

CHRYSTOSTOM, CHRISTOLOGY, AND ANTI-JUDAISM:
A RESPONSE TO ROSEMARY RUETHER'S *FAITH AND FRATRICIDE*

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a considerable generation of scholarly material chronicling the relationship between Christianity and theologically motivated anti-Judaism. These concerns have been primarily motivated by a sincere desire to reexamine the role Christian tradition has played in the formation of secular anti-Semitism. After the Shoah, it is no longer morally defensible to treat the rise of anti-Semitism as a social aberration whose spontaneous generation stands in stark contrast to the most fundamental tenets of the Christian tradition. Instead, Christians as Christians must begin to acknowledge how influential Christian theology has been in the historic manifestation of secular anti-Semitism. It is a historic reality that the emergence of modern anti-Semitism would have been largely unintelligible without the foundation laid by centuries of Christian inspired anti-Judaism. In a profoundly disturbing way, the Christian tradition has been instrumental in the historical transmission of anti-Judaism. With each passing decade it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Shoah was not the culmination of forces external to the history of the Christian tradition, but the result of forces which appear to be intimately connected to the very core of the Christian faith. Even if Christianity's theologically based anti-Judaism does not immediately translate into secular anti-Semitism, centuries of Christian teaching have undeniably helped facilitate the normalization of Jewish deprecation and destruction.

Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*

Instrumental to germinating this discussion has been the work of Rosemary Ruether, whose controversial thesis has been met with both academic acclaim and scholarly scrutiny. In Ruether's most refined work on the subject, *Faith and Fratricide*:

The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism,¹ the examination cuts to the very core of the Christian faith: does the Christian tradition's most essential affirmation of Jesus as the Messiah necessitate, whether implicitly or explicitly, a absolute negation of the Jewish faith? For its relative size, *Faith and Fratricide* has spawned an incredible wealth of critical assessments, both pertinent to Ruether's thesis and to the overall relationship between Christianity and the theological foundations of anti-Judaism. Scholars have provided extensive criticism of Ruether's argument, citing her proclivity for historic generalizations, glaring over-simplifications, and strategic omissions. The sheer quantity of critical assessments given to Ruether's argument certainly reveals something in regard to the accuracy of her thesis. Even so, the very nature of the Ruether's considerable thesis is one which resonates deeply in the hearts of committed Christians, and thus, cannot be rightly ignored.

According to Ruether, Christianity's antithetical relationship with Judaism was developed as the "left hand" of a christological interpretation of Jewish scripture.² The evolution of the Christian exegetical tradition was profoundly shaped by the polemical conflict between the messianic interpretation of the Church and the conventional midrash of the Synagogue. During the period of the primitive Church, the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue was primarily in scriptural interpretation, with a heightened emphasis upon scriptural exegesis pertaining to the messiah. Ruether suggests that as the early Christian community began to develop its christological language through the process of scriptural exegesis, it came into immediate conflict with the established

¹ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, with an introduction by Gregory Baum (New York: The Seabury Press, Inc., 1974).

² *Ibid.*, 121.

messianic midrash of the scribal tradition.³ In contrast, second-temple Judaism, which possessed an alternative messianic expectation, could not reconcile the seeming discontinuity between the proclamations of the Christian Church with Judaism's traditional understanding of the messianic vocation.⁴ As heir to the interpretive traditions of the Pharisaic sect, first and second-century Judaism possessed an exegetical tradition which interpreted the coming of the messiah as manifest in historical events, intimately coupled with the eschatological establishment of the kingdom of God and the final triumph of God's righteousness over evil.⁵ Christianity, which was forced to abandon its overtly eschatological perspective after its messianic expectation did not materialize with the historical expediency anticipated,⁶ instead, spiritualized its conception of the messiah,⁷ and institutionalized the redemptive attributes of the messianic age into the Christian Church. With the divergence of the Church and the Synagogue, a seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy emerged between Christianity, which perceived the messianic prophecies as fulfilled, and Judaism, which continued to assert that they had not.

The conflict over a shared religious tradition created an atmosphere of tension between the forces of Church and Synagogue. Though the contours of the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue ostensibly operated in the language of ritual observance, law, and covenant, the source of the conflict was situated within the Christian community's new understanding of salvation as mediated through faith in Jesus

³ Ibid., 64.

⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Anti-Semitism in Christian Theology," *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?*, ed., Eva Fleischner (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc., 1977), 80.

⁵ Joseph Klausner, "The Jewish and Christian Messiah", *Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 520.

⁶ Ibid., 529.

⁷ Ibid., 526.

Christ.⁸ In Ruether's estimation, this alternative understanding of salvific dispensation *exclusively* available to the Christian community produced a method of theological speculation which was inexorably bound to a more exegetically based polemic. In the ongoing effort to theologically justify its monopoly on messianic interpretation, Christianity simultaneously developed an aggressive apologetic to combat and discredit the authority of its Jewish rival. Christianity, which sought to establish the legitimacy of its own claims, began to develop a polemical tradition insisting that the Jews had fundamentally misinterpreted the prophetic scriptures,⁹ consequently divesting Judaism of any continuing religious credibility. The idea of the "blind Synagogue" contrasted against the "believing Church"¹⁰ continued to receive further refinement until the idea reached its apex under the *adversus Judaeos*¹¹ tradition of the early Church Fathers, ultimately implicating the Jews in the execution of their own messiah, which after the Nicene declaration was construed as the height of treason, and a "crime of cosmic regicide."¹² For this grave transgression, the Jews have incurred the God's unyielding enmity both in this world and the next. The historic destruction of the Jewish temple and expulsion from the city of Jerusalem were interpreted by Christians as evidence of a reversal of Judaism's religious fortunes, loss of divine election, and incursion of God's eternal wrath.¹³

⁸ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 78.

⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹¹ *Adversus Judaeos* literature represents a compendium of anti-Judaic sermons, dialogues, and theological treatises written by many different Christian authors beginning in the second-century to at least the eighteenth-century CE. In Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide*, the *adversus Judaeos* literary genre is identified with the Greek and Latin Fathers of the second to the sixth century of the Christian era, pp. 122-3.

¹² Ibid., 129.

¹³ Ruether, "Anti-Semitism", 81.

Proceeding centuries witnessed an expansion of Christian scriptural exegesis, continued exposition on the “blindness” of the Synagogue, and the projection of the Jews as eternal reprobates – “Christ-killers” who descend from a long tradition of apostasy and death. In an effort to further emphasize the division between Synagogue and Church, Christian theologians glossed over the positive descriptions of Judaism or Jewish law in favor of more negative extremes. According to Ruether, the evidence for this assertion was explored by Christians through a selective reading of the Old Testament. Rejecting the scriptural interpretation of the Jews, Christian theologians choose instead to recast the Old Testament to suit a more anti-Judaic perspective. By ripping prophetic literature out of context, Christian theologians were able to wield Jewish scripture as yet another example of Judaism’s historic discordance with God. Reading its own existent antipathy with Judaism into the text, Ruether asserts that the Christian community developed a “schizophrenic” or dialectical tradition of exegetical commentary. The prophetic *promises* foretold to the future Israel did not apply to the Jews, but to eschatological prophecies fulfilled by the Christian Church. Inversely, prophetic *judgments* applied to the reprobate people – the Jews and their religious traditions.¹⁴ The historic continuity between this supposedly depraved tradition and contemporary Judaism was made evident by the Church Fathers through the pejorative assertion that the Jews continued to exhibit the same level of depravity as their scripturally inspired caricatures.¹⁵ For the purposes of the Christian Church, this oversimplification served to discredit and vilify any continuing observance of the Jewish law.¹⁶ With perpetual exercise, this exegetical technique was to instill in the Christian community the sense that the Jewish religion was

¹⁴ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 132.

¹⁵ Ruether, “Anti-Semitism,” 83.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

nothing more than a hollow caricature – the *real* apostate religion of the covenant.¹⁷ It is Ruether's overarching thesis that this theologically sustained attack on Judaism, fueled by the fires of christology, resulted in the promulgation of a distinctively Christian anti-Judaism which was to eventually bear the first fruits of secular anti-Semitism.

The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition

The Christian tradition is one which has been inexorably bound to its literature. The literature produced within the first formative centuries of the Christian religious tradition, including those writings found within the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, offer a glimpse into how early Christian theologians determined normative Christian belief and practice. To Ruether, the *adversus Judaeos* tradition functions as the evolutionary paradigm of Christian anti-Judaic “midrash”: a literary collection of anti-Judaic texts with similar thematic devices and theologically sustained apologetic.¹⁸ As part of an evolving Christian identity, the *adversus Judaeos* tradition is not a simple recitation of stock literary devices, but a malleable tradition which has been shaped by the contributions of each Christian author, molded according to particular contexts, and arranged for specific rhetorical purposes.¹⁹ The materials of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition are usually categorized according to a number of distinctive themes, and arranged according to the proclivity of the editor: (1) the Jews are guilty of idolatry; (2) the Jews have always rejected and killed the prophets; (3) it was predicted in scriptures that the Jews would reject Christ; (4) the Jews cannot interpret the Old Testament scriptures; (5) the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple are evidence of God's wrath against the Jews for rejecting Christ; (6) the Jews have lost their election and have been replaced by

¹⁷ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 94.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

the new election of the Christian Church; (7) the Jews are ultimately responsible for the death of Christ. The works contained in the *adversus Judaeos* materials reach across a number of literary genres: manifest in dialogues, theological treatises, dramatic stories, and polemical sermons. Various compilations of these similar anti-Judaic texts were formally assembled and popularized as early as the third-century by the African Father Cyprian, extending through both time and space and into the six-century in the collection preserved by the Spanish Father Isidore of Seville.²⁰ Similar examples also existed in the fourth century.²¹

Ruether asserts that the persistence of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition in Christian history cannot be simply dismissed as an aberration of Christian thought or the peripheral concern of a select number of anti-Judaic thinkers within the Church. By continually perpetuating the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, Christianity was participating in the conscious act of Jewish negation and Christian self-affirmation; the sheer historical perseverance of the literature is indicative of how completely it had been absorbed into the language of classical Christian theology.

According to Ruether:

In actuality, the *adversus Judaeos* tradition represents the overall method of Christian exegesis of the Old Testament. Any sermons, commentaries, or teachings based on scriptural exegesis of the Old Testament, and even of the New Testament texts where Jews are mentioned, will reflect this tradition of anti-Judaic midrash. *It was virtually*

²⁰ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135-425)*, trans. H. McKeating (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 154.

²¹ Friedrich Heer, *God's First Love: Christians and Jews over Two Thousand Years*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970), 384.

*impossible for the Christian preacher or exegete to teach scripturally at all without alluding to the anti-Judaic theses [italics added].*²²

For Ruether, the exegetical method of the Church Fathers inherently necessitated a systematic repudiation of Judaism. As such, the anti-Judaic tractates of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition logically extend as the “left hand” of a “christological hermeneutic.”²³ In Ruether’s estimation, this early method of scriptural interpretation not only had a tremendous influence upon the formation of a distinctive Christian identity, but also influenced that way in which Christianity continued to express its relationship to Judaism and to the existent Jewish community.

As illustrated above, Ruether appeals to the anti-Judaic polemic contained within the *adversus Judaeos* tradition as indicative of the fundamental relationship between Christianity’s christological affirmation and theologically justified anti-Judaism. In doing so, she relies heavily on the oft-cited works of Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Augustine – making extensive use of some of the most virulent and iconic anti-Judaic polemic in the Christian tradition. While Ruether provides an excellent analysis of the anti-Judaic themes contained within the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, her analysis of the uniquely *christological* aspects of these materials is less thoroughly illustrated. It is rather revealing that Ruether appears to balk at the task of demonstrating the actual inter-connection between christology and theological substantiated anti-Judaism as it actually emerged in the *adversus Judaeos* tradition. Allowing this relationship to fall outside the scope of her investigation, Ruether admits

²² Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 121.

²³ Ibid.

that, “The christological side of the Christian hermeneutic cannot be covered in detail.”²⁴ Regarding the scriptural mechanics of the Christian hermeneutic, “There has been no attempt to treat this christological side of the anti-Judaic tradition in this study.”²⁵ From a scholarly perspective, this reticence is rather disconcerting. Speaking as a concerned theologian, Ruether’s reluctance to engage the crux of her own argument is both academically frustrating and potentially disquieting. Without enunciating the perimeters of this crucial dynamic, the cogency of Ruether’s entire thesis is certainly diminished, and becomes subject to extensive criticism. For this thesis, this seemingly glaring discontinuity has created the opportunity to examine the validity of Ruether’s theological proposal.

Chrysostom in the *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition

In Ruether’s discussion of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, no Church Father is more fully associated with the anti-Judaic tendencies of the early Church period than fourth-century theologian-rhetorician John Chrysostom (d. 407). In the field of Christian anti-Judaism, Chrysostom’s eight anti-Judaic sermons have been the subject of extensive scholarly documentation.²⁶ Delivered in Antioch between 386-8 CE, Chrysostom’s eight anti-Judaic homilies, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*,²⁷ are often considered to be the most infamous anti-Judaic sermons contained in the entire *adversus Judaeos* tradition.²⁸ According to Ruether, “The sermons of John Chrysostom are easily the most

²⁴ Ibid., 122.

²⁵ Ibid., 161.

²⁶ The figure of John Chrysostom is discussed in the third chapter of *Faith and Fratricide*, “The Negation of the Jews in the Church Fathers”; no other figure receives as extensive a treatment, pp. 170-181.

²⁷ John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, *The Fathers of the Church*, 68 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1973).

²⁸ Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria’s Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 19, states that Chrysostom’s homilies are “the most vituperative and vindictive attack on the Jews from Christian antiquity.”

violent and tasteless of the anti-Judaic literature of the period we have studied.”²⁹ These homilies were delivered to Antioch’s Christian congregation, and ostensibly directed against “Judaizing” Christians, warning them against the dangers of associating with the Jews and the Jewish religion.³⁰ However, since the scope of Chrysostom’s anti-Judaic discourse is so large, it can only be discussed in modest detail in this thesis. This thesis therefore intends to streamline the process by illuminating the most fundamental tenets contained in Chrysostom’s anti-Judaic sermons, with the most prominent anti-Judaic themes of the *adversus Judaeos* literary tradition.

