REVERENCE DESPITE REJECTION
The Paradox of Early Christian Views of Biblical Authority

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Introduction
Among the different forms of inter-religious dialogue, Jewish-Christian dialogue is unique in that both sides affirm the authority of the Hebrew Bible. Since the triumph of the “orthodox” Christian argument in the first few centuries CE for retaining the Bible as sacred Scripture over Marcionite and gnostic rejection, the dominant Christian position has been that the Bible is a Christian holy book alongside the writings eventually gathered in the New Testament. As we will see, the implications of this vary, but in general terms Jews and Christians alike revere and seek guidance from this text. Because of this shared source, Jewish-Christian dialogue can be especially rich, as participants consider the diverse ways that the text has been interpreted over time.

Despite much that is similar in Jewish and Christian traditions, however, disagreements about the authority of the Bible are especially common. This is not surprising, for claims about authority can reflect diverse understandings of the nature of this authority. They can encompass, for example, affirmations about authorship, the reliability of the text (e.g., historically or doctrinally), or requirements to perform or refrain from specific actions. This last topic—the binding status of the many biblical commandments in religious life—is, and long has been, especially contentious between Jews and Christians, and it is this that I want to investigate. It arose repeatedly in the recent colloquia
on "The Scandal of Particularity," and in my experience surfaces often in dialogue between Jews and Christians. Specifically, I want to focus on Christian rejection of many of the biblical commandments. Commandments on circumcision, food, purity, Sabbath and holidays—these and others, despite the biblical requirements, were dropped by many in the early church, a position largely followed thereafter. In simplest terms, then, how do Christians affirm the authority of the Hebrew Bible while dispensing with observance of (some of) the commandments?

My paper is offered as a contribution to greater clarity and understanding of seminal early Christian writings on biblical authority. In my experiences Jews have often struggled to understand this seeming incongruity in Christian thought: praise of faithfulness to the Bible sits uneasily alongside Christian rejection of some or most of the commands of the Bible. A survey of works by three foundational figures in the early church will reveal both distinctive ideas of each and also important commonalities. I consider how they defend this view of biblical authority, which, despite minor variations, is generally shared by all of them. I begin by looking at the letters of Paul, which contain claims taken up by nearly all later interpreters. I then turn to two of the most important later writers, Irenaeus from the second century and Origen from the third. While other Christians both before and after offer their own interpretations, these three writers together provide some of the most influential responses to this vital issue.

Despite my commitment to improved Jewish-Christian relations, I do not minimize what I, as a Jew, perceive to be eisegetical or radical about some of these views. I might better say that because of my commitment to improved Jewish-Christian relations, it is all the more important to understand these writers' views, for their remarkable influence on Christian thought and obvious sophistication make them essential contributors to a topic of immense and continuing importance. There is something scandalous in many religious claims, those of both Jews and Christians, for others with different assumptions, contexts, and especially goals. This is true regarding biblical authority and the status of the commandments, as much as anywhere else. Though most Jews know that Christians' views differ dramatically, I hope a careful delineation of how some reached these views will clarify a complex issue.
Paul

Paul offers some of the most provocative and influential Christian discussions of the authority of the Hebrew Bible. He treats the topic extensively, because it complicates his efforts to bring Gentiles into an originally all-Jewish, Law-observant religious movement without requiring observance of the biblical commandments. This provoked opposition from prominent Jewish Christians, and his letters are intensely polemical. Paul often emphasizes what divides him from his opponents regarding his views on the Law, though one should not lose sight of what unites them. Paul, like Jesus and his followers, including Paul’s opponents, was a Jew who affirmed the divine authorship of the Hebrew Bible, which alone was their sacred scripture. It is essential for understanding God’s interactions with and plans for humanity, and for its prophetic foreshadowing of the events of Jesus’ life and of the church. Disagreements in the early church that are apparent in many New Testament texts should not overshadow this. Of course, the authority of the Hebrew Bible is understood in diverse ways, but Paul shares a reverence for and reliance on the text, which profoundly shapes his own thinking. Explicit biblical quotations, innumerable allusions, traditional categories of biblical thought (e.g., holiness, worship, covenant, faith), and, most important for our purposes, a fundamental affirmation that religious knowledge is derived above all from the Bible: all of these characterize Paul’s writings.

