

## CHAPTER 30

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# ANTI-JEWISH SENTIMENTS IN LITURGICAL AND PATRISTIC BIBLICAL INTERPRETATIONS

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### FROM INTRA-JEWISH POLEMICS TO INTERRELIGIOUS ANIMOSITY

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VITUPERATIONS against “the Jews” in the writings of the New Testament offer an example of *inner*-Jewish rhetoric that builds on and continues a venerable tradition in prophetic literature (e.g., Amos 2:9–12; Mic 6:1–5; cf. also Neh 9:26), in a historical context in which polemics is omnipresent and rhetorical excess unremarkable (Harvey, 1962; Harvey, 1967; Murray, 1977, p. 129; Brocke, 1977). The varied religious landscape of Second Temple Judaism is characterized by the production of texts that articulate group identity by denying the legitimacy of competing groups, practices, and paradigmatic characters, locations, and events. One can think of the Qumran community’s railing against the polluted Jerusalem temple and its illegitimate priesthood (Goranson, 1998–1999); the polemics between Enoch traditions and Moses traditions (Orlov, 2005); the polemics between solar and lunar calendars, Zadokite and Hasmonite priesthood (Elior, 2005); the differences and animosity between Pharisees and Sadducees, and the Christian and Rabbinic pronouncements against both (Evans, 1990); the foundational role of Jewish–Christian polemics for the articulation of early Christian and early Jewish identity (Boyarin, 2004; Jaffé, 2005; Yuval, 2006); the telling coincidence between the rise of Christological monotheism and Christian sympathy for texts and authors with a similar binitarian orientation (e.g., Philo’s language of Logos as “second God”; the memrā-theology of the Targums; the character of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon) and the rejection, by the emerging rabbinic movement, of any exegesis or religious practice that risks affirming “two powers in heaven” (Segal, 1977; Hurtado, 2015 [1988]; Boyarin, 2004).

With the Christian movement's gradual transformation from a charismatic, egalitarian, theologically innovative, and administratively schismatic group of Galilean Jews into the increasingly Gentile reality of the second century, the vitriolic statements about the synagogue, its teachers, its scribal and exegetical habits, its liturgical practices, and so on, correspondingly shifted from harsh *intra*-Jewish polemics to polemics between the overwhelmingly Gentile Church and "the Jews." As Skarsaune observes, "as long as this tradition is used in an inner-Jewish setting, there can be no question of anti-Jewish (far less 'anti-semitic') tendencies, but rather of extreme Jewish self-criticism. . . . Something fateful happened to this tradition when it was appropriated by Gentile Christians with no basic feeling of solidarity with the Jewish people. Very soon it deteriorated into a slogan about Jews being unbelievers by nature and Christ-killers by habit" (Skarsaune, 1996, p. 404. Cf. Skarsaune, 1987, pp. 278–280, 288–295). The prophetic critique of Israel and the *intra*-Jewish polemics of the Second Temple era "were used, indeed abused by Christians and directed against the entire Jewish people" (Groen, 2008, p. 380).

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EARLY CHRISTIAN DEPICTION OF JEWS AND JUDAISM

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References, almost always negative, to Jews and Judaism abound in early Christian and later Byzantine literature. They often have little intersection with the flesh-and-blood reality of contemporary Jewish biblical exegesis or community life, constituting, rather, a *topos* of *intra*-Christian rhetoric aimed at placing certain ideas as practices outside the realm of acceptability by assimilating them to the already existing "other" of Judaism. Thus, even though Origen conducted his research and writing with an eye to contemporary Jewish scholars (see, e.g., Kimmelman, 1980, and Halperin, 1981, on the cross-fertilization between Christian and Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs), his description of a tripartite exegetical landscape—Jews, dualistic heretics, and the *simpliciores* (*PA* 4.2.1)—is a rhetorical setup enshrining his own hermeneutical theory as the only spiritually authoritative one. Literal readings of Scripture and the refusal to embrace the allegorical deciphering of Old Testament cultic realities are labeled "Jewish" in order to persuade the (Christian) reader of the opposite: Christians ought to flee "the mythologies of the Jews" and embrace "the mystical contemplation of the Law and the prophets" to (*CCels* 2.6). The same logic applies, at a doctrinal level, to Tertullian's calling the theological views of his Monarchian opponents "Jewish" (*Prax* 12) and finding that their notion of a divine monad "bears a likeness to the Jewish faith" (*Prax* 31), even as he also accuses Marcion of "borrowing poison from the Jews" (*Marc* 1.8). Similarly, Athanasius can describe both subordinationist and modalist views as "Jewish," even though they are antagonistic to each other. Thus, Marcellus and Photinus are said to, "equally with the Jews, negate Christ's existence before ages, and His Godhead, and unending Kingdom, upon pretense of supporting the divine Monarchy" (*Ekthesis Makrostichos*, Anathemas 5 and 6 [= Athanasius, *Syn.* 26.V–V.1]), while Marcellus's adversary, Asterius, is said to write "in imitation of the Jews" (*CA* 3.23.2). In fact, for Athanasius, the Arian slogan, "there was a time when He was not," denies the preexistence of Christ and is, therefore, "no sentiment of the Church but of the Samosatene and of the present Jews"

(Athanasius, CA 38). The same observation—using “the Jews” as a rhetorical device to help delineate orthodox doctrine and practice within Christian communities—has been made about Ephrem of Nisibis (Cassingena-Trévedy, 2006, pp. 20–21; Shepardson, 2008).

