

The Building of a Wall of Separation between New Testament Theology and Its Jewish
Roots/Context: A Consideration of Early Church History and a Call for
Re-Examination for 21st Century Everyday Theological Reality

Amy Karen Downey -- Director, Tzedakah Ministries
(LBTS Ph.D. Student [ABD])

Christopher Hall in *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* recounts the story of Thomas Oden's transformation from liberal theologian to a scholar with a deep respect for Biblical orthodoxy. This revolution began when Oden abandoned the teachings of Sartre and Bultmann for the Patristic writings of Nemesius.¹ In fact, Hall writes of Oden's theological conversion that "he increasingly realized that theology could be, indeed, must be done in the context of the worshipping community of the church, a fellowship that stretched across a vast expanse of years, cultures, and languages."² Thomas Oden's desire to return the church to the Patristic ideal as it would draw the community of the redeemed back together in unity and fellowship sounds appealing. It sounds especially appealing in a time when the divide between denominations grows wider and the schisms within many denominations has created a chaotic discord that indicates a forgetfulness of the Scriptural adage — "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Pro 22:28, KJV).

However, one has to question if this ideal is either really possible or was even real at the time of the Patristic Era. Thomas Oden in his introduction to the *Ancient Christian Commentary* series seeks to respond to two of the problematic issues that are often raised by historians of the period—the misogynistic attitudes of the Church Fathers and concerns over both latent and overt

¹ Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 15-18.

² *Ibid.*, 18.

anti-Semitic attitudes among many of the Patristic theologians.³ One could grant Oden's argument that the misogyny charge has to be weighed in the balance of comparing early century considerations of women as opposed to twenty-first freedoms. However, the issue of anti-Semitism must be weighed on a different set of scales, regardless of whether Oden has a point that the Fathers did not consider the Jewish people to be lesser individuals based on genetic and/or racial characteristics.⁴ For from Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* to the early *Adversus Judaeos* as expressed by Tertullian to the Supersessionistic concepts expressed by the School at Alexandria,⁵ the development of a wall of separation between the theology of the New Testament and its Jewish roots/context was clearly established in the first centuries of church history. This reality has resulted in the fact that despite the writers of the New Testament, apart from perhaps Luke, were Jewish, the New Testament theology that often comes across in modern churches reflects more of a Greek mindset than a Jewish construct. Therefore, the question that should be asked is the following—what has been lost in theological understanding which separates the "bride of Christ" from its Jewish *chuppah* context?

This paper, therefore, will seek to examine some of the key examples and individuals from church history in which the wall of separation was built between the theology of the New Testament and its Jewish roots/context. In addition, this paper will seek to consider how some basic theological wall foundations could and should be re-built in the twenty-first century so that the modern church can establish stronger New Testament theological principles. This is needed

³ Thomas C. Oden, "General Introduction," in *Ancient Christian Commentary: Old Testament I: Genesis 1-11*, gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), xxvii-xxviii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

⁵ Diodore of Tarsus, "Commentary on the Psalms, Prologue" and Tyconius, "The Book of Rules, I-III," III, 3. Found in Karlfried Froehlich, trans. and ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, in *Sources of Early Christian Thought*, series ed. William G. Rusch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 86, 115. See also, Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 161.

today as we seek for a true everyday theological reality, a reality that cannot occur unless the wall between the testaments are torn down and the whole canon of Scripture are understood as a unified whole. For while it would be a "great story" to find the deep teachings of Augustine and the humanitarian gospel of Basil the Great in the pews of the Christian church, one has to determine if there could ever be a place for *adversus Judaeos* Patristic theologians such as John Chrysostom in the twenty-first century church.

Historical Overview -- Examples and Individuals

Replacement Theology

Marcel Simon asks a simple but profoundly complex question when he wrote, “When did this hostile attitude to the Jews first appear in the history of the growing Church?”⁶ Simon struggles to find a definitive answer, even while proposing that it even began during the writing of the Gospel of John, but considered it “unfolded fully in the fourth century.”⁷ A definitive answer to Simon’s question is perhaps a difficult one to concretely establish; however, the theology of the hostility began with one concept that demands an answer—were the Jewish people ever truly replaced in the economy of God’s election? If not, as this author advocates, why then is the Jewish context and milieu lost when one hears a twenty-first century sermon?

General Definition

Kendall Soulen summarizes Replacement Theology as the concept that the Jewish people were the chosen people of God until their rejection of Jesus as Messiah resulted in the church of

⁶ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135-425* (Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1986), 207.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207-08.

God becoming the true Israel.⁸ Former Catholic priest James Carroll, in what charitably could be called a diatribe against his own Catholic faith and all branches of Christianity, defines the term as a wholistic and complete attempt in which “the Jesus movement, as it evolved into the Church, effectively replaced the Jews as the chosen people of God.”⁹ The overarching concept of Supersessionism is that God annulled His covenant(s) with Israel because of their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and this is the theological position that will come to the forefront during the Patristic Age and carry the argument for much of the two millennia of the Church Age.

