

Thus only those who know Christ can know God, and apart from the knowledge of Christ, there is no knowledge of God: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Unlike the faithful, the Jews are unbelievers who see and yet fail to believe. They are therefore the incarnation of the false principle of the fallen world. Belonging to alienated existence, their reaction to the Son of God is to plan his murder. They are not of God, but of the devil:

You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies . . . The reason why you do not hear them (God's revealed words in Jesus) is because you are not of God (John 8:44, 47).

According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is God's I Am, identified as the one true path to the Father, whose integrity is contrasted with the Jews' murderousness. Because of Jesus' claims, the Jews sought to kill him, and when they turned him over to Pilate they asserted that he must die because he has blasphemed against God: "When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out: 'Crucify him, crucify him! . . . We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God' (John 19:6-7). In this presentation Pilate refused to crucify Jesus under Roman law, and handed him over to the Jews. It is thus the Jewish, rather than the Roman authorities, who are held responsible for his death. In John chapter 15 the writer asserts that as Jesus is in the Father, and the Father is in him, so his disciples abide in Jesus and Jesus in them. The Jews on the other hand represent the demonic order: as they sought to kill Jesus, so they will seek to do the same to all his disciples who manifest his presence in the world. Not surprisingly, such a diatribe against the Jews and the Jewish faith has served as a basis for Christian persecution of the Jews through the centuries.

CHAPTER THREE

The Church Fathers and Jewish Hatred

Following New Testament teaching, the Church Fathers developed an *Adversus Judaeos* tradition which vilified the Jews. According to these writers, just as Jews were guilty in the past of indecency, so they have continued to be a lawless and dissolute people. For this reason all future promises apply solely to the Church. Appealing to Scripture, the Fathers attempted to demonstrate that the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue was prefigured in Scripture. Separated from the Christian message of salvation, the Jews have been rejected and are subject to God's wrath. It is the Christian community (rather than the Jews) who constitute the elect. This is the culmination of the messianic vision of the ingathering of all people to Zion. The Christian faith, as the religion of the Roman Empire, serves as the vehicle for bringing God's redemption to humanity, but the Jews are to suffer rejection and misery because of their unwillingness to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Destined to wander in exile, they find no peace. Jewish law has thus been superseded through Christ's death, and it is now the Christian faith alone which offers salvation to the world.

The Iniquity of the Jews

The New Testament served as the basis for the Patristic *Adversus Judaeos* tradition that flourished from the second to the sixth century. This literary form embraced treatises, sermons, discourses and other Christian writings which sought to demonstrate that the Jews had been rejected by God. Such anti-Jewish sentiment was based on the claim that the Jews had refused to accept Christ. According to the Church Fathers this was not a single act of apostasy; rather the Jews have always been an apostate nation. The Patriarchs, as ancestors of the Church,

were virtuous but with the Egyptian sojourn the Hebrews engaged in various types of evil activity. The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to curb such depravity. Thus all the crimes forbidden in the Torah mirror the Israelites' lifestyle. In his writings John Chrysostom asserted that Jews in Egypt built a brothel there, made love with the barbarians and worshipped foreign gods.

After the Israelites had escaped from Egyptian captivity, they assumed their idolatrous ways in the desert. According to the Fathers of the early Church, the Hebrews' worship of the golden calf was typical of Jewish idolatry. Thus Prudentius wrote in *Apotheosis* that such worship was due to the deafness of the Jews to God's word. By giving over their earrings to fashion a golden idol, they had impaired their hearing: "Have these truths soaked into the ears of the Jews? . . . All the trappings have vanished from their ears and gone to fashion a cast head of Baal, robbing their ears of the honour."