Certainly, early Christian Scripture exegesis is often involved in polemics against real Jewish scholars and community leaders. The ongoing attraction that many Christians had for Jewish liturgical practices, rooted as these were in the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and surrounded by an aura of mystery, is one important context of such polemical exegesis. In his homilies on Leviticus, for instance, Origen thinks it imperative “to say something to those who think that in virtue of the commandment of the Law they must also practice the fast of the Jews” (*Hom. Lev.* 10.2). It is also in an effort of “curing” the Christian “body” of Antioch of the “disease” of Judaism that John Chrysostom warns about the synagogue and the very souls of the Jews being “a lodging place for demons” (1.3.1–2; 1.4.2; on the metaphor of “disease” in the *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, see Lanfranchi, 2019). The object of the preacher’s vituperations is, most concretely, the Jewish community in Antioch and its liturgical observances: “What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts . . . some are going to watch the festivals, and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts . . . now that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door, if I should fail to cure those who are sick with the Judaizing disease I am afraid that . . . some Christians may partake of the Jews’ transgression” (1.1.5). It has even been hypothesized that the feast of mid-Pentecost, where anti-Jewish sentiments are expressed in a number of Matins hymns (e.g., “the senselessness of the lawless Hebrews,” “the grievous and faithless Jews,” “the disobedient Jews,” “slayers of Christ and slayers of the Prophets”), may have developed as a means of countering the attraction of the Jewish *Lag B’Omer* (Pulcini, 2020).

Sometimes anti-Jewish rhetoric flourishes at the intersection of biblical exegesis, ascetical practices, and claims to visionary experiences. Among the various critiques of Judaism present in many of his *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat is perhaps most personally invested in defending, against Jewish teachers, the way in which Christian ascetics used the biblical character of Moses and the Sinai theophanies to justify their sexual renunciation (Koltun-Fromm, 1996, 2000, and 2011). Jacob of Serug’s homily “On that Chariot that Ezekiel the Prophet Saw” contains a fascinating polemical section in which scholarship has discerned “allusions to the traditions attaching to the mystical vision of the body of God in rabbinic circles, the *shi’ur qomah*, or ‘measurement of the stature (of the divine body),’ texts which are associated with the *merkavah* literature” (Golitzin, 2003, p. 196); moreover, Jacob “is to some extent in actual conversation with contemporary Jews,” even making “a direct appeal to, as it were, the ‘Jew in the street’ over the heads of the latter’s rabbinic teachers” (Golitzin, 2003, p. 197).

Evidently, rhetorical constructs and social realities are not hermetically sealed categories, and *Adversus Iudaeos* writings from the second century to the sixth (see Stroumsa, 1996; Morlet, 2013) constantly meander between real and literary Jews and Judaism. Chrysostom’s *Λόγοι κατὰ Ἰουδαίων* may have addressed a Christian audience about other Christians “held in Judaism” (1.8.4) and ailing from the “Judaizing disease”; they may also occasionally target Eunomians, as when Chrysostom states that “the Jews and the Anomoeans make the same accusation . . . that He called God His own Father and so made Himself equal to God” (1.1.6). It is nonetheless true that, even if negative references against a rhetorically

constructed “Jew” are meant to be deciphered as warnings against *Christian* doctrines, practices, and modes of biblical exegesis deemed unacceptable, the negative emotions that are stirred up—disgust, distrust, outrage—are likely to wear down the emotional resistance of the audience—surprise, disbelief, even outrage— (Lanfranchi, 2016), the negative emotions that are stirred up—disgust, distrust, outrage—are likely to wear down the emotional resistance of the audience—surprise, disbelief, even outrage—(Lanfranchi, 2016), to harden into an axiom about Judaism being “the common disgrace and infection of the whole world” (1.6.7), and eventually to shape negative attitudes toward Jews of flesh and blood. After all, can one “think of Jews as satanic and yet not catch a whiff of sulphur when walking by a synagogue?” (Becker, 2002, p. 320).

## CHRISTOPHANIC EXEGESIS AND ANTI-JEWISH POLEMICS

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After these general observations, it is proper to engage in a more focused discussion of the intersection between early Christian biblical exegesis and the emergence of an anti-Jewish animus. Within the broad field of patristic biblical interpretation, Christophanic exegesis of the Hebrew Bible offers a particularly useful entry-point. This term designates the straightforward identification of the “Lord” references in texts such as Genesis 18, 28, 32; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Daniel 7; or Habakkuk 3:2 (LXX), with the “Lord Jesus” of Christian worship—a crucial element in early Christianity’s effort at self-definition, which also entailed sometime strident anti-Jewish polemics (Bucur, 2018).