General Summation of Replacement Theology

Soulen, while not expressing the rancor of Carroll, explains that Supersessionism did not eliminate the Jewish people as a group from the covenant but instead replaced or moved them to a secondary position so that Gentiles could be included.¹⁰ However, this subordination of the Jewish people from the covenant(s) creates a scenario, especially when the Gentile population of the church proper outnumbered the Jewish contingent, in which the Jewish connection to the Messiahship of Jesus is lost or forgotten. Therefore, and while Soulen argues against Supersessionism, he understands that ultimately the Jewish people within a Replacement Theology mindset will be misplaced from the kingdom of God.¹¹

Second Century (Post-Johannine Influence)

The second century begins with a world that finds itself without the last surviving witness of the earthly ministry of Jesus, the beloved disciple John. The churches of the Roman Empire no

⁸ R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 1-2.

⁹ James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2001), 58.

¹⁰ Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, 8.

¹¹ Soulen does an admirable work of discounting the theology of Supersessionism. However, he counters all the good scholarship he exhibits when he concludes his work with a discounting of the need to evangelize the Jewish people with the Gospel of Jesus (p. 171-75).

longer had a touchstone or first-person connection with Jesus. They are now required to operate based upon second-person testimony. They are in a situation similar to the world of Narnia that the Pevensie children returned to in *Prince Caspian*. The people of Narnia wanted to believe the written accounts of Aslan but the silence since His first arrival made it hard to continue to have faith.¹² Similarly, the Christians of the second century are being oppressed by the persecutions and are only left with the genesis fragments of what will become the Biblical canon. Therefore, the teaching of the theology of Supersessionism arrived at a time when it was most ready to be received if for no other reason than it provided a semblance of explanation as to why the Jewish people did not believe in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.

The Didache

The Didache is considered one of the earliest of the Christian writings with a dating as early during the times of the Apostles to around AD 150 and many settling on a date of around the end of the first century.¹³ The idea of this work having apostolic origins or authorship allowed the words of *The Didache* to remain in the hearts of many second century Christians, until as Ben Swett noted that it fell out of favor when it encouraged congregational polity in appointing their pastors and not appointment by the bishops.¹⁴

¹² There are reasons why this analogy is imperfect; however, the argument can be made that the premise is allowable considering the issues of faith and hope and the issue of time that are present in both instances.

¹³ Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity*, vol. 5, in the *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novumb Testamentum: Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, sect. III, gen. ed. P. J. Tomsom (Joint Cooperative Effort of Minneapolis: Fortress Press and Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2002), 48-49 and Ben H. Swett, "The Didache (The Teaching);" accessed 4 December 2012; available online at <http://www.bswett.com/1998-01Didache.html>.

¹⁴ Swett, "The Didache (The Teaching)."

One issue that is agreed upon in the sources is that even at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century, the rising tide of anti-Judaism can be found in its words.¹⁵ Simon in using ironic language compared the changing worship styles to a “progressive liberation from the Jewish forms” while Johannes Quasten was more blunt when he wrote that by the time of *The Didache* the “opposition to the Jews is already discernible.”¹⁶ The primary evidence within *The Didache* itself is the admonition to not fast or pray as the “hypocrites” do which is apparently code for the Jewish fasts and type of praying.¹⁷ Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser argue that this admonition against hypocrisy was directed against the using of tefillin by Jewish believers in their prayer times.¹⁸ Therefore, and while Supersessionism officially had not raised its position during the time *The Didache* was written, the beginning opposition to Jewish practices and worship was already coming to the forefront.

Ignatius of Antioch

As Ignatius of Antioch approached the city of Rome in AD 115 and was preparing for, perhaps even desiring, a martyr’s death, he pens seven letters to churches throughout the empire to provide them some parting words and thoughts from a beloved pastor.¹⁹ Among the words written by Ignatius were letters to the churches at Philadelphia and Magnesia were words that would further assist in the development of Supersessionism. The words were perhaps meant to

¹⁵ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1 (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, n.d.), 31-32, 36; Simon, *Verus Israel*, 309, 312, 335; and van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 33.

¹⁶ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 309 and Quasten, *Patrology*, 36.

¹⁷ *The Didache*, 7:1-2 (text of *The Didache* is found in van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 12-13).

¹⁸ van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 33.

¹⁹ Bryan M. Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 32; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History: Completed and Unabridged: New Updated Edition*, trans. C. F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000 rpt.), 3:36 and Quasten, *Patrology*, 63.

respond similarly to Paul's objection of the Judaizers in Colossae; however, they result in creating more animosity towards the physical descendants of Jesus and the Apostles.²⁰

In chapter eight of the "Letter to the Magnesians," we can find evidence of Ignatius' argument that the prophets of the Tanakh were in essence always Christian and not Jewish for they were persecuted for they "lived according to Christ Jesus. On this account also they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to fully convince the unbelieving that there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word,..."²¹ The longer version of chapter ten simply states, "For where there is Christianity, there cannot be Judaism."²²

Within the letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius plants the thought which will blossom into full-fledged accusations of deicide when he writes in chapter six, "not less than the Jews who killed Christ."²³ Therefore, the letters of Ignatius, and especially given that the pastor was headed towards martyrdom in Rome, were influential at seed planting an idea that will become fully realized by the later time of the Patristic Era in the doctrine of Supersessionism.