Following in the example of his forebears, Chrysostom believed that the practices of Jewish life and ritual constituted a very real threat not only to the faith of his congregation, but to the spiritual integrity of the entire Christian Church.³¹ Accordingly, the focus of Chrysostom’s attack was not necessarily directed against Judaizing Christians, but against the greater appeal of the Jewish religion in general. Thus to a modern reader, the rhetorical invective exhibited in Chrysostom’s homilies appears to closely parallel the sentiments of modern-day anti-Semitism.³² Though Chrysostom’s homilies rely heavily on several of the stock literary devices and themes inherited from the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, Chrysostom goes beyond the usual restraint of his predecessors. Representing the emergence of a new epoch in Jewish-Christian relations, Chrysostom’s homilies against the Jews appear to embody every major rhetorical

²⁹ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 173.

³⁰ See Mary C. Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing? Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 55, states: “those he [Chrysostom] attacked were ‘Judaizers,’ Christians attracted to the celebration of Jewish festivals and to the practice of Jewish customs.” Certain members of Chrysostom’s congregation appear to have been actively participating in Jewish festivals, rituals, and other religious observances.

³¹ *Disc.* 8.4.7; 219.

³² Simon, *Verus Israel*, 395, states: “St. John Chrysostom deserves to be set in the front rank among the anti-Semites of all-time.” See also, *Disc.* 1.7.1; 25-6.

technique which would be utilized in the development of modern anti-Semitism. In this sense, Chrysostom's eight homilies serve a special interest in the evolution of theologically motivated anti-Judaism. Chrysostom states: "Shall I tell you of their plundering, their covetousness, their abandonment of the poor, their thefts, their cheating in trade? The whole day long will not be enough to give you account of these things."³³ On other occasions Chrysostom labels the Jews as cannibals,³⁴ Christ killers,³⁵ and, metaphorically-speaking, animals fit for slaughter.³⁶ It is true that previous Christian authors in the *adversus Judaeos* tradition were never shy in about denouncing the religious validity of Judaism, but even so, these denunciations do not appear to approach the fevered pitch laid by Chrysostom.³⁷ The homilies of Chrysostom are unique not only in their unbridled attack upon Judaism, but also in the reconfiguration of their scope. For Chrysostom does not just stop at attacking Judaism, but also focuses his attack upon a specific community of Jews.³⁸ Adapting the language of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition to fit his own context, Chrysostom transgresses standard distinctions, fixing in his crosshairs both the Jews of Antioch and the dangerous habits of the Judaizing Christians who were putting the rest of his congregation in dire peril.³⁹

Explanation of the Thesis

No responsible theologian could ever attempt to exonerate Chrysostom for his anti-Judaic rhetoric, or excuse Christianity in general from the difficult task of examining

³³ *Disc.* 1.7.1; 25-6.

³⁴ *Disc.* 5.4.2; 110.

³⁵ *Disc.* 8.5.4; 221.

³⁶ *Disc.* 1.2.4-5., states that: "When brute animals feed from a full manger, they grown plump and become more obstinate and hard to hold in check; they endure neither the yoke of Christ, nor did they pull the plow of his teaching.... Although such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter."

³⁷ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 217.

³⁸ *Disc.* 5.12.12; 144-5.

³⁹ *Disc.* 3.1.3; 48.

the role Christian theology has played in the formation of secular anti-Semitism. Christians are incessantly obliged to uproot the theological foundations of modern anti-Semitism in every context in which it appears. But what is intended in this discussion is a critical examination of Ruether's thesis as it pertains to one of the most caustic anti-Judaic preachers of the early Church period, John Chrysostom. If Ruether's theory is correct, the relationship between christology and anti-Judaism should be incontrovertibly manifest in Chrysostom's most vehemently anti-Judaic materials. What one discovers, however, is that the anti-Judaism of John Chrysostom was not the inevitable outgrowth of his christology, but the product of a more contestable relationship which accounts for socio-political factors as well as theological considerations. Apart from Ruether, it is important to note that the anti-Judaic themes contained in these influential documents were produced and consumed during a period of religious strife, persecution, and competition. Like any historical figure, Chrysostom's theology was in part a product of his historical circumstance. In a complex way, the various factors which influenced the production of these materials, in turn, reciprocally affected the development of Chrysostom's anti-Judaism. To state the presupposition of this investigation more succinctly: the relationship between Chrysostom's christology his anti-Judaism is more convoluted and less direct than Ruether would suggest. Ruether's rather peripheral rendering of the christological aspect of her argument must be brought into careful consideration. Ideally, providing a measured analysis of Ruether's controversial thesis should only serve to benefit Christianity's ability to adequately grapple with the dilemma of modern-day anti-Semitism. This inquiry hopes to further this essential task by

examining several of the most pertinent works of John Chrysostom to explore the possible roots of his own anti-Judaism.

This thesis argues that the contours of the relationship between Christianity's christological affirmation and theological anti-Judaism cannot be as neatly delineated as Ruether's thesis might suggest. If Christianity is to take literally the recommendations of Ruether, a total re-visioning of Christianity's conception of messiah,⁴⁰ there is little evidence to suggest that such a recommendation would permanently resolve the problem, much less find acceptance among the Christian community.⁴¹ Anti-Judaism, or especially rather anti-Semitism, is the culmination of both historical circumstance and the complex interplay of events which serve to shape perceptions of meaning, structure, and authority in the world.⁴² The way in which John Chrysostom expresses his attitude in regard to Jews and Judaism as it pertains to his conception of Christology comprises the primary focus of the subsequent study. The principal notion girding the entire discussion is as follows: that the relationship between Christology and anti-Judaism is *not* a relationship based upon *direct* causation, but exists as the outgrowth of a constellation of phenomenological, theological, and social correlations. In principle, this assertion should remain nominally apparent when transposed into a variety of contexts, even manifestly evident in circumstances surrounding the infamously anti-Judaic tracts of John Chrysostom.

⁴⁰ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 246-251.

⁴¹ Thomas A. Idinopulos and Roy Bowen Ward, "Is Christology Inherently Anti-Semitic? A Critical Review of Rosemary Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 45, no. 02, 193-214, offers a more comprehensive critique of Ruether's theological recommendations as well as a more substantial critique of Ruether's general thesis.

⁴² David Nirenberg, "The Two Faces of Secular Violence against the Jews," *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed., Constance Hoffman Berman (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 397.

Contrary to what Ruether may assert, no definite relationship between anti-Judaism and Christology can be incontrovertibly demonstrated. What such a bold statement does *not* mean is that this relationship cannot exist in an alternatively obscured, labyrinthine reality; it *does* affirm that the relationship between Christology and anti-Judaism is subject to definite external factors and further nuance. Such is also the case with John Chrysostom's anti-Judaism. The study will presently examine Chrysostom's eight most infamous anti-Judaic homilies, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, and two of his apologetic works: *Discourse on Blessed Babylas and against the Greeks*, and *Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God*.⁴³ Though posterity has preserved a veritable cornucopia of Chrysostom's work, for the purpose of examining Chrysostom's anti-Judaism, the present study will principally focus on these materials. For in no other of Chrysostom's works do Jews and Judaism figure so prominently.

Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*

Since the conclusion of the first-century C.E., the precise nature of the relationship between the Church and the Synagogue has been an issue of contention within the Christian community. As late of the fourth-century, the Church's occasionally ambiguous relationship to Judaism had been punctuated with instances of Christian communities adopting Jewish ritualistic practices and religious observances, interpreting their Christian faith as an allegorical continuation of Judaism, especially among the religious practices of Eastern Christians.⁴⁴ The religious phenomenon of "Judaizing," Christians practicing both circumcision and baptism, observing the Sabbath and Sunday

⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Discourse on Blessed Babylas and Against the Greeks, and A Demonstration Against the Pagans that Christ is God*, trans. Margaret A. Schatkin and Paul W. Harkins, *The Fathers of the Church*, 73 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983).

⁴⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 320-1.

Mass, celebrating Jewish feasts and fasts as well as their Christian alternatives, and continuing to calculate the date of Easter according to the Jewish calendar, often developed in cities such as Antioch where there was a vibrant and visible Jewish community.⁴⁵ By the late fourth century, there was a general consensus among the Church Fathers that the observance of Torah challenged the idea that salvation came exclusively through Christ; the salvation of an individual Christian is jeopardized by sharing customs with the Jews.⁴⁶ Chrysostom portrays the dichotomy between the Christian and the Jew as an absolute line which cannot be crossed. If the Christian religion is correct, then the Jewish religion is wrong; there can be no alternative:

Finally, if the ceremonies of the Jews move you to admiration, what do you have in common with us [Christians]? If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies. But if ours are true, as they *are* true, theirs are filled with deceit. I am not speaking of the Scriptures. Heaven forbid! It was the scriptures which took me by the hand and led me to Christ. But I am talking about the ungodliness and present madness of the Jews. [Disc. 1.6.5; 23-4]

Chrysostom is adamant in his total repudiation of the Jewish practices. The same themes which permeate the *adversus Judaeos* tradition are vividly illustrated in Chrysostom's homilies, and often without restraint. In the new dispensation provided through faith in Jesus Christ, God has no further relationship with the Synagogue. Now that the law of the Moses has been abrogated by the new law of Jesus Christ,⁴⁷ Judaism

⁴⁵ Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula, Montana: Scholarly Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1978), 6. See also Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1983), 56.

⁴⁶ Disc. 4.3.5; 78.

⁴⁷ Disc. 5.12.7; 142-3.

has no continuing legitimacy.⁴⁸ Yet the Jews remain obstinate, feverishly clinging to the law now that it is passed, ironically failing to observe the law when God demanded observance:

I call it a transgression because their observances do not occur at the proper time. Once there was a proper time when they had to follow these observances, but now there is not. That is why what was once according to the Law is now opposed to it.... the Jews dishonor the Law and trample underfoot God's commandments because they are always doing everything contrary to God's decrees [*sic*]. When God wished them to fast, they got fat and flabby; when God does not wish them to fast, they get obstinate and do fast; when he wished them to offer sacrifices, they rushed off to idols; when he does not wish them to celebrate the feast days, they are all eager to observe them. [*Disc.* 4.3.9; 80, *Disc.* 4.4.2; 81]

With the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the old Jewish law possesses no further utility. For Chrysostom, the Jewish law was restricted in both time and space: first, the law was merely intended as a temporary dispensation until the law could be completed in Christ;⁴⁹ second, the law could only be fully observed in the city of Jerusalem.⁵⁰ In Chrysostom's estimation, the city of Jerusalem existed as the focal point of the entire Jewish religion. With the final destruction of the temple priesthood, Judaism has become an ineffective religion. Without the city, the Jews were unable to legitimately read the Torah,⁵¹ offer sacrifices,⁵² or legally observe the Pasch.⁵³ The observance of the Jews is but the "type," a fleeting shadow which has dissipated in the

⁴⁸ *Disc.* 1.3.1; 10-1.

⁴⁹ *Disc.* 2.2.7; 42.

⁵⁰ *Disc.* 7.1.5; 194.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Disc.* 4.6.7; 90.

⁵³ *Disc.* 4.4.8; 84.

coming “reality” of Christ.⁵⁴ For with the destruction of Jerusalem, God has dramatically repealed the Mosaic Law in light of the surpassing glory of the new, more spiritual law of Christ.⁵⁵ Chrysostom provides an example drawn from scripture to prove his point:

This surely made it clear that the old priesthood was ended and that another much better and more sublime priesthood has been brought in to replace it. When we admit this, we should also agree that another way of life suited to the new priesthood will be brought in and another Law given, and clearly this is ours. Paul prepared us for this when he said: “When the priesthood is changed, it is necessary that a change of law be made also, for the author of these is one.”⁵⁶ [Disc. 7.5.10; 198]

Continuing in the apologetic of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem occupies a crucial role in Chrysostom’s polemic against Judaism. No argument, no prophetic witness testifies as powerfully against the Jews as the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, functioning to historically validate every conceivable case that could be made against Judaism.⁵⁷ But yet the Jews continue to remain defiant, stubbornly refusing to surrender their “madness for offering victims.”⁵⁸ Chrysostom chronicles three separate occasions when the “shameless” Jews attempted to restore the temple, foolishly resisting God’s divine command.⁵⁹ Now that the age of temple worship and sacrifice has passed; all who join in the illegitimate assemblies of the Synagogue join in assembly with actors, harlots, thieves, wild animals, and demons:

Many, I know, respect the Jews and think that their present way of life is a venerable one.

This is why I hasten to uproot and tear out this deadly opinion. I said that the synagogue

⁵⁴ Disc. 3.4.1; 59.

⁵⁵ Disc. 5.12.10; 143-4.

⁵⁶ Heb 7.12

⁵⁷ Disc. 5.12.11; 144.

⁵⁸ Disc. 4.6.7; 90.

⁵⁹ Disc. 5.11.3; 137.

is no better than a theater and I bring forward a prophet as my witness. Surely the Jews are not more deserving of belief than their prophets. "You had a harlot's brow; you became shameless before all."⁶⁰ Where a harlot has set herself up, that place is a brothel. But the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. Jeremiah said: "Your house has become for me the den of a hyena."⁶¹ He does not simply say "of a wild beast," but "of a filthy wild beast," and again: "I have abandoned my house, I have cast off my inheritance."⁶² But when God forsakes a people, what hope of salvation is left? When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons. [*Disc.* 1.3.1; 10-1]

Jewish ritual has been completely obliterated. The vestiges of the Jewish faith have been permanently revoked. No longer do the Jews possess the prophets, the Ark, or the Spirit of God.⁶³ God has effectively removed all sources of Jewish worship. All things which the Jews held solemn have now vanished. God not only allowed the temple to be destroyed, but also removed the objects which "had their source from heaven above: the fire, the voice, the flashing of the stones, and all other such things."⁶⁴ Though the Jews retain the scriptures, they cannot properly interpret them. Chrysostom finds this all the more reason to hate the Jews:

Do not tell me that the Law and the books of the prophets are there. These do not make it a holy place. What is the better thing? Is it better to have the books there or to speak out the truths they contain? Obviously it is better to speak out these truths and to keep them in your heart. Tell me, what about this? The devil quoted Scripture.... This is my strongest reason for hating the synagogue: it does have the Law and the prophets. And

⁶⁰ Jer 3.3

⁶¹ Jer 7.11, 12.9

⁶² Jer 12.7

⁶³ *Disc.* 6.4.1; 158-9.