Christophanic exegesis contributed significantly to Justin Martyr’s articulation of the Christian faith in opposition to contemporary Judaism. It figured significantly in catechetical manuals such as Irenaeus’s *Demonstration*, and was not absent from Clement of Alexandria’s *Pedagogue*. It was part of the antidualistic arsenal deployed by Irenaeus and Tertullian; it was the crucial argument used by Tertullian and Hippolytus against Monarchians, and later by Eusebius against Marcellus, and by Homoians against the “modalistic” theology of Photinus. The exegesis of theophanic texts was, by the end of the first millennium, inextricably linked to Christianity as performed and experienced in liturgy, irresistibly commanding the gaze of the iconographer, the ready pen of the hymnographer, and the amazing tales of the hagiographer (Bucur, 2018). The Christological interpretation of theophanies also finds visual expression in numerous icons and manuscript illuminations (Boespflug, 2012; Bucur, 2018). An alternative view, advocated by Augustine of Hippo—that theophanies were created manifestations of the divine nature—was gradually adopted as normative in western Christianity (Studer, 1971; Barnes, 1999; Bucur, 2008; Kloos, 2011) but emphatically rejected in the course of the Hesychastic controversy in fourteenth-century Byzantium (Romanides, 1960–1961, 1963–1964; Bucur, 2008b). In short, then, “Christophanic exegesis” lies at the very heart of the Christian exegetical tradition.

To better understand the extent, causes, and context for anti-Jewish sentiments in liturgical and patristic biblical interpretations, the pages to follow will consider three early patristic writers—Justin of Neapolis, Melito of Sardis and Eusebius of Caesarea—and some examples of Byzantine festal hymnography. The choice of Justin Martyr is quite natural given that his extensive deployment of the argument from theophanies, which later authors

have reprised in similar ways, is coextensive with his attempt to define Christianity in contradistinction to Judaism, and that the exegetical parting of the ways between the Church and the Synagogue, dramatized in his *Dialogue with Trypho* and echoed in the *Apology*, is highly instructive about the acrimonious sentiments that colored the debate. Melito of Sardis's *Peri Pascha* is important because its Christological interpretation of theophanies is inextricably linked to anti-Jewish polemics and because of its influence on later hymnography. Transitioning into the new, imperial and conciliar, context of Christian exegesis, theology, and social life, Eusebius of Caesarea offers both "the longest, most elaborate, and certainly richest reflection that any pre-Nicene author had ever consecrated to the question of ancient theophanies" (Morlet, 2009, p. 441) and a peculiar exaltation of the "Hebrew" patriarchs over against Moses and "the nation of the Jews." As for the Byzantine festal hymns, their relevance for the discussion resides primarily in their providing a synthesis of previous patristic thought and in its liturgical usage: Once a certain type of biblical exegesis was injected into the "lifeblood" of Church worship, its influence is amplified and intensified across temporal, cultural, and linguistic borders, to an extent unrivaled by other patristic voices (Bucur, 2017, p. 55).

## Justin Martyr

Justin of Neapolis is an obvious choice for an examination of early Christian exegesis of biblical theophanies. The exegetical confrontation between Christianity and Judaism, dramatized in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*, comprises a substantial discussion of Old Testament theophanies and their interpretation. Large portions of the *Dialogue with Trypho* and even some sections of the *Apology* are dedicated to proving that all theophanies were manifestations of the Word-who-was-to-become-man. Indeed, many notable scholars even credit Justin with the *invention* of the argument from theophanies (Skarsaune, 1987, pp. 208, 211–212; Kominiak, 1948, p. 4; Trakatellis, 1976, pp. 59, 85).

Justin offers a consistent reading of all biblical theophanies as manifestations of the Logos to the patriarchs and prophets of Israel, as well as to Heraclitus, Socrates, and Plato, prior to same Logos's incarnation, death, resurrection, and worship by Christians (1 *Apol.* 46.2–3). This interpretation of theophanies provides solutions—actually, the same Christological solution, consistently—to biblical texts characterized by certain levels of ambiguity. Its main value, however, is that it produces a coherent narrative leading from Genesis to Jesus, a Christologically rewritten Bible in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as Moses and the prophets are "men of Christ" (*Apol.* 63.17), and in which the readers are invited to inscribe themselves by following Justin's own example.

Filtered through a Christian doctrinal prism, the Jewish interpretation of theophanies appears to identify the subject of such visions and revelations with the Father, "the unnamable God" (*Dial.* 56.9; 1 *Apol.* 63.1, 11, 14). Justin declares this view philosophically untenable (because it compromises the transcendence of the supreme divinity) and ridiculous for anyone "who has but the smallest intelligence" (*Dial.* 60.2; cf. *Dial.* 127.1–3). The Jewish view articulated by Trypho is nevertheless more complex, as it can accommodate, up to a point, Justin's arguments for a binitarian exegesis of theophanies (*Dial.* 56.12, 16; *Dial.* 57.4), in a manner that would warrant comparison with Philo, *Wisdom of Solomon*, or the Targums. Trypho holds, for instance, that "the God who communed with Moses from

the bush was not the Maker of all things, but He who has been shown to have manifested Himself to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob; who also is called and is perceived to be the Angel of God the Maker of all things, because He publishes to men the commands of the Father and Maker of all things” (*Dial.* 60.3). Although, for Trypho the agent “*is called and perceived to be an angel of God and Creator of God*” (*Dial.* 60.3), while for Justin he “*is called an angel, and is God*” (*Dial.* 60.4), the dialogue partners are in basic agreement on a binitarian monotheistic view. In the words of Boyarin (2004, p. 125), “the *Logos Asarkos* is kosher for Jewish worship but not the *Logos Ensarkos*. . . . Christianity and Judaism distinguished themselves in antiquity not via the doctrine of God . . . the ascription of the actual physical death and resurrection to the *Logos* was the point at which non-Christian Jews would have begun to part company theologically.”