Once in the Promised Land, the nation continued such idolatrous behaviour. In the words of Tertullian in *An Answer to the Jews*, "According to the divine Scriptures the people of the Jews quite forsook God and did degrading service to idols and, abandoning the Divinity, surrendered to images . . . In later times, in which the kings were governing them, they did again worship golden kine and graves and enslave themselves to Baal." In the fourth century, Ephrem in *Rhythm Against the Jews* accused the Jews of idolatry, contending that the persecution of Christ was prefigured in previous times:

What is thine iniquity, O Daughter of Jacob, that thy chastisement is so severe? Thou hast dishonoured the King and the King's Son; thou shameless one and harlot! The King was dishonoured in the wilderness and the King's Son in Jerusalem. The Father was exchanged for the calf and for sundry similitudes, and the Son was exchanged for a thief and a blood-shedder. And the Spirit of the Lord they did vex among strange nations. The Trinity that was old she despised and behaved herself madly, and loved vain gods and devils and fortunes and images.

In Patristic sources the Jews were also accused of blaspheming against God's nature, resisting his spirit, and engaging in sensual

practices. Chrysostom in *Eight Orations Against the Jews* linked such sensuality with the rejection of God: "As an animal when it has been fattened by getting all it wants to eat, gets stubborn and hard to manage, so it was with the Jewish people. Reduced by gluttony and drunkenness to a state of utter depravity, they frisked about and would not accept Christ's yoke." In contrast with Christian asceticism, Jews indulged the vices of the flesh. For Ephrem the synagogue was a harlot—she was cast off because "she was wanton between the legs". In Aphrahat's *Demonstrations Against the Jews* Jerusalem was equated with Sodom and Gomorrah. John Damascene declared in *On the Sabbath, Against the Jews* that the Sabbath was given to the Jews because of their grossness and propensity for material things. In addition a number of polemicists asserted that the Jews were guilty of infanticide. Thus Chrysostom portrayed the ancient Israelites as debauchers and idolators who sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons and even ate their own children. Such a conception of the Jews justified God's rejection of the Hebrew nation. In the third century Hippolytus in *Expository Treatise Against the Jews* summarized their fall from divine grace:

Why was the Temple made desolate? Was it on account of the ancient fabrication of the calf? Or was it on account of the idolatry of the people? Was it for the blood of the prophets? Was it for the adultery and fornication of Israel? By no means, for in all these transgressions they always found pardon open to them. But it was because they killed the son of their Benefactor, for He is coeternal with the Father.

The previous crimes which characterized the ancient Hebrews were said to have continued to the present day. Just as the Jews were responsible in past times, so they were equally guilty of iniquity in contemporary circumstances. In his sermons Chrysostom emphasized that the Jews continued to be a lawless and dissolute race, destined to evoke God's wrath. With venom he depicted the Jewish community of his own age:

The synagogue is not only a whorehouse and a theatre; it is also a den of thieves and a haunt of wild animals . . . not the cave of a wild animal merely, but of an unclean wild animal . . . The Jews have no conception of things at all, but living for the lower nature, all agog for the here and now, no better disposed than pigs or goats, they live by the rule of

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debauchery and inordinate gluttony. Only one thing they understand: to gorge themselves and to get drunk.

For Chrysostom and other writers of this period the Jews were not human beings – they were demons incarnate, an apostate and immoral nation who have been cast off by God into utter darkness.

The Jews and the Future Church

According to the early Church, prophetic denunciations in the Bible against iniquity applied to the Jewish people, whereas all future promises related to the Church. Given such an interpretation, Scripture contains a catalogue of Jewish wickedness. In his *Treat Against the Jews* Augustine maintained that the Jewish people are incapable of understanding the true nature of the Bible: they believe the divine promises apply to the Jewish nation. But, Augustine asserted, the Jews are in fact the enemies of God. Accordingly, when the prophets declared that God has cut off the House of Israel, such pronouncements referred to the Jews. But when Israel was described in positive terms, these statements applied to the Christian Church.

Thus both the apostate Jews and the universal Church were anticipated in the Hebrew Scriptures. Those who are righteous belong to the Christian community, while the Jews are the enemies referred to in the Psalms and the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah. In formulating this view, Christian exegetes viewed the account of Jacob and Esau as prefiguring these two religious groups. Genesis records that "When her (Rebekah's) days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb . . . and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23–24). Here "the elder" refers to the Jews who would serve "the younger", namely the Church.

