Heresies, “Jewish-Christian” and others

April 6, 2006

- Why study heresy, and its implications
- From diversity to consensus and exclusion
- The special problem of Jewish Christians, Christian Jews, and Judaism

Housekeeping

- Papers will be returned Tuesday
  - Currently, 11–12 will be asked to rewrite
  - All students MAY rewrite
- Can get a tentative grade from Elizabeth after class or in her office today (until 4:30)
- No class Thursday 4/13, 4/20

Why study heresy, and its implications

- Fundamental diversity of earliest Christianity
  - Diverse beliefs (Jn vs. Mk on Christ)
  - Diverse practices (foods used in Christian meals)
- A feedback mechanism that is part of the proto-orthodox construction of:
  - “Rule of faith” (regula fides): insistence on consensus and traditionality
  - Canon: solidified and institutionalized
  - Theology: increasingly refined, sophisticated, and “Greek”
  - Exclusion of non-conformists
### The special problem of Jewish Christians, etc.

- Terminological and conceptual ambiguity:
  - "Jewish believers in Christ" and Christian practitioners of Judaism
  - Does not adequately cover the earliest stratum
  - The problem of name-calling (Christian polemicists called opponents "Judaizers"...)
- The siren call of authenticity and biblical authority in Christianity (modern examples)
- Developments in antiquity: from mainstream to marginal
- Christian self-identity as Gentile yields active rejection, condemnation of Judaism

### The siren call of authenticity and biblical authority

Some modern examples
- Seventh-day Christians (Adventists, Church of God) (19th century)
- Some examples of Passover observance in modern Christian contexts
Messianic Passover Seder
with Marty Coetz

Friday, April 7
6:30-9:30 p.m.
CFPC Family Center

There are several reasons why Christians celebrate the Seder. One is to remember the acts of God in delivering His people from the land of Egypt and leading them through the desert toward Canaan. Another reason is to participate in the annual Passover meal on the eve of the exodus. The third reason is to celebrate the redemption of Jesus Christ, who is the Passover Lamb, the sacrifice for sin, and our hope for eternal life.

Jesus, the Passover Lamb, was crucified on the same day and time as the Passover sacrifice. He died for our sins and rose again on the first day of the week, just as the Passover sacrifice was eaten on the first day of the week.

The Passover Seder is a service where we remember the events of the exodus, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, and the promise of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins.

Passover Seder
8:00 p.m.

Parker Memorial Baptist Church

This is an opportunity to participate in a traditional Passover Seder, learning about the events of the exodus, the significance of the Passover lamb, and the promise of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins.

Church of God (Seventh Day)
Jonesboro, Arkansas

Church of God 7th Day, Jonesboro Arkansas

Visit Pastor Gateway Feed

Church Service: Saturday 10:00 am Bible Study
Saturday 1:00 pm Bible Study
Sunday 11:00 am Mrs. McRae
Wednesday 7:30 pm Bible Study
Developments in antiquity: from mainstream to marginal

- Again: fundamental diversity of earliest Christianity
- Paul, Letter to Galatians
- Gospel of Matthew: Engaged in (Palestinian) Jewish sectarian debates on marriage, purity, etc.
- Acts, Jerusalem Council
- Justin Martyr (mid 2nd C)
- Epistle of Peter to James (3rd C.)
- Jerome (ca 400) claims to know Jewish Christian groups in Syria

Paul, Letter to Galatians

- 2:3 Titus is not forced to be circumcised (Implication: arguing against expectation that he would)
- 5:2 Listen, I Paul am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised Christ will be of no benefit to you.
  (Implication: others are saying that you must)
- 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the Grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel (Implication: view has traction for the Galatians)

Matthew: A Jewish Gospel

- Unless your piety exceeds that of Scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven
- ... For truly I tell you you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes
  10:23 (16–25); cf. Mark 13:9–13
- The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do what they teach you ...; but do not do as they do ...
  23:2–3 (1–12); cf. Mark 12:37–39
- Yet: also intense memory of hostility (“His blood upon us and upon our children”). An anger born of proximity and close interaction?
Acts, Jerusalem Council

- Assembly decides that *Gentiles turning to God* need not circumcise....
- It is not *apparently* prohibited
- This decision (15:19, etc.; 21:25) is NEVER in the book of Acts extended, and the book reflects knowledge that *Christians* in Judaea opposed.

Justin Martyr (mid 2nd C)

- "Normative" Christians do not observe Jewish practices (it is one of the things Trypho disagrees with him about).
- Those who do practice circumcision will be saved, but
  - they should not enforce it on others
  - Other Christians disagree even on this

Epistle of Peter to James (3rd C.)

- Positive assessment of the Pharisees (as model to emulate in some respects)
- Rejection of Pauline tradition (some among the Gentiles have rejected my lawful preaching...)
- "Sectarian" identity:
  - Long proving period,
  - Oath of initiation
  - Secrecy teaching and protection of books
Christian self-identity as Gentile and rejection of Judaism

- Barnabas: Jews have always misunderstood Scripture. Laws are talking to us.
- Justin Martyr: They can observe circumcision, just let them not promote it.
- Jews as killers of God (meanwhile shrinking the distinction between Father and Son)
- Note centrality of Scripture as fodder in the debate
  - Allegory (Animals that chew cud: associate with those who meditate)
  - Typology (Passover, Isaac, etc. models ("types") of Christ)
    [Both examples from Barnabas]
- A response of “insecurity”? 