Epistle of Barnabas

The *Epistle of Barnabas* has an authorship that is unknown and a dating that is uncertain but estimated around AD 135.²⁴ The *Epistle of Barnabas* also blames the Jewish people for

²⁰ Michael D. Goulder, "Ignatius' 'Docetists,'" *Vigilae Christianae* vol. 53, issue 1 (February 1999): 16-20 and Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 36-40.

²¹ Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to the Magnesians," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1885); ch. 8; accessed 27 March 2013; available online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.iii.viii.html>.

²² *Ibid.*, ch. 10; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.iii.x.html>.

²³ Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to the Philadelphians," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1885); ch. 6; accessed 27 March 2013; <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.vi.vi.html>.

²⁴ James Carleton Paget, "The Epistle of Barnabas," *The Expository Times* vol. 117, no. 11 (2006): 442-43 and Quasten, *Patrology*, 89-90.

crimes against the Jewish Messiah Jesus. Tim Hegedus is correct when he draws attention to the fact that the anonymous author of this epistle is fascinated with all things Jewish; however, his argument that “Barnabas” wants to draw them to “belief in Jesus” fails what is commonly called the “smell test.”²⁵ In chapters thirteen and fourteen, Barnabas attempts to not simply replace the Jewish people in the covenant relationship by comparing them to Manasseh (not Ephraim) and Esau (not Jacob) in that the younger will rule over the elder but also to argue that the Jewish people first lost their place in the covenant when Moses broke the tablets at Mount Sinai.²⁶

Justin Martyr

The most transformative name among the second century writers and leaders is perhaps the name of Justin Martyr. Born in ca. AD 100 in Flavia Neapolis near the ruins of what was Shechem in Palestine, Jerome died proclaiming the name of Jesus in AD 165.²⁷ His legacy is secured as a martyr and a saint. However, his writings also reveal a man who sought to replace the Jewish people in the economy of God’s covenant promises.

This superseding of the Jewish people is recognized primarily, but not solely, in the work *Dialogue with Trypho*. Peter Richardson and John Gager argue that Justin was the first to advocate Supersessionism; however, and as has already been shown that the *Epistle of Barnabas*

²⁵ Tim Hegedus, “Midrash and the Letter of Barnabas,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* vol. 37, issue 1 (Spring 2007): 20, 22. See also, Simon, *Verus Israel*, 149.

²⁶ *Epistle of Barnabas*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1885); accessed 27 March 2013; available online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vi.ii.xiii.html> and <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vi.ii.xiv.html>. See also, Joel Marcus, “Israel and the Church in the Exegetical Writings of Hippolytus,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 1 (2011): 386.

²⁷ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 56; Quasten, *Patrology*, 196, 197; and Eusebius 4:16.

was actually the first written document to express this view.²⁸ Matthew Bates considered in one work just exactly how Justin utilized the Tanakh to not only hermeneutically a way to eliminate the Jewish people from the promises of Zion but also to have Jesus as designated as the true Israel.²⁹ This is contrast to Justin’s actual words in chapter 29 of the dialogue when he writes the following; however, the idea of replacement is definitely present.

For these words have neither been prepared by me, nor embellished by the art of man; but David sung them, Isaiah preached them, Zechariah proclaimed them, and Moses wrote them. Are you acquainted with them, Trypho? They are contained in your Scriptures, **or rather not yours, but ours.** For we believe them; but you, though you read them, do not catch the spirit that is in them (emphasis added).³⁰

The dating for *Dialogue with Trypho* (ca. AD 150)³¹ follows the Jewish Bar Cochba rebellion and catastrophe in AD 150.³² Therefore, AD 150 also represents a dark time in Jewish history as it includes the deaths of untold thousands of Jewish men, women, and children.³³ However, and instead of providing solace to the Jewish people, it is especially telling that Justin chose to write the evangelistic purpose for the dialogue that was anything but friendship evangelism building:

²⁸ Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 9-12 and John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 228-229.

²⁹ Matthew W. Bates, “Justin Martyr’s Logocentric Hermeneutical Transformation of Isaiah’s Vision of the Nations,” *Journal of Theological Studies* NS vol. 60, pt. 2 (October 2009): 540, 549, 550.

³⁰ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho a Jew* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 29.

³¹ William Varner, “In the Wake of Trypho: Jewish-Christian Dialogues in the Third to Sixth Centuries,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 80.3 (2008): 220.

³² Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 31. See also, Rodney Werline, “The Transformation of Pauline Arguments in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92.1 (1999): 81.

³³ Susan Wendel, “Interpreting the Descent of the Spirit: A Comparison of Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and Luke-Acts,” in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 95.

I do not process to have a mere verbal controversy with you, as I have not attempted to establish proof about Christ from the passages of Scripture which are not admitted by you? Which I quoted from the words of Jeremiah the prophet, and Esdras, and David; but from those which are even now admitted by you, which had your teachers comprehended, be well assured they would have deleted them, as they did those about the death of Isaiah, whom you sawed asunder with a wooden saw.³⁴

Third Century (The Ante-Nicene Period)

After Justin Martyr and his *Dialogue with Trypho*, the third century church continued to carry on the idea of Replacement Theology and actually built upon it. The transformation of the Jewish Scriptures to something which Moses and the prophets would not have recognized was allegorized by an exegete and brought before the bar by a jurist turned theologian. The period leading up to the Council of Nicaea continued the divide begun in the second century and created a seemingly irreparable theological wall that needs to be repaired today for both the sake of Jewish evangelism as well as for the full blossoming of Biblical teaching in the church today.

