

# Interpreting the Syrophenician Woman to Construct Jewish-Christian Fault Lines: Chrysostom and the Ps-CI Homilist in Chrono-Locational Perspective

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At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ferdinand C. Baur first employed the Pseudo-Clementine literature to reconstruct what he labeled the “Jewish Christianity” of Peter, James, and the Jerusalem church.<sup>1</sup> In subsequent years, however, that term has been used to encompass a broad and often conflicting range of persons,<sup>2</sup> texts,<sup>3</sup> dates,<sup>4</sup> and criteria,<sup>5</sup> causing many recent scholars to

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der alten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom,” *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 5 (1831): 61–206. Though Baur was the first to employ the Pseudo-Clementine literature to describe Jewish Christianity, he was certainly not the first to coin the term. For the influence of British scholarship on Baur’s work and notable publications ever since, see James Carleton Paget, “The Definition of the Terms *Jewish Christian* and *Jewish Christianity* in the History of Research,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 22–52.

<sup>2</sup> By way of example, throughout the history of research, some scholars have deemed the apostle Paul the antithesis of “Jewish Christianity” [Baur, Schwegler, Lüdemann], while others have incorporated him into the definition [Ritschl, Hoennicke, Daniélou]. See Paget, “The Definition,” 22–52. Other persons or groups who have variously received the appellation include, but are not limited to: Peter, James, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, the Nazoreans, the Ebionites, the Elchasites, and the author-redactors of the Pseudo-Clementine literature.

<sup>3</sup> Some early scholars, for instance, insisted that the phenomenon of “Jewish Christianity” ceased to exist by the time of the composition of the New Testament. Accordingly, they

underscore its inherent subjectivity, noting that its modern imposition connotes a uniformity of belief and practice, when in fact a pluriformity existed.<sup>6</sup> Daniel Boyarin has even gone on to suggest that imposing the appellation at all only reifies the boundaries between two religions, namely Judaism and Christianity, which did not, even in the fourth century CE, yet exist as such.<sup>7</sup> An obvious reason for these discrepancies lies in the nature of the extant evidence itself.

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limited the scope of their analysis to texts found within the New Testament itself, pointing to texts like 1 Peter and the Epistle of James as proof texts. Others, however, have been much more expansive, considering texts such as, but not limited to, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Protoevangelium of James*, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* and *Homilies*, *Gospel of the Hebrews*, *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, *Testament of Abraham*, and *Testament of Job*.

<sup>4</sup> Early scholarship on this topic assumed that the phenomenon of “Jewish Christianity” was confined to the first or perhaps second century. In more recent years, however, evidence has been leveled dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. For more information, see John G. Gager, “Did Jewish Christians See the Rise of Islam?” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Y. Reed. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 361–72.

<sup>5</sup> At times used interchangeably and at others in opposition to one another, the three primary criteria by which scholars have defined the phenomenon include ethnicity, law-abiding praxis, and ideological beliefs about Jesus as the Messiah. As I will unpack at greater length below, the author-redactors of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* define persons as Ἰουδαῖοι solely in relation to their law-abiding praxis. It does not matter if they are Jews or Gentiles by ethnicity. Likewise, it does not matter if they follow the pedagogical example of Moses or of Jesus. Rather, the *Homilies* are solely interested in whether a person follows God’s universal law.

<sup>6</sup> For the recent proliferation of publications on this topic, see James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 251 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–39 and 289–324 in particular (the latter is a slightly revised version of the essay referenced in note 1 above); Edwin K. Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus. Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 266 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Matt Jackson-McCabe, ed., *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus*; and Annette Y. Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’: Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementine Literature,” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 189–232.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99.1 (2009): 7–36.

Since constituencies who were predominantly Gentile ultimately won the early Christian battles for orthopraxy, as well as orthodoxy, their writings have been transcribed, transmitted, cherished, translated, and preserved. By contrast, much of our evidence for the so-called Jewish Christians<sup>8</sup> has either been preserved in the writings of heresiologists,<sup>9</sup> who sought to undermine their credibility, or reconstructed based on the ideological content present within works of contested history or authorship. Even the relevance of the Pseudo-Clementine literature has been called into question; Graham Stanton, for example, cautions researchers to “proceed gingerly and in a critically responsible manner” if the “writings are to be used as evidence for Jewish believers in Jesus” at all.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I have included the qualifying term *so-called* because, as the proliferation of recent publications on this topic makes clear, I want to underscore the inherent difficulties in employing the appellation “Jewish Christian” to ancient texts. Despite this qualification, I have also chosen to retain the use of “Jewish Christian,” for two main reasons. First, although alternatives have been proposed, such as “Christian Jews,” “Jewish believers in Jesus,” “Christ-believing Jews,” “Judaistic Christianity,” or even “Judaizers,” in my estimation these options are not better than the category “Jewish Christian” nor do they avoid the inherent difficulties associated with that term. For scholars who have reflected upon the various terms employed to try to describe persons who, in some way or another, retained a connection to Judaism while simultaneously being associated with Jesus, see Oskar Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers in Antiquity—Problems of Definition, Method, and Sources,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 3–21, esp. 9–13; and Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered*, 1–6. Second, following Annette Y. Reed, I find “Jewish Christian” a helpful “heuristic for unsettling the modern scholarly assumptions about the mutual exclusivity of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Christian’ identities in Late Antiquity.” See Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 190–91, n. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Heresiologists who have been employed to reconstruct the phenomenon include, but are not limited to, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Eusebius.

<sup>10</sup> Graham Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements in the Pseudo-Clementine Writings,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 305. By contrast, I think that the intended readership of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* likely included persons who were both ethnically Jewish and ethnically Gentile, but that the author-redactors of this work intended their readership—whether Jew or Gentile—to conceive of themselves as “Jews.” I unpack this argument at greater length below. In this vein, note the recent work of Karin Zetterholm, “Alternative Visions of Judaism and Their Impact on the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism,” *JMJS* 1 (2014): 127–53, who makes a compelling argument for the Jewish self-identification of the author-redactors of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, suggesting that these two works, in addition to the *Didascalia Apostorum*, provide evidence for non-rabbinic groups that self-identified as Jews. For similar arguments for Jewish self-identification, see Reed, “Jewish Christianity,” 222–23; and Annette Y. Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter-history? The Apostolic Past in

Despite this scrutiny, one promising new line of research into these questions, initiated in large part by the challenges of postmodernity, has been for scholars to attend more carefully to authors and texts in terms of their specific locales and chronological frameworks, rather than assuming that they can represent centuries-long perspectives on all of Jewish Christianity or on all of Gentile Christianity for that matter. With respect to the Pseudo-Clementine literature, though scholarly efforts on these texts had long been predominated by source-critical questions,<sup>11</sup> in recent years scholars have begun to approach this literature with fresh perspectives. F. Stanley Jones, for instance, has interrogated the extent to which the *περίοδοι πέτροι* (*Circuits of Peter*)—otherwise known as the *Grundschrift*, which likely stands behind the *Homilies*—might provide insights into Jewish Christian practices.<sup>12</sup> The work of Annette Reed, Nicole Kelley, and Graham Stanton has emphasized the need to investigate the final compositional forms of various parts of the Pseudo-Clementine literature,<sup>13</sup> and Annette Reed's work, in particular, has situated the Pseudo-Clementine

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Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Gregg Gardner and Kevin L. Osterloh. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 173–216, esp. 191–94.

<sup>11</sup> This unusual focus has persisted, as Reed has pointed out, because many scholars, heavily influenced by the "Parting of the Ways" model, assumed that out of the diversity of Second Temple period Judaism an early and irrevocable split between Judaism and Christianity occurred, which caused the two burgeoning religions to have little or no influence upon one another past the second century. See Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 189–231.

<sup>12</sup> F. Stanley Jones, *Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque Inter Judaeochristiana: Collected Studies*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 203 (Leuven, Paris, & Walpole: Peeters, 2012), 138–51 and 491–514.

<sup>13</sup> Reed, "Jewish Christianity," 189–231; idem, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-history?," 173–216; idem, "Parting Ways over Blood and Water? Beyond 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' in the Roman Near East," in *La Croisée des chemins* revisitée, ed. Simon Mimouni and Bernard Pouderon (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 227–59; idem, "Rethinking (Jewish-)Christian Evidence for Jewish Mysticism," in *Hekalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia*, ed. Ra'anan Boustan, Martha Himmelfarb, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 349–77; Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the 'Recognitions' in Fourth Century Syria*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); idem, "Problems of Knowledge and Authority in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance of Recognitions," *J ECS* 13 (2005): 315–48, esp. 340–48; Stanton, "Jewish Christian Elements," 305–24.

*Homilies* within their fourth-century Syrian milieu, probing into *why this specific geographical region* served as a “crucible for new approaches to [the] conceptualization of identity and difference.”<sup>14</sup> Despite these advances, one heretofore unexplored aspect of this discussion is the role that divergent exegetical practices of near contemporaries, living in proximity to one another, may have played in the creation of religious identity and differentiation.<sup>15</sup> Such a chrono-locational perspective, I suggest, offers fresh insights into how “Judaism” and “Christianity” were constructed in a particular place at a particular time, while simultaneously affording a rare—albeit indirect—glimpse of the real persons, namely those “Jewish Christians” who, in antiquity, did not fit easily into the categories so well-known in the current day.

In Mark 7:25–30 and its parallel, Matt 15:21–28, wherein a distraught Gentile mother approaches Jesus to solicit his aid in alleviating the torments of her demon possessed daughter,<sup>16</sup> Jesus does not respond with the alacrity one would expect: he utterly humiliates her, insinuating she was less than human, no better than a dog.<sup>17</sup> In what follows I seek to further explore what we might know about the liminal boundaries of “Judaism” and “Christianity” in fourth-century Syria, by attending to how two authors—namely, John Chrysostom and, as an indeterminate group, the author-redactors of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, hereafter simply called the Homilist—each made sense of Jesus’ troubling actions through their exegesis.<sup>18</sup> Since both authors not only

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to the citations of Reed’s work found in note 13 above, see also Annette Y. Reed and Lily Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch: Partings in Roman Syria,” in *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archeological Society, 2013), 105–32, esp. 105. For a recent work that has placed the *Recognitions*, and *R III* 2–11 in particular, firmly in a fourth-century Roman Syrian milieu in the midst of the Trinitarian controversy over the correct definition of the relationship between the Father and the Son, see Emanuel Fiano, “From ‘Why’ to ‘Why Not’: *Clem. Recogn.* III 2–11, Fourth-Century Trinitarian Debates, and the Syrian Christian-Jewish Continuum,” *Adamantius* 20 (2014): 343–65.