In *Contra Judaeos*, Maximinus formulated a series of similar sibling rivalries which prefigure the Jewish/Christian conflict. Heading this list was Cain who symbolizes the Jews, whereas Abel (who was killed by his brother) represents Christ. Similarly Tertullian argued that God rejected the bloody sacrifices of the Law (the Jewish sacrificial system)

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while accepting spiritual worship of the Church. In Aphrahat's writings the statement in John 8:44, "Your father was a murderer from the beginning", was identified with Cain. Ephrem also identified the Jews with Cain: "Today the glory has passed from the people of Israel and they stand among the nations ashamed as Cain was, at the unnatural deed." In the fourth century, Prudentius maintained that the Jew was the murderous brother who now wanders the face of the earth: "From place to place the homeless Jew wanders in ever-shifting exile, since the time when he was torn from the abode of his fathers and has been suffering the penalty for murder and having stained his hands with the blood of Christ whom he denied, paying the price of sin."

This antithesis was also applied to the two wives of Abraham (Sarah and Hagar) as well as Jacob's two wives (Rachel and Leah). As we have seen, Paul viewed the children of Sarah as the true Christian Israel whereas he believed the Jews were the children of the slave woman. Following this interpretation, Augustine argued that the Jews are a carnal people as against the Christians who are spiritual. Hagar was the fallen Jerusalem, bound in servitude to Sarah's offspring who belonged to the heavenly realm. A parallel analogy was drawn by Cyprian in his *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*: "Also Jacob received two wives: the elder Leah, with weak eyes, a type of the Synagogue; the younger, the beautiful Rachel, the type of the Church, who also remained long barren and afterwards brought forth Joseph, who was himself a type of Christ."

According to patristic tradition the Church is the bride of God whereas Israel has been a harlot: she had been given a bill of divorce and sent away. In his *Rhythm Against the Jews*, Ephrem presented a figurative description of this divorce:

She despised the voice of the prophets and the preaching of the Apostles . . . He wrote and delivered to her the divorcement as being rejected and polluted. He took the veil from her head and from her eyes also chastity. He stripped her of her ornaments and doubled back and lifted up her covering. He took her necklace from her neck and took away her bracelets and her armlets and as an adulteress and a harlot he drove her out and sent her forth from his chamber.

Similarly Aphrahat's, referring to Hosea's preaching in Hosea 2:2 ("For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband – that she put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her

breasts"), declared: "Israel has played the whore, and Judah has committed adultery. And the people which is of the peoples (the Christian community) is the holy and faithful people, which has gone down and adhered to the Lord." Such imagery emphasized that God's promises applied not to the Jews but to the future Church. Divorced from the message of forgiveness and hope, the Jews have been rejected and subjected to God's wrath.

Divine Election

In explaining the election of the gentiles, the early Church argued that the Christian community has taken the place of the Jews. This was not conceived simply as a substitution; rather the new Israel was understood as implicit in Scripture. The prophets had insisted that the election of the Jewish nation was only provisional – the covenant has been inherited and fulfilled by those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. In the past, biblical heroes and prophets prepared the way for this event, but from the beginning the Jewish people continually refused to accept God. Christians on the other hand, constituted a believing community.

In presenting this view, the Church Fathers appealed to the Pauline doctrine that the true sons of Abraham are those who are justified by faith. The descendants of Abraham are thus not the Jews, but the gentiles. In the words of Isaac of Antioch in *Homilies Against the Jews*, the uncircumcised gentiles have taken the place of Israel. Circumcision has ceased to be the mark of election. Instead, figuratively speaking, circumcision was a "seal" on a bag which has been kept for the true inheritors of this treasure. Neither the seal nor the bag now serve any purpose, and the Jews have become the possessors only of an empty container:

Abraham was stamped like a vessel because of the treasure that was in him. And the seal continued in your generations because of the treasure that was in you (the Jews) until now. Now . . . the treasure has come forth . . . In you it was in custody and was safeguarded, and it was preserved under the stamp. To me it was given for use. Therefore I do not circumcise myself like you . . . O nation. You were the guardians of the riches that were preserved for the generations (the gentile

Church) . . . Its rightful owners have taken the trust and you are concerned with the regulations. Unseemly are the seals . . . when the garments on which they were are worn out. They were trampled and fell and were cut off.