While there is great complexity and perhaps confusion in his views (see below), we should note a few ways he affirms the Bible’s authority. The Bible reveals God’s will, and the divine plan of salvation (Rom 1:2, 17). Historical events—above all Jesus’ resurrection—can only be understood by reference to its ancient promises (1 Cor 15:3-4). He appeals to the Bible to legitimate unexpected developments, for example, the influx of Gentiles into an originally all-Jewish religious movement (Gal 3:8; Rom 9:6-33). In this regard, the Bible authorizes decisions of church leaders, for missionizing, worship, communal organization, etc., and is a trustworthy source of guidance in all areas of religious life. Biblical commandments are applied to the contemporary community (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 9:9-14). Believers should strive to “fulfill” them, for example, through love of neighbor (Gal 5:14) and avoidance of theft and adultery (Rom 13:8-10).
Paul, like other ancient interpreters, sometimes blithely ignores the original meaning or context of a biblical text in order to find ways of linking the Bible to Jesus or the needs of his own community. Nonetheless, he insists that he is only being faithful to the Bible. This is important, he says, for he would not contradict this authoritative text (Rom 3:31). Even in his most fanciful interpretations, in places of undeniable eisegesis, in passages where he contradicts the plain sense of the original text, he does not question the authority of the text. Rather, he argues that he is faithful to it and properly understands it, even at the very moment he rejects (some of) the commandments.

It is precisely on this point, however, that his views get murky and, for many Jews, confusing, for his affirmation of the authority of the Bible is joined to an almost violent opposition to the requirement to observe its commandments. His view of authority is therefore limited, for he denies that the text has any binding force on believers’ religious practices. He famously sets up an antithesis between faith in Jesus and observance of the commandments (Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9). One’s righteousness depends entirely on assent to a theological conviction about Jesus’ status before God (Rom 10:9). Therefore, his followers must resist the demands of other Jewish Christian preachers who, like many non-Christian Jews, insisted that Gentiles could not be equal members of religious communities without observing the commandments (Gal 3:1-4:31; Phil 3:2-4:1). Faced with rivals’ demands that believers be circumcised and avoid non-kosher foods, for example, Paul angrily denounces the Bible and its many laws, and wishes that those who argue that its requirements are binding should “castrate themselves” (Gal 5:12). Statements of reverence for the text noted earlier sit uneasily alongside these very different ideas.

Scholars have long debated his views on this issue, though it is possible to explain them generally as a reflection of the practical needs of his missionary work among Gentiles. Actually, the extent of his opposition to the Law is quite limited, for he almost always has in mind the rituals that separate Jews from Gentiles, such as those noted above. In his work founding and leading churches, he bristled at religious (and ethnic and social) boundaries, for believers composed one unified community of those who affirmed Jesus as Lord. Distinctions between Jews and Gentiles (at meals, worship, etc.) were antithetical to their complete equality.
before God (Gal 3:28). Observance of the biblical commands might divide a church into factions.

His rejection of biblical authority in this regard fundamentally reflects his overriding desire to unify a diverse community in an unprecedented and highly controversial way. Without oversimplifying his views, it is clear that his responsibilities as leader of small, mostly Gentile religious communities consistently prompt his opposition to anything that gets in the way of that which was most important: “to proclaim [Jesus] among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:16; cf. 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2). He therefore denied the Bible’s authority, perhaps even for Jews as well.12 Given the harshness of his critique and zealous advocacy of his positions, it is not easy to disentangle precisely his views, though one might also argue he referred only to Gentiles.13 However, his most polemical statements against the binding authority of the Bible were ultimately influential for later Christians, who adapted his basic claims to their own unique circumstances.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus of Lyon was a profound thinker on issues of intense concern in the early church. Among his many contributions is his discussion of biblical authority in Against Heresies (late 2nd C). This is a response to gnostic Christians who denied that the God of Israel is also the God of Jesus. Because the Bible’s author was a deity they rejected as inconsistent and cruel, they also rejected the text. It had no authority as sacred scripture to shape their religious beliefs or enjoin any specific behaviors.

In response, Irenaeus extensively defends the Bible. Specifically, he defends the “orthodox” decision to retain it as a sacred Christian text while also explaining how it should be read and how its many laws are to be understood, or more precisely, why many did not need to be followed by Christians. His main claims are familiar from our discussion of Paul’s, though his circumstances differ greatly (e.g., Jewish Christianity is not a threat). However, his arguments are more systematic and complex, and his conclusions more explicit and far-reaching.14

Above all, the Bible derives it authority from its divine authorship. The God worshipped by Christians is the God responsible for the Bible (4:36:5). Irenaeus praises the Bible as “indeed perfect, since [its verses] were spoken by the Word of God” (2:28:2). He disputes gnostic
accusations that it is the revelation of a lesser or evil deity, arguing that it 
reveals the one God to humanity. Jesus’ frequent appeals to the Bible dem­
onstrate that he worshipped no other deity and trusted no other text (3:12:12, 15). It is a sure guide to religious life, teaching love of God and of 
one’s neighbor. These are the greatest demands, binding on all (4:12:2-3). 

