

THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN ANTIOCH

A social-scientific approach to the
separation between Judaism
and Christianity

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CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	x
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
1 Aim, method and perspectives	1
The aim of the study	1
The basic problem—from Jesus to Ignatius	1
<i>J. D. G. Dunn and the partings of the ways</i>	4
<i>The aim specified</i>	7
The method and perspectives of the study	8
Theories, perspectives and the question of verification	8
<i>“The truth is out there”—textuality and meaning</i>	8
<i>Theories and perspectives</i>	9
<i>How do we know when we know?</i>	11
The method of the study	13
<i>A hermeneutical model of interpretation</i>	13
Summary and conclusion	15
2 The setting: Antioch-on-the-Orontes	18
Introduction	18
A short history of Antioch	19
The foundation and early development of the city	19
From Antiochus IV Epiphanes to Titus	20
The social and religious life of Antioch	24
Antioch as a Greco-Roman <i>polis</i>	24
<i>Public and private worship</i>	25
<i>Social conditions in Antioch</i>	28
The Jewish community in Antioch up to 66 CE	31
<i>The origin of Jewish presence in Antioch</i>	31

CONTENTS

	<i>The legal status of the Jews of Antioch</i>	32
	<i>One community—several congregations</i>	37
	<i>The internal organization of the Jewish community</i>	38
	<i>The synagogue as a community center</i>	39
	Summary and conclusion	41
3	The cultural and religious differentiation	53
	Introduction	53
	Constructing analytical tools	55
	A theory of religious differentiation	55
	<i>Religion and value-changing processes</i>	55
	<i>Muslims and religious change in modern Europe</i>	58
	<i>Pluralism and religious differentiation</i>	61
	A theory of social integration	67
	<i>Variables of assimilation</i>	67
	<i>The process of assimilation</i>	69
	<i>The assimilation profile—a test case</i>	71
	<i>The use of acculturation</i>	74
	Analysis—Antiochean Judaism revealed	75
	Groups and factions	75
	<i>Crossing the boundaries—Antiochus the apostate</i>	75
	<i>Observing torah—religious traditionalists</i>	80
	<i>Constructing alternatives—messianism and Hellenism</i>	88
	The synagogue and religious differentiation	91
	Summary and conclusion	97
4	Evidence of interaction	112
	Introduction	112
	Riots and reactions	113
	The incident at the circus	114
	Antiochus, Titus and the Jews in Antioch	117
	The paradox of attraction	121
	Converts, admirers and god-fearers	121
	Ethics, survival rates and the attraction of the Jews	124
	Jews, god-fearers and civic authorities	127
	The incident at Antioch	129
	The scholarly debate	130
	<i>Purity and tithing</i>	130
	<i>Circumcision and table-fellowship</i>	131
	<i>Critique and revision</i>	132
	<i>Circumcision and oath-taking</i>	133
	<i>Christian identity</i>	134

CONTENTS

<i>The need for a different approach</i>	134
Covenant and conflict	136
<i>The eschatological status of Gentiles</i>	136
<i>A covenant for Gentiles?</i>	140
<i>The agreement at Jerusalem and the apostolic decree</i>	143
<i>Who ate with whom—the issue of table-fellowship</i>	149
<i>Covenantal theology in the making</i>	156
Summary and conclusion	164
5 Politics and persecution	178
Introduction	178
Constructing analytical tools	179
A theory of social movements	179
<i>Social movements and collective action</i>	179
<i>The rationality of social behavior</i>	180
<i>The origin of social movements</i>	181
<i>The mobilization of resources</i>	182
<i>Social movements and social conflict</i>	183
Analysis—the struggle for independence	185
The call for collective action	185
<i>The socio-political situation after the Jewish war</i>	185
<i>Jews, Gentiles and the fiscus Judaicus in Antioch</i>	190
<i>The rationality of separation</i>	193
Christianity as a social movement	203
<i>Judaism, Christianity and Ignatius of Antioch</i>	203
<i>Resource mobilization and the Gospel of Matthew</i>	211
<i>Federations and the mission to the Jews</i>	216
Summary and conclusion	222
Epilogue: summary and implications	231
The main results of the study	231
Implications	233
<i>Bibliography</i>	236
Ancient sources	236
Modern works	239
<i>Indices</i>	261
Index of passages	261
Index of subjects	269

AIM, METHOD AND PERSPECTIVES

Πᾶ βῶ, καί: χαριστίωνι τὸν γόν κινήσω πᾶσαν.
 (“If I have somewhere to stand, I will move the whole earth
 with my *charistion*.”)