Inasmuch as Justin’s “argument from theophanies” produced a Christological reinterpretation of the object and manner of divine worship, it also, more than the “proof from prophecy,” laid the seeds of an ideological and social rift between those who advocated and those who rejected this exegetical avenue, a rift greater than the one separating, for instance, the sectarians at Qumran and the religious establishment around the Jerusalem Temple. As a matter of fact, the *Dialogue* is a valuable source of information about the shift from ideological separation to social segregation and the emergence and self-identification of two distinct religious bodies that develop analogous but distinct and opposite versions of the theological vocabulary and imagery inherited from the common matrix.

From Trypho’s Jewish perspective, the Christological *exegesis* of Scripture and the Christological *worship* of God are aspects of the same blasphemy that introduces social separation between those who embrace and those who reject it. Thus, when Justin presents Trypho with the notion that “[t]his crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke with them in the pillar of the cloud . . . became man, was crucified, and ascended into heaven, and will return again to this earth; and . . . should be worshipped” (*Dial.* 38.1), Trypho reacts by accusing him of blasphemy (*Dial.* 38.1; cf. 37.3, 64.4); conversely, Justin finds the refusal of such a reading blasphemous (*1 Apol.* 31.5–7). Indeed, Trypho states that his teachers had *already* been warning the Jewish community against holding conversation with Christian teachers whose sole aim in deploying their biblical interpretations was to ensnare Jews into worshipping Jesus (*Dial.* 38.1). Although not yet authoritative (after all, Trypho does not heed his teachers’ advice to shun all company and discussion with Christians—he even speaks [*Dial.* 10.2] of having read “the Gospel”), the voice of these διδάσκαλοι and ἄρχοντες τοῦ λαοῦ can be clearly discerned in the *Dialogue*: It is radical in rejecting two-power theologies, prohibiting any discussion on such topics of *minuth*, and seeking to minimize social interaction with the *minim*. Justin, for his part, offers the Christian perception of the same: the Jewish “teachers” and “leaders of the people” (*Dial.* 73.5) are not to be trusted because they reject the Septuagint (*Dial.* 71.1) and “mutilate” some of the scriptural passages (*Dial.* 72–73); overall, Trypho should obey God rather than these “stupid, blind teachers” (*Dial.* 134.1).

The older scholarly view, according to which the consistently Christological interpretation of texts such as Genesis 18–19, Exodus 3, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, etc—i.e., “the argument from theophanies”—was Justin Martyr’s invention, is no longer tenable today, largely because, in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first two of the twenty-first, a growing segment of scholarship on Christian Origins has traced this second-century “YHWH Christology” or “Christology of Divine Identity” back to the writings of the

New Testament (Fossum, 1987; Hurtado, 2015 [1988]; 2003; Newman, Davila, and Lewis, 1999; Gieschen, 1998, 2004; Bauckham, 2008; Capes, 1992; Binni and Boschi, 2004; S. J. Gathercole, 2006; McDonough, 2009; Tilling, 2012; Kaiser, 2014). Nevertheless, even if he “did not originate the basic idea that the preincarnate Jesus could be found active in certain Old Testament passages” and “reflects an approach to the Old Testament that had been a feature of devotion to Jesus during the first decades of the Christian movement” (Hurtado, 2003, p. 577), one of Justin’s achievements is the extensive and insistent recourse to the inherited tradition of Christophanic exegesis in the context of the Christian-Jewish debate.

## Melito of Sardis

One generation after Justin, around the third quarter of the second century, the rhythmic prose of a sermon *On Pascha* ascribed to Melito of Sardis gives voice to strident anti-Jewish sentiments:

72 It is He that has been murdered. And where has He been murdered? In the middle of Jerusalem. By whom? By Israel. Why? Because He healed their lame and cleansed their lepers and brought light to their blind and raised their dead; that is why He died. . . . 90 in recompense for that you [scil. Israel] had to die. . . . 96. He who hung the earth is hanging; He who fixed the heavens in place has been fixed in place; He who laid the foundations of the universe has been laid on a tree. The Master has been profaned, God has been murdered. The King of Israel has been destroyed by an Israelite right hand. 97 O unprecedented murder! Unprecedented crime! . . . 99 Therefore, O Israel, you did not quake in the presence of the Lord, so you quaked at the assault of foes. . . . You forsook the Lord, so you were not found by Him; you did not accept the Lord, so you were not pitied by Him; you dashed down the Lord, so you were dashed to the ground. 100 And you lie dead, but He has risen from the dead and gone up to the heights of heaven.