<sup>15</sup> The work of Donald H. Carlson also attends to the exegetical practices of the author-redactors who composed this piece, but his work, unlike mine, focuses solely upon the Pentateuch and not on passages that derive from the New Testament. For more information, see his *Jewish-Christian Interpretation of the Pentateuch in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> The gospel authors describe the woman as a Syrophenician (Mark 7:26) and a Canaanite (Matt 15:22).

<sup>17</sup> Mark 7:27; Matt 15:26.

<sup>18</sup> As I describe at greater length below, the *Homilies* contain several redactional layers and later interpolations, making it difficult to determine when various parts of the text

composed their works in Greek<sup>19</sup> but were also alive and active in the fourth century,<sup>20</sup> and possibly even in the city of Antioch,<sup>21</sup> I turn my attention in the

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arose. Moreover, because the authorship of the *Homilies* is unknown, I like to think of the person(s) from the fourth century who produced the final redacted form of the *Homilies* as author-redactors, although for sake of convenience, I refer to these person(s) with the shorthand “Homilist” throughout.

<sup>19</sup> John Chrysostom preached his sermons in Greek, and those selected for this study have all been preserved in this language. The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* are likewise preserved in Greek and likely derive from an earlier Greek *Grundschrift*.

<sup>20</sup> Scholars typically date John Chrysostom’s lifetime from 349 to 407 CE, and date his time in Antioch as preacher and presbyter to 386–397 CE. See Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity. Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4, but 3–59 for context; see also Joshua Garroay, “The Law-Observant Lord: John Chrysostom’s Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ,” *J ECS* 18:4 (2010): 591–615, esp. 592 (although he suggests the slightly amended dates of 386–398 CE). The dating of the Pseudo-Clementine literature is a bit more complicated. Though early scholarship, influenced by Baur, placed the Pseudo-Clementine literature in the second century, already by the 19<sup>th</sup> century C. Biggs presented a convincing case for a fourth-century date based on the Homilist’s familiarity with the Arian controversy, his employment of Syriac words, and his general familiarity with words associated with fourth-century christological debates. See C. Biggs, “The Clementine *Homilies*,” in *Studia biblica et ecclesiastica* 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), 167, 191–92, and 368–69. As a result, most scholars now place the *Homilies* firmly in the early fourth century, with many suggesting a range between ca. 300 and ca. 320 CE. For subsequent debates on whether the *Homilies* were penned before or after Nicaea, see Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter-history?,” 173–216, esp. 177–82 and notes 29, 36, and 38. The *Recognitions* are often dated ca. 360–380 CE. For an early argument, see H. Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen: Homilien und Rekognitionen: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*, TU 10.4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinriches, 1904), 372. For more recent works, see Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, 179–212; idem, “Problems of Knowledge and Authority,” 315–48, esp. 340–48; Fiano, “From ‘Why’ to ‘Why Not,’” 343–65.

<sup>21</sup> With respect to Chrysostom, John not only served as a preacher and presbyter in the city of Antioch from 386 to 398 CE, but he also grew up in the city, became a deacon there under Bishop Meletius, and later received his ordination as priest in Antioch under Bishop Flavian. See Christine Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda: Evoking the Jews of Fourth-Century Antioch.” *JJMJS* 2 (2015): 147–82, esp. 165; Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3–16; Garroay, “The Law-Observant Lord,” 592. With respect to the *Homilies*, prominent scholars place the *Grundschrift*—which likely stands behind the *Homilies*—in Syria, suggesting that the *Homilies* were also (by extension) composed in Syria as well. Moreover, Reed underscores how the Syrian provenance of the *Homilies* was already established by scholars, such as Ulhorn and Biggs, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. See Reed, “‘Jewish

first part of this essay to that region of the world, noting how both the Markan and Matthean authors place the encounter between Jesus and the Gentile woman in that very region. In the second and third parts, I examine how the Homilist and Chrysostom each dealt with Jesus' harsh treatment of this suffering Gentile mother through their exegesis. My analysis reveals that while Chrysostom employs the narratives to construct for his congregants a "Christian" identity that was disassociated from the Jewish ethnicity of their founder, Jesus, the Homilist suggests the woman receives Jesus' aid only after she becomes a "Jew" herself.<sup>22</sup> Since the Homilist's work predates that of Chrysostom's by about sixty years, but emerges in geographical proximity, I suggest that their different exegetical responses shed light onto the dynamic manner in which Christian and Jewish identity formation played out in Roman Syria, complicating past assumptions that the parting of the ways between these two religions occurred in a manner that was unilinear in character and global in scope. The evidence suggests instead that, in Roman Syria at least, efforts to draw the boundary between who was a Jew and who was a Christian constituted

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Christianity' as Counter-history?," 180, n. 28. Whether their place of composition was near Antioch or Edessa, however, has been disputed. F. Stanley Jones suggests a location just outside of Antioch near the Orontes River (*Pseudoclementina Elchasaiticaque*, 138–51 and 491–514). Likewise Reed and Vuong, "Christianity in Antioch," 105–32, place the *Homilies* in Roman Syria, focusing their attention on Antioch in particular. By contrast, Jan Bremmer, ed., *The Pseudo-Clementines* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 1–23, advocates for Edessa. Although I think that the *Homilies* likely originated out of or near Antioch, even if the final redacted form of the text arose from a *locale* that was closer to the city of Edessa instead, there was significant cross fertilization between the cities of Antioch and Edessa. As Hans Drijvers has argued, "northern Mesopotamia and the little kingdom of Osrhoene with its capital Edessa were not isolated from the rest of Syria; there was on the contrary a continuous exchange of goods and ideas along the busy highroads from Antioch to the east and vice versa" ("Syrian Christianity and Judaism," in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians: In the Roman Empire*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak [London: Routledge, 1992], 124–46, esp. 125). To be clear, in situating the *Homilies* in a Roman Syrian milieu, I am not excluding the possibility that the final redacted form of this work could have arisen from Roman Mesopotamia or Osrhoene. The Roman province of Syria is distinct from the Roman province of Mesopotamia, but both regions can be classified as being a part of Syria.

<sup>22</sup> In making this claim I am not suggesting that Chrysostom had no "Jewish" congregants in his audience (i.e. that there were no ethnic Jews in his midst) or that he was only addressing Gentiles with his remarks. Rather, I am arguing that Chrysostom constructed a Christian identity for his various congregations that was dissociated from the Jewish ethnicity of Jesus himself.

a long and involved process. Indeed, it is even possible that Chrysostom's harsh anti-Judaizing rhetoric arose in response to the sort of Ἰουδαῖοι that the Homilist sought to inculcate with his words, or who already existed within the broader Syrian milieu, insinuating that—at least in this geographical context—religious identity was far from fixed, even toward the end of the fourth century CE.

### The Syrophoenician Woman amid Ongoing Roman Syrian Identity Formation

Situated on the eastern edge of the Roman Empire, in close proximity to both Roman Palestine and the Parthian/Persian border, the geographical region of Roman Syria—spanning from Antioch in the east to, at times, Edessa in the west—functioned as an important center for Christian identity formation long before the fourth century CE.<sup>23</sup> It was in the Roman-Syrian city of Antioch, for instance, that the term “Christian” (Χριστιανός) was first employed to describe members of the Jesus movement.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, it was also in Antioch where, in the second century CE, Ignatius famously coined the term Χριστιανισμός, which later developed into our concept of Christianity, in opposition to Ἰουδαϊσμός, which in his day meant “Judaizing,” “Judeanness,” or “Jewishness.”<sup>25</sup> That the attempts to define these categories did not immediately translate into a clear line of division between what would later become known as Christianity and Judaism,<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For scholars who have placed both Antioch and Edessa within a Syrian province, or within the region of Roman Syria in particular, see Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” 124–46, esp. 125; Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 105–32, esp. 110; Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*. North American Patristics Society Monograph Series 20 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), esp. 15–16.

<sup>24</sup> For further New Testament evidence from Matthew and Acts, which describes the early spread of the message about Jesus into Syria, as well as reflections about the importance of that region for the conceptualization of Christian identity, see Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 112–18.

<sup>25</sup> Ignatius, *Magn.* 10.1–3 (cf. *Ign., Phld.* 6.1). On how to understand these terms and other -ισμός nouns in Greek, see Steve Mason, “Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38.4–5 (2007): 457–512, esp. 470–71. For further reflection on Ignatius and the subsequent development of Christianity in Syria, see Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 118–24.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Mason argues that it was Greek and Latin Christians, in the third and fourth centuries, who established Χριστιανισμός and Ἰουδαϊσμός as “formally contrastable systems” (“Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 470). While I do not dispute that these early church fathers played a pivotal role in this process, the primary example that Mason cites, namely Tertullian, not only transported these terms outside of the Roman Syrian context but also



however, can be seen in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. This third-century text also derives from a Syrian milieu. As Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert has demonstrated, that work takes as its literary framework the conflict over identity formation found in Acts 15 and “employs it as a lens through which to read the current conflict in its audience.”<sup>27</sup> That is to say, “[t]he conflict of the first century” over what constituted proper practice “seems to repeat itself in the same geocultural environment two centuries later.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, despite multiple attempts to construct identity, and to make it an entity that excluded what would later become known as Judaism, fluidity persisted within the Syrian milieu.

But Roman Syria, and Antioch in particular, also played a pivotal role in Jewish identity formation. According to the reports of the Jewish historian Josephus, ever since Seleucus I extended the right of citizenship to Jews after founding the city in 300 BCE,<sup>29</sup> a sizeable number of Jews resided not only in Antioch but also in the broader region of Syria.<sup>30</sup> This favorable treatment by Seleucus I and his successors likely provided many Jews with the initial incentive to reside there,<sup>31</sup> but Syria’s proximity to Judea compelled them to stay.<sup>32</sup> Less

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operated in an entirely different language. Thus, what I am suggesting is that the pace and trajectory of this demarcation likely happened more rapidly in places like Carthage, and took on a different character than it did in Antioch or the broader Syrian context.

<sup>27</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, “The *Didascalia Apostolorum*: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” *JEC* 9.4 (2001): 483–509, esp. 490 (cf. Acts 15).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>29</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 12.119; *c. Ap.* 2.39; *War* 7.43–45. See also Philo, *Prob.* 75, for the widespread presence of Jews in Roman Syria in the first century CE.

<sup>30</sup> For recent scholars who have made this observation, see Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity*, 46; Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 108; Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda,” 152; Tessa Rajak, “The Maccabean Martyrs in Jewish Memory: Jerusalem and Antioch,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Essays in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra’anan Boustan et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 63–80, esp. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Josephus, *War* 7.43–45.