⁶⁴ *Disc.* 6.4.3; 159-60.

now I hate it more than if it had none of these. Why is this? Because the Law and the prophets they have a great allurements and many a snare to attract the more simple-minded sort of men. [Disc. 6.6.8-9; 170-1]

What is especially notable about Chrysostom's eight anti-Judaic homilies is that he never once attempts to evangelize to the Jews. Nor does Chrysostom offer the eschatological hope that the Jews might be converted on the last day. Instead, Chrysostom redirects his evangelical energy toward the singular task of salvaging "Judaizing" Christians, appearing completely disinterested in the prospect of Jewish conversion. Chrysostom rails against the Jews: "You did slay Christ, you did lift violent hands against the Master, you did spill his precious blood. This is why you have no chance for atonement, excuse, or defense."⁶⁵ In this regard, Chrysostom's eight homilies help to document an important shift in the Christian-Jewish relations in late antiquity, where the rhetoric of religiously-based anti-Judaism appears to have toppled into uncompromising rhetoric of ethnically-based anti-Semitism. Chrysostom does not confine his attack to the Jewish religion, but blurs the distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism by viciously attacking the very Jews of Antioch. In Chrysostom's imagination, *all* Jews, *these* Jews, are a reprobate people, utterly hopeless, individuals who would eagerly sacrifice their children to demons and whose souls are the very dwelling places of demons:

Do you see that demons dwell in their souls and that these demons are more dangerous than the ones of old?... Must you share a greeting with them and exchange a bare word? Must you not turn away from them since they are the common disgrace and infection of the whole world? Have they not come to every form of wickedness? Have not all the

⁶⁵ Disc. 6.2.10; 154.

prophets spent themselves making many and long speeches of accusation against them?

What tragedy, what manner of lawlessness have they not eclipsed by their blood-

guiltiness? They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons. [*Disc.* 1.7.7; 29-30]

But for all his uncomplimentary rhetoric, Chrysostom stops short of recommending the use of violence against the Jews – though his tactics for converting Judaizing Christians could be considered rather aggressive.⁶⁶ Though it is impossible to definitively assess Chrysostom's success in dealing with Antioch's Judaizing faction, clues taken from within his sermons may indicate that he was initially unsuccessful.⁶⁷ While there are no recorded incidents of Christian violence against the Jews during the course of Chrysostom's lifetime, violence did erupt against the Jews relatively early in the fifth century. Sporadic outbreaks of anti-Judaic violence continued to be an issue in Antioch well into the sixth century until conditions finally reached the point where all Jews were forcibly expelled from the city.⁶⁸ However, Chrysostom's sermons do not appear to project any immediate significance beyond the city of Antioch until his sermons were copied, cataloged, and published as part of the larger compendium of the *adversus Judaeos* patristic literature.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Chrysostom recommends engaging Judaizing Christians in conversation through such subtle rhetorical techniques as asking them: "Tell me, do you approve of the Jews for crucifying Christ, for blaspheming him as they still do, and for calling him a lawbreaker?", *Disc.* 8.5.4; 221-2. Other notable recommendations include home invasions, *Disc.* 8.5.3; 221, and dragging Judaizers out of their homes in order to break their observance of the Jewish fasts, *Disc.* 6.7.10; 175-6. More notably, *Disc.* 1.4.5; 15, states: "Even if you must impose restraint, even if you must use force, even if you must treat him ill and obstinately, do everything to save him from fellowship with those who slew Christ."

⁶⁷ *Disc.* 2.3.5; 44-5, indicates that Chrysostom's was initially unsuccessful in his attempt to dissuade certain members of his congregation from attending the Jewish festivals. The fact that Chrysostom repeatedly found it necessary to return to the topic of "Judaizing" on eight different occasions over a period of two years (386-8 C.E.) is similarly revealing.

⁶⁸ Carl Kraeling, "The Jewish Community in Antioch," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932), 13. qtd. in Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 180.

⁶⁹ Friedrich Heer, *God's First Love*, 63.

Christology in *Discourses*

As Ruether would expect, Chrysostom's *Discourses* are augmented with an assortment of christological proof-texts and themes. While some semblance of christology is manifestly evident in the text, these statements are by no means representative of a systematic christological interpretation. Yet, in order to test the validity of Ruether's thesis, even these basic christological statements must be brought into consideration. Predictably, Chrysostom conforms to the attitude exhibited by the *adversus Judaeos* tradition when he states that the Jews have consequently fallen out of God's favor due to their rejection Christ. By refusing to submit to the yoke of Christ, the Jews have "cast yourselves out of the kingdom of heaven, and you have made yourselves subject to the rule of men."⁷⁰ Christ's power has also been historically manifested in the destruction of the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the dispersal of the Jewish people. These historical facts affirm the authority of the Christian faith:

You Jews did crucify him. But after he died on the cross, he then destroyed your city; it was then that he dispersed your people; it was then that he scattered your nation over the face of the earth. In doing so, he teaches us that he is risen, alive, and in heaven. [*Disc.* 5.1.7; 99-100]

Chrysostom can also turn to the prophecies of Christ recorded in scripture to prove the legitimacy of the Christian Gospel. For if Christ was just a "mere man" as both the Jews and the heretics insist,⁷¹ the Church would have readily collapsed under the centuries of persecution it was forced to endure. But as is it, the Church not only escaped

⁷⁰ *Disc.* 1.2.4; 7-8.

⁷¹ *Disc.* 1.1.6; 4-5.

the time of tribulation – but actually *thrived* because of it.⁷² The miraculous growth of the Church can only be understood in light of Christ's prophecy: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not overcome it."⁷³ Likewise, Chrysostom points to Christ's prophecy indicating that the gospel message would cause familial division.⁷⁴ Chrysostom suggests from this: "How could he have known this if he was just another man out of the crowd?"⁷⁵ Chrysostom also points to the story of the woman who anointed Christ with perfume from the alabaster jar, how the deed would be told around the world.⁷⁶ Chrysostom reassures his audience: "Certainly we do hear her story told in all the churches."⁷⁷ No Jew could deny that the Church did not cover the whole world. According to Chrysostom, because it is not within the nature of a mere man to prophesy so authentically, the burden of proof is now upon the Jews to refute such overwhelming evidence.⁷⁸

Comparable examples of prophetic exegesis exist in Chrysostom's eight anti-Judaic homilies, all of which appear to operate under a similar assumption: history as evidence of theology – that the supreme power of Christ, and by association Christianity, is visibly exhibited in uncontested historical events. For Chrysostom, divine power is reflected in history, and thus, historical events can be interpreted as acts of divine intervention. In Chrysostom's rhetoric, the clash between Church and Synagogue, between Christ and the Jews, is punctuated by the demonstration of divine power in history. By pointing to the success of the Church, the destruction of the temple, and the

⁷² *Disc.* 5.2.8-9; 102-4.

⁷³ *Disc.* 5.2.8; 102-3; Mt. 16.18

⁷⁴ Mt. 10.34

⁷⁵ *Disc.* 5.3.12; 107.

⁷⁶ Mt. 26.9

⁷⁷ *Disc.* 5.2.3; 101.

⁷⁸ *Disc.* 5.3.12; 108.

fulfillment of prophetic scripture, Chrysostom relies on the foundation of history to support his apology against the Jews. In essence, historical exegesis became a permanent fixture of Chrysostom's developing theology. This exegetical technique is further demonstrated not only in Chrysostom's *Discourses*, but also in his most overtly apologetic tracts, *Discourse on Blessed Babylas and against the Greeks*, and *Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God*.

Chrysostom, *Discourse on Blessed Babylas*, and *Demonstration that Christ is God*

In the Christian tradition, Chrysostom's fame rests upon his status as a preacher, not his success as a Christian apologist. Nevertheless, prior to his ordination into the priesthood, Chrysostom contributed to the field of Christian apologetics through the completion of two polemical treatises: *Discourse on Blessed Babylas and against the Greeks*, and *Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God*. Each work represents a concentrated attempt by Chrysostom to demonstrate the validity of the Christian message by means of a theologically sustained argument; and in each work, the same historical-exegetical claims tend to operate. Likewise in each work, history is portrayed as a cosmic battleground between the competing factors of paganism and Christianity. The final victory of Christianity is achieved through the power of Christ working in history. However, quite unlike Chrysostom's *Discourses*, these two apologetic tracts are ostensibly directed against a distinctly Hellenistic audience.

In *Discourse on Blessed Babylas*, Christ's demonstration of power is both predicted in prophecy, and exhibited in the example of the martyred Antiochene bishop Babylas. The actual discourse itself was probably written between 363 and 379-80 C.E. under the supervision of Chrysostom's bishop Meletius to commemorate the installation

of a new shrine built for the third-century martyr Babylas of Antioch.⁷⁹ In this apologetic tract, Chrysostom correlates the power of Christ's prophecy "Amen, amen, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these he shall do,"⁸⁰ to its fulfillment in the figure of the martyred bishop Babylas. After Babylas was executed in the third century, his remains were later interred near the temple of Apollo at Daphne. According to Chrysostom's account, Babylas' remains had the effect of silencing the "demon" at Apollo's temple.⁸¹ During the reign of Julian the Apostate, the last pagan emperor of Rome, the remains of Babylas were exhumed under imperial order, and returned to rest in the city of Antioch. Accounts of the event suggest that shortly after the martyr was removed lightening struck the temple of Apollo, igniting the roof of the structure, ominously burning most of its edifice to the ground.⁸² For Chrysostom, the destruction of the temple of Apollo was no mere accident, but an exhibition of Christ's divine power directed against both the arrogance of the pagan emperor,⁸³ and the pagan Greeks: "creatures more stupid than dumb animals."⁸⁴ The event was immediately construed as a great victory by the Christians of Antioch, while conversely demoralizing the religious incentives of the pagan Greeks.⁸⁵ Assured of the historical supremacy of the Christian message, Chrysostom claims that the ruins of the temple of Apollo "proclaim the anger of God... to all posterity."⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Margaret A. Schatkin and Paul W. Harkins, "Introduction," *Saint John Chrysostom: Apologist, The Fathers of the Church*, 73, John Chrysostom, *Discourse on the Blesses Babylas and against the Greeks* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 15.

⁸⁰ Jn. 14.12

⁸¹ *Bab.* 68; 114-5.

⁸² *Bab.* 93; 129-30.

⁸³ *Bab.* 92; 128-9.

⁸⁴ *Bab.* 89; 127.

⁸⁵ *Bab.* 97; 132.

⁸⁶ *Bab.* 114; 143.

For Chrysostom, the destruction of Apollo's temple at Daphne so closely paralleled the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem that the two events could not be theologically disassociated.⁸⁷ The figure of the pagan emperor Julian simply provided the occasion for Chrysostom to link the two events to a single theological proof. During the relatively brief reign of the emperor Julian, an ultimately unsuccessful attempt was made to restore the temple of Jerusalem. Reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple was first hindered by an earthquake, and then apparently halted when a fire broke out at the site, consuming everything but the structural foundation. Chrysostom relates both the destruction of Apollo's temple and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem to the blasphemous hubris displayed by the emperor Julian.⁸⁸ Chrysostom declares that the very power of Christ razed the Jerusalem temple to the ground, and that by desiring to test the power of Christ, Julian inadvertently became a player in the historic drama of divine Providence:

First of all he [Julian] attempted to build the temple in Jerusalem, which the power of Christ had razed to the ground; and he courted the Jews, though a Greek, desiring thereby to test the power of Christ. And having summoned certain of the Jews...to go away and build the temple and return to their ancient custom of sacrifices. And the imbeciles, misled from the womb and immature till old age, went away to collaborate with the emperor; and as soon as they began to clear away the mound for him, fire suddenly leaped from the foundations and devoured them all. When these events were reported to the emperor, he neither pursued the audacious enterprise further...nor did he wish to be freed from the error of the demons now that he was once and for all under their control. [Bab. 119; 146-7]

⁸⁷ Bab. 120; 147-8, after Chrysostom concludes his discussion of bishop Babylas, he immediately proceeds to discuss the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, an area of discussion where the emperor Julian figures prominently.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

In this way, Chrysostom is able to unite the political ambitions of the pagan, Greek Julian with the religious aspirations of the Jews. For Chrysostom, Julian exists as the embodiment of the renewed threat of Hellenism.⁸⁹ Through the vehicle of Julian, history has proven to Chrysostom that the Hellenists and the Jews are capable of acting as collaborators against the validity of the Christian message. In this regard, Chrysostom's employs a familiar rhetorical tone utilized in his eight anti-Judaic homilies against his Hellenistic opponents in *Discourse on Blessed Babylas*:

The inducement to worship is the revelry, the daily and nocturnal feasts, the flutes and kettle-drums, the license to use obscene language and to act even more obscenely, gluttony to the point of bursting, delirium from intoxication, degeneration into most shameful madness. [*Bab.* 43; 99-100]

Though not as vitriolic as the anti-Judaic passages highlighted above, even a cursory examination of Chrysostom's apologetic treatise reveals certain similarly purposeful exaggerations and patterns common to the rhetorical conventions of the fourth century.⁹⁰ A more precise description of the nature of rhetoric in the fourth century will be a topic which will be covered in greater detail later. At the moment, it is sufficient for the immediate purpose of demonstrating that not all of Chrysostom's anti-Judaic, anti-Hellenistic rhetoric can be assessed without some degree of criticism.