As in the New Testament, patristic sources interpreted the texts describing Israel as a light to the nations as prophecies about the gentile Church. Conversely Scriptural passages concerning sinful Israel were understood as demonstrating her rejection. The Psalms for example promised the rule of a Davidic king over the nations – these texts were presumed to refer to Christ. The nations to be conquered and converted are gentiles. Such texts as Psalm 2:7–8 ("Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee; ask of me and I will give the nations as thy inheritance") were read as God's decree to Christ that he would inherit the gentile Church. Prophetic texts concerning God's faithful people were also understood as referring to the gentile Church: "Many and strong peoples shall adhere to the Lord" (Zechariah 2:11); "Those who are not my people I shall call my people" (Hosea 2:23).

Following the New Testament, the Fathers maintained that the election of the gentiles is the culmination of the messianic vision of the ingathering of the nations to Zion. According to Ephrem, the good news of Christ's redemption shall flow from Zion: "I shall open my gates with joy and the hosts of the gentiles shall enter into thee and become in thee an elect people, and the Lord shall reign over Zion and many peoples shall come and worship me in Jerusalem." The Jews, however, despaired because of this rejection: "Then Zion spoke, weeping distractedly. The Lord hath left me because I have provoked him, and God hath forgotten me; yes, he hath rejected me."

Once the Church became the religion of the Roman Empire, the concept of divine election was understood in political terms. The Roman Empire came to be identified with the reign of the Davidic Messiah. Thus Chrysostom identified Christendom with Christ's dominion over the world. Everywhere paganism was overcome by the Church, and this victory was envisaged as Christ's defeat of the demons. With all humanity united in Christ, brotherhood and peace held sway. The same combination of messianism and Roman imperialism was found in Eusebius' *Oration on Constantine*:

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As knowledge of the one God and the one way of religion and salvation, even the doctrine of Christ, was made known to all mankind, so at the self same period, the entire dominion of the Roman Empire being vested in a single sovereign, profound peace reigned throughout the world. And thus by the express appointment of the same God, two roots of blessing, the Roman Empire and the doctrine of Christian piety, sprang up together for the benefit of men.

In contrast with this vision of the universal Church, the Jewish dispersion was seen as the result of divine wrath. Jewish suffering in the diaspora was due to God's anger against the Jews. Persecuted Christians on the other hand were viewed as God's beloved servants. They were to be loved because they suffered for Christ, but Christians were to despise those who rejected Christ and brought about his death. In the words of Chrysostom: "The martyrs especially hate the Jews, for the reason that they love so deeply the one who, by them, was crucified. The Jews said, 'His blood be on us and on our children' while the martyrs shed their own blood for him whom they destroyed."

Jewish Rejection and Exile

According to Patristic tradition, the Jewish people were destined to suffer numerous calamities. Because of their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah, they were cast out and despised. In his *Demonstrations of the Gospel*, Eusebius wrote that because of the Jews' impiety, their kingdom was utterly destroyed, the Torah abrogated, and their ancient worship uprooted. Their royal metropolis, he wrote, was burned with fire, their holy altar consumed with flames and desolation, their city inhabited no longer by its old possessors. In this process the Jews were dispersed among the gentiles throughout the whole world with "never a hope of any cessation of evil or breathing space from troubles." The Jews were thus misguided in continuing to observe Jewish law since the Temple, the priesthood, and the sacrificial system have been eliminated.