<sup>32</sup> With respect to the first century, Gal 2:11–14; Acts 11:19; 14:19; and Josephus, *War* 7.43–45 all describe Jews residing in Antioch. Moreover, Acts 22:12 notes that Jews lived in Damascus, and Philo, *Prob.* 75, suggests that numerous Jews lived in the broader region of Syria. Likewise, in the fourth century, material evidence from Apamea and Beth She’arim, as well as literary evidence from Libanius and the Palestinian Talmud, exists, causing scholars to claim that there was an ongoing and perhaps even vibrant presence of real Jews residing throughout Syria in the first several centuries of the Common Era. See Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda,” 152–64; Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 108–109; Rajak, “The Maccabean Martyrs,” 71.

than three hundred miles stand between Antioch and Jerusalem, making travel between the two cities relatively easy, even in antiquity. Such proximity had both an upside and a downside. As Tessa Rajak has observed, it fostered frequent cultural exchange and “highly permeable religious boundaries, open to renegotiation.”<sup>33</sup> Yet it also opened the door to violent hostilities between the two, particularly in the wake of the First Jewish Revolt.<sup>34</sup> We know, for instance, from Josephus that there was not only “widespread Syrian curiosity” and interest in Jewish festivals and practices, but that the boundaries between Syrian Jewry and pagan Syrians were also quite porous.<sup>35</sup> On the one hand, Josephus tells stories about the wives of those in Damascus and the “conversion of various pagan rulers from the Mesopotamian kingdom of Adiabene.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, there seem to have been some pagan Syrians who were regularly engaging in Jewish practices or behaviors, some of whom even went so far as to be circumcised.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Josephus also reports that some persons such as Antiochus, who were ethnically Jewish, abandoned Sabbath observance in the wake of the Jewish War, around the time when Vespasian arrived in Syria,<sup>38</sup> choosing to partake in sacrificial practices after the manner of the Greeks instead.<sup>39</sup> They did so to avoid the negative stereotypes directed toward Jews living at that time. This evidence suggests that in the first several centuries of the Common Era in Roman Syria at least, who was a Jew and who was a Christian—or even who was a pagan—was not static, but open to renegotiation and reconfiguration.

Telling in this regard is the observation that both the Markan and Matthean authors place the original encounter between Jesus and the Gentile woman in this very region. Mark 7:24, for instance, suggests their encounter occurred in the vicinity of Tyre (τὰ ὄρια Τύρου), while Matt 15:21 mentions both

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<sup>33</sup> Rajak, “The Maccabean Martyrs,” 70.

<sup>34</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.461–463; 7.43–45. See Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 108–112; Mark Nanos, “Paul’s Non-Jews Do Not Become ‘Jews,’ But Do They Become ‘Jewish’?: Reading Romans 2:25–29 within Judaism, alongside Josephus,” *JMJS* 1 (2014): 26–53, esp. 52; Rajak, “The Maccabean Martyrs,” 70.

<sup>35</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.461–463; 7.43–45. Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 108; Nanos, “Paul’s Non-Jews,” 52.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.559–561 and *Ant.* 20.17, 34–5, 38–47, 75, respectively. See also Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 108.

<sup>37</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.454 (Metilius); *Ant.* 20.38–47 (Izates). For more information on the significance of circumcision, see note 66 below.

<sup>38</sup> Josephus, *War* 7.46.

<sup>39</sup> Josephus, *War* 7.50, but *War* 7.47–53 for context. See also Reed and Vuong, “Christianity in Antioch,” 110.

Tyre and Sidon (τὰ μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος). Moreover, though Mark describes her as a Greek (Ἕλληνίς) and a Syrophoenician (Συροφοινίκισσα),<sup>40</sup> and Matthew a Canaanite (Χανααίτα),<sup>41</sup> both narratives unequivocally stress that she was not Jewish. Mark emphasizes that she was Syrophoenician by birth (τῷ γένει), suggesting that her people derived from a region of Syria that bordered Antioch.<sup>42</sup> Matthew’s choice of the derogatory word *Χανααίτα*, itself an anachronistic imposition from an earlier period,<sup>43</sup> would have conjured up images of “Israel’s deeply-engrained fear of and revulsion toward Gentile ways,” thereby echoing the harsh manner in which both the Septuagint and other Second Temple–period Jewish literature described persons who stood outside of the people of Israel.<sup>44</sup> Thus both the Markan and Matthean authors place the encounter between Jesus and the Gentile woman—which in the biblical retellings centered around the question of whether Gentiles could be included in what had previously been an exclusively Jewish movement—just within the border of Roman Syria.

Writing from a similar locale, both the Homilist and Chrysostom reinscribe these first-century questions over “Jewish” and “Gentile” identity formation into their respective hermeneutical projects of identity formation. So just as the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* resituates an earlier first-

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<sup>40</sup> Mark 7:26. Regarding the term Ἕλληνίς, Joel Marcus notes, “Greek [in addition to Syrophoenician] may also mark the woman out as a Greek-speaker and thus perhaps as a member of the upper crust of Phoenician society” (*Mark 1–8*, The Anchor Bible: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 462). For a similar perspective, see Jennifer A. Glancy, “Jesus, the Syrophoenician Woman, and Other First Century Bodies,” *Biblical Interpretation* 18.4 (2010): 342–63, esp. 352.

<sup>41</sup> Matt 15:22.

<sup>42</sup> Mark 7:26. I have chosen to translate the Greek words τῷ γένει as “by birth” rather than “by race,” due to the different connotations associated with the word “race” today. See Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> For more information on when the Canaanites were prominent in the land of Israel, see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), esp. 541–44.

<sup>44</sup> With respect to the Septuagint’s negative portrayal of Canaanites, see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 544. With respect to other Second Temple–period Jewish literature, see T. Jud. 13.3; 14.6; and 17.1, which emphasize how Canaanite women, and Bathshua in particular, were a source of temptation for Israelite men; Jub. 14.7 and 14.18, which claim that God sanctioned the removal of the Canaanite people to make room for the Israelites; and Mart. Ascen. Isa. 2.5, which associates the Canaanites with an increase in witchcraft, magic, divination, and fornication.

century biblical conflict over identity formation into his third-century Syrian setting,<sup>45</sup> so too both the Homilist and Chrysostom reinterpret a first-century narrative, arising out of a similar geo-cultural context, with their own distinctive hermeneutics. What the Homilist and John Chrysostom do with this story, however, is an entirely different matter.

### The Homilist Encourages Jesus-Followers to Embrace the Law

The *Homilies*, which date to the early fourth century CE,<sup>46</sup> and most likely originate from a locale in or near the city of Antioch,<sup>47</sup> are a part of a much larger collection of Pseudo-Clementine literature that together narrate the conversion of Clement of Rome to Christianity, his catechesis under the apostle Peter, his struggles with the magician Simon Magus,<sup>48</sup> and ultimately his unexpected reunion with several members of his family whom he had not seen for years.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the history of research on this topic, scholars have consistently used this literature to better understand the category of “Jewish Christianity.” More recently, however, some have begun to question whether the *Homilies* can be employed with respect to the question of “Jewish believers in Jesus” at all.<sup>50</sup> Yet the Homilist’s exegesis of the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Gentile woman reveals that those responsible for the final redacted form of this text maintained a vested interest in remaining connected to the Jewish religious practice of their Lord.

My interest in the *Homilies* lies not only in unearthing what the final, redacted form has to say about the fourth-century author-redactors who wrote and compiled it, but also in the impact that the final redacted form was intended to have upon its readership. Two primary yet interrelated factors, however, complicate my study of this literature. First, the text’s authorship is uncertain. As Graham Stanton points out, the “complex corpora present literary-critical

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<sup>45</sup> Fonrobert, “The *Didascalia Apostolorum*,” 489–91.

<sup>46</sup> For more information on how past scholarship has placed the *Homilies* within fourth-century Syria, see notes 20 and 21 above.

<sup>47</sup> For recent scholarly debates on whether the *Homilies* derived from Antioch or Edessa, see note 21 above.

<sup>48</sup> Acts 8:9–24 provides the impetus for this lengthy chronicle.

<sup>49</sup> For an introduction to the history of research on this literature, see F. Stanley Jones, “The Pseudo-Clementines: A History of Research,” *SCe* 2 (1982): 1–33 and 63–96. For an updated history of research, on the *Recognitions* in particular, see Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, 17–27.

<sup>50</sup> Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 305.

problems of an almost insurmountable kind.”<sup>51</sup> Of the eight extant writings, the lengthy *Homilies* and *Recognitions* are clearly composite works. Both texts contain several redactional layers and later interpolations, making it difficult to know who wrote what part of the work and when particular pieces of the finalized version first arose.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, though the *Homilies* exist in Greek and the *Recognitions* in translated Latin, both likely derive from a common Greek *Grundschrift* that dates much earlier, again calling the text’s authorship into question. Second, the date of composition of the *Homilies* has also been heavily debated. Though early scholarship, under Baur’s influence, placed the *Homilies* and *Recognitions* firmly in the second century,<sup>53</sup> scholars today agree that both texts belong in the fourth century.<sup>54</sup> Because of these challenges, it is impossible to know whether the *Homilies* reflect the thought of one lone person or of an entire early Christian group, but the fact that they were preserved in different manuscripts and translated into different languages demonstrates that particular persons had a vested interest in preserving their content.<sup>55</sup> That is, the influence of the *Homilies* on a broader group of persons remains probable.

Framed within this context, the way that the Homilist reinterpreted the story of Jesus and this pagan woman can thus be compared constructively with

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<sup>51</sup> Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 305.

<sup>52</sup> The corpora of the Pseudo-Clementine literature also include two short introductory writings and three later dating epitomes. These texts are preserved in Arabic, Georgian, Armenian, Slavonic, and Ethiopic fragments, making the connections between them difficult to trace.

<sup>53</sup> For a challenge to the sharp divide between Petrine Christianity and Pauline Christianity, see Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 94–113.

<sup>54</sup> See Biggs, “Clementine Homilies,” 191–92 and 368–69; Waitz, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, 372; Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority*, 179–212; Stanton, “Jewish Christian Elements,” 307; Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter-history?,” 177–82; Bremmer, *Pseudo-Clementines*, 9–12; Fiano, “From ‘Why’ to ‘Why Not,’” 345; Zetterholm, “Alternative Visions of Judaism,” 133. Moreover, Karin Zetterholm’s forthcoming article, “Jesus-Oriented Visions of Judaism,” to appear in *Scripta Instituit Donneriani Aboensis* 27 (2016), which she kindly shared with me in pre-print form, also advocates for this position.

<sup>55</sup> As Stanton notes in “Jewish Christian Elements,” 307, the *Homilies* “are extant in Greek in two codices with a similar text: P (Parisinus) from the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries; O (Ottonobianus) from the 14<sup>th</sup> century . . . [and] a Syriac manuscript from Edessa which is dated to 411 contains parts of the *Homilies*.” For a further discussion of the reception history of the *Homilies* and its translation into Syriac, Arabic, and other languages, see Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ as Counter-history?,” 211–12.

how John Chrysostom reappropriated the same text, because the persons behind both interpretive streams sought to influence others through their exegesis.<sup>56</sup> In particular, when commenting on Jesus' interactions with this suffering Syro-Phoenician mother, the Homilist's earlier hermeneutics differ from that of Chrysostom's later interpretations in a number of ways.