Chrysostom's second work, *Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God*, is perhaps the more theologically charged treatise between the two apologetic tracts, embodying several of the more prominent apologetic themes which are also mirrored in

⁸⁹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 144.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113

Discourses against Judaizing Christians. The nature of Chrysostom's *Demonstration* makes determining the exact date of the material difficult to determine, and the rather abrupt ending of the treatise suggests that Chrysostom may have never completely finished the work.⁹¹ Even so, the *Demonstration* can be interpreted as a rough compendium of Chrysostom's modest contributions to Christian apologetics as disclosed in his eight *Discourses*. In the *Demonstration*, Chrysostom relies on the now familiar theme of the fulfillment of prophecy in history to bring the pagans to the belief in Christ. To accomplish this task, Chrysostom molds his approach to suit the sensibilities of his presumably *Hellenistic* audience. Since Christian dogma is incomprehensible to the pagan, and the pagan also considers theological speculation to be foolishness,⁹² Chrysostom chooses to orient his apologetic toward proofs which the pagans will find indisputable: namely, to the fulfillment of christological prophecies as predicted in the Christian scriptures.⁹³ As Chrysostom reasons, no pagan can deny what is a historic reality, and no pagan can refute what is visibly demonstrated. Therefore, Chrysostom's *Demonstration* comes to occupy the same exegetical characteristics which are indicative to his collective apologetic: history is proof of Christ's divinity.

To accomplish this end, Chrysostom proposes to utilize the scriptures of the Jews to convince the pagan unbelievers of the predictions which pertain to Christ.⁹⁴ The *Demonstration* returns to Chrysostom's encyclopedic knowledge of the prophets, cycling through a copious supply of exegetical substantiations proving the divinity of Christ. The *Demonstration* is characterized by the familiar themes and explanations in which

⁹¹ Margaret A. Schatkin and Paul W. Harkins, "Introduction," *Saint John Chrysostom: Apologist*, 166.

⁹² *Dem.* 1.4; 188.

⁹³ *Dem.* 1.6; 188-9.

⁹⁴ *Dem.* 2.2; 191.

Chrysostom habitually indulges: the persistence of the church,⁹⁵ the miracles of the apostles,⁹⁶ the abrogation of the Jerusalem-centered worship,⁹⁷ the now conspicuous absence of pagan ritual observance,⁹⁸ and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.⁹⁹ The Jews, for their failure to recognize the divinity of Christ, “became...refugees who wander the world in exile,”¹⁰⁰ thus demonstrating the historical integrity of the Christian tradition. Since Christ fulfilled both the predictions of the prophets and the predictions made during his own lifetime, the Christian message manifests a double proof:

The fulfillment of his predictions proved to men of future ages that the miracles he worked in his own day were worthy of their belief. And by this double proof, he gave a guarantee that all he had said about his kingdom was true. [*Dem.* 11.13; 237]

Chrysostom’s continuing focus upon the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem becomes vividly disclosed in the culmination of the *Demonstration*. The preceding prophetic witnesses, the flowering of the Christian Church, the miracles of the apostles and the saints, all of these examples appear to serve as a prologue to this final piece of irrefutable evidence for the divinity of Christ:

Which shines forth more clearly than the sun and which is brighter than its rays. It is a prophecy which lies before every man’s eyes and extends, as it did the last, to generations yet to come...they are for all men – for those now alive, for those who will soon come to birth, for those who will follow them. Just as did the previous prediction, these prophecies offer the power of their own truth to all men right up to the consummation of the world. [*Dem.* 16.1; 252]

⁹⁵ *Dem.* 1.7; 189.

⁹⁶ *Dem.* 5.3; 210-11.

⁹⁷ *Dem.* 6.9; 214.

⁹⁸ *Dem.* 15.4; 250.

⁹⁹ *Dem.* 16.1; 252.

¹⁰⁰ *Dem.* 8.7; 221.

A potent and visible threat to Chrysostom's historical-theological proof emerged from the combined attempt of both the pagan emperor Julian and the Jews to reconstruct the temple in Jerusalem. Chrysostom vividly recalls this collective memory together with the member of his congregation: "In our own generation, the emperor who surpassed all emperors in godlessness, during his reign, authorized the rebuilding of the temple."¹⁰¹ Though the Jews possessed the wealth, the population, and the patronage of the emperor, the power of Christ's prophecy prevailed. Thus, the embattled Chrysostom exclaims: "It is impossible that any word he [Christ] spoke should fail to come to true. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for any of his words or predictions to be proven false."¹⁰²

Julian, and the Temple of Jerusalem in Chrysostom's Apologetic

While ostensibly directed against the Hellenists, the Jews come to occupy a surprisingly pivotal role in the formation of the actual treatise. Through an examination of Chrysostom's *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, *Discourse on the Blessed Babylas*, and *Demonstration against the Pagans*, two themes remain reasonably constant: (1) that history testifies to the divinity of Christ; (2) that the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem represents both the fullest refutation of Judaism and fullest validation the Christian faith. By synthesizing the two most predominant themes which emerge in Chrysostom's apologetically-minded works, it is possible to develop the hypothesis, as Robert L. Wilken has done, that the inverse of Chrysostom's theology could be alternatively construed in quite another fashion: (1) that the divinity of Christ is

¹⁰¹ *Dem.* 16.9; 254-5.

¹⁰² *Dem.* 15.6; 250.

dependent upon history; (2) that the restoration of the temple could represent the fullest refutation of Christianity, exposing Christ as a false prophet – effectively invalidating the entire Christian tradition in a single stroke. In a comprehensive analysis of Chrysostom's anti-Judaic homilies and apologetic works, Wilken suggests that Julian's attempt to reconstruct the temple of Jerusalem cut to the very core of Chrysostom's theological sensibility, exposing the most vulnerable surface of his Christian faith, and producing a deep seeded religious anxiety which was exercised through the language of anti-Judaism.¹⁰³ According to Wilken, no other individual threatened the continued existence of Christianity in the empire quite like the pagan emperor Julian.

Julian, known as the Apostate in the Christian tradition, was the last pagan emperor of the Roman Empire. Educated under the Christian tradition as a child, Julian would disavow his inherited faith upon his ascension to the throne, and instigate an aggressive series of reforms designed to reassert paganism as the dominant religion in the empire. It was Julian who reminded Christians that their place in society was not inherently assured, and it was Julian who revealed to Christians exactly how precarious Christianity's hold was upon in the Roman population. Though his reign was relatively brief, only spanning a period of nineteen months, the memory of threat of Julian would continue to haunt the works of Christian apologists and historians for another two-hundred years.¹⁰⁴ Julian sought to undermine the Christian tradition upon two different fronts. Intellectually, Julian assailed several of the most foundational doctrines of Christianity in his polemical work *Against the Galileans*. Generations after his death, critics of Christianity were still utilizing the same arguments found within to Julian's work to

¹⁰³ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 129.

declare that Christ was nothing more than a mere man, and that the Christian faith was nothing more than an apostate religion loosely derived from an upstart Jewish sect.¹⁰⁵ In the political sphere, Julian sought to undermine the Christian church by eliminating several favorable reforms and by confiscating church property. According to Wilken, the reign of the pagan Julian would prove to deeply affect the minds of Christians. Wilken argues that nothing was more disquieting to Christians than Julian's attempt to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and return the city to the Jews. For Julian not only constructed his refutation of Christianity on intellectual grounds, but supplemented his arguments with a tangible, historically-based reality. As Wilken contends, for historically-minded theologians of the Antiochene exegetical tradition – such as John Chrysostom – nothing so threatened the truth claims of the Christian religion.¹⁰⁶

As an energetic opponent of the Christian faith, the emperor Julian understood the religious significance the city of Jerusalem possessed in the Christian apologetic tradition. According to Wilken, the young Julian, raised under the tutelage of Christians, would have become familiar with the Christian prophecies drawn from the scriptures that the Jewish temple would never again be restored.¹⁰⁷ Educated by Christians, Julian would have become familiar with certain arguments utilized in the Christian apologetic tradition. Armed with this knowledge, Julian's attempt to restore the Jewish temple was intended to cut to the heart of the Christian faith. Marcel Simon, speaking of Julian's relation to Judaism, has also observed that Julian's coalition with the religious aspirations of the Jews was perhaps more motivated by a conscious effort to tactically undermine the religious validity of Christianity, rather than drawn by any particular affinity for the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁰⁷ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 139; Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 115.

Jewish religion.¹⁰⁸ When Julian became sole-emperor of the Roman Empire in 360 C.E., he worked both intellectually and politically to undermine the social and religious prominence of Christianity. Intellectually, Julian's manifesto against Christianity, *Against the Galileans*, represents a compendium of the standard Hellenistic accusations against Christianity, including the accusation that the Christian faith was an apostate religion loosely derived from Judaism. As Wilken discusses, Julian's polemical work is characterized by its manner of linking the presence of the Jewish temple to the necessity of keeping the Jewish law.¹⁰⁹ In this sense, the restoration of the Jewish temple could function as an enduring symbol for the continuing religious legitimacy of Judaism. Coupled with the presence of a vibrant religious community, such as the community present in Antioch, a restoration of the Jerusalem temple could prove to be a persuasive argument against the validity of Christianity. For Marcel Simon, Julian's effort to rebuild the temple represents an unprecedented event in late antiquity. Though previous emperors also sought tactical religious and political alliances with Judaism in their efforts to suppress Christianity, the last pagan emperor of Rome, Julian the Apostate, was the only figure to have menaced Christianity with such a calculated, and "carefully thought-out scheme."¹¹⁰

In an ironic sense, Julian's effort to reconstruct the temple of Jerusalem represents an inversion of Chrysostom's own historically-based apologetic. If the destruction of the temple proved that the Jewish religion was ultimately invalidated, conversely, a restoration of the Jewish temple would then prove that the Jewish religion continued to

¹⁰⁸ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 141.

¹¹⁰ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 115.

remain valid, binding, and legitimate.¹¹¹ Certain strands of Chrysostom's own apologetic indicate that a restoration of the Jewish temple would potentially indicate that there was no need to abandon the precepts of Mosaic Law. As Chrysostom argues, because the temple is destroyed, and Jerusalem has been lost to the Jews, literal adherence to the law is now impossible:

I did enough to complete my task when I proved from all the prophets that any such observance of ritual outside of Jerusalem is transgression of the Law and a sacrilege...but I gave you abundant evidence to prove that the city will not be restored nor will they get back their old commonwealth and way of life. Once that has been proved, there is no room for disagreement on any other points. For example, neither the form of sacrifice, nor of the holocaust, nor the binding force of the Law, nor any other aspect of their old commonwealth and way of life can stand. [*Disc. 7.1.4-5; 178-80*]

A reconstructed Jewish temple would necessitate a reinterpretation of standard Christian apologetic and potential redirection for the entire Christian faith. A restored Jerusalem temple could no longer function as a means to validate the Christian faith, but would serve as an argument for the continuation of Jewish sacrificial customs, Torah observance, and the continued adherence of the Jewish law. In regard to sacrificial custom, Chrysostom admits that God allowed sacrifice to proceed, but restricted its practice to Jerusalem. Through the city's destruction, God led the Jews away from this "mad practice." For Chrysostom it is more than coincidence that the Jews have been driven to all corners of the world, but are not permitted to sacrifice in any location other than Jerusalem. Chrysostom explains the obvious:

¹¹¹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 132.

Even if a man were completely lacking in understanding, should it not be clear and obvious to him why Jerusalem was destroyed?...This is what God did. He made Jerusalem...the keystone which held together the structure of worship. When he overthrew that city, he destroyed the rest of the entire structure of that way of life. [Disc. 4.6.9; 91]¹¹²

Yet the destruction of the temple was not the *real* reason why the law has now been abolished. During the Babylonian exile, God did not revoke the commandments of the law. As Chrysostom observes, even when the first temple was destroyed, God did not abandon the Israelites; and as a sign of God's persistence, Daniel and Ezekiel were filled with the spirit of God, foretelling miraculous events through God's gift of prophecy.¹¹³ Though the scriptures attest to God's continued collaboration with Israel even after the destruction of the first temple, the destruction of the second temple was viewed as distinctly unique – this destruction was designed to endure forever.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Chrysostom utilizes the additional example of Moses to validate his point. In the time of Moses, the Israelites neither possessed a temple nor an altar for worship; yet, even under these circumstances, Moses did not lose his ability to prophesy.¹¹⁵ But now it has become apparent that the Jews have no more prophets, live in banal moderation, and are without all of the tangible benefits of their former covenant.¹¹⁶ Apart from the crucifixion of Christ, the real reason why the law has been abolished was because of the wrath of God:

Let us, rather, stop their shameless mouths with still more proof. To do this, let me prove from the Scriptures themselves that the destruction of the temple was not the reason for

¹¹² Cf., Disc. 7.3.5; 189, offers a more sympathetic portrayal, where God's rejection of sacrifices is interpreted as an indictment against *the sinfulness of the suppliant*, not against the sacrificial act.

¹¹³ Disc. 6.4.6; 161.

¹¹⁴ Disc. 5.9.6; 131-2.

¹¹⁵ Disc. 6.4.5; 160-1.

¹¹⁶ Disc. 6.4.7; 162.

destroying the ritual given to the prophets. The real reason was the wrath of God. And he is much more provoked to anger now, because of the Jews' mad rage against Christ, than he was when they worshipped the calf. [*Disc.* 6.4.5; 160-1]

Additionally, Wilken provides another insight, claiming that by reconstructing the temple in Jerusalem Julian might also refute the notion that Jesus was divine.¹¹⁷ If Julian had successfully completed the temple in Jerusalem, the prophecy of Jesus concerning the destruction of the temple, as preserved in the canonical tradition, would have been proven false. In an ironically poignant way, if history could be used to validate the claims of Christianity, so too could history be construed to invalidate those same claims. Consequently, if the words of prophecy spoken by Jesus could be proven false, Christians would have had difficulty asserting the infallibility, or indeed, the very *divine power* of Jesus:

Do you not see that this prediction came true?...Do you see his invincible power which does all things with ease? Because the words are few – “I will build my Church”¹¹⁸ – do not simply pass over them...That word which Christ spoke in his own day has been planted in the souls of all men and is found on the lips of all...it surpasses greatness and provides a proof of his divine power. [*Dem.* 12.3-5; 239-40]

Within this context, Julian's attempt to reconstruct the Jerusalem temple was nothing less than an assault upon the integrity of God and the divinity of Christ. Chrysostom interprets the entire event as a protracted “drama,” where the notorious scheming of the pagan unbeliever is thwarted by a mighty demonstration of God's divine

¹¹⁷ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 141.