Origen

Bryan Litfin refers to the third century exegetical scholar Origen as the “Man of Steel” in consideration of his courage under the Decian persecutions in AD 250.³⁵ He was a Christian who loved God and suffered for his faith. He was also a man who contributed exegetical prowess in order to disenfranchise the Jewish people from their covenant heritage.

Litfin attempts to defend Origen’s allegorical interpretation of Scripture by describing it as “the difference between Origen’s exegesis and our own has to do with the stance of the human interpreter in relation to the Bible” and that Origen saw Scripture as “invested ... with multiple

³⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 120.

³⁵ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 154-57. Litfin goes on to draw the analogy further by explaining the nickname given in honor of Origen, *Adamantius*. See also, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:39.

layers of meaning.”³⁶ However, and despite Origen’s engagement with Judaism and Jewish literature, one of the primary purposes in this allegorization process was to eliminate any sense of Jewish connection to the Hebrew Scriptures.³⁷

Simon notes that Origen’s rationale for Moses breaking the tablets of the law, the core essence of Judaism, was that Moses rejected the legalism found in the words and knew that what God really wanted was obedience to the spirit of the Law.³⁸ We find in Origen’s own words in the Commentary on John passages of replacing the Jewish people from God’s salvific economy:

That people which was **called of old the people of God** was divided into twelve tribes, and over and above the other tribes it had the levitical order, which itself again carried on the service of God in various priestly and levitical suborders. In the same manner, it appears to me that **the whole people of Christ, when we regard it in the aspect of the hidden man of the heart, that people which is called "Jew inwardly,"** and is circumcised in the spirit, has in a more mystic way the characteristics of the tribes (emphasis added).³⁹

Origen also refers to the Passover “of the Jews” as “in those heavenly things of which the shadow was present to the Jews on earth,...”⁴⁰ In addition, Origen was one of those who also sought to deny the Jewish heritage of Timothy in Acts 16 because they would rather see Paul’s choices as someone who would “occasionally act against his own principles if the setting demanded it.”⁴¹ Origen could make that determination because he saw in Israel a “benign

³⁶ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers* 148, 151.

³⁷ “Origen,” in the Jewish Virtual Library.

³⁸ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 149.

³⁹ Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1:1; accessed 28 March 2013; available online at <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen-john1.html>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10:12.

⁴¹ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1-3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105/2 (1986): 255.

providence” that would create availability for the salvation of the world.⁴² However, he also argued that any Jewish believer in Jesus who persisted in retaining their Jewish heritage are guilty of not “wholeheartedly embracing the full truth.”⁴³ Therefore, the argument could be made that the chasm begun in the second century now had an “exegetical” justification for it.

Tertullian

Tertullian is another Patristic theologian in which what is known about his birth and early life is best shrouded in mystery. An estimation as to the time he was born includes a range cover between AD 155 and 160.⁴⁴ He had no apparent theological position within the Christian church and Justo González makes the argument that perhaps he was a lawyer.⁴⁵

While a consistent thread of anti-Judaism is present in many of Tertullian’s writings, including *de Pudicita* and *First Apology*, attention will be solely devoted to his *Adversus Judaeos* (*An Answer to the Jews*). A generic definition of what exactly was this *Adversus Judaeos* genre in early Christian history is simply “early Christian writings of late antiquity which tried to prove that Christianity was superior to Judaism.”⁴⁶

⁴² Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, 56.

⁴³ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 110.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, *The Early Church Fathers*, ed. Carol Harrison (London: Routledge, 2004), 7; François Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, trans. Edward L. Smither (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 33, 45; and Thomas C. Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 38-39, 87, 107

⁴⁵ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5 and Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day: Complete in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2004), 74. Dunn does not necessarily agree with González because he offers no opinion at all on Tertullian’s position.

⁴⁶ Robert MacLennan, “Four Christian Writers on Jews and Judaism in the Second Century,” in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, vol. 2 (187-202), ed. Jacob Nuesner et al (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 190.

In a quick examination of his *Adversus Judaeos*, Tertullian does not consider Psalm 2 to be a reigning song of David but instead a promise of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus. He writes, “And if these blessings accrue through Christ, they will not have been prophesied of another than Him through whom we consider them to have been accomplished.”⁴⁷ In other words, there appears to be no fulfillment as it applies to King David who wrote the Psalm perhaps because it might benefit the Jewish people. Tertullian has been described by Clark Williamson in relation to his attitudes towards the Jewish people with these words, “[T]he conflict between Judaism and Tertullian’s Christ is strong, bitter, and profound.”⁴⁸ It is bitter because Tertullian’s Supersessionistic tendencies cause him to reflect on the “superiority” of Christianity over the “ethnocentric” and displaced Judaism of his century.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Tertullian views the Jewish people as “divorced” from God.⁵⁰ He also blamed them for the death of Jesus with these words, “Accordingly, **all the synagogue of Israel did slay Him**, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss him, ‘His blood be upon us, and upon our children;’” (emphasis added).⁵¹

Fourth and Fifth Centuries (Post-Nicaea to the *Vulgate*)

The beginning days of the fourth century saw Constantine's "profession of faith" and the scope of the Christian church made a dramatic swing. The battle for survival turned to a battle for doctrinal purity and the clearest example of this struggle was over the place of Jesus in the

⁴⁷ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, n.d.), ch. 12.