There is among us a certain one, Justa, a Syro-Phoenician [Συροφαινίσις], by race a Canaanite [Χαναανίτις], whose daughter was oppressed by a grievous sickness [ἦς τὸ θυγάτριον ὑπὸ χαλεπῆς νόσου συνείχετο]. And she came to our Lord crying out and beseeching that he would heal her daughter. But He, being asked also by us, said, "It is not possible to heal the Gentiles [Οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἰᾶσθαι τὰ ἔθνη], who are like dogs [κυσὶν] on account of using various foods and practices, while the table in the kingdom has been assigned to the children of Israel [τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραήλ]." But she, hearing this, and begging to partake like a dog [κύων] of the crumbs, which fall from this table, having changed the very woman who she was [μεταθεμένη ὅπερ ἦν],<sup>57</sup> by living like the children of the kingdom [τῷ ὁμοίως διαιτᾶσθαι τοῖς τῆς βασιλείας υἱοῖς], she obtained healing for her daughter, as she asked. For she being a Gentile [ἔθνηκην οὖσαν], and remaining in this course of life

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<sup>56</sup> I have chosen to employ the word "pagan" instead of "Gentile" to describe the woman Jesus encountered in order to underscore that she was not merely a theologically neutral non-Jew, but rather a "pagan," that is, a person who worshipped false gods. My subsequent descriptions of this woman as a "pagan," a "Gentile," a "pagan Gentile," and a "Syro-Phoenician" reflect this point.

<sup>57</sup> The citation I have quoted above does not explicitly describe Justa as a Ἰουδαῖος. Rather, it merely claims that she changed who she was [μεταθεμένη ὅπερ ἦν] and that she took up a course of life [πολιτεῖαν] observant of the law [νόμιμον]. However, as I point out below, a bit later in the text, *Homilies* 13.7 explicitly states that Justa becomes a "proselyte of the Jews [Ἰουδαίους προσήλυτος]" and *Homilies* 11.16 suggests that even those from other tribes who practice the law can be described as Ἰουδαῖοι. Although not precisely the same, the Jewish historian Josephus relays a similar story in which a Gentile woman, namely Helena of Adiabene, ostensibly rejects the Gentile lifestyle and "converts" to what only later, in retrospect, has come to be labeled as "Judaism" (*Ant.* 20.17–95). Accordingly, Justa and Helena offer interesting test cases with respect to what was required for women to become "Jews [Ἰουδαῖοι]," since neither would have been required to undergo circumcision by law (cf. Gen 17:9–14; Lev 12:3).

[καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ αὐτῇ πολιτεία μένουσαν], he would not have healed her, at first, on account of it not being possible to heal her as a Gentile [διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐξεῖναι θεραπεύειν ὡς ἐθνικήν]. She, therefore, having taken up a course of life [πολιτεῖαν] observant of the law [νόμιμον] . . .<sup>58</sup>

The account here, unlike John's later interpretations, reads more like a harmonization of the narratives found in Mark and Matthew than a full commentary. In contrast to Chrysostom, for instance, who embraced the notion of authoritative written Scripture, the Homilist does not quote directly from the words of Jesus as preserved in those gospels.<sup>59</sup> Instead he provides his own "free retelling of the story."<sup>60</sup> Yet despite these differences, the Homilist's exegesis of this story is striking. For the first time in all of early Christian literature, the suffering pagan mother receives a name: Justa. The narrative conflates Mark's "Syrophenician" (Συροφονίκισσα)<sup>61</sup> and Matthew's "Canaanite" (Χανααναία)<sup>62</sup> to describe the woman's identity, but she clearly remains—at least initially—a non-Jew, a Gentile, a pagan who stands outside of the people of Israel. Moreover, though not explicitly stated in the context of this citation, the larger literary framework of the *Homilies* suggests that her daughter remains plagued by demon possession. Accordingly, she seeks Jesus' aid.

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<sup>58</sup> *Hom.* 2.19.1–2.20.1 The Greek text can be found in Bernhard Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen*, I: *Homilien*, GSC (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1969), referenced here at 42–43. Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the *Homilies* (labeled as *Hom.*) will come from this source. An English translation of the Homilies, along with other portions of the broader corpus of the Pseudo-Clementine literature, is available in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Clementine Homilies*, ANF 17 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1870). I have referenced this translation in making my own from the Greek text.

<sup>59</sup> Both the unusual quotations from Scripture and the strange sayings of Jesus found in the PsCl H have intrigued scholars for centuries. See Jones, "The Pseudo-Clementines," 63–69. Moreover, as Carlson, *Jewish-Christian Interpretation*, has more recently noted, "[w]hat dominates [the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*] are the recollections of the True Prophet's [i.e., Jesus'] words *as spoken*, not *as written*—that is, not as they appear in any one particular Gospel" (219). Indeed, the Homilist also does not quote directly from the Diatessaron, but seems—like some of the rabbis living near him—to have an inherent distrust for the notion of a written, canonized text altogether.

<sup>60</sup> L. L. Kline, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*. SBL Dissertation Series, 14 (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars' Press, 1975), 79.

<sup>61</sup> Mark 7:26.

<sup>62</sup> Matt 15:22.

Yet the way the Homilist narrates how the woman acquires the help she needs from Jesus only after she has become a Ἰουδαῖος is the most striking difference of all. According to the story, after Jesus informs her that he is not able to heal Gentiles, due to the foods they eat and the practices they engage in, the reader discovers that “she changed what she was [μεταθεμένη ὅπερ ἦν].”<sup>63</sup> The woman altered her very identity. A few lines later, the Homilist is more explicit: Jesus “would not have healed her, at first, on account of it not being possible to heal her as a Gentile [διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐξεῖναι θεραπεύειν ὡς ἐθνικὴν].”<sup>64</sup> Consequently, according to the Homilist, the only way for this pagan woman to obtain the gift of healing for her daughter was for her to cease being a Gentile. In fact, a bit later in the text, *Homilies* 13.7 states that she became a “proselyte of the Jews [Ἰουδαίους προσήλυτος].”<sup>65</sup>

To unpack the significance of this claim, I address two important, interrelated points with respect to how the Homilist constructs Jewishness. That is, how he conceives of a “Jew (Ἰουδαῖος),” especially since the Homilist’s perspective on this issue differs from other authors.<sup>66</sup> First, the Homilist does

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<sup>63</sup> *Hom.* 2.19.3 (Rehm, 43).

<sup>64</sup> *Hom.* 2.19.4 (Rehm, 43).

<sup>65</sup> *Hom.* 13.7.3 (Rehm, 196). Not only does Justa stop being a Gentile, but the storyline of the *Homilies* also presents the orphaned children whom she raises, namely Faustus and Faustinus (cf. *Hom.* 20.22.3), and Clement and Clement’s mother, Mattida, ceasing to be Gentiles as well.

<sup>66</sup> The way the fourth-century Homilist defines a Ἰουδαῖος differs quite radically from many other authors. In the first century CE, for instance, as Mark Nanos has recently argued, the apostle Paul, like many of his contemporaries, defined a “Jew” as “being born to parents who are Jews, being circumcised if male (on the eighth day of life),” and, ideally, behaving according to the standards that define that identity (Rom 2; 9–11; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 1:14–14; 2:15–16; Phil 3:4–6) (“Paul’s Non-Jews,” 27–28). For a similar perspective, see Skarsaune, “Jewish Believers,” 11–14. The focus on circumcision derives from texts such as Gen 17:9–14 and Lev 12:3, which establish the ritual on the eighth day as an important identity marker for Abraham and his male descendents (cf. Jub 15:26, which reifies this position). As a result, circumcision was also a primary concern among early Jesus followers, particularly in the city of Antioch where there was a mix of Jews and Gentiles, as confrontations over whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be fully included in the movement took place there (cf. Gal 2:11–14; 5:2–3, 11–12; 6:12–13; Acts 15: 1–2, 22–35). Starting in the second century BCE, however, there is evidence that some persons thought that circumcision later in life could enable non-Jewish males to become Jews (LXX Est 8:17; Josephus, *War* 2.454 [Metilius]; *Ant.* 20.38–47 [Izates]). See Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion. Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 67–89. Moreover,



not define Jews in terms of their ethnicity, but in terms of their law-abiding practice. Peter's remarks in *Homilies* 11.16, illustrate this point well.<sup>67</sup>

But some one will say perhaps, [even] some of the worshippers of God fall under such misfortunes [i.e. on account of the demons]. I say that this is impossible. For he is a worshipper of God, of whom I speak. He is really a worshipper of God, not one is only called [this], but one who really performs the commands of the law, which has been given to him. If someone acts impiously, he is not pious; in like manner, *if one who is of another tribe practices the law, he is a Jew; but the one who does not practice is a Greek* [ἐὰν ὁ ἀλλόφυλος τὸν νόμον πράξῃ, Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν, μὴ πράξας δὲ Ἕλληνα]. For the Jew [ὁ γὰρ Ἰουδαῖος] believes in God and keeps the law [τὸν νόμον]. . . . But the one who does not keep the law, it is clear that he is a deserter through not believing God; and thus is no Jew [οὐκ Ἰουδαῖος], but a sinner [ἁμαρτωλός].<sup>68</sup>

For the Homilist, then, Jews can be considered Greeks if they fail to follow God's preordained universal law. Likewise, those from other tribes can be considered Jews if they follow God's preordained universal law. In other words, the Homilist defines Jews solely in terms of their law observance.

Second, the Homilist defines the "law" and "law-abiding practice" not as referring to the mosaic Torah, nor as something akin to what we find in the Mishnah or later rabbinic writings, nor even, like the third-century Syrian author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, as a sort of biblical law that can be

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as Maren Niehoff has pointed out, there "have always been male Jews who were not circumcised," (cf. Philo, *Migr.* 89–93), and during the Second Temple period this phenomenon "appears to have increased as a result of acculturation to Hellenism" ("Circumcision as a Marker of Identity: Philo, Origen, and the Rabbis on Gen 17:1–14," *JSQ* 10 [2003]: 89–123, esp. 89). So views on the importance of circumcision were not monolithic. In fact, by the third century CE, although the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* employs Acts 15 and the so-called Apostolic Council as the guiding framework for his discussion of identity, he downplays the significance of circumcision, at least in terms of conflict within his community, and places more emphasis on having Jewish converts abstain from food practices, ritual immersion, and Shabbat observance instead. See Fonrobert, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*, 487–91.

<sup>67</sup> See Zetterholm, "Alternate Visions of Judaism," 136, for a similar perspective on this text.

