicuous parties were those who referred to themselves as "orthodox" and referred to their adversaries as "Eusebius and his fellows",⁴⁵⁵ whom Athanasius, "defender of orthodoxy" and eventually regarded "father of

⁴⁵⁵ This is Eusebius of Nicomedia, not the Church historian, whom, according to Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea calls, "at first an accomplice of the Arian heresy". Eusebius of Nicomedia later signed with the Council of Nicaea. Athanasius, *To the Bishops* 5f. (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 4:491f.).

orthodoxy” called “The Church of the Nicomedians” and “Arius and his fellows”.⁴⁵⁶ They are now typically called “Arians”. We fail for the records and case of the “Eusebians” but the orthodox, and especially Athanasius, have secured their place and names in history.

It appears that when it came to the religious, the proto-orthodox church could be stricter and often cruel to those who were closest than others who were markedly different. This was especially noticeable in the fate of those who came along later, who would be called Nestorians.

Neither Jacobites nor Nestorians were anything like as floridly heretical as the Gnostics, who have attracted so much attention in recent years. Yet even on an issue as basic as the Person of Christ, what we call mainstream historical orthodoxy looks more like the view that happened to gain power in Europe, and which therefore survived.⁴⁵⁷

The Orthodox Catholic Church deemed the churches of the East heretical, and the excising of these expressions of Christianity was part of the triumphalist program. During the coming fifth century, the Catholic and Orthodox churches would function in Greek. Greek was then seen as the Roman language and Syriac, while the Church of the East operated in Syriac, Persian, Turkish, Soghdian, and Chinese.⁴⁵⁸ Distinctly important to this period is that the Church of the East was also comfortable with Semitic forms. While the Roman world worked towards purging itself of Judaic elements, the Church of the East still thought and spoke in Syriac, and for centuries afterward. Still in the thirteenth century, they called themselves “Nazarenes,” in its Aramaic form, and they worshiped Jesus as Yeshua. Monks

⁴⁵⁷ Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died*, (New York: Harper-Collins, 2008), 27

⁴⁵⁶ Athanasius, Deposition of Arius, 1.2

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. 11

and priests bore the title rabban (related to rabbi). While their brethren to the west were writing apologies and holding councils, they were comfortable studying the Talmud.⁴⁵⁹

If we are ever tempted to speculate as to what the early church might have looked like if it had developed independently, avoiding the mixed blessing of its alliance with Roman state power, we have but to look east.⁴⁶⁰ “But to look east” would offer us the chance to see something similar to the Christian communities on the margins around the Roman Mediterranean, as well. To define orthodoxy, one school would need not only to debate the others, but also outmaneuver them. As such, the proto-orthodox overcame other Christians, pagans, and Jews.

The practices of polytheism were a given. The cities attributed their histories, security and prosperity to their own deity. Corinth had Aphrodite, Delphi and Delos had Apollo, Athens had Athena, Olympia had Zeus, and Ephesus had Artemis. It was critical to maintain these distinct gods and their hierarchies. When philosophers in their sophistication yearned for the higher beings, and beyond them, the One, there was always deference to the gods of the culture to whom altars were erected and for whom coins were designed in each locality.⁴⁶¹ Still the “animal gods,” the half-human figures like jackal-headed Anubis, falcon-headed Horus, or cat-headed Bast, increasingly offended them. Augustus had once said that he worshiped gods, not bulls, referring to Mithra, and there was a growing discomfort over the “chaos in the heavens”.⁴⁶² There were cultural and visceral attractions to monotheism but

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid. 7

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid. 7

⁴⁶¹ Brown, Peter R. L. *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 58

⁴⁶² Stark, Rodney. *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 110-12.

there was no magnetism in doctrine. Still, the Church Fathers knew that without doctrinal consensus, they faced their own chaos.

Christians for centuries made sense of their world in terms of clash of gods, and had recently emerged from widespread persecution. Christians now saw Constantine's Milvian Bridge event coming only nine years after Diocletian erected a monument to himself. They were tensed against the outside world. Christ's power was pitted against the malevolent power of demons that energized polytheistic worship.⁴⁶³ All lived in a world that attributed military victory to divine supremacy and the account of Constantine's conversion was consistent with that model.

Inability to resolve its issues with Judaism would plague the church of the Roman Empire, and increasingly so, throughout the Patristic Period and beyond. Once again, they derived triumphalism from their predecessors. Christians substituted Jews, their enemies, for the Romans' enemies, Persians and Arabs.⁴⁶⁴ This was similar to an earlier time when the Roman Empire substituted Christians for Jews, once the distinction between them became clear, and the Church became detestable, a superstitious sect with absurd and extravagant rites, the new hater of mankind, the worshiper of the head of an ass, the ritual murderer, the devotee of debauchery and incest.⁴⁶⁵

Long before those days of imperial power and glory, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who

⁴⁶³ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 58

⁴⁶⁴ Olster, David M. *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 116.

⁴⁶⁵ Flannery, Edward H. *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), 28.

supports the root, but the root supports you.”⁴⁶⁶ If this had come naturally to the Christians in Rome then perhaps Paul would not have to have used so much time writing passionately in defense of Jews, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.”⁴⁶⁷ Paul’s intended audience was presumably a Gentile majority with the added complication of Christian Jews who had had to evacuate Rome after anti-Jewish persecutions, returning to communities of Gentile Christians who had emerged into roles of leadership.⁴⁶⁸ It may have been difficult, even counterintuitive for Gentile Christians to measure their liberty in Christ against that of the minority Christian Jews who continued to follow practices of their unique faith history.

The phenomenon of Gentiles needing to learn and to appreciate “Israelites, to who belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants. The giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.”⁴⁶⁹ This would come to be a characteristic challenge in the churches in the Greek East and Latin West of the Roman Empire, the variety of Christianity that would dominate the West, affecting and influencing much of the world in the later history.

Specific historical developments discussed in this thesis show that over the first five centuries CE Christianity:

⁴⁶⁶ Romans 11.18

⁴⁶⁷ Romans 9.3-4

⁴⁶⁸ Klaus Haacker, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

⁴⁶⁹ Romans 9.4-5

- Became increasingly a distinct movement from Judaism
- Established an anti-Jewish polemic
- Underwent persecution from imperial authorities
- Established an anti-pagan polemic
- Established an anti-Christian heretic polemic
- Became a dominant political force in the Roman Empire
- Used its political dominance to oppress Jews, pagans, and heterodox Christians

A fundamental shift in Christianity's self-perception in the region was required to facilitate the transformation of a fledgling sect to imperial power. Christians would need to reappraise their value of martyrdom to eventually become the government that martyrs others. The grueling and contentious sculpting of their doctrines stimulated this entitlement, this sense of rightness.

I have herein showed that the symbiotic struggle to survive and obtain social legitimacy on the part of Christians and the need for imperial powers to stabilize government and defend against seditious or invading forces led to a specifically Roman brand of Christianity. This Roman Christianity needs to be critiqued so that Christians may reclaim the essential Christianity whose nature is universal and defensible in modern, postmodern, and global contexts.

Our world is both post-national and tribal. It means that we may be eager to tell our stories, but also that audiences will not listen for long unless they, too, are being heard. In order for them to be heard, they will not accept being talked down to, but look to be honored as equals. The Christendom narrative is not only obsolete, but reference to it gives rise to acrimony, because (Western) Christians are in many cases too comfortable with it.

At the root of the hostile global divide between Christianity and cultures are the first soil of enmity between Christian and Jew. What it takes to find reconciliation there will do

much restore our essential humble character and reputation. Christians will discover the lexicon of the second church, the church on the margins, which will enhance our efforts to connect with every kind of people, regardless to age, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, nationality and all other classifications real and imagined. Ultimately, we are summoned to stand in solidarity with the helpless, those whose backs are against the wall, in the words of Howard Thurman.