The Bible’s prophetic sections are equally important. They “prepares 
[humans] for the coming of Christ” (4:12:1). For Irenaeus, who wants to 
refute those who deny any special status to the Bible, the prophetic fore­
shadowings of Jesus prove that the Bible is sacred and holy, and a divine 
revelation (4:26:1; 4:33:10). Its authority in this regard lies in its trust­
worthiness, for it provides vital information about Christ that Irenaeus’ 
opponents disregard. The believer’s faith is only established when the 
Bible is relied upon (4:32:2). It is therefore wrong to neglect or ignore it, 
for it reveals fundamental truths about God and Christ (4:34:5). Its divine 
authorship guarantees its veracity (the text is trustworthy) and its rele­
vance (it points forward to Jesus and the Church).

However, when addressing the Bible’s detailed moral and ritual laws, 
he is far less positive about the authority of the text to command spe­
cific behaviors. He oscillates between different, perhaps contradictory 
statements. This might be expected, for despite his strong endorse­
ment of the Bible as an authoritative source for Christian belief and practice, 
he believes that almost no specific biblical commandments are actually 
binding (apart from the Decalogue; see below) (4:4:2). There is an 
unavoidable tension in this position, for, as we have seen, he has high 
praise for the Bible. Against his gnostic opponents, he vigorously denies 
that Christians do not recognize the binding authority of the Bible.

On the one hand, Irenaeus can be surprisingly reluctant to endorse 
openly the abrogation of any of the commandments. Jesus, he says, did 
not instruct his disciples to break the laws, but only to be more rigorous 
in observing them. Nothing Jesus taught was “opposed to the Law” 
(4:13:1; cf. 4:8:3). His healing on the Sabbath, for example, was not 
against the Law, but only against some Jews’ interpretations of the 
Law. On the other hand, Irenaeus unambiguously rejects the binding 
authority of the Bible for any part of the Law besides the Decalogue. This 
short code alone was God’s original revelation, the only part of the Law 
that must be followed by Christians (4:15:1; 4:16:5). He supports this 
by quoting the statement that follows the Decalogue in Deuteronomy

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5:22—"These words the Lord spoke...and he added no more"—to argue that these ten commandments alone were the content of God's original message. Only after the sin of the golden calf did Moses give them additional rules, which are not authoritative and binding commandments of God. While his chronology is imprecise (there are many commandments between the revelation of the Decalogue in Exod 20 and the building of the golden calf in Exod 32), he wants to establish a separation between those laws that are binding on Christians and those that are binding only on Jews.

He justifies the abrogation of biblical commandments with a few arguments. The upright behavior of the heroes of Genesis, who lived before the giving of the Law, proves that it is possible to be righteous apart from the Law. Even though living before Moses, they had the Decalogue's "natural" precepts written on their hearts (4:13-16). The other biblical laws have a lesser, non-binding status, and were given by God to the Jews alone. With these laws, God sought to check their proclivity for sin and temporarily educate them for righteousness (4:15:1-2). While this need not necessarily undermine the binding status of the Bible, practically Irenaeus circumscribes the demands for obedience to one people, the Jews, and one period of time, between Moses and Jesus. Note as well that he has practical concerns with the emergence of a Gentile church for which these commandments were an unacceptable imposition. Even the demand that one not work on the Sabbath, from the Decalogue itself, is effectively abolised (4:8:2-3), for this had been seen, already before Irenaeus, as an onerous and unacceptable imposition. Though Irenaeus was not a missionary defending Jew-Gentile equality like Paul, Irenaeus likewise emphasizes the universality of Christian salvation and interprets the Bible so as to legitimate Gentile inclusion (4:22:2; 4:24:1-2).

Irenaeus is delicately balancing competing interests. He vigorously defends the Bible, for its role foreshadowing Jesus, its few eternally binding precepts, and most importantly, its divine authorship. At the same time, he limits its authority severely. As a leader of an increasingly Gentile church, without any interest in convincing Jews of his claims, the requirements of the Law are presented as unacceptable and indeed irrelevant. Though he insists that Christians better fulfill the Law than the Jews, sometimes even literally, his affirmation of biblical authority is
seldom applied to actual observance. His concern to refute the gnostics provides the necessary context for his claims. Because of their intense hostility to the Law, he was understandably reluctant to openly break with the Law, though his notion of authority is one to which no Jew likely would assent.

**Origen**

Origen, writing in the middle of the third century from Alexandria and Caesarea, like Irenaeus and Paul walks a fine line between defense of the Bible as a sacred and authoritative religious text, and opposition to Christian observance of its many commandments. A threat that Paul faced—counter-missionaries who demanded that Gentile believers observe Jewish law—has mostly became irrelevant with the waning of Jewish Christianity by his time. The gnostic threat, like that faced by Irenaeus, had not disappeared, prompting Origen’s zealous defense of biblical authority, though his responses are somewhat different. They reflect his deep commitment to allegorical interpretation of the Bible and unconventional ideas about the Law.