<sup>68</sup> *Hom.* 11.16.2–4 (Rehm, 162).

distilled down to the Ten Commandments.<sup>69</sup> Rather, the Homilist describes the law as a perpetual and preordained universal entity that God gave to all persons, which can neither be “abrogated by enemies, nor is vitiated by any impious one, nor is concealed in any place, but can be read by all.”<sup>70</sup> This universal law covers all persons and enables them to connect with God. Moreover, the consequences of either following or failing to follow this universal law are as follows: If humans follow God’s universal law, then the demons will have no power over them. If humans, however, of their own accord “sacrifice and pour libations, and partake of [the demon’s] table, or accomplish something other that they ought not, or shed blood, or taste dead flesh, or fill themselves with that which is left behind of beasts, or that which is cut, or that which is strangled, or some other thing that is unclean,”<sup>71</sup> then God will give permission to the demons to inflict suffering upon them. Given these consequences, it seems that part of what the Homilist has in mind in terms of this “universal law” is something akin to what we find in the so-called Apostolic Council of Acts 15, wherein Gentiles are requested to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from the meat of strangled animals, and from blood. Since the storyline of the *Homilies* presents pagans as continuing to persist in these behaviors, this backdrop helps to explain why the Homilist portrays them—like the daughter of the woman in our narrative at hand—as susceptible to the influence of demons, whereas the Jews are impervious to their advances.<sup>72</sup>

The underlying difference between Jews and pagan Gentiles, then, is their knowledge of God’s *universal* law and the attendant consequence of whether or not they are able to follow it. Since the instruction of Moses points Jews toward God’s universal law, they can avoid activities that enable the demons to enter. By contrast, pagans, without the benefit of the instruction of Moses, remain ignorant of these preordained universal laws. As a result, they engage in destructive behavior by partaking of meat offered to idols and

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<sup>69</sup> For more information about how the third-century Syrian author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* distinguishes between the first law, constituted by something akin to the Ten Commandments, and the laws or burdens of the second legislation, constituted by something akin to the Mishnah, or even the Mishnah itself, see Fonrobert, “The *Didascalia Apostolorum*,” 502–506. Accordingly, though the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the Homilist are both interested in identity formation, and both focus on issues of law-abiding praxis, they define what constitutes the law quite differently.

<sup>70</sup> *Hom.* 8.10.3–4 (Rehm, 125–26).

<sup>71</sup> *Hom.* 8.19.1–2 (Rehm, 129). This translation has been slightly altered to fit with the syntax and grammar of my sentence.

<sup>72</sup> *Hom.* 9.16.1 (Rehm, 138) states that the demons “do not appear to the Jews.”

participating in other illicit activities. As a consequence of these actions, they have become afflicted “by the prince of evil,”<sup>73</sup> and admit demons into their bodies “through the food having been given to them.”<sup>74</sup> Much of the storyline of the *Homilies* presents them learning through the exhortations of the apostle Peter how they are to live in order to avoid the influence of demonic powers. Peter instructs them to receive baptism for the remission of sins,<sup>75</sup> to follow the instructions of Jesus, to cease living like Gentiles,<sup>76</sup> and to begin living like the Jews by following God’s universal law. Yet, because the Homilist presents God’s law as a *universal* law—and not the *Mosaic* Law per se—these pagans need not learn about it through the instruction of Moses. They can gain their own knowledge of God’s law through the instruction of their own teacher—Jesus—instead.

Both Moses and Jesus function as pedagogues for the Homilist, instructing Jews and Gentiles in how they are to follow God’s universal law: the Jews gain knowledge of God’s universal law through Moses and the Gentiles have the ability to acquire the essentials of that same law through Jesus.<sup>77</sup> That is, both Moses and Jesus provide the *same* teaching. For this reason,

Jesus is hidden from the Hebrews,<sup>78</sup> who have taken the  
teacher Moses, and Moses is hidden away from those who

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<sup>73</sup> *Hom.* 7.6.3 (Rehm 119).

<sup>74</sup> *Hom.* 9.9.2 (Rehm, 135).

<sup>75</sup> *Hom.* 9.19.4–5 (Rehm, 139–40).

<sup>76</sup> *Hom.* 11.16.3 (Rehm, 162).

<sup>77</sup> As Karin Zetterholm has recently observed, “Moses and Jesus are presented as two teachers of the same truth to two different peoples, Moses for Jews and Jesus for non-Jews (*Rec.* 4.5; *Hom.* 8.5)” (“Alternative Visions of Judaism,” 135). Throughout this piece, Zetterholm appears to define Jews and non-Jews vis-à-vis their ethnicity (although note her further comments on this topic with respect to *Hom.* 11.6 on pages 136–37). By contrast, I think that the Homilist intentionally redefines what it means to be a Jew (Ἰουδαῖος) based on an individual person’s law-abiding praxis. Thus, there are some Jews, by ethnicity, who the Homilist would no longer consider to be Ἰουδαῖοι. Likewise, there are some non-Jews, by ethnicity, who the Homilist would consider to be Ἰουδαῖοι. Practice, not ethnicity, is the primary determining factor. For more information, see my discussion of *Hom.* 11.16 above.

<sup>78</sup> The word used here is the plural of ἑβραῖος (i.e., ἑβραίων) and not the plural of Ἰουδαῖος. By employing ἑβραίων, the Homilist appears to be making an intentional distinction between a person who is a Jew by ethnicity, or in a genealogical sense—and thus described as a ἑβραῖος—and a person who is a Jew by faithful law observance—and thus

have believed in Jesus. For, *there being one teaching by both* [μίας γὰρ δι' ἀμφοτέρων διδασκαλίας οὔσης], God accepts the one who has believed either of these. But to believe in a teacher is for the sake of doing the things spoken by God.<sup>79</sup>

Because the Homilist portrays Moses and Jesus as pedagogical—and not divine—figures,<sup>80</sup> their role is to guide the Jews and Gentiles, respectively, by instructing them in how they are to live in accordance with God's law. Particularly striking in the quotation above is the comment that God will accept the one who has believed either of these, which suggests that Moses and Jesus carry equal value in the eyes of the Homilist. With respect to this theme, the Homilist even asserts, “There would have been no need of Moses, or of the coming of Jesus, if of themselves [i.e., if the Jews and Gentiles on their own] they would have perceived what is reasonable.”<sup>81</sup> Yet, since neither the Jews nor the pagan Gentiles understood how to follow God's law on their own, God provided them with Moses and Jesus, respectively, to teach them how to live.

Because the Jews benefited from Moses' instruction, they have had a great advantage over pagan Gentiles. Through Moses' teachings, Jews have been pointed in the direction of God's universal law; consequently, they have not been affected by demons. In contrast, pagans have been at a great disadvantage. Because they had no teacher to instruct them in God's universal law, they have been afflicted by demons. The coming of Jesus affords them a second chance. Like the Jews who followed the pedagogical instructions of Moses before them, the teachings of Jesus enable them to follow God's universal law. In this manner, they can cease being Gentiles, by abstaining from foods that have been sacrificed to idols. Once they have learned to do this, they will begin to follow God's law.

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called a Ἰουδαῖος. That is, the Homilist describes Jews by ethnicity as Hebrews (Ἑβραίων), and Jews by faithful law observance as Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι).

<sup>79</sup> *Hom.* 8.6.1–3 (Rehm, 124).

<sup>80</sup> The ubiquitous appellations of “teacher” or “prophet of truth,” assigned to Jesus and Moses respectively throughout the *Homilies*, only serve to underscore this point. For instance, the Homilist frequently refers to Jesus as a “teacher” or a “prophet” of truth (cf. *Hom.* 2.3, 8, 12; 3.15; 7.6; 8.22; 12.29; 15.7; 19.2; and 20.19). Likewise, the Homilist refers to both Jesus and Moses as “teachers of truth (διδασκάλους ἀληθείας)” (cf. *Hom.* 8.5.3 [Rehm, 124]).

<sup>81</sup> *Hom.* 8.5.4 (Rehm, 124).

The difficulty with this assertion is that once the Gentiles begin to follow God's law—because of their law-abiding practice—they actually become “Jews,” too.<sup>82</sup>

The way the Homilist reinterprets how the Roman Syrian woman ultimately acquires Jesus' help on behalf of her afflicted daughter only after she becomes a “Jew” demonstrates how she has learned to do just that. If she had continued “being a Gentile [ἔθνικὴν οὖσαν],” if she had remained “in this course of life [τῇ αὐτῇ πολιτεία μένουσαν]” by eating of “various foods” sacrificed to idols and engaging in various illicit “practices,”<sup>83</sup> both she and her daughter would have continued to be afflicted by the torments of the demons. But because she learned to follow Jesus' instructions, because she took up “a course of life [πολιτεία] observant of the law [νόμιμον],” Jesus agreed to heal her daughter.<sup>84</sup> In effect, she receives Jesus' aid only after she had given up her former lifestyle, had begun to follow God's law, and thus, through this law-abiding practice, had come to be a “Jew (Ἰουδαῖος).” The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, then, provide a poignant example of the religious diversity present in early fourth-century Roman Syria, revealing that not all Jesus-followers were attempting to distance their present religious experience from the fact that their Lord, Jesus, was Jewish. For the Homilist, the Syrophoenician woman receives Jesus' aid not because of her faith *in* Jesus, but because she follows the pedagogical example *of* Jesus. That is, she receives Jesus' aid because she learns to follow God's law, thereby becoming a “Jew” herself.

Preaching in a similar locale about a half century later, John Chrysostom interprets the same narrative in a manner that distances the “Christian” identity of his Antiochene congregations from the fact that their founder, Jesus, was a Jew. Although at this point it seems too far of a stretch to suggest that John's well-known anti-Judaizing rhetoric arose in direct response to the success of the Homilist in fostering a group of Ἰουδαῖοι for whom both Moses and Jesus mattered, what is clear is that John had to work hard to construct a “Christian” identity for his congregants that was disassociated from the law-abiding praxis of their Lord, Jesus. Thus, within the broader Roman Syrian milieu and within John's Antiochene congregations in particular, a lack of clarity persisted—beyond Ignatius' second-century rhetoric and beyond the *Didascalia Apostolorum*'s third-century claims—regarding what was proper orthodoxy and orthopraxy for followers of Jesus. If this wasn't the case, then why

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<sup>82</sup> For my discussion of how Gentiles can become Ἰουδαῖοι, see my analysis of *Homilies* 2.19–20; 8.6; 11.16; as well as notes 57 and 77 above.

<sup>83</sup> *Hom.* 2.19.2–4 (Rehm, 42–43).

<sup>84</sup> *Hom.* 2.20.1 (Rehm, 43).

would Chrysostom, toward the end of the fourth century CE, still have reacted so vehemently against it?