The masses of men live with their backs constantly against the wall. They are the poor, the disinherited, and the dispossessed. What does our religion say to them? The issue is not what it counsels them to do for others whose need may be greater, but what religion offers to meet their own needs. The search for an answer to this question is perhaps the most important quest of modern life.⁴⁷⁰

Imagine Christian culture that comports itself according to the exilic models of Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the saints who knew they did not dwell in their homeland. Nevertheless, they transformed the dominions of their lifetimes. These prophetic people did not need to hold the power of the last word from the highest office in order to fulfill the mission of God. Christianity and political power make for a difficult marriage, especially since our allegiance is to another Empire. We seriously compromise ourselves when we conflate our patriotisms. We further diminish the dignity of our testimony when we lash out at our critics as though we are above being judged.

In order for Christians to sanction the military use of arms, a basic sea change had to take place in the culture that radically affected the church. That sea change was the conversion of Constantine and his endorsement of the Church. The earlier Christians' aversion to war was well known, accounting for part of Celsus' disdain for them.⁴⁷¹ Justin

⁴⁷⁰ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon, 1976), 13

⁴⁷¹ Origen, Celsus, *Alethes Logos*, 34

wrote that Christians “have traded in our weapons of war”.⁴⁷² For Clement of Alexandria, the Church was “an army of peace which sheds no blood.”⁴⁷³ Athenagoras said, “We... cannot endure to see a man put to death even justly.”⁴⁷⁴ Hippolytus, even more boldly stated,

A soldier of the civil authority must be taught not to kill men and to refuse to do so if he is commanded, and to refuse to take an oath. If he is unwilling to comply, he must be rejected for baptism. A military commander or civic magistrate who wears the purple must resign or be rejected. If an applicant or a believer seeks to become a soldier, he must be rejected, for he has despised God.⁴⁷⁵

Tertullian asked, “Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?”⁴⁷⁶ Later, against Celsus, Origen would write, “You cannot demand military service of Christians any more than you can of priests. We do not go forth as soldiers.”⁴⁷⁷

There is evidence of Christians participating in military service, to be sure, well before the age of Constantine.⁴⁷⁸ It is impossible to disregard the fact that Christians’ openness to war is directly proportioned to the degree of the political power held. Roland Bainton’s conclusion is:

The three Christian positions with regard to war... matured in chronological sequence, moving from pacifism to the just war to the crusade. The age of persecution down to the time Constantine was the age of pacifism to the degree that

⁴⁷² Justin, *Dialogue*, 110.3.4

⁴⁷³ Clement, *Protrepticus* 11.116

⁴⁷⁴ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 11, 34-35

⁴⁷⁵ Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 16:17-19

⁴⁷⁶ Tertullian, *De Corona*, 11.3.99

⁴⁷⁷ Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.7.3

⁴⁷⁸ Herein is a catalogue of armed Christians, including the regime of Abgar IX, king of Edessa (179-216 CE) converted in 202 and who made Christianity the official cult of Osroene. Bainton contrasts several examples against the cleavage that occurred in the Church after the Church sanctioned warfare under Constantine and the ensuing emergence of monastics, after the model of Syrian Christianity, which in the third century had its own ascetics, an expression of the rejection of military service. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 69-75

during this period no Christian author to our knowledge approved of Christian participation in battle.⁴⁷⁹

6.2 The Sword of Roman Government is added to the Administrative Efforts of the Bishops and Rhetorical Strength of Apologists and Historians.

It might not be surprising that a war-based foreign policy might be part of a larger picture of state-sponsored violence. However, the deaths and slaughters of religious dissidents came not at the hands of the government, but happened rather in the course of civil violence. Between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Second Council of Constantinople (553) more than twenty-five thousands of them died.⁴⁸⁰ This time was before times of salaried police forces but the emperors strategically situated military colonies and veteran colonies throughout the empire. Constantine distrusted the Praetorian Guard as Maxaentius' supporters and so he disbanded them along with the law-enforcing Urban Cohorts. In the new imperial order under Constantine (a policy that changed after his death), compliance would be abetted by Christians who were not government-supported.

It was in the best interests of the government to eschew terror and to avoid the creation of martyrs. The one exception to the government's policy of abstinence from police action is the case of the Church of the Martyrs in North Africa. Called "Donatists", these Christians' determination and willingness to die (and in some cases kill), reshaped imperial policy toward creedal dissidents.

The emperor underestimated their feelings of marginalization from the empire. The Gospel gained a faithful audience in North Africa not unlike when poor Galileans flocked to

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. 66

⁴⁸⁰ Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church Councils*, (New Haven: Yale, 2006), 56

Jesus. The obtuseness of some early 20th century Western scholarship shows the historical legitimating of the Roman Empire's right to require religious compliance of Christians, for example:

The preaching of the Gospel had a most disturbing effect among the native Berber proletariat in North Africa where it became identified with social grievances that were undermining all Roman society. Apparently schism early became a habit in the African Church, and by the middle of the 4th century a violent struggle was in process between local interpretations of Christian doctrine at variance with orthodox Catholic theology and the official Church. Christianity became, as we should say, pacifist and many refused to serve in the Roman Army after they were baptized.⁴⁸¹

These were people whom Nickerson admits gained no benefit from the *Pax Romana*; that these were the people who tilled and planted, quarried stone and marble, dug the irrigation trenches, trod the grapes, and pressed the oil. They remained, however, landless proletariats with little incentive for loyalty to their masters.⁴⁸² Still, they did not “become” pacifists, for the Church had long resisted enlistment in the military, which partially accounts for why the Africans viewed themselves as the true Church. Nickerson credits their ultimate demise to the “Augustine’s genius.”⁴⁸³

The Diocletian Persecution has been blamed for the origins of the Donatist schism that would endure for half a millennium beyond his reign, with Constantine as the main protagonist causing the rupture to become irremediable.⁴⁸⁴ It is more reasonable to think that

⁴⁸¹ Jane Soames Nickerson, *A Short History of North Africa: From Pre-Roman Times to the Present: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1928), 33

⁴⁸² Ibid. 25

⁴⁸³ Ibid. 33

⁴⁸⁴ Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 184

the Great Persecution awakened and gave definition to social class misgivings that long predated Roman presence along the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Diocletian created the tetrarch in 293 CE, and when in 303 the harshest of Christian persecutions began, the emperors agreed. Although Maximian also controlled Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, he executed it more ferociously in African Provinces. De Ste. Croix argues that the effects of the persecution in Africa tend to be overstated asserting that researchers like Frend overlook voluntary martyrdoms.⁴⁸⁵ This study does not need to debate degrees of savagery of emperors or eras to explain that North Africa's martyrdom résumé is most remarkable.

Diocletian's imperial acts included a series of edicts at first sought to purge the army of Christians, then required of Christians traditional religious practices, and later targeted their clergy and sacred books.⁴⁸⁶ Diocletian's motives for persecuting Christians are unclear but the conflict with the Persians was sufficiently important to be a cause for the establishment of the tetrarch whereby greater attention could be paid to the eastern frontier, and there had always been a religious element in the recurrent conflict. Manicheans had for some time been feared as a pro-Persian hazard, and seeing that in 297 C.E. Diocletian's Caesar Galerius had recently retaliated and resoundingly defeated the Persian King Narses in Armenia;⁴⁸⁷ the defeat firmly established him as an enemy. Since sometimes-Persian-but-Roman-for-now Armenia had become Christian by the beginning of the fourth century. Even

⁴⁸⁵ Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter, eds., *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55

⁴⁸⁶ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 116

⁴⁸⁷ Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds. *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226-363): A Documentary History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3

though Armenians sided with Galerius, there was an increased Roman awareness of the growing Christian presence in Persia, which likely brought Christians throughout the Roman Empire into the same perceived threat status as Manicheans.