It is not surprising that a scholar labeled the author of this text as “the first poet of deicide” (Werner, 1966). His juxtaposing biblical Israel and the Church as “type” and “fulfillment” also effectively seems to undermine the enduring relevance of the Old Testament and to completely wipe out any theological justification for the continuing existence of Judaism after the advent of Christ:

36 A preliminary sketch is made of a future thing out of wax or of clay or of wood. . . . 37 But when that of which it is the model arises, that which once bore the image of the future thing is itself destroyed as growing useless having yielded to what is truly real the image of it; and what once was precious becomes worthless when what is truly precious has been revealed. . . . 43 In the same way as the model is made void, conceding the image to the truly real, and the parable is fulfilled, being elucidated by the interpretation, just so also the law was fulfilled when the Gospel was elucidated, and the people was made void when the Church arose; and the model was abolished when the Lord was revealed, and today, things once precious have become worthless, since things truly precious have been revealed. 44 Once, the slaying of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the life of the Lord; the death of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the salvation of the Lord; the blood of the sheep was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Spirit of the Lord; a speechless lamb was precious, but it is worthless now because of the spotless Son; the temple below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Christ above.

It is not surprising that many scholars have concluded that “Melito’s basic understanding of the typological nature of the Old Testament drives him to supersessionist claims” (Knapp, 2000, p. 371), or even that “Melito’s supersessionist tendencies forced him to develop typological hermeneutics” (Wilson, 1985, p. 348). A more attentive reading of the text, however, will show that *Peri Pascha*’s admittedly inflammatory language is primarily driven by Christology, not polemics; that its biblical exegesis is more complex than is usually acknowledged; and that seeing *Peri Pascha* as a Christian polemical response to, or parody of, the Passover *Haggada* (Werner, 1966; Flusser, 1977; Hall, 1971) is no longer possible. Let us consider these points in inverse order.

Although older scholarship debated whether the liturgical script for the Passover *seder*—the *Passover Haggadah*—should be viewed as a product of Second Temple Judaism or as a post-AD 70 composition (Finkelstein, 1938; Zeitlin, 1948), the scholarly consensus today is that we are dealing with the product of a centuries-long evolution that began after AD 70 and stretched well into the second half of the millennium (Kulp, 2005; Leonhard, 2005, 2005b). Indeed,

[n]early all scholars agree that most of the elements known from the *seder* as described in the Mishnah are missing from descriptions in Second Temple literature, including *Jubilees*, Josephus, Philo, the Gospels, and the sections of the Mishnah and the Tosefta which deal with the Passover as offered in the Temple (*m. Pesahim* 5–9). This includes the absence of a *seder* or a *haggadah*” (112); “Some of the most famous elements of the current *seder*—recitations such as the *dayyenu* [‘it is enough for us’; Glatzer 1989: 52–57] and the *ha lachma anya* [‘this is the bread of affliction’; Glatzer 1989: 24–25]—were not part of the evening’s ritual until the post-Talmudic period” (111); “In all likelihood, many of the elements of the midrash as it appears in geonic Haggadot . . . first emerged in Babylonia in the talmudic and even geonic periods. (Kulp, 2005, p. 122)

Since the *Haggadah* can no longer be presumed to be pre-Christian, it is rather more credible to entertain the possibility that the Passover *Haggadah* was constructed in direct and deliberate opposition to Christian teachings and practices (Yuval, 2006, pp. 87, 73–75, 81)—though one must take into account the dating of the various elements and layers in the *Haggadah*, and consider that the religious polemics discerned in Rabbinic texts does not always and necessarily carry over into the later *Haggadah*, which remains only marginally polemical. According to Leonhard (2005, p. 43n.86), “traces of interreligious conflicts that are found in the Haggada are either reflections of medieval encounters or the consequence of quotations of rabbinic *texts* (that may reflect Jewish opposition against Christianity in late Antiquity) within the Haggada.”

The biblical exegesis in *Peri Pascha* is multilayered. There is, first, Melito’s fundamental conviction about scriptural correspondences between pattern and its reproduction: “if you wish to see the mystery of the Lord, look at Abel who is similarly murdered, at Isaac who is similarly bound, at Joseph who is similarly sold, at Moses who is similarly exposed, at David who is similarly persecuted, at the prophets who similarly suffer for the sake of Christ” (*PP*, 59); [Christ] “struck down lawlessness and made injustice childless, as Moses did to Egypt” (*PP*, 68).

A second interpretative move is to hold that the type “yields up the image to what is truly real” (*PP*, 37) or “gives up meaning to the truth” (*PP*, 42), but also to posit the presence of Christ “in” the very same biblical characters noted above, who constitute types

of Christ: “This is the one who in many people endured many things. This is the one who was murdered in Abel, tied up in Isaac, exiled in Jacob, sold in Joseph, exposed in Moses, slaughtered in the lamb, hunted down in David, dishonored in the prophets” (PP, 69). What is meant here is that, with the advent of Christ (who “comes from heaven onto the earth for the suffering one, and wraps himself in the suffering one through a virgin womb” (PP, 66; cf. PP, 46), the types are revealed to always have been contained in the multifaceted Christ-mystery (PP, 65), which is not a historical occurrence but “both new and old” (PP, 58, reprising #2). “Only there”—i.e., in Christ—“can you see the type, and the material, and the reality” (PP, 38). The reason Christ can be perceived through the type/ sketch/ parable (PP, 35), or model (PP, 36) is that He is already in the sheep (PP, 33) as in all the patriarchs, prophetic utterances, and rituals of the Old Testament.