Archimedes

The aim of the study

The basic problem—from Jesus to Ignatius

Undoubtedly, most Jews and Christians of today consider that they belong to different religions. For modern people this division between Judaism and Christianity seems normal because, in Christian tradition, Judaism has often been pictured as the ultimate contradiction of Christianity. As J. D. G. Dunn has put it, “[i]t would hardly be surprising if someone brought up in Protestant Christianity thought of Judaism as the antithesis of Christianity.”¹ G. Boccaccini, however, has suggested that we should understand Judaism as denoting “the whole family of monotheistic systems that sprang forth from the same Middle Eastern roots.”² Seen in this way Judaism includes Rabbinism, Karaism, Samaritanism—and Christianity. In Boccaccini’s model Judaism denotes the *genus*, while the branches, such as Christianity, denote the *species*.

To picture the relation between different religious expressions in this way has its obvious advantage, especially over previous confessionally oriented models, and it certainly emphasizes the aspect of continuity. Boccaccini is undeniably right in drawing attention to biases that have led to a confessional terminology. His choice of an all-inclusive extreme, however, can lead to other problems. One must, for instance, reflect upon the meaningfulness of a terminology that for many Jews and Christians might even be considered

offensive. Boccaccini admits that his statement “may be shocking.”³ I would, however, go further—it is simply incorrect.⁴

For the majority of Christian conceptions, Christian identity is not consistent with a Jewish life. In most Christian ideologies, Christ is considered to have *invalidated* the torah. This process is operative from the other side of the divide as well. According to secular Israeli legislation, a Jew who has converted to Christianity (or any other religion) loses the right to immigrate to Israel according to the Law of Return, which applies to Jews only. Thus, according to this definition, a Jew who converts to Christianity ceases to be Jewish. G. G. Stroumsa has summarized the fact of the matter in the following way:

From the second to the fourth centuries, we can follow the birth out of the traditional faith of Israel, of not one, but at least two religions. Rabbinic Judaism, which emerged at Yavneh before the end of the first century, grew into a full-fledged religion with the development of the Talmudic culture, during the same centuries in which Christianity developed into a new religion with a structure and an identity that were quite different from those of its genitor.⁵

Christianity certainly was a variety of Judaism but definitely ceased to be so. Already at the beginning of the second century we find the first signs of the *Adversus Iudaeos* literature, which can be taken as early evidence of a development that resulted in Judaism being considered as heretical. Henceforth, Judaism and Christianity are best understood as two different religions.⁶ One early and rather clear indication of the emergence of Christianity as a new religion is to be found in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch.

Probably during the end of Emperor Trajan’s rule (98–117 CE), Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, was sent to Rome to be executed.⁷ During the journey he wrote several letters to various churches in Asia Minor, addressing local problems he knew either from personal visits or from delegations sent to him from local churches. In two letters, to the Magnesians and to the Philadelphians, the local situation led Ignatius to comment on Judaism. It is clear from these comments that Ignatius understood Judaism to be *something profoundly different from Christianity*. In *Magn.* 8:1, for instance, he warns against Jewish influences:

Be not led astray by strange doctrines or by old fables which are profitless. For if we are living until now according to

Judaism [εἰ γὰρ μέχρι νῦν κατὰ Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν], we confess that we have not received grace.

In this text it is evident that Ignatius sees a clear contradiction between Christianity and Judaism. To some extent he probably draws from popular prejudice of Judaism: dependency on fables or myths were common accusations against Judaism.⁸ While the text seems to echo Paul in Galatians 5:4, the context of the situation is completely different. As J. Lieu has noted, Ignatius opposes not law and grace *but Judaism and grace*.⁹ While Paul addressed the question of how Gentile adherents to the Jesus movement should relate to Judaism from a position *within Judaism*, Ignatius argues from a position *outside Judaism* in order to nullify the whole Jewish religious system. As he states in *Magn.* 10:3:

It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism [ἰουδαΐζειν]. For Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity [ὁ γὰρ Χριστιανισμὸς οὐκ εἰς Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ἐπίστευσεν, ἀλλ' Ἰουδαϊσμὸς εἰς Χριστιανισμὸν], and every tongue believing on God was brought together in it.

We may conclude that, less than a century after the execution of Jesus, we find in many respects one part of the Jesus movement that had turned into something profoundly different. For instance, it seems clear that Jesus directed his mission predominantly, if not completely, to the people of Israel and that, while it cannot be ruled out that in some ways he may have represented a novel interpretation of Jewish traditions, he was deeply rooted within the Judaism of the period. The same, I venture to say, is true for Paul, who most certainly lived and died as a torah-obedient Jew, convinced that the god of Israel intended to fulfill his covenantal promise to the people of Israel, at the same time extending his grace to include also the Gentiles.