For the Christian community on the other hand, non-cultic worship was regarded as the culmination of the spiritual development predicted by Malachi: "Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire upon my altar in vain! I have no

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pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand" (Malachi 1:10). Identifying Judaism with the cult, the Church saw the destruction of the Temple as a sign of God's disfavour. The Jewish nation had become exiled, and the observance of ancient festivals in the diaspora was viewed by Christians as a violation of God's law. In light of this teaching, Chrysostom vilified the synagogue – to go there was no better than visiting a brothel, a robber's den, or any indecent place:

For if their place of worship was a den of robbers in those days, when what pertains to their way of life still prevailed, if a person should call it a brothel today, or a criminals' hangout, or a resort of demons, or a citadel of the Devil, or the ruin of souls, or a cliff and a pit of complete destruction, or any other name whatever, he would speak more kindly than the place deserves.

In their writings the Church Fathers utilized the Book of Daniel to demonstrate that the Jews were to endure various captivities. Both the Egyptian and Babylonian captivities were limited in time, but there will be no future liberation from the exile of the Jews after their refusal to accept Christ – no Messiah will deliver them from their wandering. As Hippolytus explained in *Expository Treatise Against the Jews*:

For now that the true light has arisen, ye wander as in the night and stumble on places with no roads and fall headlong, as having forsaken the way that says, "I am the Way". Furthermore hear this yet more serious word: "And their back do thou bend down always." That means, in order that they may be slaves to the nations, not four hundred and thirty years, as in Egypt, or seventy years, as in Babylonia, but bend them to servitude, he says, always.

Chrysostom argued that the Jews will be crucified throughout history because they crucified Christ: "It is because you killed Christ. It is because you stretched out your hand against the Lord. It is because you shed the precious blood, that there is now no restoration, no mercy any more, and no defence . . . This is why you are being punished worse now than in the past." Again, in *Demonstrations of the Gospel*, Eusebius contended that the rejection of the Jews was due to their own hard-heartedness:

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Therefore the Jews, because they rejected the Prophet and did not harken to his holy words, have suffered extreme ruin, according to his prediction. For they neither received the Law of Christ of the New Covenant, nor were they able to keep the commands of Moses without some breach of his Law, and so they feel under the curse of Moses, in not being able to carry out what was ordained by him; being exiled from their mother city, which was destroyed, where alone it was allowed to celebrate Mosaic worship.

According to some writers, circumcision was given to the Jews as a sign of Cain. Thus Justin Martyr wrote in *Dialogue with Trypho* that "Circumcision according to the flesh, which is from Abraham, was given for a sign, that you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer, and that your land may be desolate and your cities burned with fire, and that strangers may eat your fruit in your presence and not one of you may go up to Jerusalem." As wandering figures – homeless and reviled by God and man – the Jews lack any means of salvation. Jewish misery thus bears testimony to God's wrath which has fallen upon those who refuse to accept Christ. The only hope for this reprobate people is to recognize that the Christian community constitutes the true Israel and become members of the Church. In this regard Augustine argued (following Paul's teaching in Romans 9–11) that Jews must repent the error of their ways and embrace the true faith; it is only by becoming followers of Christ that they can be saved.

The Fulfilment of the Law

According to the Church Fathers, Jewish law and the Temple cult are intrinsically unworthy and have become obsolete in the light of Christ's redemption. Christians are thus under no obligation to keep the biblical prescriptions. In his Epistle, Diogenetus emphasized that Jewish practices have no efficacy:

As for those who think that they can offer him sacrifices with blood and fat and holocausts . . . they differ in nothing, so it seems to me, from those who show the same devotion to deaf idols . . . Is it not ridiculous to boast of a mutilation of the flesh as a sign of the chosen people, as though they were particularly loved by God? . . . I have said enough to show you

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how the Christians are right in keeping away from the plain silliness and error, the fussiness and vaunting of the Jews.