Diocletian's unclear motives notwithstanding, his Augustus appointee Maximian was especially harsh. There may have been vestigial rage from the arduous two-year offensive in 297/8, not directed against Christians but a tribe of unruly nomadic Africans. They were expert in guerilla warfare, subduing them for the regular reasons of taxation and safety. An increasing number of Romans held large tracts of land and frontier garrisons were provided for from those lands.⁴⁸⁸ Land grants were more freehanded here than in other provinces.⁴⁸⁹

The generations of disdain, carnage and loss with doubts about the future created an insuperable lack of trust in government and wealth. They would certainly not rely upon a government that had not trusted them. They could trust God alone. The contamination of this present world was devious, a sly serpent always trying to find its way into the church. When North Africans saw the official church become the imperial church, their misgivings were substantiated: They, the Church of the Martyrs, remained non-apostate.

Diocletian, for the first nineteen years of his reign had left Christians unmolested. Nine emperors before him, for a period of over four decades, had not persecuted them except for rigorists, who tended to be ostracized by other Christians rather than the government, like the New Prophecy (called Montanists), the Puritans, (who were called Novatianists), and the Church of the Martyrs. Christians in the Roman Empire experienced unprecedented adaptation and acceptance. This is the church Constantine knew and desired. He did not

⁴⁸⁸ Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: Constantine and Eusebius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 16

⁴⁸⁹ Pat Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 259

choose a church that would challenge the culture and government. He may not even have known so much about Christians who would continue to live as though their Lord would return and change everything. He did not choose a Christianity that was persistent in fasting and disallowing youth from fighting wars. For these reasons the Church of the Martyrs, the Donatists, claimed that they were the true church.

Donatists, like the older Novatianists and Montanists, and later the Meletians, were known to be stricter with the lapsed. The Donatist practice of robotizing those who were previously baptized by traditores, that is, those who had given up copies of sacred texts or recanted their faith to authorities may appear petty and all of these churches are referred to as rigorist. For them, Christians who compromised disqualified themselves from the Church and they perceived corrupting consequences in easy restorations, especially for bishops. Leithart notes that persecution had weeded out the most determined leaders from the church, leaving to rule the bishops who capitulated once the persecution ended.⁴⁹⁰ Except a few men of integrity, (some might include Athanasius), those who constituted the councils were not necessarily the Church's noblest men.

The millenarian Donatists coalesced and overcame Constantine. When Rome foreswore their press to conform them, Donatists became the dominant church presence in North Africa. When later the time came that they were no longer persecuted, they reinvented themselves as a separatist movement. As government officials began to join them, further redefinition was required.⁴⁹¹ Their legacy would be their resistance to empire and their

⁴⁹⁰ Leithart, *Defending Constantine*, 29

⁴⁹¹ Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 93

impact on the state. Never again would Constantine use a show of force to bring Christians into ecclesial compliance (although he would send troops to quell Christian riots). The Church of the Martyrs may well be the cause for at least two of history's bellwether influences: the Nicene Christianity and Augustine's theory of Just War. Nicaea may be viewed as a new approach to divisiveness. At this point, it becomes important to ask with James Charlesworth:

Has the supracategorical dimension and ineffableness of God been sacrificed by the need to think in logical and philosophical categories? Did the success and popularity—and the unity—of Christianity (in the West) demand such logical precision?⁴⁹²

Although collateral to the central theme of this study inasmuch as the focus here remains on the implications of the merger of state and church, the problem is germane. Even if we speculate that the conclusions, creeds and canons that councils approved in Nicaea and beyond would be no different with a greater appreciation for complexity and inclusion of more voices. There would be the matter of process. In any relationship, say, a marriage, if a proper but unilateral choice is made, there may be deleterious repercussions but Charlesworth's query goes farther. He does not want to simply challenge on the point of the Church's alliance with the emperor, but whether the need for exactitude was necessary at all. I have argued already that a Jewish presence might have slowed, if not excluded the Nicene decision *homoousios* on the basis that it is not mentioned in Scripture. The term enforced a break with Judaism and I have shown that the borders between Christians and Jews were traversable before the emergence of imperial Christianity. It is of consequence also because on this point Arius was excommunicated and the Arians denounced. If the emperor showed

⁴⁹² Charlesworth, *Christians and Jews in the First Six Centuries*, 320-321

no interest in creedal outcomes, it would have been unlikely that, exclusive as it was, a council of this magnitude would have or could have taken place. It would thenceforth have been implausible for the emperor to be engaged in ecclesial matters. Certainly, the debates would have had different stakes, as anathemas and banishments could not have eventuated in exile, and even depositions would have been difficult to enforce.

The emperor obtained a place of influence in the Church, and the Church became politically influential. C.H. Turner describes this sea change:

We cannot tell whether or not the Fathers of Nicaea understood what a revolution they were inaugurating... not only was the Creed, which had hitherto grown, now for the first time being made, but (an even greater change) it was being made not as a summary of Christian doctrine to be imparted to the learners, but as a test of right interpretation of Christian doctrine to be applied to teachers. In a word, the old creeds were for catechumens, the new was a creed for bishops.⁴⁹³

With his ambitious project to employ the bishops to unify the empire, Constantine still found that working toward collaboration was complicated. When later he wanted to welcome Arius back into the fold, Athanasius resisted and the emperor threatened to depose him. Although Athanasius' voice was known among the bishops, these clashes with the emperor truly began after Athanasius' appointment to the see of Alexandria. From the second century onward, each bishop had come to be a "virtual monarch" of his community.⁴⁹⁴ The magisterium, teaching authority, in which bishops grew in the second century, gave them wide powers by the time of the councils. Frend traces the tradition of monarchical episcopacy and apostolic success to the Jerusalem Church featured in Acts, with James as

⁴⁹³ Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *The History and Use of Creeds and Anathemas in the Early Centuries of the Church* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 24

⁴⁹⁴ H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 105

high priest and head of the church.⁴⁹⁵ For Josef Lossl, early Christian doctrine emerged, to a great extent, from authority, also, but looks to figures like Polycarp and Ignatius who may have disagreed with each other on some points but their accord and able to formulate heresy, even though there were differences. Lossl points to their declaration of Marcion as a heretic. The above Subapostolic voices should be added to others, such as Justin and Irenaeus. Given their historical context, their purpose was very different from what came to be.

It is clear that the ideas bound up with office and succession, which by and large take up very little space in Irenaeus' writings, have an apologetic and polemical intention. Except when they are important to the struggle against the heretics, they are nowhere pursued or developed. Irenaeus's purpose is only and always the defense of the Church, that is, of her teaching, against the false teachers with their supposedly higher but in fact spurious and totally unfounded separatist doctrine. Irenaeus does not contemplate a special sacramental "character" of the episcopate, not does he ever stress the authority of the bishops as opposed to that of the laity, or indeed to that of the other non-Episcopal clergy of the Church. The mere position in itself calls in his eyes for no special respect; it must be combined with living faith.⁴⁹⁶

"Living Faith" is what the dissidents claimed to have. It was an unthinkable concession for them to accept the growing number of lapsed at least without discipline.