We have thus identified the main problem of this study: namely, *if the Jesus movement started out as a Jewish messianic faction, how can it be explained that a representative of the same movement, about eighty years later, finds the basic religious outlook of Judaism to be incompatible with the movement he represents?* What mechanisms lie behind a development that makes Christianity an anti-Jewish religion, entirely separated from Judaism?

J. D. G. Dunn and the partings of the ways

These questions have certainly been dealt with before.¹⁰ One modern work of vital importance is Dunn's *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (1991). Dunn claims that, during the end of the first century, two new religions emerged: rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. He states that the fact that they emerged from the same matrix makes relevant the question of why they split and became distinct.¹¹ Despite the obvious merits of Dunn's work, there are reasons for taking a fresh look at the separation between Judaism and Christianity.

Firstly, *Dunn's theoretical outlook and analytical tools are almost exclusively focused on ideological aspects.* He identifies what he considers to be the four pillars of second temple Judaism, namely, monotheism, election, the covenant focused in the torah, and land focused in the temple. His basic hypothesis is that the partings of the ways was a result of the new movement's questioning and the redefinition "of these four axioms in greater or less degree—at any rate, to a degree unacceptable to mainstream Judaism."¹² While ideological aspects certainly played a vital part in the process, it seems more correct to assume that what Dunn understands to be *the cause* of the separation process actually represents *the result* of the separation defined in ideological terms. The reason for this assumption is that *concrete cultural resources* (e.g., church architecture, symbolic practices, liturgical forms) are more likely to be the object of contention, while *abstract resources* (e.g., ideas, ideologies, values) are easier to manipulate and often function as strategically mobilized resources in conflicts over other kind of resources.¹³ A full historical analysis of the separation between Judaism and Christianity has to take into consideration the role of social mechanisms as well as the function of ideological aspects in a social conflict perspective. In this study I intend consequently to focus on the sociological aspects of the separation process: while naturally I will not disregard the ideological aspects, these will be treated within a sociological framework.

Secondly, while Dunn takes into account the extensive reappraisal of the character of Judaism and even refutes what he views as too simplistic a dichotomy between gospel and torah,¹⁴ *he reiterates the old dichotomy in a new way.* Paul does not attack the torah or the covenant, Dunn, states, but "*a covenantal nomism which insisted on treating the law as a boundary round Israel, marking off Jew from Gentile, with only those inside as heirs of God's promise to Abraham.*"¹⁵

However, when it comes to the relation between the torah and the covenant, it becomes evident that Dunn believes that Paul replaced the torah with faith in Christ for both Jews and Gentiles. Since entry into the covenant is by faith, Dunn argues, circumcision is no longer necessary, and membership in the covenant should not be tied to specific rules but rest solely on faith.

Faith in Christ *is* the climax of *Jewish* faith, but it is no longer to be perceived as a specifically *Jewish* faith; *faith should not be made to depend in any degree on the believer living as a Jew (judaizing)*.¹⁶

In the wake of K. Stendahl's important collection of essays *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (1976), there has been an increasing awareness of Paul's Jewish context that in important areas moves beyond Dunn's understanding of Paul's relation to the torah and Judaism. This new way of looking at Paul and his relation to the torah, the Jewish people, and the Gentiles represents something of a paradigm shift. It is now possible to speak of an independent tradition made up of several well-established and highly respected scholars who offer an alternative solution to the problem of Paul, the torah, and Jewish and Gentile adherents to the Jesus movement.

J. G. Gager has made a very useful summary of the problems associated with the traditional view of Paul and the advantage of a reconstruction of Paul that allows him to be firmly rooted within the diversified Judaism of the first century. The present study agrees with the basic elements of the new view as presented by Gager.¹⁷ Thus, it is assumed that the audience addressed in Paul's letters are Gentiles. Consequently, discourses where the contradiction between the torah and belief in Christ are salient are not applicable to the situation of the Jewish believers at all but are part of a rhetorical discourse aimed at preventing Gentiles from becoming Jews.¹⁸ Thus, it can no longer be assumed that Paul considered the torah to have ceased to have relevance for Jesus-believing Jews. As P. Lapidé puts it: "[f]or Jews and for Jewish proselytes the Mosaic Law, as Paul sees it, retains its full and unaltered validity."¹⁹ It is the point of departure of this study that Paul meant Jesus-believing Jews to remain Jews and Jesus-believing Gentiles to remain Gentiles and that the torah had continued validity for Jews.

It must be emphasized that it is not my intention to make any contribution of my own to the problem of Paul's relation to the torah. In these matters I will base my reconstruction exclusively on the

works of others, who in my opinion have showed the reasonability of a new view of Paul to a sufficient degree. While there are certainly several more problems to deal with in this field, the focus of this study is a different one. This means that I, as anyone who engages in issues where the relation between the torah and Paul is relevant, side with a specific scholarly tradition whose results are used as a point of departure. This new understanding of Paul is sufficient by itself to motivate a new study of the separation process.

