

AUGUSTINE and the JEWS

Rhetoric: the study of how to have an argument over how to interpret a text.

Cosmology: geo-centric universe. The higher up in the heavens, the better materially, metaphysically, and morally

Ancient monotheism: one supreme god; any number of lower, ethnic gods

Greco-Roman Binary Opposites

Spirit/Matter or Flesh
Soul or mind/Body
Intelligible/Sensible
One/Many
Allegory/Narrative
Eternity/Time

“Christian” Binaries

Gospel/Law
Grace/Works
Baptism/Circumcision
Spiritual/Carnal
Gentile/Jew

Chronology

| | |
|------------|---|
| c. 300 BCE | Alexander the Great’s conquests; <i>paideia</i> (Gk cultural education) exported. |
| c. 200 BCE | Jews in Alexandria complete translation of scriptures into Greek (Septuagint, or LXX) |
| 50 CE | letters of Paul. esp. important for later tradition: Galatians and Romans . |
| 70 | Roman destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple |
| 80-100? | Gospels composed |
| 132-35 | Bar Kochba revolt; Jewish Jerusalem disappears beneath Aelia Capitolina |
| c. 130 | Valentinus , a premier Christian theologian. (“Gnostics”) |
| c. 140 | Marcion , another premier theologian. (Invents a “new testament”) |
| c. 150 | Justin Martyr , <i>Dialogue with Trypho the Jew</i> . LXX is <u>Christian</u> scripture. |
| c. 208 | Tertullian <i>c. Marcionem</i> . Jews teach their poison to heretics. |
| c. 290 | Mani’s new revelation of Christianity travels from Persia West. |
| 386 | Faustus the Manichee writes <i>Capitula</i> : Catholics are ‘really’ Jews. |
| 398 | Augustine responds with <i>c. Faustum</i> |

Points of Agreement

- * High God is not the creator god; of necessity it is a lower god (logos, demiurge) who creates.
- * Jews and “heretics” read in a “fleshy” way
- * Truest meaning of text available only through allegory/ spiritual reading.
- * Judaism a bad religion, Jews are bad people: understand the Bible in a “fleshy” way (food laws, circumcision, resting on the Sabbath, & c.)
- * blood sacrifices intrinsically idolatrous, “fleshy,” pagan, and bound up with bad religion.

Point of Disagreement

- * Valentinus, Marcion, Mani, Faustus: OT a “fleshy” text. Christ only seemed to have human flesh; Jews and catholics read in a fleshy way.
- * Justin, Tertullian, Augustine: OT “spiritual” when read correctly. Christ incarnate; Jews and heretics read in a fleshy way.

Faustus

- * OT god carnal, morally impaired, ignorant.
- * NT gospels written by “obscure half-Jews” (33.3)
- * Paul’s letters corrupted by Judaizers.
- * Jews, pagans and catholics all form one community; only Manichees are apart.
- * Jewish law foolish and disgusting; whole purpose of Christ’s coming was to overthrow the Law. Catholics agree with this, though they hypocritically insist that OT is Christian scripture.

Augustine

- * God chose Israel, gave his Law to be enacted in the flesh, Israel received it: all good.
- * Jewish practice of Judaism – Sabbath, purifications, food laws, and most especially circumcision and blood sacrifices: all good, and according to divine will.
- * Jesus kept the Law scrupulously, even when dead (*c. Faust.* 16.29)
- * His apostles, both before and after resurrection, kept Jewish law, as did Paul, always.
- * Law and Gospel two different phases of a single divine initiative of redemption.
- * God and the Jews, and thus the church and the Jews, maintain an abiding relationship: BIBLE

Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: UC Press)

Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press)