Hans von Campenhausen rejects attempts to tie the belief in the "apostolic succession" of bishops to the apostolic period, not only because it lacks adequate basis in the sources, but also because it ignores the significance of intermediate development.⁴⁹⁷ The Church saw wide acceptance of the structure proposed by Ignatius, stressing loyalty to a

⁴⁹⁵ W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 39

⁴⁹⁶ Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power: In the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 172

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 149

single bishop in each city.⁴⁹⁸ Constantine sought to employ this influence towards uniting the empire. There was, however, another kind of authority in the church: confessors, those who suffered for their faith. Bishops had been targets of persecution and many of them had heeded the words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. They fled from city to city, but in the eyes of many, lost their moral authority. In the wake of persecutions, the rifts between the proto-orthodox and the rigorists tended to grow.⁴⁹⁹ This division was true whether in the case of the Novatianists, Meletians, or Donatists. As the question of the reception of the lapsed came into focus and schisms were an ongoing nuisance for the emperor, the bishops were displeased. They disliked that many of the lapsed turned to the confessors to gain pardon and re-entry to the Church, and developed the formalization of "apostolic succession" to reinforce their own power. Drake equates "apostolic succession" in the Christian community with the place that dynastic succession holds in a monarchy.⁵⁰⁰

In the end, it was the bishops who came to judge the martyrs and to decide which apologists were orthodox, and not vice versa. Bishops even took it upon themselves to define the meaning of martyrdom... By defining the Christian canon and the criteria for sainthood, appropriating to themselves the prestige of the martyrs and the skills of the apologists, they made the church a fact as well as a theory, representing their local traditions to the universal body and universal traditions to their localities, serving in their own persons as the hinge that united the one to the other... The bishops were the players.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ Ignatius writes in his letter to the Smyrnaens (c. 100) "See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid. 7

⁵⁰⁰ Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 108

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.* 109

These are powers that bishops wielded in order to lead the Church toward imperial prominence; they broadcast the culture of their communities and imported ideas into their bishoprics. They mitigated the influence of other churchmen.

6.3 The Imperial Office Finds Economic and Military Needs to Consolidate the Provinces and Their People with the Road to Patriotism Containing No Provision for Religious Diversity

But after you have read this letter, you should make it plain both to Caecilian and to them, that when by the Divine Goodness I come to Africa, I shall render it most clear to all, both to Caecilian, and to those who are acting against him, by reading a perfectly plain judgment, as to what and what kind of worship is to be given to the Supreme God, and with what manner of service He is pleased.⁵⁰²

Although Constantine never followed through on his threat to appear in Africa and take matters into his own hands, he did deploy troops against the Donatists. Like Diocletian before him, he held a vision of an empire forcibly united by religion but the Donatist resistance caused him to reconsider. Constantine's next ecclesiastical headache was the Arian Controversy, which produced a statement of faith that most signed, many of whom had reservations about the language.

At this time during the session of the Synod, Eusebius, surnamed Pamphilius, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, who had held aloof for a short time, after mature consideration whether he ought to receive this definition of the faith, at length acquiesced in it, and subscribed it with all the rest.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Constantine, *Letter to the Vicar Domitius Celsus*, in Optatus, Appendix 7

⁵⁰³ Socrates Scholasticus, *Church History*, 1.8. The text of the letter is included here, too.

The discussion about *homoousios* dominated the council, and even Eusebius of Caesarea had to write a letter to his congregation explaining his reasons for signing. Some who disagreed with the statement, like Eusebius of Nicomedia, signed reluctantly. Those who did not sign were exiled.

Secundus, ongoing into exile, said to Eusebius, “You subscribed, Eusebius, in order to escape being sent into banishment: but I place my confidence in a revelation made to me by God, that within a year you will be sent into exile too.” In point of fact, within three months after the conclusion of the synod, Eusebius was sent into exile according to the prediction of Secundus, upon returning to his own original and manifest impiety.⁵⁰⁴

We do not place all blame on the emperor for the ecclesiastical wreckage instigated at Nicaea and storming through later Church Councils; the churchmen were willing partners. A young deacon by the name of Athanasius was present at the council and would later be the chief advocate of *homoousios* for the following generation. He was energized by the debate and motivated by what he perceived to be the heresy of “Arian” interpretations. The Bishop Athanasius later explained that he was open to the more moderate formulations such as “the Son is like the Father.” They were insufficient, however, in the face of Arianism. While it may seem impious of me to come off as being less than thoughtful about such a premise, I wonder if the debaters drowned in so many minutiae? Were they victims of the same kind of vanity that characterizes priests come to power? Was this an omen of where Christianity in the Roman Empire was headed? Michael Gaddis deduces that the very attempt to secure

⁵⁰⁴ Philostorgius, *Church History*, 1.10

compromise was inherently deceitful if they were to use noncontroversial and inclusive creedal language.⁵⁰⁵

6.4 Conclusion

A score of centuries has passed since the days when the first apostles embraced and proclaimed what they held to be a message for the entire world. They were unconscious to the multiple habitable continents beyond them or the millennia ahead of them, but were certain of the usefulness of their experience and hope for humanity. They believed that Jesus had, in their behalf, received “all power”, *exousia*, or, authority, which “denotes active power; the full ability to do as one wills.”⁵⁰⁶ Jesus ordered the apostles to “make disciples of all nations.”⁵⁰⁷ The Greek word for disciple, *mathētēs*, means “learner”. Jesus’ learners saw themselves as fulfilling the role ostensibly before held by “scribes and Pharisees.”⁵⁰⁸ If scribes are official interpreters of revelation, then it is Jesus’ goal for the nations to be just that.⁵⁰⁹ For scribes and Pharisees, ancient Law contained the will of God for men and they recognized that, having been written centuries earlier, needed interpretation for a changing

⁵⁰⁵ Michael Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 60.
⁵⁰⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1961), 117.
 In Matthew 28:16-19 Jesus says, “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Matt. 13:52 Jesus says, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

⁵⁰⁹ Norman Perrin, and Dennis C. Duling, *The New Testament, an Introduction: Proclamation and Parenesis, Myth and History* 2nd ed., (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 270

culture.⁵¹⁰ The Great Commission of Jesus was for his apostles to enable the nations to make the history of His Story relevant in their times. The only way that Gospel makes sense at all is if it helps people make sense of the world, because the God's rule is characterized by mercy and grace it requires humility of his messengers. What are the requirements, the credentials, of teachers who represent Jesus? Those who learned the identity and mission of Jesus could not be fully characterized by creeds that seem to have been designed to form consensus for purposes of political control.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid. 264

Chapter 7

Conclusion

I insinuated my misgivings at the end of chapter 6 that I wondered if the Nicaean bishops fell to pride. They rejected more reasonable dialogue, and became victims of the same kind of vanity that might characterize priests who come to power. I speculate if this were an omen of where Christianity in the Roman Empire was headed.

The mere fact that the other side might also find it acceptable was enough to make it unacceptable. Such attitudes guaranteed that imperial attempts to reach unity through compromise would always encounter determined opposition from the extremes, even if the vast majority of bishops went along.⁵¹¹

Perhaps the bishops succumbed to what Sigmund Freud called “the narcissism of minor differences,” where it is seen that the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them.⁵¹² (Perhaps it can also explain to some extent even Christians’ need to differentiate from Jews.) We know that conflict had begun to simmer before the church was legalized. In some places, confessors and

⁵¹¹ Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ*, 61

⁵¹² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed., James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), pp. 58-63.

the celibate jostled for primacy with bishops over half a century before Constantine “forming an aristocracy within the Christian church.”⁵¹³

This thesis has emphasized that the Jewish prophetic beginnings of Christian hope are not ancillary but rather its quintessence. Their overreliance upon and even over-negotiation with Hellenistic influence of the Gospel deposes it from its humble Galilean source. John Caputo reminds us of the self-evident circumstance that theologies are born in a concrete time and culture, and under the influence of the prevailing philosophy and culture.