Thirdly, Dunn's view of Paul and the torah implies that the original Jewish and Gentile identities of the adherents to the Jesus movement are transformed *into a common new Christian identity*. Without dealing with the specific theological implications of this, from a social-psychological point of view such a development is highly unlikely. A Jew who came to embrace belief in Jesus as the Messiah could not be said to change one symbolic universe for another. To become a Messiah-believing Jew would rather represent *a new orientation within the same symbolic universe*. The social consequences for a Jew who in an urban environment became attached to a messianic synagogue probably did not initially affect the individual's social and religious identity in any profound way. It was more likely a much greater step to become a member of the strict, monastic Qumran sect.

The social and cognitive consequences for a Gentile who became an adherent of the Jesus movement would be far more serious. It seems clear that it was not consistent with belief in Christ to worship simultaneously other deities.²⁰ Because of the socio-political system in the Greco-Roman world, reluctance to maintain a Gentile religious identity could have severe effects on the individual's social identity. In this case we may speak of a conversion in the meaning of leaving one religion for another. Such a process would involve the individual's complete repudiation of his or her original social and religious context and a corresponding resocialization into a new. This implies that to a higher degree we must take into consideration that Jews and Gentiles became "Christians" from rather different points of departure. Hence, when dealing with the situation in the first century we cannot speak of "Christians" as if they constituted a homogeneous group. It is of utmost importance that this insight is evidenced in and affects the analytical work. Thus, in the present study I will use the designations "Jesus-believing Jew" and "Jesus-believing Gentile" to describe the followers of the "Jesus movement."²¹

The aim specified

Since it cannot be assumed that the separation between Judaism and Christianity occurred simultaneously everywhere and was caused by the same circumstances, *a sensible strategy seems to be to restrict an initial study to one location* and only in a second step to examine whether results from such a study are applicable also to other locations. This strategy is also preferable if one considers the amount of available sources. The likelihood of being able to reconstruct the whole process of separation between Judaism and Christianity from the few available texts is almost nil. Even if we confine ourselves to study only one location, the task is an extremely complicated one. However, there is one location that is dealt with or at least touched upon to a greater extent than others: namely Antioch-on-the-Orontes. As already mentioned, Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch and has written several letters that may have a bearing on the Antiochean situation. Paul's letter to the Galatians deals with one specific incident at Antioch that is of utmost importance for our understanding of the relations between Jews and Gentiles. The Gospel of Matthew may have originated in Antioch and almost certainly played an important role in the community of Ignatius. The traditions of the Maccabean martyrs in 4 Maccabees may also be connected to Antioch, and Josephus specifically mentions circumstances concerning the Jewish community in Antioch.

Thus, the present study will be restricted to an investigation of the separation between Judaism and Christianity in an Antiochean context, from the period from the introduction of the Jesus movement in Antioch up to the death of Ignatius. *The main aim is to provide an understanding of how the Jewish Jesus movement turned into a new non- and even anti-Jewish Gentile religion, completely separated from Judaism.* In my analysis, which will focus upon the social aspects of the process without neglecting ideological elements, I will emphasize the different conditions for Jewish and Gentile adherents to the Jesus movement.

Even with the limitations of time and space, the task is a complicated one. The main problem is the paucity of relevant sources and the tendentious character of those available. This implies the need to use other tools and an innovative and even experimental approach regarding the methodology. We will therefore turn to questions about method and perspectives.

The method and perspectives of the study

Theories, perspectives and the question of verification

“The truth is out there”—textuality and meaning

There are several basic problems involved in a study such as this one. Firstly, the separation between Christianity and Judaism is a process of immense complexity. Given the amount and character of the sources, together with the distance in time, we must admit that no reconstruction of the process can ever capture the fullness of the course of events. What we can possibly aim at is to understand different aspects involved in the process. This implies that, whatever the outcome of this study, it is only a partial explanation that emphasizes some aspects, while neglecting others.

The reason for this is our total dependence on different kinds of source material. In the case of the problem of the separation between Judaism and Christianity, we are almost entirely dependent on *ancient literary texts*. Having stated this, an enormous number of problems arise. Are the sources reliable? Are they suitable for answering our questions? Is there enough material to create a complete picture? The answer is that the sources are usually biased and frequently part of a rhetorical discourse, that they were not written to give answer to our specific questions, and that they are always too few. This implies that in addition to the general problems of textual interpretation, we face severe difficulties in relating the sources to the specific problem on which we are focusing.