How exactly Melito understands this presence of Christ in the Old Testament becomes clear in PP, 81–85, 88, and 95–96, where the God who guided Israel in a pillar of fire, fed his people manna from heaven and water from the rock, and gave the Law on Horeb, is explicitly identified with the Son, the firstborn of God, the Crucified One—Jesus. While it is certainly true that “Melito graphically retells the story according to rhetorical conventions, allusion and quotation ‘mimicking’ the scriptural narrative by creatively reminding it” (Young, 1997, p. 194), and that he offers a prime example for the typological exegesis (Knapp, 2000), the commanding idea seems to be the identification of Christ as the Lord God of all Old Testament narratives.

When the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the *Peri Pascha* is considered in the light of his YHWH Christology, it becomes clear that the polemical element is subservient to Christological proclamation and to the mystagogical objective of raising a Christian audience to the awareness of the lofty YHWH-identity of the Crucified One. It is also noteworthy that Melito uses “Israel” throughout, not “Jews.” This might suggest that the object of his criticism is a rhetorical reconstruction of biblical Israel (implicitly staging the voice of *Peri Pascha* as a continuation of the prophetic reproaches). Since *Peri Pascha* revolves explicitly around the theme of recognition—recognizing who Adam, “the suffering one,” is (PP, 46; PP, 100) and recognizing who it is that clothes himself with the suffering one (PP, 66 and 95)—and since these questions are posed in a liturgical setting, it is evident that this recognition is expected from Melito’s Christian audience. Highlighting Israel’s failure to recognize its Lord (PP, 82: “You did not perceive the Lord, Israel, you did not recognize the first-born of God”) is ultimately a rhetorical tool in the service of Melito’s exhortation to his “insider” audience.

In conclusion, it appears that Melito’s interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel is determined primarily by a mystagogical and kerygmatic intention; the anti-Jewish sentiments, undoubted present in *Peri Pascha*, neither derive from exegesis nor do they determine it.

## Eusebius of Caesarea

Already an established thinker before Constantine, “still a stranger to preoccupations that would only emerge after the council of Nicaea,” Eusebius “offers in the *Proof of the Gospel* and, earlier, in the *Prophetic Eclogues*, the longest, most elaborate, and certainly richest reflection of any pre-Nicene author had ever consecrated to the question of ancient theophanies” (Morlet, 2009, pp. 441). Like his predecessors, Eusebius finds in theophanies the doctrinal foundation for the qualified reception of wisdom traditions outside of Israel;

like Justin Martyr he calls the Logos “second God” (*Eclogues* 1.12; *Dem. Ev.* 5.30), identifies the Logos with the Tetragrammaton (*Eclogues* 1.10–12), and understands theophanies as manifestations of the Logos “concerning himself with the work of mankind’s salvation even before the Incarnation” (*Eclogues* 1.10). He emphatically rejects the interpretation of theophanies as mere angelic apparitions, and instead ascribes them to one and the same agent: God’s Logos (*Hist. eccl.* 1.2; *Dem. ev.* 5.9; *Eccl. Theol.* 2.21; *Comm. Esa.* 1.41). This Christologically reinterpreted biblical narrative naturally features the patriarchs and prophets as “men of Christ,” to echo Justin’s formula, of whom the Church is the rightful heir: “If then the teaching of Christ has bidden all nations now to worship no other God but Him whom the men of old and the pre-Mosaic saints believed in, we are clearly partakers of the religion of these men of old time. And if we partake of their religion we shall surely share their blessing. Yes, and equally with us they knew and bore witness to the Word of God, Whom we love to call Christ. They were thought worthy in very remarkable ways of beholding His actual presence and theophany” (*Dem. ev.* 1.5).

But Eusebius also introduces a new anti-Jewish element (Bucur, 2018b; Kofsky, 1996, pp. 59–83; Ulrich, 1998, pp. 57–109; Johnson, 2004). He distinguishes between the spiritually advanced “Hebrew” patriarchs (Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job), on the one hand, and the “nation of the Jews,” whose spiritual infirmity in Egypt required the Mosaic Law as “a constitution adapted to their (low) moral condition” (*Prep. Ev.* 7.8.37–41; *Dem. ev.* 1.6.13–17). He goes so far as to not allow “the covenant of the pre-Mosaic Saints to be called ‘the old covenant,’ but that which was given to the Jews by the Law of Moses” (*Dem. ev.* 1.6). Moreover, in an exegetical move prominent in the *Prophetic Eclogues* and the *Demonstration of the Gospel*, which he seems to have abandoned by the time of the *Church History*, Eusebius places Moses in the same category as the people of Israel—as spiritually inferior to the patriarchs. “Do not be amazed,” he tells his readers, “that God manifested himself to Moses and to the people in the very same way” (*Extracts* 12 [PG 22:1064 A, B]). He states emphatically that “throughout all of Scripture God is *not even once* said to have appeared to Moses” as he had appeared to the patriarchs (*Eclogues* 9, 12 [PG 22:1052A; 1061A]). Indeed, as Eusebius explains (*Eclogues* 9 [PG 22:1053 C]), even though it was the same Logos that appeared to the patriarchs, to Moses, and to the people, the *mode* of the apparition differs: to Moses and the people, who were more “material,” the presence of the Logos was mediated by angel, pillar, cloud, and voice, whereas to the patriarchs, who did not need all of these veils, he appears *himself* and in a more direct manner, “simply,” “nakedly,” and “clearly” (*Eclogues* 1.9 [PG 22:1049D; 1052 B]; 1.10 [PG 22:1053 C]; *Eclogues* 1.12 [PG 22:1061B]).