Theologians give words to revelation by means of the words theologians are given to speak, and these words are given by the world in which they live.⁵¹⁴ This is not to say that Greek thought should be avoided. Instead, those who shaped dogma must be seen as men who wrestled with meanings in their cultural context much like Christians do in any era. They are the “scribes and Pharisees” of their places and times. Their language may not be as universally useful as it has been required. As in every culture, the bishops at Nicaea found themselves arguing for a specific, but undetermined version of God.

The philosophers were not unanimous, but from the Neo-Platonist perspective, Plotinus taught that, since the soul was an incorporeal substance it could not be acted upon by the body and in this sense was impassible.⁵¹⁵ Impassibility was a purely negative characteristic, ruling out the soul’s ability to interact with the material. Epicurus believed that gods and humans were better off not mingling, that if the gods were to intervene in human affairs, they would become anxious and unhappy. The gods were so separate from

⁵¹³ Louis Duschene, *The Christian Church: from its foundation to the end of the third century* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), p. 386

⁵¹⁴ John D. Caputo, *Philosophy and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 44-45

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.* 168.

men that they could only disturb divine tranquility and contaminate divine life with the lower behaviors typical of humans.

It is possible that the bishops were in some cases sincere and in others intoxicated by their company and their own egos. They would at one moment a proponent of an illegal religion and the next invited to an audience with the emperor is heady enough. Even with the best of intentions, the imperative to reach conclusions could not have been fully inclusive. The Nicenes argued and decided against subordinations, although some of them wanted to backtrack; not all the bishops signed in the first place. These matters could hardly be resold as foregone conclusions to the laity around the empire. The discussions either continued or were revisited for generations, beyond the period of this thesis, which probes Nicaea as a climax for Western Christianity. Later voices such as those of Ambrose, Theodosius, and Augustine are the bearers of the legacy of state-empowered Christianity.

7.1 The Politics of Making Nicaea Important Over and Against Judaism

Some thought that the churches with larger congregations should carry more influence.⁵¹⁶ The number of attendees may not have been much higher than 200. The total was inflated to 300, and eventually to 318.⁵¹⁷ The stretching and mythologizing of the total tells us something of the need for numbers to verify decisions as truth.

Even with the best of intentions, the press to reach conclusions could not legitimately have been inclusively representative with so much diversity around the empire and the world.

⁵¹⁶ MacMullen, *Voting about God*, 41

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.* 42

It was true for the Christians everywhere, and even within Jewry. Jewish Christianity was heterogeneous, but none of these voices were a factor. There had been strife for some time between Jewish Christians and the Gentile Church. As far back as the second century, churches forbade Jewish Christians to keep the commandments and persecuted them as heretics. This resulted in a backlash of Jewish Christians who began to oppose Gentile Christians and Pauline Christianity. They were left without a larger community. Jews rejected them on one hand and the Gentile Church on the other.⁵¹⁸

It was critical that the Son of God is not essentially different or inferior to the Father, but Arius could not accept that God could “stoop to contact with humans.” Arius was true to his Middle Platonic orientation, resembling to one degree or another Philo and Justin before him, requiring that the Divine Logos be a step lower than God. This ideology would allow for the Son’s suffering, which, for Arians, was absolutely necessary. For the Nicenes this looked like the polytheism away from which they wanted to lead the empire. There may have been a fear among the bishops that Constantine or the court and culture of Constantine would have been offended by the idea that God could suffer, since it contradicts the sensibilities of Greek culture. Perhaps they protested too much. I contend that the God they created in their own image, as grand as the Patristic conclusions were, left us all wanting if we want to accept the transcendence of a God for all peoples. What would the church look like if our God, instead of perceivably insensate, were known to be passionate?

Without exception, biblical authors ascribe to God strong emotions. God becomes angry and repents, feels sorrow and rejoices. Above all else, he is the God of self-sacrificial

⁵¹⁸ David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (Israel: Naidat Press, 1989), 88

love and self-giving compassion. He hears prayers and responds to them. The God of the Bible is deeply involved in history. The prophetic writings speak of him as actually suffering with and for humanity. In contrast, the God of the Greek philosophers, according to this reading, takes no interest in human affairs and is entirely immune from suffering. This deity cannot be influenced by anything external. It is useless to pray to it, except for the psychological benefit of moral exercise. This deity was incapable of feelings and emotions; such a God is also incapable of love and care.⁵¹⁹

My view is that the bishops assembled at the Council of Nicaea (and Chalcedon) were limited in their capacity to deal adequately with Greek refinements, because the empire was, after all, still Greek. Their judgments carried with them the disastrous effects of expunging them of their Judaic core. They left behind the God with “strong emotions”, who is “deeply involved in history.” The West and all humanity have paid an incalculable price for hallowing both of these decisions. With all the violence that did and does ensue, it is undoubtedly the costliest use of heresiology as an ideological apparatus in all of history. Adolf Von Harnack noted early in the twentieth century that the Greek increasingly penetrated Christendom of the Patristic Period and philosophical idea that true religion is first and foremost “doctrine.” This doctrine is coextensive with the whole range of knowledge.⁵²⁰

The only manner in which “true religion” in the West is “doctrine” is doctrine that is Hellenized. It has a love-hate relationship with the Roman-Roman academy, but it touts the

⁵¹⁹ Gavriyuk, Paul L. *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

⁵²⁰ Harnack, Adolf Von and Martin Rumscheidt, *Liberal Theology at Its Height* (UK: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1989), 203.

doctrine shamelessly. The presumption of the superiority of Hellenized faith contributes to an approach that has already been corrupted by the authoritarianism basic to triumphalism. It promotes a God who can act without sentience. Sentience is the very quality absent from artificial intelligence and today separates humans from machines. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the world and the World War and of the unreasonable situation that reasonable people must face.

This is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; he uses God as *Deus ex machina*. The Bible however directs him to the powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help.⁵²¹

The identification of the logos with Christ, the now Divine Logos, and fused Greek philosophy with the message of the Gospel but cost has been as high as advantage—for the conceptual dialogic model has been mistaken for an irreplaceable historic antecedent. The Greek logos allowed for a super collision of historic proportions of Judaic, Christian and Hellenic forms that left them all with unidentifiable debris.

Any Christianity that is the property of West, that is to say, Greco-Roman, is at some level imperialistic. Westernize, for all its good, cannot easily see beyond its virtues and so praises conquest. For Plutarch, Alexander was the great philosopher-king and the greatest civilizer in history.

Those who were subdued by Alexander are more fortunate than those who escaped him, for the latter had no one to rescue them from their wretched life, while the victorious Alexander compelled the former to enjoy a better existence. [...] Alexander's victims would not have been civilized if they had not been defeated. Egypt would not have had its Alexandria, or Mesopotamia its Seleucia, nor Sogdia its Prophthasia, nor India its Bucephalia, nor the

⁵²¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison* ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald H. Fuller, (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 164.

Caucasus a Greek city nearby; their foundation extinguished barbarism, and custom changed the worse into better.

In the 18th century, Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, known as the “Father of Modern Sociology,” extends the trend of propaganda concerning Alexander the Great:

At his death the very family he has cast from the throne is all in tears. These were the most glorious passages in his life, and such as history cannot produce an instance of in any other conqueror.