### **Chrysostom's Hermeneutics Construct "Christian" Identity Exclusive of "Jews"**

When confronted with the story of Jesus' harsh cruelty directed toward a suffering Gentile mother, John Chrysostom, himself a Gentile—yet newly bolstered by Roman imperial power—addressed it. Yet his radical reshaping of the narrative, especially in light of what the Homilist had done with the same story, makes the biblical accounts found in Matthew and Mark nearly unrecognizable. This remarkable shift in focus arises because in the post-Constantinian era, John found himself operating under entirely new circumstances. By the time that John preaches about this story in various congregational settings throughout fourth-century Antioch,<sup>85</sup> the Jesus movement in the city was no longer composed of a small number of mixed Jews and Gentiles vying for survival, but instead was constituted by much larger, predominantly Gentile groups, many of which were vested with Roman imperial power.<sup>86</sup> In particular, John's twelve years as priest and preacher in Antioch, spanning from 386 to 398 CE, proved fortuitous in that they corresponded with

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<sup>85</sup> The sermons that I have selected for this study almost certainly derive from Chrysostom's time in Antioch. For an important study that has reassessed the provenance of Chrysostom's sermons, scrutinizing the standards by which past scholarship has placed them in either Antioch or Constantinople, see Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom—Provenance. Reshaping the Foundations*, Oriental Christiana Analecta 273 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005). For an earlier study of hers that pushed scholars to attend more carefully to the specific *locales* in which he preached, see "John Chrysostom and His Audiences: Distinguishing Different Congregations at Antioch and Constantinople," *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997): 70–75. Regarding the location of John's *Adversus Iudaeos* series, scholars consistently place these sermons in Antioch in the years 386–387 CE. For a recent scholar who has argued that Chrysostom preached his homilies on Matthew and John in Antioch in the years 390–391, see Garroway, "The Law-Observant Lord," 594.

<sup>86</sup> The story of how Christianity ultimately became vested with Roman imperial power is too lengthy to recount here, but as Ellen Muehlberger notes, by 380 CE, "Christians had received imperial support, in varying forms, for much of the previous six decades. Though that support was fickle—different emperors had championed one or another faction of Christians, to the disdain of the disfavored, and there was a severe interruption in that support during the reign of Julian . . . the fact that emperors were aligning themselves and their resources with any Christians at all was a significant change in policy" ("Salvage: Macrina and the Christian Project of Cultural Reclamation," *CH* 81.2 [2012]: 279).

a recent switch of Roman imperial support from the Homoian branch of Christianity in the city to one of the pro-Nicene branches of Christianity with which John had aligned himself from the beginning.<sup>87</sup> What this meant for John, practically speaking, is that as he sought to shape the identity of those who listened to him through his interpretation of various passages from Scripture, his position in the pulpit would have received additional backing by the authority of his imperial patrons.

In each of the three main instances that John refers to the story of Jesus' encounter with the pagan woman—in one of his sermons on the Gospel of Matthew, in one of his sermons on the Gospel of John, and in his first sermon in the *Adversus Iudaeos* series—John employs the narrative to construct a new, “Christian” identity for his congregants. But in doing so, he makes Jesus unlike, or foreign to, his entire first-century Judean/Jewish context. For instance, in one of his homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, Chrysostom allegorizes the text. To do so, he begins by lauding the woman, noting “how worthy this woman is of every kindness [“Ὅρα γοῦν πῶς ἐστὶν εὐεργεσίας ἀπάσης ἀξία ἡ γυνή],” but then he transforms the story into something entirely new.<sup>88</sup> For him the story is no longer about a Jewish Jesus encountering a Gentile woman, but becomes radically reshaped.

. . . when Christ [ὁ Χριστός] came out [ἐξῆλθεν] of Judea, then the church [ἡ Ἐκκλησία] had courage to approach him, and she also came out [ἐξελθοῦσα] from her borders [ὁρίων]. For it is said, “Forget your people and your father’s house [ἐπιλάθου . . . τοῦ λαοῦ σου, καὶ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου].” For both Christ came out of his borders [γὰρ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθε], and the woman out of her borders [καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτῆς], and so they were able to join together [καὶ οὕτως ἠδυνήθησαν

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<sup>87</sup> As Sandwell has underscored, there were at least three active versions of Christianity within the city of Antioch during John Chrysostom’s lifetime: A Homoian branch and two pro-Nicene branches. John grew up in Antioch, but when he was baptized by Bishop Meletius, later became a deacon under him in 381, and was appointed presbyter by his successor Flavian, he clearly aligned himself with *that* particular branch of pro-Nicene Christianity within the city (*Religious Identity*, 45–46). See also Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda,” 165.

<sup>88</sup> Chrysostom, *hom. in Mt.* 52.1.17–18 (PG 58:519). English translations of ancient sources are my own. Here and elsewhere I have used the work of Migne when a critical edition of the Greek text has not been created.

συντυχεῖν ἀλλήλοις]: thus he said, “Behold a Canaanite woman coming out of her borders.”<sup>89</sup>

In particular, through an allusion to the Septuagint’s rendition of Ps 45:10, “forget your people and your father’s house,”<sup>90</sup> John suggests that Christ abandoned one of the defining features that made him Jewish, namely his people, and the woman left behind her identity as well. Their combined actions enabled them to join together (συντυχεῖν ἀλλήλοις) in order to inaugurate the foundation of a new joint identity.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, by making dual references to Christ coming out (ἐξῆλθεν) of Judea, and the woman coming out (ἐξελθοῦσα) of her homeland, and to Christ coming out of his borders (ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτοῦ), and the woman coming out of hers (ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτῆς), John suggests that the two entered into a new liminal space together, a place where the church could approach Jesus, unassociated with their prior respective homelands, thus inaugurating something new.

These allusions reveal a subtle yet significant epistemic shift in how John sought to construct “Christian” identity for the persons who composed his Antiochene congregations, which, in contradistinction to the Homilist, was disassociated from any prior appreciation for how their founder, Jesus, was a Jew. In particular, since these hermeneutical reappropriations were not a part of an esoteric piece of literature but rather embedded directly by John into one of his sermons, whose specific purpose was to shape the behavior of his congregations, they perform a distinct pedagogical function. The actions that both Jesus and the woman took in leaving behind their previous identities become a paradigm for how identity formation ought to proceed within his congregations. Rather than forming social cohesion by protecting the previously established ethnic lines of his congregants, or by suggesting that they observe similar practices, John suggests that they “forget” or disassociate themselves from their previous identities in order to create a new collective identity, which renders them acceptable for inclusion in the church instead. The encounter between Jesus and the woman thus functions as a heuristic tool to instantiate a new, “Christian” identity for John’s congregants.

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<sup>89</sup> Chrysostom, *hom. in Mt.* 52.1.23–28 (PG 59:519).

<sup>90</sup> Note that this language also resonates with the Septuagint’s version of Gen 12:1, wherein Abram, as the first “convert” pre-circumcision, is instructed to ἐξελθε ἐκ τῆς γῆς σου καὶ ἐκ τῆς συγγενείας σου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς σου.

<sup>91</sup> Chrysostom, *hom. in Mt.* 52.1.28 (PG 59:519).



Another way that John radically reinterprets the narrative is to suggest that a role reversal had occurred between “Jews” and “Gentiles,” precisely because the latter, and not the former, had come to believe in Jesus. In constructing “Christianity” in this manner, in opposition to what, in hindsight, we consider “Judaism,” John also, quite distinctly from the Homilist, disassociated Jews from their history, language, and land, in order to maintain the de-ethnicized parallel to Christianity.<sup>92</sup> This construction reoccurred frequently within the predominantly Gentile church. By way of example, Steve Mason has argued that in setting up “Christianity” as a religion in opposition to “Judaism,” the church father Tertullian stripped away “all that was different in Judean culture—its position among ancient peoples, ancestral traditions, laws & customs, constitution, aristocracy, priesthood, philosophical schools” in order to abstract “only an impoverished belief system.”<sup>93</sup> Likewise, as Daniel Boyarin has suggested, “Christianity . . . needed religious difference—Judaism—to be its other, the religion that was false,” in order to establish itself as its own entity.<sup>94</sup> The work of both of these scholars demonstrates that part of the intellectual project of these church fathers was to construct both “Judaism” and “Christianity” in terms of the ideological beliefs of their adherents instead of in terms of their shared ethnicity or shared practices.

Here I am suggesting that this same focus on ideological beliefs emerges in the way that John Chrysostom interpreted the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Gentile woman. For instance, in one of his homilies on the Gospel of John, when Chrysostom alludes to details of the encounter between Jesus and this woman, he remarks:

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<sup>92</sup> This a striking development, especially in light of the fact that ancient gods were ethnic. For a discussion of how the apostle Paul continued to retain the ethnic boundaries of Jews and Gentiles within the communities that he established, see Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 232–52.

<sup>93</sup> Mason, “Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 473.

<sup>94</sup> Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity,” 20. See also his seminal article on this topic: “Semantic Differences; or ‘Judaism’/‘Christianity,’” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 65–85.

For it is indeed worthy of alarm, how they<sup>95</sup> who were educated in the prophetic books and heard Moses daily and the other prophets thereafter, who, besides, beheld Christ daily working miracles for them and speaking to them alone, who neither during that time allowed his disciples to depart into the way of the Gentiles [εις ὁδὸν ἐθνῶν] or to enter into a city of Samaritans [πόλιν Σαμαρειτῶν], nor did so himself [μήτε αὐτὸν τοῦτο ποιοῦντα], but who said up and down [i.e. everywhere], to be sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [πρὸς τὰ πρόβατα ἀπεστάλθαι τὰ ἀπολωλῶτα οἴκου Ἰσραήλ], who all the same had the benefit of the signs and who daily heard the prophets: yet once for all they made themselves so blind and dumb, as by the power of influence of none of these things to be brought to faith in Christ. While they of the Gentiles [Οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐθνῶν], who had enjoyed none of these things, who had never heard the divine oracles, not even, as one might say, so much as in a dream, but ever moving in the myths of the madmen (for this is the philosophy of heathens) . . . [believed].<sup>96</sup>

Here Chrysostom creates a sharp dichotomy between pagan Gentiles and “Jews.” The “Jews,” according to Chrysostom, occupied a privileged position in the family of God; God had given them prophetic Scripture, the words of Moses, and even Jesus himself, who like them was Jewish. All of this shared patrimony, he argues, ought to have caused them to believe in Jesus. Indeed, even Jesus himself, Chrysostom notes, specifically instructed his disciples not to go to the

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<sup>95</sup> This excerpt derives from a part of John’s sermon that addresses the phrase Εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθε, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ περιέλαβον. The specific referent of “they” is not provided here. In the broader context of the sermon, however, John clarifies the referent of “they” in two main places. First, he writes that “Εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθε” refers to “ἰδίους Ἰουδαίους λέγων νῦν, ὡς λαὸν περιούσιον, ἣ καὶ πάντας δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὡς αὐτοῦ γεγενημένους,” and second he suggests that this phrase describes οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα πάλιν, ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῇ τῶν πολλῶν δυσανασετῶν ἀγνωμοσύνη. So, although the primary referent of “they” is chiefly those who, like Jesus, were ethnically Jewish, in the context of the sermon, Chrysostom’s “they” is expansive enough to also refer to the “stupid many” who have chosen to engage in the sorts of practices that are typically associated with Jewish identity. That is to say, Chrysostom’s “they” could refer not only to ethnic Jews, but to the sort of Ἰουδαῖοι that the Homilist sought to inculcate with his words.