⁴⁸ Clark Williamson, “Anti-Judaism in Process Christologies?,” *Process Studies* vol. 4, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1980); available online at www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2492; accessed 20 June 2012.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, ch. 1.

⁵¹ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, ch. 8.

Godhead that was fought at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.⁵² However, Nicaea still provides examples of anti-Jewish and Supersessionist thought, including the need to secure a date for remembering the Resurrection of Jesus that was separated from its moorings of Passover.⁵³ This final historical section will seek to illustrate how the separation of the second century that became a wall in the third ultimately becomes an almost impassable fortress in the fourth and fifth centuries. This illustration can be achieved by briefly examining three of the most famous theologians of the Patristic Era: Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Jerome.

Augustine

Carroll offers the opinion that Augustine's conversion to Christianity was perhaps the second most important moment in the Patristic Age. Indeed, Augustine's life (AD 354-430) can be viewed on a quasi-mythic proportions. To go from a Manichean to a bishop of the North African community of Hippo to a theologian that influences both Catholic and Protestant dogma on a significant level is a life not only worth living but also worth telling.⁵⁴ He also was attracted to the theology of Supersessionism and his position of the "Jewish Witness" concept, will be explored here through only two of his writings: *Adversus Judaeos* and *The City of God*.

In essence, Augustine's concept of the "Jewish Witness" can be summarized as the need for the Jewish people to exist so that the world can understand the damnation one will experience

⁵² Oskar Skarsaune, "From the Jewish Messiah to the Creeds of the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 32:3 (2008): 230-31. The question of the Council of Nicaea within Christian circles would generally fall into the category of General Knowledge; however, this citation for Skarsaune was included as it illustrates the transition from a Jewish sect to a religious entity in and of itself.

⁵³ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 310, 316-18 and Carroll, *Constantine's Sword*, 55.

⁵⁴ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 4 (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, n.d.), 345-50; Carroll, 208-12; and Carroll, 216-30. It would be inappropriate to move beyond this briefest of sketches of Augustine's life without mentioning, at least in a content footnote, the influence that Ambrose had on the life of Augustine. He was baptized by Augustine and he learned the art of allegorical exegesis.

if they do not follow Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ Augustine's caution to the church, while not calling for the death of the Jewish people as one can aver that John Chrysostom did, still became a great burden for the Jewish people to bear during Augustine's time and including through this present day. In *The City of God*, Augustine wrote of this witness motif with these words:

Therefore God has shown the Church in her enemies the Jews the grace of His compassion, since, as saith the apostle, 'their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles.' And therefore He has not slain them, that is, He has not let the knowledge that they are Jews be lost in them, although they have been conquered by the Romans, lest they should forget the law of God, and their testimony should be of no avail in this matter of which we treat. But it was not enough that he should say, "Slay them not, lest they should at last forget Thy law," unless he had also added, "Disperse them;" because if they had only been in their own land with that testimony of the Scriptures, and not every where, certainly the Church which is everywhere could not have had them as witnesses among all nations to the prophecies which were sent before concerning Christ.⁵⁶

In Augustine's *Adversus Judaeos*, we are exposed to a dichotomy of positions as it relates to the Jewish people. He can be welcoming as he is in book ten when he writes, "[L]et us proclaim them with great love for the Jews."⁵⁷ He also perhaps sought to be evangelistic /apologetic when one examines his phrasing in books six and nine:

⁵⁵ This paraphrased definition is based on a general overall understanding of the term and not on a single source from which to cite. An expression of this concept can be found in the writings of Samuel Edelman when he wrote, "The Church needed its Jews. They needed them to show the vast unwashed how much better they all were than the Jews; the Church took over all the good in Judaism while at the same time throwing out the bad. The Church was the new Israel, the new chosen, and the Gospels and the other early Church writings that made up the New Testament were to supersede Judaism and the Jews." Samuel M. Edelman, "Supersessionism Rears Its Ugly Head in the Church's *Dominus Iesus*: A Contextual Analysis," *SHOFAR: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* vol. 22, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 4.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *The City of God in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: St. Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, nd, 18.46; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.XVIII.46.html>; accessed 2 October 2011.

⁵⁷ Augustine, "In Answer to the Jews (*Adversus Judaeos*)," in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation: Saint Augustine: Treaties on Marriage and Other Subjects*, gen. ed. Roy J. Deferrari and trans. Marie Ligouri (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1955), 10.15. Daniel Boyarin takes the Jewish witness concept in a more sexual direction; however, he recognizes at least on a peripheral level that Augustine saw a clear delineation between the Jewish people and those who believed in Jesus. Daniel Boyarin, "Behold Israel According to the Flesh': On Anthropology and Sexuality in Late Antique Judaism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5:2 (1992), 27.