Aelius Aristides, a popular Greek orator who lived during the Roman Empire, delivered a panegyric to Augustus and the Pax Romana to affirm Rome’s conquest of Greece because of the peace dividend. As a Westerner and American in particular whose nation has historically viewed itself as Christian, I must ask the questions of militarism with the premise of God’s support. I presume that our military actions and presence are always for the good of, if not those other nations, the world in general. The United States has amnesia about the arguable impropriety of many engagements, not just in recent years, but also of the past two centuries. The legacies Greece and Rome have passed down to many of us today as the most celebrated civilizations in history. Greek culture was ubiquitous among 15th century Europeans who credit the study of ancient literature, history, and moral philosophy with their break from medieval tradition. Recovery of the classics degenerated into slavish imitation but it was a pursuit of freedom corresponding to the Renaissance idea of humanism. Later, the United States would be born, employing the same ideals but having never been suffocated with the Christianity of the Middle Ages. In America, Christianity was able, unlike Europe, to ameliorate Christian doctrine with Greco-Roman culture until the present day.

In Europe, the church’s triumphalism proved inadequate and disappointing to its proponents. American Christianity, however, descends from Europe and even with the commitment to the separation of church and state the nation has never been able to avoid

invoking God as it steamrolled indigenous peoples from Maryland to Hawaii, traded and held Africans in bondage, and spread its wings across the West Indies, Panama, the Philippines not to mention incursions into almost any country not already occupied by European powers. Of course, the United States has delivered great beneficence to the world, but not unlike Greece and Rome is often blind to the damage done, only without the same theological framework.

Even if one does not acknowledge the underlying imperial rudiments of western Christianity, still we cannot ignore that there are ancient misgivings between east and west. Potential problems in Asia and Africa regarding the ideas and practices *appeared* to be western in nature. Even though such hostilities long preexist Christianity, there is long history of polarity even within western and eastern Christianities. We are still in need of understanding.

Deep roots of anti-Westernism still exist in the Orthodox Church. What is more striking, many of these anti-Western feelings among the Eastern Orthodox strongly resemble certain Muslim attitudes toward the West as well, suggesting a common geopolitical source of shared views, suspicions, and grievances toward Western influence, intentions, and interventions.

7.2 Toward a Christianity that is not Anti-Semitic and not fundamentally Western

It may be possible to grasp that the Gospel is for the whole world without understanding the problem of Westernism. There is little incentive there, however, for the confused postmodern who wants to believe Jesus' words and actions, but not to the point of committing to a Jesus who seems to pretend not to be part of his Jewish origins. Jean Danielou, faithful to these Greco-Roman historic forms overlooks the need to reconcile with the historic people of God.

China can welcome Catholicism, and allow it to take root in Chinese culture, without repudiating the capital value of its existing investment in Latin forms, which would indeed be a ridiculous act of xenophobic self-improvement; the new accretion represents for the recipient a gain beyond all human expectation. The true Church is no more Greek or Latin than Chinese or Indian.⁵²²

While he is correct to conclude that the Church is no more Greek or Latin than Chinese or Indian, Danielou calls it a “ridiculous act of xenophobic self-improvement.” This term repudiates the Latin forms of the Church, which is precisely what the Latin, forms reflect: a repudiation of its Aramaic linguistic and Judaic historical beginnings.. He seems to acknowledge this, but only partially.

[I]t is clear that the Church is characterized forever by its Semitic origins -- the word of God is always the message that was originally given in Hebrew. It is equally clear that the Church has ineradicable connections with the Latin culture and with the historical circumstances of Petrine Rome; but it is also true that the Church can never lose its tincture of Hellenism. This last point deserves to be emphasized. The Church was born in Judaea, but grew up in Hellas: the Church's liturgy and theology are radiant with the traces of this education.⁵²³

When Danielou says, “the Church can never lose its tincture of Hellenism”, he presumes Hellenism’s universality and reaffirms the process that left Jews behind in the first place.

Ruether points out a specific strain of Hellenistic anti-Judaism that began in Egypt. Egyptians were aware of the salvation story of Jews, which came at the expense of Egyptians complete with plagues performed against them by the Jews’ deity. An anti-Jewish Egyptian literary tradition developed. She adds the more generalized anti-Jewish attitudes in Hellenistic society, a reaction to Jewish religion, since Greek culture was considered the standard for humane existence. The Jews had an alliance with Rome. Consequently, the

⁵²² Jean Danielou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History* trans. Nigel Abercrombie, (London: Longmans, 1958), 41

⁵²³ Ibid. 41

collision between Jew and Greek was blunted, and out of this emerged Hellenistic Jewish apologists like Josephus and Philo. This environment gave place to the use of the Septuagint. Likewise, Greeks were drawn to Jewish monotheism and ethics and a less anthropomorphic religion. Reuther attributes much of the rapid growth of the Church to the Hellenistic Jewish apologetic in the Diaspora. Reuther goes too far by claiming that the dispute between Jews and Christians over the Messiahship of Jesus is at the heart of Christian anti-Semitism.⁵²⁴ She makes a strong point in highlighting that Christians emptied the Jews' concept of Messiah from its original meaning and replacing it with a divine Savior, but even when Christians are attentive and aware of Jesus as Messiah, including Jews who believe in Jesus, Ruether's thesis would be extreme.

Orthodox Christology cannot be called the sole source of anti-Judaism as the empire's tensions with Jews were never too far from the surface. By the time of the Council of Nicaea, Constantine had already taken measures against them.⁵²⁵ I have already shown that Jewish Christians continued as part of the Jewish community, and as such were seen as a sect within Judaism. They even cooperated with Gentile Christians until as late as the fourth century in some cases. The stress to which Christians succumbed corresponded to their project to Hellenize Christianity, and finally their adoption of and by the empire.

Christians who envision their faith spreading past the boundaries of the past may find hope in the growth of the Gospel in the Global South, but what is happening in the rest of the

⁵²⁴ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 27-28

⁵²⁵ Abraham Malamat and Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing House, 1976), 350. One of the earliest of Constantine's edicts (315) required Jews to share in the responsibilities of municipal government. This revoked an explicit exemption that had earlier been granted them earlier because municipal office involved idolatry.

world cannot be encouraging. What is the key? Should the Church be expected to cease evangelization of the world? Part of Gospel's vigor and efficacy are in that it is not linked to single culture. The Christian Bible is generally held to be authoritative in any language, unlike the Quran for Muslims, who consider the original verbal text in Arabic the final revelation of God.⁵²⁶ Another part of the Gospel's quintessence is the calling and desire that Christians have to share their message. It cannot be properly called "the Gospel" if it is not preached, hence the commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," or to make of the nations official interpreters of revelation.

The Church grew up in Greco-Roman culture after beginning in a more Aramaic-Semitic milieu. We can no longer presume that Jesus, the Levantine Jew, should be adapted to language and thought of Greeks. It is true that Neo-Platonism was in some way a preparation for Christianity, but not every nation has Neo-Platonist influences. The early Church was involved in a fight to survive and the apologists were concerned with the forensics of their present system, not one that was hypothetical.

Christianity emerged in a complex religious world that required deep conviction and tenacity to establish its distinctiveness and relevance. Determined believers, including apologists and martyrs, were essential to the growth of the fledgling movement but the fight to survive survived the fight, and what had been a scorned, apocalyptic culture had to grapple with the sudden receipt of power after the conversion of Constantine I. Christianity gained unprecedented freedom to theologially define itself, unify, and grow even more rapidly. It would become a world movement with the facility to suppress belief systems—especially

⁵²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, "Qur'an" 2007-11-04.

Judaism, Greco-Roman paganism, variant Christianities, and others. This bellicosity was antithetical to the nonviolent character of the faith.