<sup>96</sup> Chrysostom, *hom. in Jo.* 9.1.48–68 (PG 59:69–70).

Gentiles or to the Samaritans, because his mission was exclusively directed to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”<sup>97</sup> Yet their obtuse nature had obscured their ability to believe in Jesus. By contrast the Gentiles, despite having none of these aids along the way, came to believe. This role reversal between Jews and Gentiles enables Chrysostom to craft a version of these two groups based primarily upon their ideological belief systems. While he defines the former by its lack of belief in Jesus, the latter gains standing by its faith in him. For Chrysostom, the “Jews” and the “Christians” have become two distinct religious groups. Consequently, what I am suggesting here is that though in reality there is much in common between what would later become known as Judaism and Christianity, since both religions emerged out of the same cultural milieu of Second Temple Judaism,<sup>98</sup> through his reinterpretation of Jesus’ encounter with this pagan woman, Chrysostom constructs “Judaism” and “Christianity” as distinct binary opposites, defined in relation to their respective beliefs about Jesus.<sup>99</sup>

In recent years, a highly charged debate has occurred among specialists on late antique Christianity that questions whether early Christian discourse about Jews reflects mere *rhetoric*, which, as Andrew Jacobs points out, would “deprive it of any reliable facticity,” or *reality*, which would “signify that

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<sup>97</sup> Chrysostom, *hom. in Jo.* 9.1.58–59 (PG 59:70).

<sup>98</sup> For a clear yet concise articulation of Christianity’s indebtedness to Judaism, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), xiii, final paragraph.

<sup>99</sup> The parallel growth of Judaism and Christianity as rival, sibling religions in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE was first popularized in the work of James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991). Yet subsequent scholars have demonstrated that inherent methodological flaws and theological biases render this model insufficient, causing many to overlook the remarkable fluidity between these two developing religions long after their so-called parting. See Judith Lieu, “The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–19; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); idem, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Annette Y. Reed and Adam H. Becker, “Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions,” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 1–33; Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For a helpful review essay on scholarly critiques of this model, see Megan H. Williams, “No More Clever Titles: Observations on Some Recent Studies of Jewish-Christian Relations in the Roman World,” *JQR* 99.1 (2009): 37–55.

historians can safely use this material as evidence to reconstruct the ancient past.”<sup>100</sup> Early scholars aligned themselves rigidly on one side or the other,<sup>101</sup> but the work of scholars such as Brakke, Shepardson, and Jacobs presents a more nuanced approach.<sup>102</sup> The work of all of these scholars moves beyond the mere-rhetoric-versus-reality debate, asking instead how early Christian discourse about the Jews helped to construct a new identity for early Christians. Their scholarship does not deny the presence of real Jews living in the diverse religious landscape of late antiquity, but it suggests that early Christian language about Jews says more about how early Christians sought to define both their “orthopraxy” and “orthodoxy” than it does about the Jews themselves.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Andrew Jacobs, *The Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 200.

<sup>101</sup> Jacobs provides an excellent survey of the history of research on this topic, which traces how the pendulum has swung back and forth from Adolf von Harnack’s position at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which stated that early Christian rhetoric said nothing about real Jewish-Christian interactions, to Marcel Simon’s research after World War II, which stressed the opposite, to Miriam Taylor’s 1995 monograph, which again emphasized the rhetorical nature of these works. See Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*, 200–209. For similar sketches, focusing on this debate’s relevance for the question of ancient Jewish-Christian relations and on the *contra Iudaeos* tradition in particular, see Paget, *Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians*, 18–20; and Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, xv–xviii.

<sup>102</sup> In his analysis of the anti-Jewish rhetoric present in Athanasius’ *Festal Letters*, David Brakke acknowledges that while “contemporary Jewish Passover practices may indeed lie behind Athanasius’ anti-Jewish rhetoric,” this influence is, at best, only indirect. Instead, for Brakke, Athanasius merely employs the term *Jew* as a rhetorical device to construct the identity of his opponents in order to consolidate his own power and to universalize the form of Christianity that he is promoting (David Brakke, “Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria,” *J ECS* 9.4 [2001]: 466). For a similar perspective with respect to John Chrysostom’s rhetoric, see Christine Shepardson, “Controlling Contested Places: John Chrysostom’s *Adversus Iudaeos Homilies* and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy,” *J ECS* 15.4 (2007): 483–516, esp. 516; and Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*, who argues that early Christian language was in “itself a site for the production of reality” (204) which “instantiated and elaborated a new mode of Christian identity, one that was explicitly and unapologetically imperial” (12). For a foreshadowing of this perspective, see Andrew S. Jacobs, “The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity,” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, 95–118. See also Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

<sup>103</sup> Note, however, that in her most recent work Christine Shepardson intentionally seeks to “revisit the evidence for Jews in fourth-century Antioch between the extremes of John

My analysis of how John Chrysostom reappropriated the story of Jesus' interactions with a suffering pagan mother reveals a similar trend; namely, in his homilies John employs the narrative as a *rhetorical* means to construct the identity of his Christian communities. In making this claim I am not suggesting that there were not real Jews living in the diverse religious landscape of fourth-century Antioch. Far from it! For, as Christine Shepardson has recently argued,<sup>104</sup> if we look more closely behind Chrysostom's official rhetoric, especially in light of the Homilist's work about a half century earlier, we can glimpse, albeit only slightly, something of the way in which Jewish and Christian identity formation was playing out in the Syrian context, extending beyond traditional ethnic boundaries. Indeed, this is particularly true when we consider that the Homilist labels everyone to whom he writes, whether a follower of Jesus or of Moses, as a *Ἰουδαίος* (i.e. a Jew) if they followed God's universal law. In contradistinction to the Homilist, John's interpretations of this narrative are not interested in the question of how Jesus' background as a Jew affected his treatment of a distraught Gentile woman per se. Instead, he reshapes the story to construct a form of "Judaism," composed of persons who had failed to believe in Jesus, in order to solidify the new, "Christian" identity of the various congregations under his purview. Yet, in the process of reinterpreting a story that originally stressed Jesus' Jewishness to emphasize how "Christianity" had superseded "Judaism," John distances his burgeoning and predominantly Gentile Christian communities from the Jewish ethnicity and practices of their Lord.

Nowhere is this role reversal between Jews and pagan Gentiles more readily apparent than in John's *Adversus Judaeos* series.<sup>105</sup> In the year 386 CE, John delivered a homily to his congregation in Antioch, which ostensibly included persons attending both the synagogue and the church. Here, he strives to snuff out this tendency by carefully crafting the words in his sermon into a series of four chiasms.<sup>106</sup> The final one climactically concludes the point by referring directly to the narrative of Jesus' encounter with the pagan woman.

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Chrysostom's polemic and rabbinic propaganda," in order to unearth the contemporary practices of fourth-century Antiochene Jews ("Between Polemic and Propaganda," 149).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> For how Chrysostom's rhetoric helped to control the religious geography of late antique Antioch, see Shepardson, "Controlling Contested Places," 483–516.

<sup>106</sup> In the first chiasm John alludes to Mal 4:2, a text that describes how only the righteous within Israel will receive salvation, but he reappropriates this argument into an indictment against the Jews. In the second, John alludes to Rom 11:16–17, but instead of

1: The Jews [they (κακέϊνοι)] had the sun of justice rise for them in the morning, but they spurned its rays (A). Now they sit in darkness [σκότῳ] (B). We [ἡμεῖς] who were brought up in darkness [σκότῳ] (B<sup>1</sup>) drew the light to ourselves and escaped the gloom of wandering. (A<sup>1</sup>).

2: The Jews [they (Ἐκεῖνοι)] were branches of the holy root [τῆς ῥίζης τῆς ἀγίας] (A), but were broken off (B). We [ἡμεῖς] were not a part of the root [τῆς ῥίζης] (A<sup>1</sup>), but produced fruits of piety (B<sup>1</sup>).

3: They [Ἐκεῖνοι] read the prophets [προφήτας] from an early age (A), but crucified the one whom the prophets foretold [τὸν προφητευθέντα] (B). We [ἡμεῖς] did not hear the divine oracles (A<sup>1</sup>), but worship the one whom the prophets foretold [τὸν προφητευθέντα] (B<sup>1</sup>) . . .

4: They [Κακέϊνοι] were called to *adoption as sons* [υιοθεσίαν] (A), but were denigrated to the kinship of *dogs* [κυνῶν] (B). We [ἡμεῖς] who were *dogs* [κύνες] gained strength through the grace of God to put away our former irrationality (B<sup>1</sup>) to rise to the honor of *sons* [υιῶν] (A<sup>1</sup>).<sup>107</sup>

In the Matthean telling of the story, Jesus likened this suffering Gentile mother to a dog, incontrovertibly stating that his mission was directed toward his people.<sup>108</sup> But Chrysostom tacitly reverses the narrative's original claims. The "Jews" have been denigrated to *dogs*, while those in his congregation have been elevated to *sons*. Through this artful literary arrangement, John vividly depicts a role reversal that has occurred between "Jews" and "Gentiles" with respect to their place in the kingdom of God.<sup>109</sup> Chrysostom, in attempting to construct this "Christian" identity for members of his congregation, interprets the narrative in a manner that is diametrically opposed to that of the Homilist.

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considering the historical context of Paul's letter or Paul's Jewishness, Chrysostom employs the text to construct a role reversal between Jews and Christians in God's family.

<sup>107</sup> Chrysostom, *Jud.* 1.2.5–21 (PG 48:845).

<sup>108</sup> Matt 15:26–27 (cf. Mark 7:27–28).

<sup>109</sup> Chrysostom, *Jud.* 1.2.14 (PG 48:845).

Rather than encouraging his listeners to become Ἰουδαῖοι as the Homilist had done, he distances his church from the Jewish identity of their very founder, Jesus.