Clearly, a new covenant is promised, not according to that covenant which was made with the people when they were led out of Egypt. Since, then, there are in the Old Testament precepts which we who belong to the New Testament are not compelled to observe, why do not the Jews realize that they have remained stationary in useless antiquity rather than hurl charges against us who hold fast to the new promises, because we do not observe the old?... Finally, with what words do you cry out against such evidence? Why do you continue to exalt yourselves so impudently beyond measure that you perish all the more miserably, and with graver destruction?⁵⁸

Ultimately, he was neither evangelistic nor welcoming to the Jewish people. His position on the Jewish people, especially in light of his influence on doctrine for more than a thousand years, was such that he only made a large wall even more impassable.

John Chrysostom

Church history has given acclaim to many great men who were able to captivate and evangelize the masses, including but not limited to Billy Graham, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon. However, the first great Christian orator, the one to whom the nickname “Golden Mouth” was given was John Chrysostom (AD 349-407).⁵⁹ From a widow’s son to the pastor of Constantinople, Chrysostom captivated audience as well as driving them toward an antipathy of the Jewish people that was unprecedented until his time.⁶⁰

Robert L. Wilken attempts to defend what will be illustrated as Chrysostom’s anti-Judaism by appealing to culture and politics of the fourth century.⁶¹ He puts forth a position that Chrysostom was reacting to the Christians who were behaving as Jews (Judaizers) and not the

⁵⁸ Augustine, “In Answer to the Jews (*Adversus Judaeos*),” 6.8 and 9.12.

⁵⁹ Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1983), 5; Chrysostom Baur, “St. John Chrysostom,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910); accessed 29 March 2013; available online at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm>; and Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 192.

⁶⁰ Litfin, *Getting to Know the Church Fathers*, 201 and Simon, *Verus Israel*, 217.

⁶¹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, xv-xvii.

Jewish people themselves.⁶² However, his arguments fall into question when he compares the observance of Jewish festival as participating in the “rites of a rival religious group.”⁶³ However, and as Christine Shephardson points out in two separate works, the sermons delivered in Antioch in AD 386-387 were both against the Judaizers in the church at Antioch and against the Jewish people personally. She does acknowledge that Chrysostom was angry at the Judaizers but she views the majority of his venom as to be directed as the Jewish people.⁶⁴ The words revealed do speak for themselves for not only are they are rebuke of the Judaizers but also an expression of antipathy towards the Jewish people.⁶⁵

What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now.... But now that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door, if I should fail to cure those who are sick with the Judaizing disease. I am afraid that, because of their ill-suited association and deep ignorance, some Christians may partake in the Jews' transgressions; once they have done so, I fear my homilies on these transgressions will be in vain. For ... once they have committed this sin it will be useless for me to apply the remedy.⁶⁶

There is a lack of the Jewish side of Jesus for Chrysostom as well as something deeper and more insidious.

⁶² Ibid., 67, 73-79.

⁶³ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁴ Christine Shephardson, “Paschal Politics: Deploying the Temple’s Destruction against Fourth-Century Judaism,” *Vigilae Christianae* 62 (2008): 247-48 and Shephardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem’s Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*, North American Patristics Society: *Patristic Monograph Series*, vol. 20, ed. Philip Rousseau (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 148-49.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos*, I.1.5; accessed 29 March 2013; available online at http://www.preteristarchive.com/ChurchHistory/0386_chrysostom_adversus-judeaus.html.

But at any rate the Jews say that they, too, adore God. God forbid that I say that. No Jew adores God! Who say so? The Son of God say so. For he said: "If you were to know my Father, you would also know me. But you neither know me nor do you know my Father". Could I produce a witness more trustworthy than the Son of God? If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons? God is not worshipped there. Heaven forbid! From now on it remains a place of idolatry.⁶⁷

Perhaps these words reflect a pastor who is concerned as Shephardson hypothesizes over the heresy of Nestorianism.⁶⁸ Perhaps the non-verbal cues delivered by Chrysostom during his sermon would soften the harshness of the words as they are read in the twenty-first century. Perhaps is an operative word; however, there is no way to soften his words and the Christian church today is only left with being able to judge a man, a pastor, a gifted orator by what he is most known by—his words. It is these words that have caused some of the greatest divides between Christians and the Jewish relatives of the Messiah.

Jerome

Jerome's year of birth ranges from AD 331 to 347.⁶⁹ His first efforts toward living a holy life after coming to faith in Jesus was to live a solitary life with the ascetics; however, he is best known for his work in writing and translating the Scriptures.⁷⁰ Jerome died around AD 420 and left his *Vulgate*, that truly has changed the world, and an interesting relationship with the Jewish people that places a unique bookend on the Patristic Era.⁷¹

⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, *Adversus Judaeos*, I.3.2. Original reference to Chrysostom's words was found in Garroway, "The Law-Observant Lord," 397.

⁶⁸ Shephardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christianity Orthodoxy*, 149.

⁶⁹ Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome*, The Early Church Fathers, ed. Carol Harrison (London: Routledge, 2002), 4 and J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 1, 337-39.

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Jerome*, 47.

⁷¹ Kelly, *Jerome*, 331 and Rebenich, *Jerome*, 59.

Jerome was unique during this time frame as he had no compunction but to seek out Jewish rabbis for assistance in understanding the passages from the Old Testament.⁷² Michael Graves sees it as a part of his “method of interpretation” in his desire “to uncover the meaning of the text *ad litteram* or *iuxta historiam*.”⁷³ Therefore, an appropriate question to be asked and answered is just what was his relationship with the Jewish people?