¹¹⁸ Mt 16.18

power – not unlike similar events chronicled in the Biblical tradition.¹¹⁹ According to Chrysostom, Julian “courted the Jews, though a Greek, desiring to *test the power of Christ* [italics added].”¹²⁰ This theme permeates both of Chrysostom’s apologetic works: history was inundated with similar events which exhibit “many examples of the power of Christ.”¹²¹ The very power of Christ is revealed in divine providence, the intervention of the divine in history. As cited earlier, this divine power, *Christ’s divine power*, had been visibly demonstrated in the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore to Chrysostom, the challenge Julian posed was all the more potent. If Julian had succeeded in building the temple, Chrysostom’s historically-validated apologetic, his most suggestive proof for Christ’s divinity, would have collapsed. From this, it is possible to suggest, as Robert Wilken has done, that Julian’s effort to rebuild the temple heighten Chrysostom’s aggression against the Jews, since “it was the Jews alone who had the capability to prove Christianity false.”¹²² In Wilken’s evaluation, when Chrysostom assumed the pulpit in Antioch to preach against villainy of the Jews, Chrysostom is also seriously responding to Julian’s concerted effort to destroy the truth of Christianity through the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple. Wilken’s argument draws attention to the possibility that Chrysostom’s anti-Judaic rhetoric was profoundly influenced by the anxiety produced by the reign of the emperor Julian, and not the sole result of his theologically-motivated anti-Judaism.

With the death of Julian in 363 C.E., all efforts to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem effectively ceased. Though the immediate threat had subsided, Wilken observes that the

¹¹⁹ Bab. 81; 122-3.

¹²⁰ Bab. 119; 146-7.

¹²¹ Bab. 91; 128.

¹²² Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 159.

anxiety produced during those years continued to linger in the minds of Christians. The attention Chrysostom gives to the subject serves as an indication for how much anxiety the restoration of the Jewish temple produced in the imagination of Christian writers for generations afterward.¹²³ Wilken argues that for Chrysostom, the imminence of this threat was only compounded when a Judaizing faction emerged within Chrysostom's own congregation.¹²⁴ While Chrysostom saw Judaism threatening enough to expound upon the notion in several of his sermons, the Judaizing faction was evidently not convinced that Christianity's relationship to Judaism was completely severed. Though Chrysostom takes pains to enunciate the theological implications surrounding the practice of Judaizing, Judaizing Christians nonetheless found Judaism attractive enough to incorporate Jewish observances into their religious lives. Thus, Chrysostom was not only challenged from without by the interests of the Jews, and Hellenists, but also challenged from within by the Judaizing faction in his own congregation.

According to Wilken, Julian's efforts exposed the fragile nature of Chrysostom's historically-based theology. The conflict over the temple renewed the discussion of a restoration of the Jewish law, and a total reevaluation of the Christian theological tradition. Though Christians could continue to point to the ruins of Jerusalem,¹²⁵ Julian had planted a seed of doubt. As Wilken observes, Julian's arguments were not just theoretically based in pagan apologetics; with the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple Julian introduced a tangible, political, and historical challenge to the truth of the Christian faith. For Chrysostom, the threat was immediate. Chrysostom states that Jews, even more than twenty years removed from the reign of Julian, continued to boast: "Bragging

¹²³ Ibid., 146.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *Disc.* 5.12.11; 144.

that they will get their city back again.”¹²⁶ The relatively recent memory of Julian, an event which Chrysostom recalls “happened in our own time,”¹²⁷ combined with the ever-present and vibrant Jewish community of Antioch,¹²⁸ continued to remind the Chrysostom of how precariously Christianity stood in the good-graces of the Roman political apparatus. Observing the recent political turbulence of the fourth century, Chrysostom reminds his congregation that the security of the Christian faith is not gained through the provision of emperors, but is gained through “the power of God.”¹²⁹ Wilken contends that Julian’s potentially destabilizing effect tapped into the very marrow of Chrysostom’s historically-based theology.

Though approaching the subject from a different perspective than Chrysostom, Julian similarly chose to portray Christianity and Judaism as fundamentally antithetical religions. Julian constructed a system of interpretation which only fed into the model he inherited under the tutelage of his Christian instructors: the truth of one religion, either Christianity or Judaism, was essentially dependent upon the invalidation of the other.¹³⁰ In this sense, Wilken claims that rather than undermine the validity of such a depiction, Julian simply challenged Christians to strengthen their particular side of the argument. Rather than offer an alternative interpretation of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, Julian’s efforts only exacerbated the tensions between Christians and Jews. Wilken observes that aggression against the Jews in Antioch appears to have noticeably intensified shortly after Julian’s reign – when the Christians forcibly took control of the martyrdom of the Hasmoneans away from the Jews, and when Chrysostom composed his

¹²⁶ *Disc.* 7.1.4; 178.

¹²⁷ *Disc.* 5.11.10; 140.

¹²⁸ See Wilken, “The Jews of Antioch,” *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 34-65.

¹²⁹ *Disc.* 5.2.10; 104.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

eight discourses against the Judaizing Christians.¹³¹ Though perhaps Wilken is overestimating the significance Julian's reign possessed in contributing to these events, the continued prevalence of Julian in Chrysostom's homilies indicate that Julian continued to have an impact upon Antiochene Christianity for sometime afterward. Wilken proposes that Julian's reign factored into the escalation of Chrysostom's anti-Judaic rhetoric, increasing the perceived threat of both Judaism and Hellenistic society.

The temple of Jerusalem also serves an important purpose in Chrysostom's apologetic works. Underlying Chrysostom's original argument against the Hellenists rests another argument against the validity of the Jewish religion. For Chrysostom, the destruction of the temple not only served as evidence of the power of Jesus, but also served to invalidate any continuation of the Jewish tradition.¹³² For Chrysostom, the absence of the temple meant the very end of Judaism.¹³³ Chrysostom could not conceive of the continuation of Judaism without a temple sacrificial cult. Evidently, Chrysostom did not believe that the Jewish community he saw all around him in Antioch was a legitimate permutation of the Jewish religion.¹³⁴ Without a temple, the Jewish religion, its religious observances, and its festivals were effectively rendered illegitimate.¹³⁵ In another location, Chrysostom states that as a consequence of the temple's destruction: "God had rejected the old commonwealth and way of life, because it was imperfect, and that he rendered it inoperative."¹³⁶ Furthermore, Chrysostom states: "There was a time when the law was useful and necessary, but now it has ceased and is fruitless."¹³⁷

¹³¹ Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 30.

¹³² Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 132.

¹³³ *Disc.* 3.3.7; 57-8.

¹³⁴ *Disc.* 1.3.1; 10-11.

¹³⁵ *Disc.* 3.3.6; 57.

¹³⁶ *Disc.* 7.4.1; 190-1.

¹³⁷ *Disc.* 2.1.6; 37-8.

Consequently, for all practical and soteriological purposes, “the Law has ceased to bind.”¹³⁸ Moreover, without a temple, there was also no presiding Jewish priesthood. Using the language of the “greater Law” replacing the “old,” Chrysostom elaborates upon another reason why the Jewish law cannot be considered effective, no longer capable of being observed:

Many prescriptions of the Law were devoted to the ministries of the priesthood, and the old priesthood has been abolished. Since another priesthood was brought in to replace the old, it is clear also that a greater Law had to be brought in to replace the old...because the priesthood was changed, it was reasonable and necessary that there also be a change of Law...the old commonwealth and way of life will be transformed for the better, and that never again will a king arise for the Jews. [*Disc.* 7.5.11; 199, *Disc.* 7.6.1; 200]

In a number of ways, Chrysostom argues that the absence of the Jewish temple effectively invalidated the Jewish law. Furthermore, without the temple or the city the Jews were unable to legitimately read the Torah,¹³⁹ offer sacrifices,¹⁴⁰ or legally observe the Pasch.¹⁴¹ The observance of the Jews was but the “type,” a fleeting shadow which has dissipated in the coming “reality” of Christ.¹⁴² For with the destruction of Jerusalem, God had dramatically repealed the Mosaic Law in light of the surpassing glory of the new, more spiritual law of Christ. Thus, the historical circumstance of the temple’s destruction made Christianity the only viable option. As Wilken has observed, many of Chrysostom’s theological proofs are drawn from history. Consequently, the construction of a *new temple* in Jerusalem would negate Chrysostom’s apologetic basis, derail a

¹³⁸ *Disc.* 1.2.3; 6-7.

¹³⁹ *Disc.* 7.1.5; 179-80.

¹⁴⁰ *Disc.* 4.6.7; 90.

¹⁴¹ *Disc.* 4.4.8; 84.

¹⁴² *Disc.* 3.4.1; 59.

considerable component his theology, and threaten the foundation upon which he built his historically-based arguments.

Chrysostom's apologetic was not uncommon for his time. Many theologians could point to the Jewish scriptures as evidence of God's historical intervention. In scriptures which could be affirmed by both Christianity and Judaism, historical events were repeatedly construed as indicators of divine approval or punishment. This tradition, which was attested in scripture, could easily be utilized to interpret historical events happening in the theologian's own time. One particularly notable event which stood out above all others, calling for immediate interpretation, was the destruction of the second temple at the hands of the Romans in 70 C.E. Christians and Jews alike took to the scriptures to explain this monumental circumstance. While Jewish interpretation emphasized a continuation of the relationship between God and the Jews, Christian interpretation took a different turn. Though the scriptures attested to God's continued collaboration with Israel even after the destruction of the first temple, the destruction of the second temple was viewed as distinctly unique. Subsequent Christian writers such as Chrysostom chose to view the loss of the Jewish temple as effectively invalidating the ancient Jewish law, inaugurating a profoundly different relationship between God, Israel, and the Gentile community through the person of Jesus. Most Christian writers were not troubled by the idea of interpreting contemporary history to authenticate their religious claims.¹⁴³ Apparently, these Christian writers appear to have failed to conceive of a Jewish law which was not innately bound to the fortunes of Jerusalem, choosing to purposefully dismiss the actual continuation of the Jewish religion, effectively classifying contemporary Judaism as an illegitimate successor to Biblical Israel.

¹⁴³ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 137.

The Rhetorical Tradition

As Robert L. Wilken writes, “the practice of rhetoric had an enormous impact upon how intelligent men and women wrote, and consequently, on how they thought.”¹⁴⁴ In an age where literacy was in many ways a luxury, the ability to speak elegantly possessed a powerful effect on the common citizenry. John, whom history would later remember as *Chrysostomos* or the “golden-mouth,” was especially notable for his mastery of the rhetorical devices. Educated in his youth under the tutelage of the great fourth-century rhetorician Libanius, Chrysostom was one of the most gifted students of his age. In one account preserved by the Christian historian Sozomen, Libanius, the first rhetorician of Antioch,¹⁴⁵ expressed upon his deathbed that he had originally intended Chrysostom be his successor if the Christians hadn’t already snatched him away.¹⁴⁶ Chrysostom’s abilities continued to serve him well in his early ecclesiastic career, endearing him to the Bishop Flavian, and providing him ample opportunities to exhibit his rhetorical skill in both his preaching and writings.¹⁴⁷

In the fourth century, the discipline of rhetoric not only served to pattern formal oration, but also functioned as a form of popular entertainment. During Chrysostom’s lifetime, major cities within the Roman Empire were experiencing the resurgence of rhetoric in popular culture. This recovery of the rhetorical tradition, identified as the “second sophistic” period, witnessed the emergence of the last great orators of late antiquity.¹⁴⁸ According to Wilken, these *sophists* or “wise men” utilized a variety of

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁵ Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 1, pt. 1., *Antioch: The Early Years*, trans. Sr. M. Gonzaga (Belmont, MA: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1988), 16-21.

¹⁴⁶ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Paul Harkins, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, xxiii-xxiv.

¹⁴⁸ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 96.

literary and rhetorical devices including parallel structure, archaisms, hyperbole, metaphor, alliteration, and repetition to effectively persuade or entertain an audience.¹⁴⁹ As Wilken observes, the art of rhetoric permeated all linguistic compositions including “history, philosophy, poetry, theological polemics, biblical commentaries, and, eventually, preaching.”¹⁵⁰ The discipline of rhetoric was an integral component of a classical Hellenistic education, a discipline Chrysostom would have acquired in his youth, and influenced the delivery of his homilies years later.¹⁵¹

In the fourth century, Christian preachers were not above the influence of popular rhetorical techniques. As the wave of rhetorical fever swept through Hellenistic society, Christian writers and thinkers similarly indulged in the practice of carefully structuring words and phrases according to the specifications of the rhetorical tradition.¹⁵² The attention Christian rhetoricians paid to rhetorical tradition was not necessarily self-indulgent, but also functioned to persuade the audience of a certain point and amass a minor sense of celebrity.¹⁵³ In late antiquity, the popularity of a particular Christian preacher was bound to his skill as an orator, and the success or failure of his message was in many ways contingent upon his skill of the public speaker. As Wilken writes, “Christians expected a performance in church equal to what they enjoyed in the theater. If dissatisfied, they booed and hissed; if delighted they clapped their hands and shouted.”¹⁵⁴ In the Christian church of Antioch, the audience had every reason to expect an eloquent performance. With the expectation that a visit to the local church was akin to

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 97.

¹⁵¹ Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom in His Time*, vol. 1., pt. 1., 26.

¹⁵² Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 102.

¹⁵³ Disc. 7.6.2; 200-1, states, “I do not undertake this great task just to hear myself talk or to enjoy the tumult of your applause; I do it to bring those who have been cut off back to the path of the truth.”