The meticulous “demotion” of Moses by means of Scripture exegesis, and the reference to the views of unnamed other interpreters (*Eclogues* 1.12, PG 22:1061 A) suggests that Eusebius is attempting to counter an established Jewish tradition which affirmed Moses’s spiritual excellence as a tenet of faith to be upheld by reference to passages such as Exodus 3, 6, 19, 33–4, and Numbers 12. It has been suggested that Eusebius might have intended to undermine the kind of “exalted Moses” traditions that scholars of Second Temple Judaism identify in writings such as the *Exagoge of Moses*, Philo’s *Life of Moses*, or the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Bucur, 2018b). We would have, in other words, a faint echo (and reuse) of earlier intra-Jewish polemics opposing the exalted patriarchs of the “Enochic” tradition (Melchizedek, Noah, and Enoch) to the exalted Moses (Orlov, 2005, pp. 254–303; Orlov, 2008; Hurtado, 2015 [1988], pp. 53–72).

It is obvious that the disjunction between the spiritually advanced “Hebrew” patriarchs and the spiritually inferior “nation of the Jews”—regardless of whether Moses is counted among the latter, as in the *Demonstration* and the *Eclogues*—is designed to establish the notion of a spiritual continuum between the “Hebrews” and the multi-ethnic Church. Both, in fact, are described as “a religion” (θεοσέβεια) “neither new nor original” but “of great antiquity” (*Dem. ev.* 1.2), both are defined by their relation to the preexistent Word of God which became human in the latter days. Eusebius’s Jewish contemporaries are implicitly consigned to spiritual blindness, not only by comparison to the Church, but even to Moses and the “Jews” who benefitted from a diminished and veiled perception of the Word.

## BYZANTINE FESTAL HYMNOGRAPHY

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That “in the official liturgical books used in several Byzantine rites today we still meet with a drastic and extensive anti-Jewish polemic that also several times degenerates into torrents of abuse” (Groen, 2008, p. 370) is well established. It is equally clear that for a strand of the texts, the “we” in the hymns is identified crassly with the Gentiles, thereby eliminating the oft-suggested reading of anti-Jewish criticism as directed toward the Christian worshipers (Kratzert, 1994, pp. 161–182). Some statistics are also available, at least for the hymns of the Triodion: Ioniță (2021) sets the number of “problematic” hymns at around 150 out of a total of 5,000. The case for eliminating or editing such compositions is fairly clear (Papademetriou 1976; Hackel, 1998; Theokritoff, 2003; Groen, 2008; Pentiu, 2014, p. 40; Azar, 2015; Bucur, 2017), and to some extent these situations are being addressed by some of the local Orthodox Churches, albeit imperfectly—arbitrarily, unevenly, and without the benefit of a Church-wide consultation. Since many of these kinds of gratuitous invectives, “to say the least, contribute nothing to our theological understanding” (Theokritoff, 2003, pp. 26, 42), they are not relevant to a discussion of biblical exegesis in Byzantine hymnography.

There are, of course, Byzantine hymns whose anti-Jewish rhetoric is quite strident but not theologically vacuous. Many of them occur on Great and Holy Friday:

O My people, what have I done to you, and how have you repaid Me? Instead of manna, you have given me gall, instead of water, vinegar. (Holy Friday: Antiphon 12)

Today the Jews nailed to the Cross the Lord who divided the sea with a rod and led them through the wilderness. Today they pierced with a lance the side of Him who for their sake smote Egypt with plagues. They gave Him gall to drink, who rained down manna on them for food. (Holy Friday: Antiphon 6)

With Moses’ rod You have led them on dry ground through the Red Sea, yet they nailed You to the Cross; You have suckled them with honey from the rock, yet they gave You gall. (Royal Hours of Holy Friday: Troparion of the Third Hour)

Be not be deceived, O Jews: for this is He who saved you in the sea and fed you in the wilderness. (Holy Friday: Antiphon 12)

These texts are *Improperia*-type hymns—they belong, in other words, to the liturgical tradition that found expression in the *Improperia* (“Reproaches”) of the Roman Holy Friday service (Auf der Maur, 1967, p. 134n.380). Their content can be traced to older Greek, Syriac,

and Latin sources, most notably Aphrahat, Ephrem of Nisibis, Jacob of Serug, Melito of Sardis, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ps.-Asterius, Romanos the Melodist, the sermon “On the Soul and the Body” ascribed to Alexander of Alexandria and preserved only in Coptic, and New Testament Apocrypha such as the Acts of Pilate, the Acts of Thomas, and the Gospel of Bartholomew. The oldest example of *Improperia* is found in Melito’s paschal homily, as Antiphon 15 of the Great and Holy Matins bears evident resemblance to PP, 96, discussed earlier (Wellesz, 1943; Werner, 1966; Auf der Maur, 1967, pp. 143–151; Schütz, 1968, esp. p. 37; Janeras, 1988, pp. 264–270).