Jerome saw Judas as emblematic of the Jewish people as a whole, despite the assistance he received from rabbis in learning Hebrew.⁷⁴ He also wrote this invective towards the Jewish people as he was penning an acrimonious letter towards Augustine (Letter LXXV):

If, however, there is for us no alternative but to receive the Jews into the Church, along with the usages prescribed by their law; if, in short, it shall be declared lawful for them to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the **synagogues of Satan**, I will tell you my opinion of the matter, they will not become Christians, **but they will make us Jews** (emphasis added).⁷⁵

He also wrote to Augustine, “...I may boldly declare that the Jewish ceremonies are to Christians both hurtful and **fatal**; and that whoever observes them, whether he be Jew or Gentile originally, **is cast into the pit of perdition** (emphasis added).”⁷⁶ Ultimately, his commentary on Haggai that advocates that the synagogue has been replaced by the Church reveals his ultimate position.⁷⁷

⁷² Kelly, *Jerome*, 84. Kelly recounts the time when Jerome abandoned the opportunity to answer questions from Pope Damasus “to transcribe” works in Hebrew from a nearby synagogue.

⁷³ Michael Graves, ‘Judaizing’ Christian Interpretations of the Prophets as Seen by Saint Jerome,” *Vigilae Christianae* 61, no. 2 (2007): 144, 145-46. Graves utilizes for this point an article by A. Vaccari that is unfortunately in Italian and is therefore not accessible for examination.

⁷⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 230-231. Simon’s references of *Psalm 108*, *Contra Rufinus*, and *In Ezekiel* were not accessible for this paper.

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Letter LXXV*, ch. 4, 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 4, 14.

⁷⁷ Kelly, *Jerome*, 166.

Rebuilding the Church's Theological Principles: Making the "Bride of Yeshua" Jewish Again 2,000 Years Later

As this paper has initially considered the early history of the Church Age and how this period of time sought to build a wall between the Jewishness of Jesus and His disciples and what will come to be known as New Testament theology, it is now time to consider not only what has been lost by their actions, both inadvertently and intentionally, but also to seek ways to tear down a wall that has been even more disastrous for Christendom than the one in Berlin was for Europe in the latter part of the twentieth-century. Therefore, the final section of this presentation will consider three issues that were created by our Church Fathers and ways in which they can be rectified. Rectified for both theological academia and for the church laity that knows there is something more to the Old Testament but they simply do not know where to begin.

#1 -- Reading the Hebrew Scriptures for What Is There and Not for Possible Prophecies

One of the most difficult verses in all of Scripture is the seemingly innocuous Mt 2:15, "He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.'" With this verse, we are confronted with a question—was Matthew finding, inventing and/or understanding a prophecy? For Hosea 11:1 states, "When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." At first glance, and out of context of the prophet Hosea's intent, it appears to be an obvious prophetic connection; however, both passages (Matthew and Hosea) need to be understood in light of their original and Jewish intent. For even though, Manlio Simonetti was dealing with different passages in his appendix to *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, the lesson he imparts covers the Matthew-Hosea texts as well—"...the first obvious point to make is that the scriptural passages used for doctrinal ends [by many Patristic exegetes] were normally taken out of their original context and considered in isolation, producing results sometimes quite foreign to

the sense which they would have had if interpreted within their proper context."⁷⁸ And while Sidney Greidanus might defend Theodore of Mopsuestia as an example of one Church Father who did not see Matthew 2:15 as a prophecy,⁷⁹ he apparently was the exception and not the rule.

However, this approach can create problems as it does with the Hosea-Matthew connection. Was Hosea creating a prophecy with a simple phrase that would be disconnected and/or out of context from the rest of the section? Was Matthew inventing a prophecy where none was there? Or is there something missing that we as the twenty-first church do not see because we have defaulted to the church fathers and our desire to find prophecies everywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures? Therefore, this leads to a hermeneutical principle that modern exegetes should and could glean—recognize that seeking to find double fulfillment in some of the “minor” prophecies can often create more exegetical issues than they solve. Therefore, we should perhaps investigate another hermeneutical approach codified before the Patristic Age ... what did the rabbis say because perhaps the writers of the Gospel were utilizing them as well.

Rabbi Hillel, who was one of the leading scholars before Jesus began his earthly ministry, developed seven rules for interpreting Scripture. One of these rules was called *G'zerah Shavah* which teaches the idea of “equivalence of expressions” and conveys the idea that one can find a meaning (arguably an allegorical approach) and make a devotional/hermeneutical application (*drash* in Hebrew).⁸⁰ Therefore, one could argue that Matthew was not necessarily making a prophecy fulfillment connection but a Hillelian *G'zerah Shavah* application for Matthew was a

⁷⁸ Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 122.

⁷⁹ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 93.

⁸⁰ Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 35.