¹⁵⁴ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 105.

a visit to the theater, the crowd was poised to respond to a skillful preacher, and the preacher expected the audience to respond to the delivery. Chrysostom recalls such an experience:

There was great applause, the audience warmed with enthusiasm, your assembly came aflame. I did rejoice at this, yet my joy was not because praise was coming to me but because glory was coming to my Master. [*Disc.* 1.1.3; 3]

For all of the rhetorical techniques utilized by Chrysostom, the sophistic invective emerges as the most notable. The sophistic invective, a technique intended to discredit and defame an opponent, was a common device utilized in traditional rhetoric. Invective usually included a number of intentional distortions, falsifications, and purposefully exaggerations which were not intended to present the audience with a balanced presentation, but to persuade the audience to accept the speaker's position.¹⁵⁵ Wilken identifies a number of standard themes, stock denunciations, and accusations which typically characterize the sophistic invective: ignorance, barbarity, neglect of the poor, unrestraint, greed, and drunkenness.¹⁵⁶ Chrysostom's use of the sophistic invective against the Jews is typical:

What else do you wish me to tell you? Shall I tell you of their [the Jews] plundering, their covetousness, their abandonment of the poor, their thefts, their cheating in trade? The whole day long will not be enough to give you an account of these things. [*Disc.* 1.7.1; 25-6]

¹⁵⁵ Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?*, 55.

¹⁵⁶ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 115.

Again, the opening lines of Chrysostom's eighth discourse exhibit the theme of "drunkenness," a notable characteristic of the invective:

Gone is the fasting of the Jews, or rather, the drunkenness of the Jews. Yes, it is possible to be drunk without wine; it is possible for a sober man to act as if he is drunk and to reveal like a prodigal. [*Disc.* 8.1.1; 205-6]

The Jews were not the only individuals who bore the brunt of the invective. When Chrysostom's anti-Judaic rhetoric is contrasted against the supposed debauchery of the Hellenists, an interesting symmetry is produced:

The inducement to worship is the revelry, the daily and nocturnal feasts, the flutes and the kettledrums, the license to use obscene language and to act even more obscenely, gluttony to the point of bursting, delirium from intoxication, degeneration into most shameful madness. [*Bab.* 43; 99-100]

Similar patterns emerge from a closer reading of Chrysostom's denunciations of both Jews and the Hellenists. As Wilken states, the sophistic invective is relied upon so heavily in Chrysostom's apologetic material that "The charges become so predictable, so similar from situation to situation, that they become monotonous in their regularity."¹⁵⁷ In utilizing the sophistic invective, Chrysostom draws upon the standard rhetorical arsenal made available through a traditional Hellenistic education. Though Chrysostom has been credited with producing some of the most virulent anti-Judaic statements of Christian late antiquity, one must begin to wonder how much of this language can be definitively accredited to his supposed *christological* anti-Judaism, and to what degree Chrysostom's anti-Judaic statements might exist as the result of a penchant for rhetorical

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

exaggeration. In Ruether's treatment of Chrysostom, enunciating the contours of this rhetorical/christological dynamic is something that she does not appear to attempt.

As illustrated in Chrysostom's polemic, the sophistic invective worked as a tool of intentional exaggeration, insinuation, and degradation.¹⁵⁸ The objective of the invective was not to present a reasonable, honest critique of the opponent, but to produce a sense of moral outrage in the audience which was designed to utterly discredit and completely vilify the opponent. According to Wilken, Hellenistic rhetoricians were routinely trained to apply the invective's formula to any circumstance, without paying attention to the specific details of the situation.¹⁵⁹ With striking monotony, the same stock charges were continually recycled: drunkenness, greed, ignorance, recklessness – all of which can be observed in the writings of Chrysostom. Contrary to Ruether's assertion that it was *christology* which ultimately predetermined how Chrysostom approached the tasks of scriptural exegesis and anti-Judaism, a portion of Chrysostom's particular anti-Judaism might also be credited to his education in the rhetorical tradition. Wilken writes: "Whether John [Chrysostom] is quoting the Bible or drawing on the techniques of the invective learned in school, his purpose is the same: to present the Judaizers and the Jews in the worst possible light."¹⁶⁰ Wilken believes that Chrysostom was plainly aware of the fact that the synagogue was not a den of thieves, nor the abode of actors, harlots, or demons, but that Chrysostom was partly responding to the Judaizing crisis with a scripted set of accusations which he acquired through his rhetorical education.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 125.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 124.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Historically, a similar rhetorical arsenal was utilized against the Jews prior to the emergence of Christianity by anti-Judaic Hellenists as early as the third century BCE.¹⁶² The Alexandrian Apion, a first century CE pagan critic of Judaism, exhibits strikingly similar arguments against Judaism which appear to parallel at times Chrysostom's most caustic anti-Judaic statements. Apion, quite obviously bereft of any *christological* inspiration, similarly accuses the Jews of being stubborn misanthropists who possess a special hatred of all the gods; the Jews are also a godless people who subvert all other religions; the Jews are diseased, superstitious, and ignorant; the Jews are also accused of practicing ritualistic murder against the Greeks.¹⁶³ Finding continuity between the language of pagan anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism, Friedrich Heer has suggested that: "All the weapons used by Christians and Nazis in the twentieth century are already to be found in the writing of Apion and his like."¹⁶⁴ Though Heer may overestimate the influence pagan anti-Judaism exerted in the formation of Christian anti-Judaism, it remains true that as Christianity began to emerge in opposition to Judaism in the later half of the first century there was a preexisting compendium of pagan anti-Judaic material which served to shape the language and expression of Christianity's more theologically-based polemic. As the rhetorical tradition served to shape the language of Christian polemic, so too did the language of pagan anti-Judaism contribute to the development of Christian anti-Judaism.

Still, Heer is mistaken if he intends to suggest that Christian inspired anti-Judaism is essentially an adaptation of pagan anti-Judaism. As Rosemary Ruether has observed, pagan inspired anti-Judaism does not immediately translate into Christian inspired anti-

¹⁶² Heer, *God's First Love*, 16.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Judaism.¹⁶⁵ In Ruether's judgment, Christian anti-Judaism erupted from a separate *christological* source which pagan anti-Judaism did not share. The similarity between the language of Christian anti-Judaism and the language of pagan anti-Judaism belies an important shift in foundation. When Christianity appropriated selective elements of traditional pagan anti-Judaism, pagan rhetoric needed to be reinterpreted utilizing distinctly Christian language to fit its more theologically-motivated context. Thus, Ruether argues that pagan anti-Judaism played a relatively minor role in developing a distinctively *Christian* anti-Judaism, stating: "traces of anti-Semitic material that clearly have a pagan rather than a Christian basis form a very small part of the total tradition of Christian anti-Judaism."¹⁶⁶

In Christian polemic, the anti-Judaic themes inherited from the pagan tradition are combined with particular theological convictions, projecting the Jews in a vocabulary original to Christianity. In Chrysostom's anti-Judaic material, the theological themes of anti-Judaism merge with the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition. In actual history, the most iconic example of this theological incorporation involves the theme of the Jews as "Christ-killers," a theme exclusive to Christianity and frequently referenced in Chrysostom's own anti-Judaic material. As a strong advocate of this more theologically motivated argument, Chrysostom's theologically-based anti-Judaic language is impossible to ignore:

It is with those who shouted: "Crucify him, crucify him,"¹⁶⁷ with those who said: "His blood be upon us and our children."¹⁶⁸ If some men had been caught in rebellion against their ruler and were condemned, would you have dared to go up to them and to speak

¹⁶⁵ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 30.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Lk 23.21

¹⁶⁸ Mt 27.25

with them? I think not. It is not foolish, then, to show such readiness to flee from those who have sinned against a man, but to enter into fellowship with those who have committed outrages against God himself? It is not strange that those who worship the Crucified keep common festival with those who crucified him? Is it not a sign of folly and the worst madness? [*Disc.* 1.5.1; 18]

While Chrysostom found it necessary to attack Judaism with emotionally-charged rhetoric, at the same time, Chrysostom also found it necessary to “respond to the theological challenge [the Jews] presented.”¹⁶⁹ Not all elements in Chrysostom’s homilies can be explained rhetorically. And it is insufficient to claim that all of Chrysostom’s sermonizing can be reduced to mere rhetoric. The potential origins of Chrysostom’s distinctly theological language must be seriously considered.

The Theological Tradition

In respect to the vitriol of Chrysostom’s anti-Judaism, Marcel Simon writes that Chrysostom was “without parallel in the literature of the first few centuries.”¹⁷⁰ In this regard, Chrysostom occupies a unique position in the evolution of Christian anti-Judaism. In the interest of providing a more detailed picture, Simon is also quick to acknowledge that Chrysostom’s rather extreme version of anti-Judaism is not definitive of Christianity’s broader relation to Judaism, but moreover represents the interplay between a localized phenomenon, Christian tradition, and the disposition of the author within the context of the particular situation. For Simon, Chrysostom’s anti-Judaism is both the result of “a specifically Antiochene problem,” and an indication of larger trends within

¹⁶⁹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 126.

¹⁷⁰ Simon, *Verus Israel*, 222.

Christian tradition.¹⁷¹ More specifically, while Chrysostom's anti-Judaism was partly the product of his own unique circumstance, it was also partially indicative of Christianity's own polemical history with Judaism. Historically speaking, Chrysostom was not the first to enunciate many of the theological arguments which appear in his polemic against the Jews. Many of the theological arguments which appear in Chrysostom's polemic are actually part of a broader Christian tradition which was inherited by Chrysostom, retooled to fit his particular context, and regurgitated with remarkable regularity. This collection of Christian polemic against the Jews, cited as the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, served to shape the language and polemic of Christian anti-Judaism. As a student of the Christian polemical tradition, when Chrysostom attempts to justify certain theological attitudes toward the Jews, he is potentially utilizing traditional arguments and accusations gleaned from previous Christian theologians. For instance, Chrysostom's accusation that the Jews were Christ-killers, perpetrators of deicide, murderers of God, was first enunciated by the influential second-century Christian bishop Melito of Sardis (d. 180), who, in his *Homily on the Passover* famously declares: "He who made all things fast is made fast on a tree. The Master is insulted. God is murdered. The King of Israel is destroyed by an Israelite hand."¹⁷² Likewise, Chrysostom also inherits much of his anti-Judaic polemic from his theological forebears: Chrysostom's idea that the law was implemented by God to curb the Jewish propensity for idolatry and gluttony was previously exhibited by Tertullian (d. 225);¹⁷³ the notion that the law only possessed a

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Melito of Sardis, *Homily on the Passover*, 96, in Richard A. Norris, Jr., *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 46.

¹⁷³ David P. Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 101.

temporal significance was expressed by Justin Martyr (d. 160);¹⁷⁴ the concept that the destruction of the temple conveys God's express desire to permanently invalidate the religious prescriptions of Judaism was articulated earlier by Origen (ca. 254).¹⁷⁵

Writing in response to Ruether's treatment of Christianity's anti-Judaic tradition, David P. Efroymson examines the external, polemical issues which resulted in the creation of the *adversus Judaeos*, anti-Judaic tradition. As Efroymson's observes, several of the most prominent anti-Judaic themes contained in the *adversus Judaeos* tradition simultaneously developed in response to critical encounters with Hellenists, heretics, and non-Jews. Focusing his discussion upon the second century Antiochene bishop Tertullian, Efroymson notes that the largest concentration of Tertullian's anti-Judaic material is not found in his polemical treatise against the Jews, *Adversus Judaeos*,¹⁷⁶ but in his work against the teachings of Marcion, *Adversus Marcionem*.¹⁷⁷

Marcion (d. c. 160), bishop of Sinope, emphatically carried the concept of Christianity's "newness" in a radical direction. Sensing the discontinuity, the tension, and the inconsistency in a Christianity which claimed to affirm the legitimacy of the Hebrew Scriptures, but ostensibly rejected the authority of the Mosaic Law, Marcion advocated abandoning the "Old" testament in favor of the "New" testament of Christ, as principally outlined through a selective reading of the apostle Paul.¹⁷⁸ Marcion could not reconcile the sweeping message of love proclaimed by Jesus with the wrathful, vengeful God he perceived in the Hebrew Scriptures. To Marcion, this alleged discrepancy too

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 105.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 111.

¹⁷⁶ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, trans. Sydney Thelwall, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed., Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., vol. III, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian: I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical* (Buffalo, New York: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885).

¹⁷⁷ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, trans. Ernest Evens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

¹⁷⁸ Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," 100.

great to be overcome. The God of Jesus, therefore, must have originated from another source. In Marcion's theology, Jesus became the representative of the new, true God who had come to liberate humanity from the wicked and ignorant God of the Hebrews. For Marcion, the creator God depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures was humanity's enemy, creating a deeply flawed world, and trapping humanity in a perverse system of law, obedience, and disproportionate punishment. However, the new God revealed in Jesus, has now come to free humanity from both the wickedness of the world and the burden for the corruption of the Mosaic Law. Marcion personally adjusted his interpretation of Christianity, dropping the Old Testament from his personal canon, and rejecting all perceptible Jewish influences upon Christianity.¹⁷⁹

As Efroymson has observed, Tertullian responds to Marcion's criticisms by providing a defense which largely develops at the expense of the Jewish community.¹⁸⁰ As a concession to Marcion, Tertullian acknowledges the existence of a *linguistic* distinction between the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old Testament; however, Tertullian does not believe that this distinction indicates two different Gods, but rather two different attitudes displayed by the same God. To preserve the integrity of his understanding of God, Tertullian argues that the Old Testament Jews *deserved* God's wrath; that the Jews were *so* reckless, *so* prone to godlessness that God was left no other option but to address the rampant depravity of the Jews through the vehicle of the Mosaic Law. According to Efroymson, Tertullian argues that the law was not arbitrarily assigned to the Jews and rejected by the Christians, but that the law was a pragmatically-minded measure implemented by God to restrain the otherwise uncontrollable vice of the

¹⁷⁹ Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 103-9.

¹⁸⁰ Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," 108.

Israelites. Accordingly, God only permitted temporary sacrifices to be offered at the temple due to Israel's propensity for idolatry. Efroymson writes:

Tertullian's answer...was as follows: the (admittedly) "inferiority" of God's "old" law and/or cult cannot be due to any inferiority on God's part, but must be accounted for by the "inferiority" of the people with whom God was working at that time. Thus, the God of the Hebrew Bible was "salvaged" for Christians precisely by means of the anti-Judaic myth (101).