The increasing awareness of the problems involved in determining how texts create meaning and the role of the readers in constructing meaning make it impossible not to comment upon such issues. One does not have to go as far as S. Fish who states that there is *nothing* in the text since everything is in the interpretation, to realize that reading texts is connected with certain interpretative difficulties.²² A more pragmatically oriented approach is the one suggested by W. Iser. Unlike Fish, Iser does not question the existence of stable constraints in texts but rather emphasizes their *indeterminate status*.²³ During the reading process the reader fills in “gaps” in the text through an act of interpretation. Here it becomes clear that *the “meaning” arrived at through the reading process is dependent on what the gaps in the text are being filled with*. Thus, different readers may arrive at different “meanings” since their interpretations are made from different points of departure.

What is true on the level of interpretation of one single text is, of course, also true when it comes to the reconstruction of a complex historical process that is dependent on the interpretation of texts, archaeological remains, or any other artefact. In our effort to understand what happened in the past, we are compelled to fill in gaps when the sources are few, corrupt, tendentious, or even lacking. It is important that we understand that, as every reading process is a *meaning-constructing process*, so is the work of every historian. Perhaps this is true to such an extent that we should think of “reconstructions” rather in terms of “constructions” that may involve as much artistic creativity as the modern interpretation of a pavane by L. Milán, played from the original tablature.²⁴

The “truth” may be out there, but its appearance is almost completely dependent on a construction based on the interpretation of sources from certain perspectives and points of departure.

Theories and perspectives

The insight that every historian is doomed to perceive the past not only through ancient sources but through their *interpretation*, makes the use of modern theories or models urgent. As P. F. Esler has rightly noted, everyone uses “models,” even though we should perhaps refer to our subjective pre-understanding with some other term.²⁵ Nevertheless, it is true that the totality of assumptions, beliefs, prejudices, and experiences that can be said to constitute our symbolic universe obviously affects the interpretation of ancient sources.²⁶ In this respect it is not possible to choose whether a given problem shall be viewed with or without subjective points of view. We may become conscious of the subjectivity of our analysis, but we can never disconnect from it. What, however, may be affected is the choice of *specific* theories or models.

There are two main problems in using ancient literary sources. The first problem relates to how information in texts is to be valued. Some texts relate events that cannot possibly have happened: people walking on water or corpses coming alive, etc. Furthermore, texts may be part of rhetorical discourses that are hard for us to decode, since the communicative situation is no longer known. The other main problem, however, is the paucity of relevant sources. This is, of course, a general problem, but in the case of the separation between Judaism and Christianity it becomes especially urgent. The study of this part of history therefore requires a special methodological strategy.

In dealing with the problem of using sociological analyses in New Testament exegesis, R. Scroggs has proposed that, if the available data

evidence some *parts* of the gestalt of a known model, while being silent about others, we *may* cautiously be able to conclude that the absence of the missing part is accidental and that the entire model was actually a reality in the early church.²⁷

In commenting on this, B. Holmberg raises the question of the legitimacy of such a methodology. Holmberg finds that Scroggs's use of sociological models is based on a misunderstanding of the concept. He states:

[Sociological models] are simply abstractions, constructed types that do not depict any reality exactly. It is illegitimate to use them as prescriptions or prognoses about what must have happened or been there when there is no evidence to say so.²⁸

Holmberg is of course right in stating that sociological models or theories are abstractions without any possibility of depicting reality exactly. The sad thing is that they share this fate with *every other way of depicting a historical reality, such as spoken language, written texts, and archaeological remains*. In my opinion, the use of specific theories may help us tackle some of the problems with ancient literary sources. They may help us evaluate information given in texts and infer information not given. In both cases, in fact, they act as gap-fillers. For instance, a theory of gravitation may help us evaluate texts about people walking on water. In such a case we may have to be open to the possibility that a model or theory can perform the function of correcting an ancient source. However, when we possess no sources about a process we may assume was operative in antiquity, we may perhaps be able to use models applied to similar processes elsewhere.

Thus, I would ascribe a somewhat more salient function to theories and models as providers of information. They can certainly function as merely heuristic tools, and by using them we may be able ask new questions of the texts, but, when the texts are unable to answer any questions, a specific theory about reality may.²⁹ To some extent, in the absence of sources, specific theories can actually be used in order to speculate about what may have happened. The ideal situation is, of course, when we have literary or other remains that can be interpreted

with help from theories about reality. With regard to scientific generalization R. Stark has stated that “it is precisely the abstract generality of science that makes it possible for social science to contribute anything to our understanding from social scientific theories.”³⁰

If the theories seem to be good theories, based on empirical studies of humanity, there is no reason why we should not use them, *if the alternative is to say nothing*. “Need,” Stark continues, “is the only justification for the application of social science to fill in historical blanks.”³¹ The problem of why Judaism and Christianity became separated seems to be precisely such a case. This leads us to the problem of verification.

