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Even within the New Testament, we find significant variants. Jesus' mission to proclaim God's reign in word and deed put him at odds with his Jewish contemporaries on various matters. Yet, debate over interpretation of Torah was typical of Judaism in the first-century; no single understanding was normative. Whatever disputes Jesus may have had with other Jews of his day, the differences lay within Judaism. Moreover, the prominence Judaism accorded prophecy meant that Israel had a strong tradition of self-criticism. Thus, his hearers would likely have understood Jesus' challenges within the context of prophetic speech.

Paul's differences with Judaism were more complicated. Writing in the 60s C.E., Paul was both an insider—Jews were “his kindred according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3)—and an outsider—“They are Israelites. . .” (Rom 9:4). Judaism in many respects lay in the past for him, as he redirected his energies to Gentile converts. His argument, however, was not directed against Jews as such, but against what he regarded as traditional Judaism—Judaism that follows the way of Torah rather than the way of Jesus Christ. Paul believed passionately that Christ had brought Gentiles into the covenant, and that faith in Christ transcended covenantal laws. To be sure, this was an argument with Judaism—but an argument indicates a difference with, not opposition to, the people as such.

Yet, we do have one text where Paul's passion leads him to cross the line. In 1 Thes 2:14-16, Paul levels the accusation that the Jews killed both Jesus and the prophets. Further, they hindered him and his disciples from preaching to the Gentiles. Thus, Paul writes, the Jews have displeased God and “God's wrath has overtaken them at last.” This passage is indeed anti-Jewish. Likely shaped by Paul's apocalyptic outlook, this text does not represent how deeply he cared for the Jewish people, nor does it reflect his utter commitment to Israel's God and its Scriptures. In Romans 9-11—a dense thicket of Paul's thought—he speaks of his “kindred according to the flesh”; “to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises” (10:5). Paul's complicated thought requires painstaking explication.<sup>10</sup>

In general, as the Gospels move toward the end of the first century, they reflect a greater degree of tension with Judaism, even though the evangelists' communities were still inextricably connected to it—“Christianity” had not yet parted ways with “Judaism.” Hence, we find the scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23), and the scurrilous “You are from your father the devil” in John 8:44. Clearly, the argument had become heated. The rhetoric of defamation had become part of the proclamation of the gospel—though let the reader note that Jesus rebukes Peter as “Satan” in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 8:33), with a parallel in Matt 16:23.

The New Testament writers were not alone in drawing upon such derogatory language. Vitriolic attacks on one's opponents, even one's co-religionists, were part

of the Greco-Roman culture. Jewish writings of a roughly comparable period attest to this. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide vivid examples of one group—a dissident community gathered at Qumran along the Dead Sea—excoriating other Jews as “lying interpreters,” and as “teachers of lies and seers of falsehood.” Neither the Qumran community nor the writers of the Psalms of Solomon spared harsh language in denouncing the Jewish priesthood.<sup>11</sup>

The fact the New Testament’s rhetoric of defamation has counterparts in Jewish sources explains but does not justify it. Situating the texts in their socio-cultural world, however, permits us to understand the dynamics that gave rise to such language—and challenges us to become judicious interpreters.

Douglas Hare, a New Testament scholar, contributes to the interpretative process in his identification of three kinds of anti-Judaism in the texts: prophetic anti-Judaism, Jewish-Christian anti-Judaism and Gentilizing anti-Judaism.<sup>12</sup>

Prophetic anti-Judaism. From its inception, Jesus’ Movement was a conversionist sect within Judaism. Like others caught up in the eschatological expectations of his day, Jesus found support in the sacred writings for his particular interpretation. Even his controversies with the Pharisees mirrored a well-established prophetic tradition in which the prophets accused priests and teachers of Torah of special responsibility for Israel’s apostasy. <sup>13</sup>

Jewish-Christian Anti-Judaism. This post-resurrectional form of anti-Judaism includes elements of prophetic anti-Judaism, but adds a new element: Israel manifests its apostasy not only by failing to repent and return to God in ways prescribed by the prophet Jesus, but also by refusing to acknowledge the critical importance for salvation history of the crucified and risen Jesus. Hare writes, “As a conversionist sect, it [Christianity] could grant validity to the religion of its opponents as little as today’s Jehovah’s Witnesses can acknowledge the authenticity of the established churches.”<sup>14</sup> Jewish-Christian anti-Judaism, however, retained the basic assumption of prophetic anti-Judaism that repentance was possible because God had not rejected his people. Nevertheless, it fostered a breach with the larger Jewish community. Because they subordinated the primary symbols of Jewish identity—Torah, temple, circumcision, Sabbath, food laws—to the central Christian symbol of the crucified and risen Jesus, Christian Jews “challenged ethnic solidarity too severely to be tolerated . . . Ordinary Jews correctly perceived that Christianity constituted a genuine threat to Jewish identity.”<sup>15</sup>

Gentilizing Anti-Judaism. This form sublated prophetic and Jewish-Christian forms of anti-Judaism, and added the conviction that Israel’s apostasy was incurable and that God had finally and irrevocably rejected his people. It drew upon prophetic texts that seemed “to speak of Israel as incurably obdurate, and which can be taken as suggesting that God will create a new people for himself.”<sup>16</sup>

Hare's typology allows readers to recognize the way in which anti-Judaism developed within the New Testament itself. It is particularly helpful in helping to distinguish intra-Jewish debate from the rhetoric of a largely Gentile church. This "Gentilizing anti-Judaism" assumed new force in early Christian writings.