As Efroymson indicates, Tertullian's argument served to protect the integrity of God by degrading the image of the Jews. In Tertullian's apologetic, this exegesis of degradation also spilled over into the New Testament, indicated through the uneasy relationship between Jesus and the Jews. According to Tertullian, the conflict between Jesus and the Jews depicted in the gospel tradition was in no sense supportive of Marcion's position, but was interpreted as consistent with God's ongoing historical animosity with the Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁸¹ Additionally, Jesus' own condemnation of the Jews was interpreted as *prophetic*, aligned with the statements of the earlier prophets, and similar to God's own antipathy with biblical Israel.¹⁸² In Efroymson's opinion, the challenge of Marcion prompted a change in the apologetic context of Christian anti-Judaism. The driving force behind this new context of anti-Judaism was not necessarily Jew-hatred, but a desire to preserve Christianity's understanding of its own religious identity and its special relationship to God. For theologians such as Tertullian, the conclusion was simple: if Christianity was essentially

¹⁸¹ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, trans. Ernest Evens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), IV.12; 15; 23; 27; qtd. in Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," 102.

¹⁸² *Adversus Marcionem*, IV, 14; 33; 42.

anti-Judaic, "*God and Christ must be anti-Jewish too.*"¹⁸³ As Efroymson demonstrates, this phenomenon was not limited to Tertullian, but also permeated the apologetic works of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen.¹⁸⁴ In Efroymson's words, the introduction of the Marcion's theology metabolized a new venue for Christian anti-Judaic language: "The tragedy was that 'God-talk' and 'Christ-talk' had now inevitably taken a strong anti-Judaic turn."¹⁸⁵

The same tendencies observed by Efroymson in the works of Tertullian and the like are exhibited in Chrysostom's own anti-Judaic treatises. In Chrysostom's two systematic refutations of paganism, *Discourse on the Blessed Babylas and against the Greeks*, and *Demonstration against the Pagans that Christ is God*, Chrysostom returns to the language of anti-Judaism with surprising regularity. As Efroymson would expect, the polemical language of Chrysostom, while allegedly directed against the Hellenists, is almost completely composed of theological proofs which have their basis in anti-Judaism. In this sense, Chrysostom's polemic against the Hellenists appears to simultaneously serve as instruction to the Christian community, constructing an apologetic which exists as indicative of Chrysostom's (and Christianity's) own struggles with Judaism. Additionally, for Chrysostom, attacking Hellenism through the language of anti-Judaism accomplished two tasks in the same instant, since the fundamental heresy of the pagans and the Jews was essentially the same.¹⁸⁶ Struggling against the Anomoean heresy, an Arian derivative localized near Antioch, Chrysostom declares: "And there is a kinship because the Jews and the Anomoeans make the same accusation. And what

¹⁸³ Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," 105.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸⁶ *Disc.* 2.1.6; 37-8.

charges do the Jews make? That He called God His own Father and so made Himself equal to God. The Anomoeans also make this charge..."¹⁸⁷ After equating the pagan temple cult to the Jewish synagogue, reminding his audience that "the Jews themselves are demons"¹⁸⁸ in the process, Chrysostom levels his rhetoric to compare the impiety of the pagans to that of the Jews:

So the godlessness of the Jews and the pagans is on a par. But the Jews practice a deceit which is more dangerous. In their synagogue stands an invisible altar of deceit on which they sacrifice not sheep and calves but the souls of men. [*Disc.* 1.6.4; 23]

The Anomoeans took their theological cues from Arianism, and as Melvin Lawrence has commented: "Arianism, which denied the Nicene doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, was the principal heresy Chrysostom encountered."¹⁸⁹ The fourth century was a tumultuous period in Christian ecclesiastical history. As Chrysostomus Baur has pointed out, "neither Jews nor pagans damaged Christendom at this time so much as the heresies which originated within the Church itself."¹⁹⁰ More specifically, "The cradle of Arianism was indeed...the city of Antioch, for it was here that Bishop Paul of Samosata had first taught that Christ was not the actual but only the adopted Son of God; and the priest Lucian...taught that the Logos was a created being. Arius was Lucian's pupil..."¹⁹¹ Shortly before Chrysostom's ordination into the priesthood, ecclesiastic control of the city of Antioch was constantly shifting between the hands of the Arians and the Nicæan Christians. Since the death of

¹⁸⁷ *Disc.* 1.1.6; 4-5.

¹⁸⁸ *Disc.* 1.6.3; 23.

¹⁸⁹ Melvin Lawrence, "Antiochene Exegesis and Christology," *Australian Biblical Review*, vol. 12, no. 1-4 (December, 1964), 16.

¹⁹⁰ Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, 48.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

Constantine in 337 C.E., Christianity had witnessed imperial power transfer between a succession of distinctive emperors: from the favorable Constantius II, to the zealously pagan Julian, to the indifferent Valentinian, and to the fanatically Arian Valens. By the time Chrysostom became a priest in Antioch in 386 C.E., the empire was once again under the auspices of a Nicaean Christian, Theodosius I. However, by the reign of Theodosius the Christian community of Antioch would have been very aware of the contingency of their now favored position in society. Less than fifteen years prior to Chrysostom's ordination, Antioch was the home of no less than four competing bishops: one Arian, two Nicaean Catholics, and an Apollinarist.¹⁹² Though Theodosius I would declare Nicaean Christianity the official religion of the Empire in 380, the Arian Anomoeans continued to have an impact upon the religious atmosphere of Antioch well into the final years of Chrysostom's Antiochene presbyterate and beyond.¹⁹³ Consequently, when Chrysostom declares, "Here we are fighting not only against the Jews but also against the pagans and many heretics,"¹⁹⁴ Chrysostom is recognizing the threat of a renewed Arianism, Anomoeanism; a threat which has infiltrated his congregation, prompting him to clarify the specifics of Christ's nature. From a close reading of Chrysostom's *Discourses*, it appears that Arianism, not necessarily Judaism, forces Chrysostom to formulate a stronger *christological* language. In the paragraph which precedes the last quotation from *Discourses*, Chrysostom elaborates upon the corporal reality of Christ's indwelling:

¹⁹² Ibid., 75.

¹⁹³ Melvin E. Lawrence, *The Christology of John Chrysostom* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen University Press, 1996), 43-61, appears to suggest that Chrysostom was in dialogue with the Anomoeans for most of his ecclesiastical career.

¹⁹⁴ *Disc.* 7.3.3; 187-8.

Therefore in coming into the world, he says: "Sacrifice and oblation you wished not, but a body you have fitted to me."¹⁹⁵ By this he meant the entrance into the world of the Only-begotten, the dispensation through the flesh. For this is the way he came to us. He did not change from place to place – how could he since he is everywhere and fills all things – but he was made visible to us through the flesh. [*Disc.* 7.3.2; 186-7]

It would appear that it was not anti-Judaism alone which occasioned this distinctly christological outburst for Chrysostom, but was in some sense prompted by the challenge of Arianism. When the prospect of Arianism was introduced, with its alternative understanding of christology, Chrysostom's speculations upon christology become more substantial, speaking not of christological proofs or power as he does with the Jews, but upon the actual nature of Christ. In Melvin Lawrence's work, *The Christology of John Chrysostom*, Lawrence finds it sufficient to simply make a passing gesture at the christological language exhibited in Chrysostom's anti-Judaic material. Lawrence's statement is quoted in full:

The polemic against Neo-Arianism was not the only context in which Chrysostom discussed the divinity of Christ. In particular, the prominence of the Jewish population, especially in Antioch, is to be noted in this connection. On at least two occasions Chrysostom directly addressed the Jews or the judaizing Christians of Antioch. However, while these polemical and apologetic writings do discuss the divinity of Christ, *they include no theological discussions of the divine nature, but only proofs of divinity based on fulfillment of prophecy and miracles* [italics added]. (60)

¹⁹⁵ Heb 10.5; Ps 40.6-8 (see Septuagint)

For Lawrence, a far more substantial, christological picture emerges from Chrysostom's homilies on the Gospel of John¹⁹⁶ and in his most direct refutation of the Anomoeans: *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*,¹⁹⁷ where the Jews figure less significantly.¹⁹⁸ In Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants' evaluation of eight of Chrysostom's homilies preached on baptism, "Making Christian the Christians: The Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom,"¹⁹⁹ another area where Chrysostom's christology figures predominantly, one does not encounter an elaborate discussion of anti-Judaism. Instead, Chrysostom is principally interested with instructing the believer in the mystery of the union between Christ and the Christian.²⁰⁰ According to Pleasants, Chrysostom, in both a mythological and practical sense, endeavors to persuade the believers that the process of Christian baptism involves a transformation of praxis; that baptism alone is incomplete without participating in the mysterious union of the believer with God in Christ and through the Holy Spirit.²⁰¹ In *Baptismal Instructions*, Chrysostom attempts to fortify his initiates against the "deceits of the devil" declaring: "if the Arians wish to trip you up, you should know for sure that you must block up your ears to what they have to say. Answer them with confidence, and show them that the Son is like in substance to the Father."²⁰² Though the Jews figure into small sections of Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions*, their appearances in the text are extremely limited and relatively insignificant. Furthermore, when the Jews appear in Chrysostom's *Baptismal*

¹⁹⁶ Lawrence, *The Christology of John Chrysostom*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, trans. Paul W. Harkin, *The Fathers of the Church*, 72 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984).

¹⁹⁸ Lawrence, *The Christology of John Chrysostom*, 46-48.

¹⁹⁹ Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants, "Making Christian the Christians: The Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 34, no. 4 (1989).

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 380.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

²⁰² John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), I.22.

Instructions, they are rarely discussed in distinctly christological language, but are more frequently referenced for their general immorality, providing a counter example to the idealized Christian life.²⁰³ The Greeks also suffer a similar treatment.²⁰⁴

The observations made by Lawrence and Pleasants would appear to counter Ruether's assertion that it was practically impossible for the Christian exegete to teach scripturally without making a connection to anti-Judaism.²⁰⁵ Contrary to Ruether's generalization, Lawrence has observed that Chrysostom's most foundational christological statements do not appear in his polemic against Judaism, but in his homilies upon the Gospel of John and more polemical discourse against the Amoneans. Likewise, Pleasants' work on Chrysostom's baptismal homilies indicates that it was possible for Chrysostom to practice Christian exegesis, and to speak christologically, without substantially alluding to the anti-Judaic theses. Most notably, these works help illustrate that the relationship between christology and anti-Judaism, at least in Chrysostom's case, may be less direct, less inter-connected than Ruether's thesis would suggest. Thus, it becomes possible to say that Chrysostom's anti-Judaism does not appear to rest exclusively upon his christology, but involves a myriad of other factors which contributed to the development of Chrysostom's anti-Judaism.

Jewish Ritual and the Sociological Efficacy of Judaizing

In a social context, the city of Antioch was a unique stage for John Chrysostom. In the fourth century, Antioch was not only one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean

²⁰³ *Baptismal Instructions*, VI.5, warns Christians not to behave like the Jews, who "have preferred the amusements of the world, the harmful gatherings at the racecourses and at Satan's spectacles."

²⁰⁴ *Baptismal Instructions*, I.39, states, "I exhort both men and women to shun altogether omens and superstitions. These are foolish practices of the Greeks and of those who are still in the grip of error..."

²⁰⁵ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 121.

world; it was also one of the most diverse.²⁰⁶ During Chrysostom's residency in Antioch, Christianity had not yet completed its total transformation of society; much of Antiochene culture was supported by Hellenistic influences. Statues of the old Olympian Gods lined the streets, and vestiges of paganism could be found upon many public decorations, fountains, bridges, and adorning archways.²⁰⁷ No less than eight temples to the pagan Gods still stood in the city, accompanied by a plethora of minor pagan shrines, sacred edifices, and sacrificial altars.²⁰⁸ In the city of Antioch, Hellenism, whether divested of its religious symbolism or not, continued to legitimate many institutions in civic society, regulate its business, and connect it to a larger, transcendent past.²⁰⁹ As late as the fourth century, the remaining vestiges of paganism continued to serve as a constant reminder of the tension between the relatively recent, broad social acceptance of Christianity, and the still socially potent foundations of Hellenistic culture.

The Jews also possessed a long and distinctive history in the city of Antioch. Since the foundation of the city in the early third century by the Greek general Seleucus, the Jews had been an integral component of civic existence. The first Jewish settlers of the city were likely a small contingent of mercenaries, but the city's advantageous location between the trade routes of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, coupled with its proximity to Palestine, facilitated further Jewish colonization.²¹⁰ By the late fourth century, Antioch was home to a culturally vibrant and economically prosperous community of Jews. Archeological evidence from the period indicates that affluent Jewish families were financing building projects, not only in Antioch, but also in the

²⁰⁶ Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, 29-41.

²⁰⁷ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 19.

²⁰⁸ Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, 29.

²⁰⁹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 24.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

regions of greater Syria and Palestine.²¹¹ Suffice to say, by the late fourth century, the Jewish community in Antioch had been present for roughly six hundred years, far more than enough time to firmly establish a social and religious niche in Antiochene society.

Contrary to the modern conviction that religion is a matter of internal conviction, religious life in fourth-century Antioch was primarily characterized by its calendrical and ritualistic cycles. As Wilken has noted, “few things” were “more important to religious life than the calendar and the celebration of festivals on the proper dates.”²¹² And according to Isabella Sandwell, participation in religious ritual during the fourth century was a primary mark of religious allegiance.²¹³ In the anti-Judaic discourses of Chrysostom, the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue is not only framed in the language of christology, but is also characterized as a competition of opposing religious liturgies. In a significant way, this issue emerges as a primary justification for Chrysostom’s denunciations of the Jews. Chrysostom often exhibits an obsession with the “proper time” of Jewish festivals:

Did the Jews ever observe our pre-Paschal fast? Did they ever join in keeping the feast of the martyrs? Did they ever share with us the day of Epiphanies? They do not run to the truth, but you rush to transgression. I call it a transgression because their observances do not occur at the proper time. Once there was a proper time when they had to follow those observances, but now there is not. That is why what was once according to the Law is now opposed to it. [*Disc.* 4.3.9; 80]

²¹¹ Ibid., 56.

²¹² Ibid., 77.

²¹³ Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 246.