How do we know when we know?

One of the main problems with (re)constructions of complex scenarios in antiquity is how to verify our suggestions. It is often possible to verify individual data: we know, for instance, with reasonable certainty that Jesus existed, that Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE, and that Titus besieged Jerusalem in 70 CE. Other historical assertions are more uncertain, and the scholarly community may be divided into two or several parties.

For instance, what relation did Paul have to the torah? Could Jews eat with Gentiles? Do Galatians 2 and Acts 15 relate the same story? Was Judaism a legalistic religion? Unfortunately, there is no single answer to these questions, and the scholarly community has been involved in numerous discussions about these problems. One problem of extreme complexity is when an analysis of a process in antiquity must relate to other conditions in the environment that are not completely known to us or when different or even contradictory opinions exist regarding a certain question. How do we verify a reconstruction of a course of events that is based on conditions that are not fully known to us? These questions relate to the overarching problem of verification of knowledge.

There are basically two ways of approaching the problem of how to verify a statement. We may, on the one hand, assume that a statement is true *if it corresponds to reality*. There are, of course, several difficulties involved in such a definition of scientific truth: what do we mean by “correspondence,” for instance? However, on a pragmatic level it is fairly evident what is hinted at. We “know” that the Roman Empire existed, since we have an overwhelming amount of evidence that indicates this. We can thus say that the statement “the Roman Empire existed 2000 years ago” is true because it corresponds to the

reality indicated by different and numerous sources. When we begin to pose questions about the function of different aspects in the empire, how different institutions related to each other, how authority was administered, what the social conditions were, etc., we may, however, find it difficult to determine whether a statement corresponds to reality, *since we do not know what this reality looked like*.

When we are forced to use assumptions about reality in constructing plausible models of what Roman ancient reality may have looked like, we may find that “coherence” is a more useful criterion for historical truth. According to J. Hospers, a body of beliefs is coherent when none of them is inconsistent with any other and when they mutually support one another.³² This way of verification takes into account that several elements are related to each other and that the validity of one single element is dependent on its place within the whole system.

It is obvious that using this kind of verification system is problematic. The risk of circular reasoning, for instance, is obvious. However, this is a risk we must take: in fact, *the state of things leaves us no alternative*. If one single piece of evidence can be given several interpretations, we may be justified in choosing one that seems to fit into the system as a whole. W. V. Quine and J. S. Ullian have compared this state of affairs to an engine:

Often in assessing beliefs we do best to assess several in combination. A very accomplished mechanic might be able to tell something about an automobile’s engine by examining its parts one by one, each in complete isolation from the others, but it would surely serve his purpose better to see the engine as a whole with all the parts functioning together. So with what we believe. It is in the light of the full body of beliefs that candidates gain acceptance or rejection; any independent merits of a candidate tend to be less decisive.³³

To sum up: the sources are few and to some extent inadequate, the interpretation of texts and other sources requires an interpretative act, and, furthermore, some elements upon which we base our argumentation are themselves based on assumptions and non-verifiable elements. We must conclude that it may be the case that our reconstructions correspond in some degree to reality, but we have little chance of knowing when we have reached such correspondence. *The “truth” may be out there, but we will never know when we have found it.*

What we may aim at is to create a coherent, plausible system based on the interpretation of all available sources from certain carefully chosen perspectives. We will now turn to how this task is carried out in the present study.

The method of the study

A hermeneutical model of interpretation

In creating such a plausible reconstruction of the process of separation of Christianity from Judaism in Antioch, we must obviously adopt a methodological strategy that takes into consideration the difficulties involved in historical reconstructions. We must be able to show that our reconstruction is not only possible, but also a plausible suggestion of how things may have developed. The available sources must be given a reasonable interpretation within the system, and the perspectives that underlie the interpretation of them should be accounted for.

The primary source material in this study is literary. In order to create as plausible a reconstruction as possible when interpreting the sources, I intend to use the combination of 1) a basic, general theoretical perspective regarding society, 2) specific social-scientific theories used in empirical studies of modern societies, and 3) comparative material from antiquity. Through the reciprocity between these elements, we should be able to construct an interpretative frame that will help us understand literary and other sources that are related to the subject under discussion. When such material is scanty or even lacking, the model may help us to fill the gaps and create a plausible and testable reconstruction of history.