Jewish man who would have been exposed to the teachings of Hillel. Simonetti also acknowledges this Hillelian influence, even if he does not refer to it in these words, and this is something that was missing in the Patristic Era and in the modern church era.⁸¹ Perhaps it is something that we need to consider again as we exegete the Bible in the twenty-first century for it does not negate the Messianic prophecies that was categorically observable such as Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9 but simply allows to embrace the Jewishness of the text and the Jewishness of the authors themselves. By doing so, the wall between the testaments begins to reveal cracks in its foundation and the church body begins to discover the Jewishness of Jesus that fills in the gaps of His story for all the laity to discover.

#2 -- Finding the Truths that Early Rabbinic Thought Can Offer the Modern Church

Dr. Philip Palmer and this presenter in the seminar, "Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," argued that early rabbinic thought has a great deal to teach the modern Christian church in the understanding of the New Testament. The rationale for this argument was based upon two premises: (1) awareness of rabbinic thought assists in understanding the historical and religious contexts at play during the writings of the Gospels, epistolary material and apocalyptic sections and (2) rabbinic thought can also provide additional material in developing a response to Jewish positions which run counter to the teachings as it relates to Jesus' Messiahship and divinity. In consideration of the historical and religious contexts at play during Jesus' ministry and the writing of the Gospels, scholars, pastors, and the laity would be well-advised to remember that Jesus was categorically Jewish from the ritual of circumcision (Luke 2:22-39), to the possible ritual of manhood known as the Bar Mitzvah in Luke 2:41-51,⁸²

⁸¹ Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 8.

⁸² Amy-Jill Levine, "Introduction and Annotations of Luke," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford

to the observance of the feasts including Hanukkah of John 10:22-31. By incorporating the rabbinic thought, a third caveat can now be added to the two mentioned earlier. Nuances will no longer be missed for the laity and depth of meaning to such passages as John 10 will provide insight that once was lost for two millennia. Lost because the Church Fathers lost the core essentials of Jesus' Jewishness. Lost because the Church Fathers sought to replace the Jewish people in the Hebrew Scriptures. Lost because allegory became a more popular approach to interpretation than the plain meaning of Scripture, even if that Scripture was Levitical in nature.

#3 -- Confronting the Harmful Ramifications of Replacement Theology

The Hebrew Scriptures should not be forgotten by the modern church but neither should it be utilized as a means to replace the Jewish people as God's Chosen People. This was the mistake that the Church Fathers made in the early days of church history. This was a mistake that the church made for more than a millennia during the Middle Ages. This is a mistake that many churches continue to make today.

This mistake is made not only because they have "forgotten" that the Bible was written by Jewish authors to an originally Jewish audience about a Jewish Messiah with the message that the Jewish people were to be light to the Gentiles ... and this is the message of both testaments.⁸³

This mistake is made because they have also chosen to either allegorize, perhaps accidentally, for

University Press, 2011), 103. Levine, interestingly enough a non-Jewish believer in Jesus but a professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University, does not believe that the Luke 2 account of the pilgrimage is Jesus' Bar Mitzvah event. Craig Evans surmises that Luke was drawing a parallel to the beginning ministry date of Samuel – Craig Evans, *Luke*, in the New International Biblical Commentary: New Testament Series, NT ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 46. Both E. Earle Ellis and Norval Geldenhuys believe the trip to Jerusalem at the age of twelve was in anticipation of his Bar Mitzvah the next year. E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, in the New Century Bible Commentary, NT ed. Matthew Black (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996 rpt.), 85 and Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction Exposition and Notes*, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975 rpt.), 126.

⁸³ Simonetti, 8. Simonetti was not as expressive as this author; however, enough of the connotation was present that a footnote was necessary.

application purposes or abandon preaching from the Tanakh because the narrative genre is too difficult to preach when everything must have an application in this day and age. However, there are application possibilities in the narrative genres of the historical stories of the Old Testament. There are application possibilities even in the book of Leviticus (i.e., holiness). However, it takes work and a recognition that these lessons were first for the Jewish people and then for the rest of us ... just like Romans 1:16 tells us. There is no need to replace and/or supersede the Jewish people but simply enjoy the fact that we have been grafted into the same root and can enjoy the rewards from this fact.

The Church Fathers have something to teach the modern age because they were among the first to examine the Scriptures in a post-Jesus world. They made mistakes. They created problems that we as a twenty-first century Christian model are still trying to rectify; however, their love the Word of God is evident. Therefore, we can learn from them and at times we can even emulate them as long as we maintain the twin concepts of balance and careful scrutiny of their exegesis. However, the one error that we in the modern church age must never make that the Patristic exegetes made is to forget that Christianity is nothing more than Judaism Realized.

For when the Patristics forgot that the "Jesus was Jewish," the door becomes open for doctrinal error and the church will often lose its forcefulness and impact in the modern age. The Wall that divides the Scriptures will remain and the Wall between the Church and the world will continue to divide the lost from the Gospel that is present from Genesis to Revelation, from the covenant promises of Abraham to the realization of Jesus as our High Priest in Hebrews. And to paraphrase the words of Ronald Reagan, "Mr. Chrysostom, Tear Down This Wall."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Portions of this paper have been extracted from Ph.D. seminar papers at Liberty University -- Augustine, Latin Fathers, Patristic Theology, Patristic Exegesis, and Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. The author is grateful for the professors who guided these seminars as well as her project partner in the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, Dr. Philip Palmer, who was mentioned earlier.