The very fact that the biblical “Lord’s reproaches to Israel” are here placed on the lips of Jesus points to the primarily Christological message of the hymns. As in the case of *Peri Pascha*, the hymns use Judaism’s faulty perception of Jesus as a foil for their Christological proclamation—addressed, of course to Christians: the Lord God who chastised Egypt with plagues *is Christ*; the Lord God who cut a path through the Red Sea for Israel to cross unharmed *is Christ*; the Lord God who fed Israel with manna in the desert *is Christ*. In short, the primary intention of the hymns is the identification of the *kyrios* of Old Testament theophanies with the *kyrios* of Christian worship. We find, then, in the *Improperia*-type hymns, the same ancient layer of Christian thought “wrapped in the beauty of poetry, and consumed liturgically” (Bucur, 2017, p. 55).

Numerous hymns evince the same Christophanic exegesis but do not sharpen this Christological confession into anti-Jewish polemics. As a matter of fact, the pattern of PP 96, clearly echoed in Antiphon 15, was later extended to the festal hymnography of Palm Sunday, Nativity, Presentation, Baptism, etc. (see Janeras, 1988, pp. 254–256)—yet there, the identification of YHWH with Jesus is not given an anti-Jewish twist. Consider the following:

Great and Holy Friday: Antiphon 15	Eve of Nativity: Ninth Royal Hour, <i>Glory Sticheron</i>
<p>Today                  He who hung the earth upon the waters                  is hung upon the Cross.                  He who is King of the angels                  is arrayed in a crown of thorns.                  He who wraps the heaven in clouds                  is wrapped in the purple of mockery.                  ...                  ...                  ...                  The Son of the Virgin is pierced with a                  spear ...</p>	<p>Today                  He who holds the whole creation in the hollow of His                  hand is born of the Virgin.                  He whom in essence none can touch                  is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a mortal.                  God who in the beginning founded the heavens                  lies in a manger.                  He who rained manna down on the people in the                  wilderness is fed on milk from His Mother’s                  breast.                  ...                  The Son of the Virgin accepts their gifts                  ...</p>

Byzantine festal hymnography discerns the luminous face of Christ in *all* theophanies of the Old Testament: the paradoxical identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord of Paradise, the God of our fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He-Who-Is, who spoke to Moses in the burning bush and gave the Law on Sinai, the Lord whom Ezekiel saw riding on the cherubim, whom Isaiah saw enthroned and worshiped by the seraphim, whom Daniel discerned in the characters of both Son of Man *and* Ancient of Days, the Glory of his people, the Holy One of Israel, occurs in the hymns of Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha, of Annunciation, Nativity, Circumcision, Presentation, Baptism, and Transfiguration (Bucur, 2018). The Church at worship delights in the paradoxical fusion between the lofty depiction

of the “Lord” in Old Testament theophanies and the humble portrait of the “Lord” in the Gospels. Hymnographic exegesis essentially proclaims the same theandric mystery in Jesus Christ that is defended by the Councils, yet in a language very different from that of conciliar definitions”; hymnography constitutes “the historical companion of dogmatic writings in the patristic era and should be considered as their interpretative framework” (Bucur, 2006, p. 21).

The evident centrality of Christophanic exegesis and absence of anti-Jewish polemic in most hymns indicates that the anti-Jewish overtones are not essential to their theological message. Consequently, as has been argued (Bucur, 2017, p. 59), a hypothetical liturgical reform could very well excise all anti-Jewish “flourishes” (for instance, by switching to the passive voice, by changing the addressee from “Jews” to “believers” or “brothers,” etc) without, however, changing the Old Testament reference, and thereby maintain the central Christological message of the hymns.

## CONCLUSION

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The topic of anti-Jewish sentiments in patristic and liturgical biblical exegesis is highly complex and resists easy parsing. Scholarly research helps approximate an understanding of the topic by considering carefully a number of factors, which are themselves neither clear nor constant across time and region: the gradual shift from intra-communitarian polemics within the boundaries of Second Temple Judaism to a struggle between the two survivors of the destruction of the Temple—emerging early Judaism and early Christianity—whose self-definition as Israel implies the delegitimization of the other; the spectacular demographic change on the Christian side, from an ethnically Jewish community to an overwhelmingly Gentile Church; the mirroring efforts, on the Christian and Rabbinic side, of policing the border between the two groups; starting with the early fourth century, the sociopolitical implications of Christianity providing the ideological glue of the Roman Empire; etc.—the list continues.

In the end, readers who have ears to hear will have understood that the question of anti-Jewish sentiments in liturgical and patristic biblical interpretations is not merely academic, but touches on the very spiritual integrity of the Church. Those wild shoots that have been grafted into the nourishing root of Israel (Rom 11:17, 24) and thus granted to share in its sonship, glory, covenants, Law, worship, and promises (Rom 9:4) should know better than to hate the Jews from whom comes their salvation (John 4:22).

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