At the core of Christian triumphalism was its early heresiology practice, a practice that continues today. Although Christian heterodox movements have come and gone, Jews have not gone away. Heresiology may have contributed to the elimination of groups but we have seen that for every church like the Novatianists or Donatists there are Nestorians and Monophysites that live on separated from larger churches. The Donatus controversy provided history with the first example of strife between state and non-state Christianity.

7.3 Can a New and Different Approach Help?

Will an appreciation of the mutability of Hellenized Christianity solve the Church's historic failures with relations with Jews and non-westerners? It would only be a beginning, because Judaism, too, is largely westernized. These two religions have canonized their ancient forms that preclude the possibility of a broadly fruitful dialogue. The good news is that their researchers now see this in amplified measure. A poignant example is the statement made by leading Jewish Scholars in 2000.

Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshippers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of heaven and earth. Although Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that through Christianity hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁷ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, et al., editors, *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), xviii

This statement goes on to appreciate the affirmation by many Christians of the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the “Promised Land.” Further, it celebrates the shared moral principles of Torah, and offers this healing acknowledgment:

Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime.⁵²⁸

The statement proceeds to clarify that the “humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture,” that a new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice, and finally, that Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.⁵²⁹

The phrase “humanly irreconcilable differences” is an understandable deduction, but not terminal. Consciously or not, it leaves the door open for something that surpasses what is humanly possible. If one accepts that Jesus has indeed been granted all power, and has authorized his followers to make disciples of the nations, then even what is humanly irreconcilable is not only possible but also inevitable. This, however, only seems to approve the triumphalism behind canonical Christianity, which is precisely what hinders and delays to telos being reached. The only way that the Church can fulfill the Great Commission it with self-criticism with regards to the culture and practices of anti-Semitism, heresiology, misogyny, nationalism and militarism. The victims have been Jews, heterodox Christians,

⁵²⁸ Ibid. xix

⁵²⁹ Ibid. xix-xx

women, practitioners of religions, nations, and ethnicities, in short, the resumption of apologetics, but of a new kind, with apologies that defend those victims.

This self-criticism requires a different kind of language. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews presented Jesus a high priest, able to remove sin. John the Evangelist portrayed Jesus as the incarnate Logos. To Origen of Alexandria, Jesus was of the same nature as God. The Gnostics saw Jesus as incorporeal. Alexandrian thinkers dominated the dialogue that attempted to define the Jesus of orthodoxy as they tried to embrace both humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ.

The lexicon of the Church Fathers is woefully inadequate in postmodernity. Indeed, it was inadequate in its own day. Even the term “Church Fathers” is up for debate, however comfortable canonical churches are with its perpetuation, simply because it may be viewed, as so many other canons are, as a device for control. In this case, not even employed by the subjects, but rather by the heirs who had less gravitas (or imperial power, in some cases) than their forbears. This is true also for the selection of “Saints”, and extra-Scriptural language. The most threatening proposition for canonical and perhaps most Christians, is the language of Christology and Trinitarians may need to be reevaluated. Caputo asks:

If the main drift of modernity was toward secularization, it is inevitable that something that gets to be called postmodern will provide an opening for the post secular.... If the long arms of the modern and the secular are overreaching, what then are the possibilities for theology in the postmodern situation? What is postmodern theology? What is theology in the postmodern situation? Does not theology today operate in a milieu that is, for better or worse, postmodern, just as theology in the thirteenth century was deployed in the midst of an Aristotelian revival that swept over western Europe, and just as Augustine’s theology was embedded in the world of late antiquity in which he lived?⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ Caputo, *Philosophy and Theology*, 44

This is threatening because it turns on its ear the paradigms of orthodoxy that are confined to ancient forms and the vocabulary of ancient philosophy. Canonical Christians may fear that they might relativize or negotiate away theological doctrines as a response to modernists' reduction of Christianity. This may be an outcome of modernism but we are facing post modernity. Modernity came of culture that was superficially Christian, and reacted against it. Post modernity swiftly displaced modernity, something Christianity had long been trying to do, but has left Christianity with a new and even more overwhelming challenge, if its goal continues to be cultural domination. The fear of relativization or negotiation may seem to be rooted in postmoderns' rejection of metanarrative, and any language of absolutes. That is not the goal of this thesis. Some have given up on a driving story for reality does not mean there is no story, and a change of language does not mean there is no model. Peter Leithart, for example, expresses the concept:

I worship and pray to the triune God, though the word Trinity never appears in Scripture.⁵³¹

For Leithart, Christianity is Gnosticism, responding to the physical world as though it were a cosmic blunder. This allows the faithful to be soporifically marginalized, hoping for a better age to come.

The Bible never mentions Christianity. It does not preach Christianity... During centuries when the Church was strong and vibrant, she did not preach Christianity either. Christianity, like Judaism and "Yahwism", is an invention of biblical scholars, theologians, and politicians, and one of its chief effects is to keep Christians and the Church in their proper marginal place... Christianity is the heresy of heresies, the

⁵³¹ Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003) 12

underlying cause of the weakness, lethargy, sickness, and failure of the modern church... Even the absence of the word Christianity is not entirely irrelevant, because it demonstrates that God is perfectly capable of revealing Himself and His plan without using that word.⁵³²

The powerful can control and manipulate with the abuse of religious ideology, while their subjects/victims worship God (who in their minds resembles the static God of Greek philosophy) dotingly. Christianity is overinvested in Hellenism, the culture of the ancient Roman Empire, only to find itself restricted culturally, because of the imagined indebtedness to a form that proved and proves useful but stands in need of reevaluation. Further, religious doctrines do not begin to touch the real cores of conflicts, as Fuller argues,

Religion and heresy become the chief instruments, the banner, and rallying point of diverse cities, regions, groups, and ambitious patriarchs in the internal political struggles of the Roman/Byzantine Empire.⁵³³

7.4 Lessons for Application

The Church would like to evangelize the world, while nation states, especially young ones who have escaped colonialism, are studying and appreciating their own histories. A culturally clad Gospel will find success in some lives and families but Jesus' mandate was to make disciples of the nations. Missionaries have long known the need for contextualization but we are in a new age that demands even greater humility. The wrestling twins are a spectacle for nations. The separation is presented with finality over the mission of Jesus.

Questions about the identity and work of Jesus should not be shocking. Immediately after his resurrection, when his followers worshiped him, some doubted. There have always

⁵³² Ibid. 12-13

⁵³³ Graham E. Fuller, *A World Without Islam* (New York: Little, Brown & Co.), 45

been Christians who do not accept the divinity of Jesus and there have been Jews who have. Each of these classes has met with scorn and rejection from both Jews and Christians. There are nexuses and subsets of the above categories, as well. The Church councils hoped to solve all of this but the enforcement of their creeds by civil law aggravated hostility against those who disagreed.

Constantine was not the first to dream of a Christian empire. We can look as far back as the second century to as prodigious a bishop as Melito, reputed to be the successor to the Apocalypse's "Angel of the church at Sardis". Melito, who envisioned an ultimately peaceful earthly reign, addresses the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

My opinion is this: that in this way a kingdom may be governed in peace-when the sovereign is acquainted with the God of truth, and is withheld by fear of Him from doing wrong to those who are his subjects, and judges everything with equity, as one who knows that he himself also will be judged before God; while, at the same time, those who are under his rule are withheld by the fear of God from doing wrong to their sovereign, and are restrained by the same fear from doing wrong to one another. By this knowledge of God and fear of Him all evil may be removed from the realm. For, if the sovereign abstains from doing wrong to those who are under his rule, and they abstain from doing wrong to him and to each other, it is evident that the whole country will dwell in peace. Many blessings, too, will be enjoyed there, because amongst them all the name of God will be glorified. For what blessing is greater than this, that a sovereign should deliver the people those are under his rule from error, and by this good deed render himself pleasing to God? For from error arise all those evils from which kingdoms suffer; but the greatest of all errors is this: when a man is ignorant of God, and in God's stead worships that which is not God.⁵³⁴

We do not know whether Constantine knew of Melito's homily either before or after his ascent. We do know that Melito was read in the Church, and would have seeded the reveries of those who followed him. The Church was stunned when Constantine converted to Christianity, but would have long prayed for a Christian emperor. The Church is nothing if

⁵³⁴ Melito, (170) *A Discourse Which Was in the Presence of Antoninus Caesar, and He Exhorted The Said Caesar to Acquaint Himself with God, and Showed to Him the Way of Truth*

not idealistic and hopeful. Epidemics of martyrdom were, intentional or not, acts against tyranny and specifically so during the reign of Diocletian.