It is impossible to know if John's harsh rhetoric against "Jews" arose in direct response to the sort of persons that the Homilist sought to foster with his work, but John does exhibit intentionality in constructing a new, "Christian" identity for his congregants that was disassociated from any prior or current inclination toward a "Jewish" identity. Although done by different means, this is similar to the calculated efforts that I underscored earlier from the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* in the third century, from Ignatius in the second, and even, to a more limited extent, from the Matthean and Markan authors in the first. Chrysostom's attempts to disassociate "Christian" identity from "Jewish" identity in his Antiochene congregations was not an isolated endeavor. Rather, within the specific locale of Roman Syria it constituted part of a long and convoluted process, re-inscribed through different means, many times over, in the first several centuries of the Common Era. Thus, it should come as no surprise that even sixty years after the Homilist composed his work, John remained familiar with the exegetical arguments that the Homilist sought to promote: either because he knew of actual Jesus followers who also engaged in the sorts of Jewish law observance that the Homilist had advocated, or because he had encountered the types of hermeneutical arguments the Homilist had promoted through different means. Given the preponderance of evidence from this particular locale, perhaps it is time to take a hard look at our sources and ask whether what has long been seen as the anomalous "Jewish Christians" might, in fact, have been the norm instead.

### **Concluding Remarks: The Liminal Boundaries of Judaism and Christianity in Fourth-Century Roman Syria**

Much of our literary evidence from antiquity arises from the winners in the early battles for Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy—such as John Chrysostom—but by contrasting Chrysostom's harsh "anti-Jewish" rhetoric with evidence from Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, we gain a glimpse, albeit only slant, of something else. Having already surveyed how Chrysostom's later dating hermeneutics differ from the Homilist's earlier interpretations of the same story, I can now turn to address how evidence from both authors better informs discussions of the category of "Jewish Christians," at least within fourth-century Roman Syria. Specifically, I focus on how the final redacted form of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, especially in contradistinction to Chrysostom's later sermons, offers insight into how certain persons who self-identified as Jews, living in fourth-

century Syria, expressed their faith in Jesus.<sup>110</sup> Underscoring the significance of this claim are two particular ways in which the Homilist attempted to straddle elements of what now, only in hindsight, persons identify as “Judaism” and “Christianity.” After unpacking those, I conclude with a few brief remarks on what this might say about the Homilist’s intended audience and whether such persons persisted within the region, even as late as Chrysostom’s works.

First, in contradistinction to John Chrysostom’s later homilies to his Antiochene congregations, the Homilist’s earlier hermeneutics deriving from a similar locale do not attempt to construct his readers’ identity by emphasizing their shared ideological beliefs *about* Jesus; rather, they encourage them to follow the pedagogical example *of* Jesus’ behavior by also learning to observe the law. For the Homilist, law observance remained paramount; indeed, it was the primary requisite for a person’s inclusion in this group. Whether a person followed the instructions of Moses or Jesus in this regard, however, was irrelevant, so long as he or she remained faithful to the practice of law. Since the Homilist considered both Moses and Jesus as pedagogical—and not divine—figures, their significance lay in the fact that they pointed others toward salvation, which could only be acquired through the practice of the law. Jesus may have had extraordinary powers; indeed, his miraculous powers healed the Gentile woman’s daughter. But he remained human. Accordingly, for the Homilist, salvation ultimately came through the law, not through Jesus.

Second, while John Chrysostom employs the original biblical narratives to distance his burgeoning Antiochene congregations from any connection to Jesus’ “Jewishness”—or what would later become known as “Judaism”—in a manner that resembles the earlier efforts of Ignatius and the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, the Homilist underscores precisely the opposite. For the Homilist, becoming a Jew by following the law is exactly what the pagan, Roman Syrian woman needed to do in order to achieve the healing that she sought for her afflicted daughter. With respect to this point, it is important to keep in mind that the Homilist defined a Jew (Ἰουδαίος) as someone who kept the Jewish law and who worshipped the Jewish god. Like Chrysostom, the Homilist

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<sup>110</sup> Christine Shepardson has recently lamented that “[u]nfortunately, no first-person voice like Libanius’s or John Chrysostom’s survives from fourth-century Antiochene Jews, so we are left to imagine them . . . through the voices of others and the scant material remains” (“Between Polemic and Propaganda,” 181). While that may be true, evidence from the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* offers something quite similar. Although certainly not an expression of rabbinic Judaism, here we have a text whose author-redactor(s) self-identify as “Jews” and who also redefine who can be included in that Jewish identity.



also stripped “away all that was different in Judean culture—its positions among ancient people, ancestral tradition, laws and customs, constitution, aristocracy, priesthood, philosophical school.”<sup>111</sup> But instead of “abstracting only an impoverished belief system,” as the early Gentile interpreters did, the Homilist left in his wake a definition of a Ἰουδαίος that was synonymous with faithful observance of the law, and thus with worship of the “true”—that is, the Jewish—god. In other words, for both John and the Homilist, the Jewish ethnic background of Jesus no longer mattered, albeit for very different reasons. For the former, ethnic identity was replaced by ideological belief. For the latter, ethnic identity was superseded by faithful observance. The net effect of these interpretive moves was that while John attempted to divorce himself and his congregations from “Jews” and “Judaism,” the Homilist embraced them instead.

Accordingly, the intended readership of the *Homilies* likely included some persons who were ethnically Jewish and others who were ethnically Gentile, the sort of mixed Jesus-following ethnic groups that had persisted in Roman Syria ever since Paul originally preached in the region. For them, the Homilist wanted to make clear that Moses and Jesus were equivalent figures, since both of their teachings pointed persons toward God’s universal law.<sup>112</sup> Since the Homilist did not conceive of Jesus as divine, salvation did not come through belief in him directly, as would be the case for Chrysostom, but rather through observance of God’s law. In this manner, law-abiding practice would have been one of the defining features of the community that the Homilist sought to establish with this work or that had already been established prior to his time. Through the instruction of the *Homilies*, these persons would not have conceived of themselves as Christians, but rather as Jews for whom Moses and Jesus held equal weight. It did not matter whether they followed Moses or Jesus, as long as they became Jewish through their faithful observance of God’s universal law. The Homilist could thereby claim that Jesus’ acts of healing remained unequivocally directed to the Jews alone, since all Jews, even those who had previously been identified as pagan Syrians, were defined by their law-abiding practice.

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<sup>111</sup> Mason, “Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 473.

<sup>112</sup> The references to the “school of Moses and Christ” and elsewhere to the “followers of Moses and Christ” (*de Puls. Diff.* 2.4 and 3.3, respectively) in the work of “the well-known [second-century] medical writer,” Galen, in combination with the evidence that I have been presenting from the *Homilies*, suggests that there may have been a community, or several communities, in antiquity that revered both Moses and Jesus simultaneously. For a discussion on the merits of Galen’s testimony, see Paget, *Jews, Christians, and Jewish Christians*, 10–11 and 16.

In this respect I am certain that those associated with the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* did not conceive of themselves as Jewish Christians. The Homilist avoids labels like Christian or Christianity intentionally, even with respect to the apostle Peter's preaching about Jesus. Instead he prefers the term "God-fearer," and identifies those Gentiles who have come to follow the law of God through Jesus as "Jews."<sup>113</sup> Rather than thinking of themselves as Jewish Christians, those associated with the *Homilies* would have simply thought of themselves as Jews for whom Jesus played a fundamental role.

Despite this observation, I retain the term Jewish Christianity because the very fact that both John and the Homilist were employing the same scriptural passage to construct a "Christian" or "Jewish" identity for their respective audiences suggests that in fourth-century Syria, the liminal borders between what would ultimately emerge as two separate religious categories was much more fluid than what the official rhetoric of either John or the Homilist would have us suspect. Thus, *contra* Skarsaune, I do not think that "by the fourth century the normative, mutually exclusive self-definitions of Jews and Christians had become so clear to everyone that there no longer were any border-crossers or border-dwellers, or at least only very few."<sup>114</sup> Instead, in fourth-century Syria, there were a number of border-dwellers. That is to say, "Jewish Christianity" in this specific context encompassed ethnic Jews incorporating Christ-followers in their midst *and* Gentile Syrian Jesus-followers enacting Jewish practices, because both authors suggest this, albeit indirectly.

That Chrysostom reacts so forcibly—even sixty years after the Homilist composed his work—to oppose such an ideology and practice suggests that what has long been construed as the anomalous or in-between category of "Jewish Christians" was likely, in reality, more of the norm. Indeed, if Shaye Cohen is right in his claim that "the diaspora Jews of antiquity were not easily recognizable—if, indeed, they were recognizable at all,"<sup>115</sup> and if Tina Shepardson is correct that "[l]ate antique Jews joined their neighbors at the theater and the baths, and talked with them on the streets . . . owned slaves like other Romans of their social position . . . [and in Antioch] bought and sold in

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<sup>113</sup> For the designation of Gentile followers of Jesus as Jews, see *Hom.*11.16.2–4, as well as Zetterholm, "Alternative Visions of Judaism," 133, 135–38. For more information on how the author-redactor(s) of the *Homilies* stress the Jewish ethnicity of Peter and Barnabas throughout the narrative, see Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-history?," 203–204; idem, "Rethinking (Jewish-)Christian Evidence," 363–64.

<sup>114</sup> Skarsaune, "Jewish Believers," 9.

<sup>115</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 67.

the marketplaces . . . and participated in local, regional, and imperial patronage systems,” then a construction of their religious identity as Jews, not just in terms of their ethnicity, but also in terms of their practice, seems to have been necessary.<sup>116</sup> For the fourth-century Syrian Homilist, this new religious identity was broad enough to include persons who were Jews not only by ethnicity but also by practice.

It would be too much of a stretch, however, to suggest that this evidence from John and the Homilist can be extrapolated to all persons who straddled the boundaries between what are now, only in hindsight, considered Judaism and Christianity, or that it somehow had a global effect. Rather, in my estimation, the most profitable work in the future study of “Jewish Christianity” will occur when we no longer focus on one text or one author, asking whether that particular text or author is “Jewish Christian,” but instead look at the broader evidence for what is happening on the ground in terms of particular locales and particular chronologies. Indeed, I am uncertain whether the term “Jewish Christian” will ever be able to define a universal group or party, which can encompass persons from Rome to Alexandria to Antioch during various centuries throughout history, unless such specific and detailed analyses come first. For just as Wendy Mayer’s work has called scholars to attend more carefully to the social and physical setting of John’s sermons—whether they were delivered in Antioch or Constantinople, or even more specifically the precise church they were delivered in—so, too, we can further refine and nuance our investigations into the topic of Jewish Christians. Moreover, such a chrono-locational perspective has the additional advantage of allowing us to expand our investigations of the topic of Jewish Christians beyond the confines of a set of previously prescribed texts—which meet a specific list of pre-determined criteria—and to look for evidence in the most unsuspecting of places, such as the exegesis of the Gentile Christian author John Chrysostom, for instance, instead. Such an chrono-locational approach is our best chance of understanding, refining, and retaining this elusive term.

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<sup>116</sup> Shepardson, “Between Polemic and Propaganda,” 150–52. For a similar perspective, see Drijvers, “Syrian Christianity and Judaism,” 128. Such proximity and exchange further explains why this particular geographical region long served as an important site for religious identity formation.