In patristic sources the concept of a pre-Mosaic religion plays a significant role. According to Eusebius, during the pre-Mosaic era human beings were naturally virtuous. The Patriarchs were thus not Jews, but simply members of the human race who were virtuous without being bound by legal restrictions. In place of a code of law, they were motivated by the law of conscience – that which is universal in scope. This spiritual religion has now become available to all peoples through Christ. It is not a new covenant, but rather the restoration of the original religion of the Patriarchal period. Within this framework the Ten Commandments should be understood as the basic law of God, whereas Mosaic legislation is temporary, given only to the Jewish nation.

Legislation in the Pentateuch was therefore designed for an intermediate period – from Moses to Christ – and is of an inferior status than Patriarchal faith. Its purpose is punitive rather than redemptive, and was intended to elevate the Jews from the state of moral decay into which they had fallen in Egypt. In the words of Chrysostom: "And this is what God did. He saw the Jews raving mad, choking themselves in their lust for sacrifices, and ready if they didn't get them to desert to idolatry . . . then it was that he permitted sacrifices." Similarly the Sabbath was instituted to restrain the Jews' lust for material gain. Further, circumcision was prescribed to separate the Jews from those who practised idolatry.

Jewish law has thus been superseded by a new dispensation. Christians are the true keepers of God's law of inward obedience. In place of Moses, Christ is the new lawgiver. By following scriptural legislation the Jewish community misconstrued God's intention, acted against his will, and have become a lawless nation. Christians, on the other hand, are liberated from the Law's outward practices and are able to interpret its inner meaning. Through their repentance, they have circumcised the heart. According to Isaac of Antioch, Joshua's stone knives, by which God commanded him to circumcise the people of Israel a second time, signify the circumcision of Jesus – this symbolizes a circumcision of the heart of Christians rather than the flesh. Dietary laws are likewise dealt with. They were initially given to Israel to restrain them from gluttony, but their real meaning is internal.

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Similarly cultic observances were seen as irrelevant. In support of this view, the Church cited numerous prophetic utterances condemning formal worship: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21); "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord, I have enough of burnt offerings . . . Incense is an abomination to me. I cannot endure your new moons and Sabbaths and assemblies" (Isaiah 1:11-13). Temple sacrifice thus does not fulfil God's will, and the destruction of the Temple confirmed this judgement. As Chrysostom explained: "After permitting them to offer sacrifices, he allowed them to do so nowhere else in the world except in Jerusalem. Then after they had offered sacrifices for a short time, he destroyed the city. God intended by demolishing the city to lead the Jews away from the practice in spite of themselves."

What is now required is the sacrifice of the heart. Christian spiritual worship thus supersedes cultic observance. The true faith is the spiritual Temple of the Holy Spirit found in each believer and also within the body of the Church. As far as the priesthood is concerned, the priests of Christ are superior to the Aaronite priests, and the Eucharist is identified with the spiritual worship of bread and wine offered by Melchizedek. As Chrysostom explained, the priests of Melchizedek have now taken the place of those who officiated in the Temple: "If perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood . . . what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11) rather than the one after the order of Aaron?" It is clear from this that the former priesthood had come to an end and a different one, very much better and more sublime, had been introduced in its place."

In expounding this interpretation of the Christian supersession of Judaism, the Fathers stressed that they possessed the correct understanding of Scripture. The Jews, however, are blind to its true meaning. They are incapable of seeing the Christological implications of God's Word. This is due in part to Jewish literalism, for Jews are incapable of discerning the inner meaning of Scripture. In the words of Irenaeus (second century): "Therefore the Jews departed from God, in not receiving his Word, but imagining that they could know the Father apart by himself, without the Word, that is, without the Son; they being ignorant of that God who spake in human shape to Abraham and again to Moses."

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Christ is the incarnation of God's Word – it is he whom the Jews have never known, since they have preferred the exegesis of the Scribes and Pharisees to the direct word of the Bible. Rabbinic hermeneutics thus constitutes the veil over the Scriptural text; it induces blindness and leads the Jews astray. According to Augustine, the Jews are a carnal people and belong on a lower level of existence. Jewish teachings and customs are thus useless; they belong to Israel after the flesh in opposition to spiritual Israel, the Church: all that is Jewish has been set aside now that Christ has come.