As the most basic theoretical concept I will use the phenomenologically oriented approach of P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, as presented in the classic *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966). The fundamental presumption about humanity and society that permeates this study is contained in the statement “[s]ociety is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.”³⁴

Using the perspective of sociology of knowledge makes it possible for us to make some important assumptions about peoples’ relation to each other and to the world surrounding them. According to Berger and Luckmann, it is the *biological constitution* that compels mankind to create a social world that is eventually perceived as objective. *Homo sapiens* is also *homo socius*, and this is the reason why it can be assumed

that some basic mechanisms regarding human social life are operative in all human societies.³⁵

In addition to this I will draw on some specific theories from different social-scientific traditions in order to make suggestions that go beyond what is stated in the literary sources. It is important to note that my intention is not to test these theories. The empirical material used in building them up is from my point of view considered to be sufficient. Rather, I aim to employ these specific theories as propositions about reality.

Finally, I will use comparative material from antiquity. As far as possible I intend to draw from the works of other scholars in trying to find ancient parallels to phenomena that concern the present study.

Thus, if we find something in texts about the local situation in Antioch that makes sense from an underlying social-scientific perspective, and if this text can be analyzed with modern theories in order to extract more information from it, and if we also find expressions of the same phenomenon in other ancient texts dealing with other locations, I would say we have a case. Admittedly, it will not always be possible to use this hermeneutical strategy consistently, but it is my ambition to increase the validity of the reconstruction by letting the sources interact with these three elements.

The theoretical approach is most clear in chapters 3 and 5. In chapter 2, I deal with some introductory issues such as the history of Antioch and its Jewish community, as well as the social and religious life in general. This chapter gives some important information about the religious and political situation in a Greek city under the dominance of Rome. In chapter 3, I analyze the religious differentiation of the Jewish community of Antioch using modern theories about international migration and assimilation. This chapter tries to differentiate between religious groups within the Jewish community. In chapter 4, I focus on the interaction between Jews and Gentiles in Antioch. How were Jews generally looked upon in the Roman Empire and what expressions did this take in Antioch? A large part of the chapter deals with how Jews and Gentiles interacted within the Jesus movement. Chapter 5, finally, integrates the results of the previous chapters in suggesting how and why the separation took place by using theories about collective action. In the Epilogue there is a short summary of the main results of the study, as well as a discussion of their relevance for explaining the separation between Judaism and Christianity in general.

Summary and conclusion

The present study aims to contribute an understanding of how the Jewish Jesus movement in Antioch turned into a Gentile religion and became separated from Judaism. The problems involved in interpreting literary texts in general and ancient sources in particular is dealt with from a theoretical point of view. It is suggested that it may be possible to construct a picture of the separation process using text interpretation in combination with theoretical models and ancient comparative material. As much as possible, the assumptions of the study are brought to the surface.

Such an approach of openly accounting for the assumptions leaves the present study exposed to criticism on several levels. This, of course, is an important part of scholarly discourse. One may, for instance, discuss the interpretation of individual texts from the suggested perspectives. Furthermore, the choice and application of the specific theories are open for discussion and the relevance of the ancient comparative material may be questioned. Finally, it is perhaps the coherence of the complete picture, including its assumptions and theoretical presuppositions, as well as the relation between the different elements, that will determine the plausibility of what is here suggested. *The "truth" is out there—the present study is but one attempt to grasp some of its elusiveness.*

Notes

- 1 Dunn, "Against the Law," 455.
- 2 Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 20.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 4 Charlesworth, who has written the foreword to Boccaccini's book, seems to agree. He refers to a number of objections to defining Christianity as a Judaism and puts the question: "[a]re not the differences today between Christianity and Judaism obvious and indeed essentially attractive?" See "Refreshing Developments," xviii.
- 5 Stroumsa, "Anti-Judaism," 10.
- 6 To comprehend Judaism and Christianity as two separate religions is scarcely controversial, see e.g., Segal, *Rebecca's Children*, 1: "[t]he time of Jesus marks the beginning of not one but two great religions of the West," and Dunn, *Partings*, 1, who states that "two of the world's great religions, emerged from the same matrix." Borgen, *Early Christianity*, 16, finds that Christianity *first* existed within a Jewish context but *then* "grew into the Graeco-Roman world with an identity of its own." Sigal and Sigal, *Judaism*, 80, discusses how "Christianity ceased to be Jewish," and Cohen, *Maccabees*, 168, discusses in a similar way how "Christianity