Historically, the issue of calendrical competition came to a head in the fourth century over the dating of the Easter celebration. As Wilken's research has noted, nothing was more determinative of religious allegiance during the fourth century than the proper observance of festivals, ritual, and the calendar. In Wilken's words, "Calendar was a primary mark of religious identity."²¹⁴ Originally, Christianity had observed Easter on the same day as the Jewish Passover, in keeping with the Jewish calendar.²¹⁵ But as Christianity and Judaism moved further away from one another in the succeeding centuries, both religions began to emphasize the necessity for greater distinctions between Christians and Jews. This tendency eventually led Christianity to seek to disengage the Christian festival of Easter from the Jewish observance of Passover. In 325 CE, the Council of Nicaea decided that Easter was never to be observed on the same day as the Jewish Passover. Even so, the ruling did not stop certain segments of the Christian population from continuing to observe the Easter celebration according to the Jewish calendar. From Chrysostom's comments, it appears that certain members of his congregation were attempting to do exactly that, transgressing the boundaries between Christians and Jews to observe the Easter celebration the same day as the Jewish Passover. For Chrysostom, the practices of these Judaizing Christians ran the risk of destroying the unity of his entire congregation,²¹⁶ so potent was the threat of calendrical syncretism. Believing that the decisions of the Council of Nicaea carried a profoundly spiritual significance, Chrysostom states:

Did you not hear Christ himself say: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them?" But if Christ is in their midst where two or three

²¹⁴ Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 92.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹⁶ *Disc.* 3.1.3; 48.

are gathered together, was not his presence all the more pervasive among the more than three hundred Fathers at Nicaea? Christ was present there, it was Christ who formulated and passed the laws. Yet you condemn not only the Council Fathers but the whole world which approved their judgment. [*Disc.* 3.3.5; 56-7]

To Chrysostom, the decision to alter the date of Easter was not simply an ecclesiastical decision, it was *supernaturally* decided. In effect, failure to recognize the authority of the Council of Nicaea is also a failure to recognize the authority of Christ. Thus, Nicaea becomes a defining element in Chrysostom's definition of Christianity. Chrysostom sets the stakes in no uncertain terms: "if the ceremonies of the Jews move you to admiration, what do you have in common with us [Christians]? If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies. But if ours are true, as they *are* true, theirs are filled with deceit."²¹⁷ In another location, Chrysostom continues by stating:

For when they see that you, who worship Christ whom they crucified, are reverently following their ritual, how can they fail to think that the rites they have performed are the best and that our ceremonies are worthless? For after you worship and adore at our mysteries, you run to the very men who destroy our rites. [*Disc.* 1.5.7; 20-1]

As Isabella Sandwell has pointed out, it is clear that Chrysostom envisioned "religious identities as essential and objective categories."²¹⁸ There was no religious continuity between the Christian and the Jew. In Chrysostom's opinion, the break between Judaism and Christianity was complete; Chrysostom endeavored to make that characterization a social reality. The separation of Jewish ritual from Christian ritual

²¹⁷ *Disc.* 1.6.5; 23-4.

²¹⁸ Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 61.

served as a tangible reminder of that unbridgeable gap. In an effort to construct a clear religious identity for his audience, Chrysostom endeavored to characterize Judaism in such a way for his audience as to provide a contrasting moral image: the image of the unbelieving Jew in direct contrast to the faithful Christian.

According to Sandwell, "Chrysostom could not construct a clear Christian identity for his audience without also making constant reference to what it was to be Greek or Jewish."²¹⁹ Approaching the homilies of Chrysostom from a sociological perspective, Sandwell notes that "Chrysostom's sermons against the Jews can be seen as a model example of identity formation."²²⁰ Mary C. Boys, affirming these same tendencies in Chrysostom's sermons, writes: "church leaders, mindful of the need for legitimizing Christianity in the Roman Empire, engaged in what we might term 'identity formation'."²²¹ In Chrysostom's homilies, Sandwell observes a distinctive sociological pattern; a pattern where Chrysostom is "trying to shape the audience's moral values" or "theological points" to help determine the audience's sense of religious reality.²²² In a more general sense, religious identity exists in part as the product of religious interaction. To belong to a religious community is to participate in that community's religious festivals, rituals, and observances. These religious observances have the effect of binding together members of the religious community through the collective affirmation of a distinctive religious identity. As previously indicated, to belong to a religious community was to participate in its religious rituals. Thus, in Sandwell's estimation, Chrysostom's anti-Judaism not only serves a theological purpose, but also serves a significant

²¹⁹ Ibid., 65.

²²⁰ Ibid., 82.

²²¹ Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?*, 57.

²²² Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 11.

sociological function. Not only were there theological or *christological* factors contributing to the language of Chrysostom's anti-Judaism, but there were also determinative and driving *sociological* elements which contributed to Chrysostom's perception of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. According to Sandwell, in order to accomplish this social distinction, it was advantageous for Chrysostom to identify visible markers of what it meant to be Christian, Jewish, or Greek.²²³ In a visible demonstration of this tendency, and to help clarify his definition of Christian "spiritual worship," Chrysostom portrays the Jewish religion as the embodiment of hollow and stagnant obedience:

Again, Christ to the Samaritan woman: "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."²²⁴ When Christ said this, he removed from us for the future the obligation to observe one place of worship and introduced a more lofty and spiritual way of worship. [*Disc.* 5.12.10; 143-4]

Moreover, to Chrysostom, the choice between the calendrical and ritualistic observances of the Jews, Christians, and Greeks was also framed as a choice with supernatural repercussions. In Sandwell estimation, Chrysostom portrays "The choice between being a Christian, Jew, or Greek" not only between "wholly different ways of life but also as a cosmic choice between siding with God and siding with demonic powers."²²⁵ Chrysostom quite literally and routinely demonizes his opponents, at one point stating rather succinctly, "the Jews themselves are demons."²²⁶ By labeling the

²²³ Ibid., 278.

²²⁴ Jn 4.21, 24

²²⁵ Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 90.

²²⁶ *Disc.* 1.6.3; 23.

Jews, Greeks, or Heretics as accomplices or instruments of the devil, Chrysostom was able to effectively invalidate any of these options as a legitimate religious expression. Such rhetoric not only served a theological purpose, but was also conceived and delivered with very real sociological intentions and sociological consequences. Regardless of the rhetoric involved, the effect was to maintain a definitive religious identity for his Christian congregation. As Chrysostom poses the question:

Are you a Christian? Why, then, this zeal for Jewish practices? Are you a Jew? Why, then, are you making trouble for the Church? Does not a Persian side with Persians? Is not a barbarian eager for what concerns the barbarians? Will a man who lives in the Roman empire not follow our laws and way of life?...The difference between the Jews and us is not a small one, is it? Is the dispute between us over ordinary, everyday matters, so that you think the two religions are really one and the same? Why are you mixing what cannot be mixed? [*Disc.* 4.3.5-6; 78-9]

Sandwell observes that the practice of Judaizing was a type of “religious interaction” between Christians and Jews which was inexorably bound to “social interaction.”²²⁷ To prevent Christians and Jews from interacting religiously or socially, Chrysostom aggressively emphasizes the differences between Christians and Jews through a variety of religious and behavioral distinctions. Boys observes that Christian writers, “sought to provide their members with a distinctive Christian identity by contrasting its beliefs and practices with Judaism – that is, they fostered an oppositional identity.”²²⁸ In an effort to demonstrate what constitutes pious Christian behavior and

²²⁷ Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 278.

²²⁸ Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?*, 57.

what did not, Chrysostom attempts to distinguish the “new” Christian rites from the “old” Jewish rites in order to illustrate the superiority of the latter:

At the same time he [God] saw that the Jews, too, who were even more imperfect than the pagans, would put aside their worship through sacrifices, holocausts, and other material things and be led to our way of life...All this was to take place after the old sacrifice had been abolished and after God had brought into its place the new sacrifice through the body of Christ. [*Disc.* 7.2.5-6; 184-5]

When discussing the anti-Judaic homilies of Chrysostom, it is important to note that for Chrysostom, anti-Judaism was not simply an end to itself. Chrysostom’s eight anti-Judaic homilies were not necessarily focused upon the promulgation of Jew hatred, but intended to preserve the religious integrity of his Christian community. The concept of the Judaizing Christian seriously threatened Chrysostom’s definition of Christianity as objectively distinct from Judaism.²²⁹ In Chrysostom’s opinion, by blending Jewish traditions with Christian traditions, Judaizing Christians were threatening to destabilize not only the stability of his local congregation, but the entire Christian world:

Let us, then, get rid of this wicked practice, my beloved, for it leads to no small harm. Let me tell you how it does this. Somebody hears you say that there were many who observed the fast of the Jews and, without any further investigation, he spreads the story to somebody else. And the second man, without inquiring into the truth of the rumor, again still tells it to another. Then, as the evil rumor little by little grows greater, it spreads a great disgrace over the Church. And this does no good for those who have fallen away; in fact, it causes considerable harm both to them and to many others. [*Disc.* 8.4.3-4; 218]

²²⁹ Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 82.

Chrysostom's anti-Judaic rhetoric is also partly occasioned by a desire to win the Judaizers back into the Christian fold. To regain the unity of his flock, Chrysostom turns to the language of anti-Judaism. Chrysostom's anti-Judaism does not appear to emanate solely from a sheer desire to spread anti-Judaism, but also rises from a distinct desire to reclaim Judaizing Christians. Chrysostom explains the intent of his homily:

Let me get the start on you by saying this now, so that each of you may win over his brother. Even if you must impose restraint, even if you must use force, even if you must treat him ill and obstinately, do everything to save him from fellowship with those who slew Christ. [*Disc.* 1.4.5; 15]

Sandwell's observations help to illuminate the social dynamics contained within Chrysostom's anti-Judaism. In short, Chrysostom envisioned a Christianity which encompassed all aspects of the Christian's life.²³⁰ This identity was in part achieved by communal participation in Christian rituals and practices. Since participation in religious ritual was tantamount to religious allegiance in the fourth century, the Christians who observed Jewish ritual, festival observances, and calendar had the effect of striking right at the core of Chrysostom's understanding of Christian identity. Jewish religion and ritual possessed an efficacy which was attractive to a number of Christians in Antioch. In defense of his church, Chrysostom attempted to persuade his congregation to avoid the temptation of Judaism at all costs – even if the Jews “show dead men brought back to life.”²³¹ The most straightforward way to accomplish this was to represent Judaism in an extremely negative light. Certainly, many of Chrysostom's arguments against the Jews were theological. However, focusing on Chrysostom's theological language should not

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

²³¹ *Disc.* 8.5.8; 197-8.

come at the expense of examining its sociological, calendrical, liturgical, and ritualistic effects.

Conclusion

It is the intention of this study to argue that the many non-christological factors figured in the formation of John Chrysostom's anti-Judaism in particular and Christianity in general. In summary, Chrysostom's anti-Judaism was in part the result of the interplay between rhetorical tradition, Christian tradition, and the socio-historical context of the particular situation. In this sense, Chrysostom becomes an indicator of larger trends in the development of Christian anti-Judaism. Specifically, that a more critical evaluation of Chrysostom's contextual circumstances suggests that the relationship between christology and anti-Judaism is far more convoluted and far less direct than Ruether's thesis implies. Contrary to Ruether's assertion, it is difficult to incontrovertibly demonstrate that anti-Judaism exists in a linear relationship to christology. In effect, the contours of the relationship between christology and anti-Judaism cannot be neatly delineated.

It has been previously stated in this thesis that no responsible theologian could ever attempt to exonerate Chrysostom for his anti-Judaic rhetoric, or excuse Christianity in general from the difficult task of examining the role Christian theology has played in the formation of secular anti-Semitism. To this effect, the present inquiry has attempted to further this task by examining several of Chrysostom's most pertinent works, exploring the possible roots of his own anti-Judaism in the process. While this thesis has attempted to argue against Ruether's general thesis, this author has not endeavored to claim that the relationship between anti-Judaism and christology cannot alternatively

exist in an obscured, more labyrinthine reality. In Ruether's defense, it is an undeniable historical reality that Christian theology has been construed in a way which has been tragically detrimental for the Jewish people. And while the subtleties of Ruether's thesis are suspect, her thesis cannot be ignored. While the connection between christology and anti-Judaism may not be as direct as Ruether insists, Ruether's thesis remains contributive: the antipathy between Christian and Judaism, the impetus for anti-Judaism in Christian theology, is in part precipitated by Christianity's particular rendering of christology. As Ruether argues, Christianity, by reinterpreting Judaism's messianic language, sought to assert its own messianic claim over and against its Jewish rival. Christological affirmations, therefore, took on a polemical construction. As Ruether demonstrates, the history of Christian christology has been characterized by both positive christological affirmations, and an almost reflexive anti-Jewish polemic. Consequently, it is difficult to dismiss the underlying anti-Judaic traditions which would have served to shape Chrysostom's perceptions of Judaism in fourth century Antioch. It would seem, in the final assessment, that Ruether's argument remains compelling, albeit in reduced utility.

Ruether's failure to account for many historical inaccuracies considerably reduces the cogency of her over-all thesis, but it does not completely dismiss it. Christians are still obliged to examine the theological or christological roots of anti-Judaism, and its modern permutation: anti-Semitism. Ruether's generalizations do not excuse Christianity from this difficult task. However, without a measured analysis of all pertinent materials, Christianity has a significantly reduced hope of adequately grappling with both theological anti-Judaism, and modern-day anti-Semitism. If the sources of anti-Judaism

improperly defined, if the contours remain vaguely defined and subject to extensive criticism, one must begin to wonder whether or not Christianity would truly benefit from pursuing such an indefinite perspective. Ruether's argument must be taken into account, but so must the external and historical factors which she excuses from consideration.

While Ruether's insights possess certain applications, this author remains doubtful that her argument represents the truest estimation of the sources of Chrysostom's or especially Christianity's anti-Judaism. Instead, it would appear that the emergence of anti-Judaism is dependent upon a more complex relationship between the linguistic, traditional, social, and theological developments which provide expression for the Christian community.

Any consideration of Chrysostom's anti-Judaic homilies must learn to appreciate the complex interactions which lead to anti-Judaism in Christianity. It is this author's hope that by providing a measured analysis of the sources of Chrysostom's anti-Judaism, Christianity may be better served to adequately grapple with the dilemma of anti-Judaism.

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