

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS: A TANGLED HISTORY

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Session 4: The 'Parting of the Ways', part 2

1. DIFFERENT CANONS FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

Jewish canon formation from the 1st century CE onwards

- The Torah
- The Prophets (Nevi'im) –some doubts about whether Ezekiel should be included
- The Writings (Ketuvim) – these did not settle down till the 2nd century at the earliest, with disputes over the status of some books. Some were eventually included after dispute Shir Hashirim/Song of Songs, Mishlei/Proverbs, Esther), some almost made it but were excluded (Ben Sira).

Some other books that were written by Jews during the Second Temple period:

Ben Sira, 1-3 Enoch (collections of different books), *Psalms of Solomon, Wisdom of Solomon*, additions to the book of Daniel, *Epistle of Jeremiah, Jubilees, Testament of Moses, 1 Baruch, 2 Baruch, Thanksgiving Hymns* (DS), *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (DS), *Temple Scroll* (DS), *Genesis Apocryphon* (DS), *4 Ezra, Apocalypse of Abraham*, plus possibly the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

Horizontal and vertical continuity/discontinuity in scriptures

TIME 

Various Jewish groups

Jewish scriptures-----various 2nd Temple period books, e.g. Enoch, Baruch, Ben Sira, etc. Some died out?

'Proto-rabbinic' Jews

Jewish scriptures (canon finally closed in 2nd-3rd centuries CE)-----switch to oral texts?? (Mishnah, Tosefta, midrash)

Ebionites

Jewish scriptures-----New scriptures (?) (part of Gospel of Matthew, ?Gospel of the Nazareans). Died out ...

'Proto-orthodox' Christians

Jewish scriptures-----New Testament (canonized 2nd-4th centuries CE), other books e.g. Epistle of Barnabas

'Gnostic' groups

(Jewish scriptures??)-----New scriptures, e.g. Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Truth, Treatise on the Resurrection.

Other early Christian groups

(Jewish scriptures?)-----New scriptures, e.g. Gospel of Mary, Proto-Gospel of James. Many died out/were suppressed.

Marcionites

Jewish scriptures (parts of) Gospel of Luke, some of Paul's epistles (2nd century CE). Died out/were suppressed.

The Jewish reaction to new scriptures

Tosefta, Yadayim 2: 13

The *gilyonim* [= *evangelion*?] and the books of the *minim* do not make the hands impure [= are not holy]. The books of Ben Sira and all the books written from then onwards do not make the hands impure.

Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10: 1

These are the people who have no portion in the world to come: ... Rabbi Akiva says: Also someone who reads in the *sefarim chitzonim* [external books].

Midrash Kohelet Rabba 12: 12

Anyone who brings into his house more than the 24 books [= scripture], such as the book of Ben Sira, brings chaos into his home.

2. RECENT ACADEMIC THEORIES

Daniel Boyarin (USA, b. 1946)

- *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (1994)
- *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (1999)
- ***Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*** (2004)
- *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (2012)

Judith Lieu (UK, b. 1951)

- *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (1996)
- ***Neither Jew nor Greek: Constructing Early Christianity*** (2002)
- *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (2004)

Israel Yuval (Israel, b. 1949)

- *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (2000)

(Other important scholars: Paula Fredriksen and Martin Goodman)

3. CHRISTIANITY AS A PERSECUTED MINORITY FAITH

Pliny the Younger, Letter to the Emperor Trajan (103 CE)

Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I

thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.

They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.