The Church and the State have an unavoidable convergence. It is their destiny. How can it be otherwise since the *King of Kings* has come into the world? The story of the people of God will always conclude and renew with the hope of Apocalypse and/or some form of Millennial Reign. Martin Luther King, Jr. often quoted a shorthand version of abolitionist Theodore Parker's analysis.

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice.⁵³⁵

Justice epitomizes the kingdom of God. Amid the despair over the Church in the West, the future holds immeasurable opportunities. A proper critique of origins would produce openness to descendants of heterodoxies who have suffered from power and rigidity. Perhaps first, a fresh approach to relating to Jewish history, observing the manner of the Church that migrated eastward in Late Antiquity, who “always retained an approach to the text that would have much in common with Jewish readers.” Such a renewal will recover us from the “ministry” of authoritarianism and fear mongering.

These are days for the people of God to venture anew, encouraging one another and offering hope to those outside the faith, but not without faithful and openhearted prayer. They must steep their hearts in a sense possibility as they go out enlarging the faith of others, networking individuals and small groups who may even experience a time of stigmatization similar to the Christians of the first three centuries in the Roman Empire. They will probably

⁵³⁵ Theodore Parker, *Views of Religion* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1885), 151

be viewed as social pariahs due to their inability to conform to urbane, tolerant, syncretistic religious attitudes. They will also be viewed as heretics to those who cannot see relinquish linguistic and cultural forms of orthodoxy.

The people of the church are the outside voice, living witnesses of the Christ who was confronted by humiliating, dehumanizing powers unwitting to the preposterous delusion they were under, to approach the Creator and Ruler of all things and seek to unseat Him. We must always remember that we are crucified in the Redeemer, and that our God is intimately involved in the created order's chaos and travail.

As the voice from outside, it redemptively speaks with lucidity inaccessible to insiders. Its highest interest is the glorious Name and His divine order, which features humankind in his image and all that He has made. God's empire acts upon persons and federations to provide transformed life. I can foresee great things for the Western Church that will restrain itself when victories are in the offing, and humble itself in the face of defeat.

The good news for the Western Church comes camouflaged. If accurate, the 2008 report from Trinity College's American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) reveals that Americans are slowly becoming less Christian that 86% of American adults identified as Christians in 1990 and 76% in 2008.⁵³⁶ I can imagine alarmist Christian groups announcing the "end of civilization." If "civilization" is Western-dominated chiefly rationalistic Christianity, they could be right. Christianity has declined in the northern hemisphere for many years, but not in the south, where it is increasingly indigenized without the taint of imperialism. It does not obviate the doctrinal distortions that can take place in the developing

⁵³⁶ ARIS, <http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/AmericanReligionSurvey-ARIS/reports/highlights.html>.

world as a result of insularity, lack of education, or a host of other possible impediments, but those problems do not have to be endemic.

I believe we can have a new Renaissance, one of Christian faith in the North, but transformed into something more global. Following the critique of origins would be openness to descendants of heterodoxies who have suffered from power and rigidity. We can also uncover a fresh approach to relating with Jews, when we see through the eyes of the Syriac Christians, who “always retained an approach to the text that would have much in common with Jewish readers.”⁵³⁷ Such a renewal will recover us from the “ministry” of authoritarianism and fear mongering. We represent not the Prince of Power, or Panic, but the Prince of Peace! These are days for us to venture anew, encouraging Christians and offering hope to those outside the faith, but not without faithful and openhearted prayer. We must steep our hearts in a sense possibility as we go out enlarging the faith of others, networking individuals and small groups who may even experience a time of stigmatization similar to the Christians of the first three centuries in the Roman Empire. We will probably be viewed as social pariahs due to our inability to conform to urbane, tolerant, syncretistic religious attitudes.⁵³⁸

Still the Kingdom of God is near, and global Christianity can arise complete with divine works commonly associated with the faith of Apostles, inadequately recognized and traced, and frequently disdained through the course of history, and profoundly in the West and places where Christians reign on earth. It will be profitable for the West to acknowledge and accept the legacy of heterodox missionaries such as of the Jacobites who could, “defy the

⁵³⁷ Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity*, 90

⁵³⁸ Limberis, Vasiliki. *Divine Heiress*, 1

laws of nature and demonstrate divine power through acts of miracles and healing... ideas [that] clearly carried weight, or the churches would not have made as many converts as they did.”⁵³⁹ Their God demonstrates his concern for humans’ infirmities.

When faith is overly attached to political power, history has shown that faith withers. The magnificence of God’s promise is not that he has promised temporal victories. I can foresee a true-to-calling tomorrow becoming reality with the thoroughgoing review of the Patristic Period’s missteps. A principal reason for the hope of transformation is that the Church will change its imagination of, and thusly its relationship with God. Is God victorious? If we measure victory with the understanding that God is self-limiting, that he will stumble (under the weight of a cross) but never strut. His people will, therefore, walk like he does.

The ruling bodies of all church traditions, denominations and movements would do well to cry out for humility more than unity. Parachurch organizations, also, must bear in mind that their effectiveness is grounded in humility. Ideas and ideologues will inevitably arise in response to people’s pain and indignation. They will look for and appoint leaders. If their aim is to provide Jesus as the key, then they will need to take the posture of an advocate in order to shun the otherwise inescapable fights that are generated when the glorious opportunity presents itself for them to have a voice. Their constituents of all ages and stations must be prepared, trained, and disciplined so that when after periods of suffering the doors of blessing are opened, they do not compel their leaders to champion their cause at all costs.

⁵³⁹ Jenkins, Philip. *The Lost History of Christianity*, 76.

When the people of the church are not aptly prepared for triumph they will not handle their vindication gracefully. They will even resort to violence as in the case of the murder of Hypatia by a Christian mob. Emperor Theodosius later made his startling admission, “the monks commit many crimes.”⁵⁴⁰ Emperor Theodosius I discovered the burning of a synagogue in Mesopotamia had been instigated by a bishop and he ordered that same bishop to rebuild it until Ambrose, Bishop of Milan intervened. According to Ambrose there were no conditions where Christians could be constrained to finance the building of a place of worship that was not for Christians.⁵⁴¹

I look for a divine narrative to reach its glorious goal, one envisioned by Jesus when he addressed a crowd of desperate Galileans on the edge of the world. When the kingdom of God comes for a community and when it appears for the whole earth it will be a gift for the humble, rather than the triumphalistic. This can only be ascertained with the premise that Jesus was post-imperial.

⁵⁴⁰ Socrates Scholasticus: The Murder of Hypatia (late 4th Cent.) from Ecclesiastical History, Bk VI: Chap. 15 <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/hypatia.asp>

⁵⁴¹ Ambrose of Milan, “Letters about a Synagogue Burning” (August, 388) addressed to his sister, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/ambrose-letter22.asp>

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