- ceased to be a Jewish sect,” and states that Christianity is no longer “a Jewish phenomenon but a separate religion.” Sanders, *Judaism*, 5, calls first-century Palestine “the cradle of two of the West’s three major religions: rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.” Finally, Alexander, “Parting,” 1, deals with the question of “how we have reached the present situation in which Christianity and Judaism are manifestly separate religions.” Alexander also points at the Jewish and Christian self-definition respectively as being different from the other. Judaism understands itself *as not being* Christianity and vice versa (see pp. 1–2).
- 7 Lieu, *Image*, 25, suggests c. 114; Trevett, *Study*, 9, suggests 107. Generally the date is disputed: for overviews of the general discussions of dating and authenticity, see Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 5–6, Hübner, “Thesen”; Trevett, *Study*, 3–15; Koester, *Introduction 2*, 57–9; and Legarth, *Guds tempel*, 103–9.
 - 8 Lieu, *Image*, 28.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, 29.
 - 10 See, e.g., Dunn, *Partings*, 1–15, for an overview of different ways of picturing the relation between Judaism and Christianity, from the beginning of the nineteenth century (F. C. Baur) to the late 1970s (E. P. Sanders).
 - 11 Dunn, *Partings*, 17.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, 35.
 - 13 Kniss, “Ideas,” 8–9.
 - 14 Dunn, *Partings*, 120.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 138.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, 133.
 - 17 See Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 3–75, for an extensive overview of the basic problem involved in the traditional view of Paul and a summary of the fundamental assumptions underlying the new way of understanding Paul’s relation to the torah, Judaism, Gentiles, and the Jewish people.
 - 18 See, e.g., Gal. 3:10–11; Rom. 3:20, 9:31; 2 Cor. 3:4–18.
 - 19 Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul*, 42.
 - 20 See, e.g., 1 Cor. 10:1–22.
 - 21 In commenting on my article about the incident at Antioch (Zetterholm, “Covenant”), Holmberg objects to terminology he considers to be “unwieldy,” even to represent a “misnomer.” He argues that the “first-century believers” did not simply believe in Jesus but in “something much more specific and notable.” Holmberg concludes: “if ‘Christian’ is a term used about a specific group of people and their specific faith and ethos by others and themselves already in the first century, it is hard to understand why modern anxieties about how the term might be misunderstood should prevent its use in historical investigation of this very phenomenon” (see “Life”). This terminology can indeed be cumbersome, but that is arguably a small price to pay for a higher degree of analytical precision. It is likely that Jewish adherents to the Jesus movement thought of Jesus as “the promised Messiah of Israel.” A Gentile person, however, who was primarily socialized within the Greco-Roman religious system, had to form an understanding of the concept of “the promised Messiah of Israel” from a completely different angle. This is true even if we assume Gentile participation in the life of the synagogues. Thus, the implications are not as clear, or as free of

circular reasoning, as Holmberg suggests. For instance, we cannot assume from the beginning that Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing Gentiles formed a group that was separate from Jewish communal life, or that the term “Christian” was already in use by others and themselves before the end of the first century. The references in Acts to which Holmberg appeals arguably refer to historical developments by the time of Luke’s writing, usually dated to late in the first century, but these designations are not found in Paul’s letters. It could even be the case, as will be suggested, that the term—if at all used in the middle of the first century—was an intra-Jewish designation for a Jewish messianic synagogue in Antioch. Moreover, the use of the term “Christian” obscures the situation, if, as will also be argued, Gentile adherents to the Jesus movement had to subordinate themselves to the synagogue authorities, and may even have pretended to be Jews in order to gain acceptance in the political system of the Greco-Roman *poleis*. Thus, it is hard to know exactly who was referred to by the designation “Christian” in these earliest references. Finally, the long and varied use of terms such as “Christian” and “Christianity” to refer to people and institutional entities clearly distinguished from—even opposed to—Jewish people and communal life after the first century certainly limits their descriptive value. On this see also Esler, *Galatians*, 3–5; Nanos, *Irony*, 20, n. 5.

- 22 See Fish, *Text*, 1–17.
- 23 Iser, *Act of Reading*.
- 24 Milán’s *Libro de musica de vibuela de mano intitulado El Maestro* was originally published in Valencia in 1535, and is presumably the earliest Spanish tablature. The music is written without using ordinary notes; the tablature indicates where on the fingerboard the musician should press the string. The performance of this music is to an even higher degree an act of interpretation compared to music written with modern notes. Since the possibility for the composer to specify, e.g., the duration of a particular voice and its interaction with other voices is rather limited, these decisions are almost entirely left to the interpreter.
- 25 Esler, *First Christians*, 12. Horrell, “Models,” 85, has rightly objected to the labeling of presuppositions, assumptions etc. as “models.” On the use of models in New Testament interpretation, see also Esler, *Community*, 9, and “Models.”
- 26 On “symbolic universe,” see Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 113–14.
- 27 Scroggs, “Sociological Interpretation,” 166.
- 28 Holmberg, *Sociology*, 15.
- 29 Consequently, I do not completely agree with Esler, *First Christians*, 13, who states that “[t]he texts must supply the answers, not the model.” Models or specific theories can actually do more than that.
- 30 Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 23.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 32 Hospers, *Introduction*, 183–4.
- 33 Quine and Ullian, *Web of Belief*, 16.
- 34 Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 79.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 69.