Like Paul and Irenaeus, Origen absolutely affirms that the Hebrew Bible is the work of the one God, the God of Israel who is also the God of Jesus (Hom. on Numbers 5:59). Especially important to Origen is the notion of divine authorship (Celsus 3:3; 5:60; First Principles 1:3:1). On this claim he is uncompromising, stressing that “not a single dot [of the Bible] is devoid of the wisdom of God.” Though influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy, Origen insists that all religious truth is found within this one book. Surprisingly for a Gentile Christian, he sometimes grants the Bible binding authority for specific behavior. Christians are to refrain from work on the Sabbath (Hom. on Num 23:4). They are not to eat meat that still has blood in it (Celsus 8:30). Likewise, the Bible’s eternal commands, such as the command to honor one’s parents, are to be followed. The Bible’s historical reliability is undisputed when it refers to certain actual events in the past, such as Abraham’s burial in Hebron or the building of Solomon’s Temple. These parallel some views we have seen earlier, but Origen occasionally is much more accepting of the Bible’s authority for specific ritual acts.

As noted, he can speak positively about the Bible as a legally authoritative code, even when discussing Jewish observance. Unlike most other
early Christians, who harshly denigrated it, he is surprisingly accepting of the Jews’ adherence to at least some commandments when it was suitable for them to do so (e.g., on criminal justice and war, when they had political power; Celsus 7:25). When defending Jews against the pagan Celsus’ condemnation, he can identify some positive value in the requirements, though they were a temporary accommodation by God for the Jews. There is here a parallel to earlier Christians’ claims that the authority of the Bible was time-limited, though prominent in Origen is the reliance on historical events to buttress this argument, above all the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. He links this one event, which immediately prevented the observance of many biblical commandments such as sacrifice, with a broader criticism of biblical authority for Christians (Celsus 4:22; 7:26). Because these could no longer be done, God was signaling that the authority of the Bible, at least as the Jews understood it, had changed.21

It is when we turn to Origen’s embrace of allegory that we recognize the most prominent influence on Origen’s views of biblical authority. He argues that verses in the Bible, despite their obvious meaning, point beyond themselves to something else. This can be an event in Jesus’ life or the early church, or the text can address an issue of concern in the contemporary church. This not only affects how he interprets individual verses of Scripture, it also shapes his entire perspective on the status and meaning of the Bible as a text with a hidden meaning. This meaning may be distant from what Jews or others identify as the plain sense of the text (and thereby unacceptable and even baffling to them), but this method nonetheless reveals a dedication to the Bible even when seeming to reject it.

Allegory was practiced by ancient Jewish exegetes, and Origen was influenced by them.22 A comparison, however, makes clear how different Origen’s use of allegory is, and how this sharply affects his views of biblical authority. The most prominent example is the first century Jew Philo (whose work Origen knew), who often downplays the literal sense of biblical verses and argues that they point toward an allegorical meaning typically in line with Hellenistic virtues. Some rabbis, though more restrained than Philo, also employ what we might call an allegorical method of linking biblical verses and scenes to other, seemingly unrelated events. Yet for both there is no denial of the real referents of the
Bible (in contrast to Origen’s method; see below). Both insist on the abiding authority of the biblical text even when “loosening” verses from their literal referents. Philo famously rebukes those who, carried away by allegory, neglect the actual demands of the Law. The effect of allegorization is not to undermine the binding authority of the text, especially its legal requirements, but to uncover additional, even unexpected meanings in it.

Origen extensively relies on allegorical interpretation, which serves numerous important goals (Hom. on Gen 6:1). At least in theory, his hermeneutical rule is clear: “with respect to Holy Scripture, our opinion is that the whole of it has a ‘spiritual’ [i.e., allegorical], but not the whole a ‘bodily’ meaning, because the bodily meaning is in many places impossible.” In practice, Origen adopts a freewheeling approach to the Bible, often entirely rejecting as “bodily” any straightforward interpretation of a verse in its context in order to discover what he calls “hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (First Principles 4:19-23). Origen could quickly move far from the biblical text, not just introducing topics that he thought were relevant but seemingly jettisoning the biblical text itself. The allegorical meaning is typically a Christological reading, persuasive to believers but obviously completely untenable to Jews.

Besides passages objectionable for their anthropomorphic or unflattering portraits of God, passages that present impractical or impossible demands are likewise allegorized so as to not be mandatory. Seemingly onerous restrictions on travel during the Sabbath; bans on eating certain animals that are hard to identify; even the parapet that one is required by biblical law to build on a roof: all are allegorized out of existence and given spiritual meanings. This allows him to claim the Hebrew Bible as his community’s religious text, while freeing him up both to reject all that is unacceptable in it (e.g., many ritual commandments) and to posit connections between ancient passages and Jesus. Though he relies on a distinctive allegorical method, the result is familiar to us from Paul and Irenaeus. This is because Origen saw himself above all as an exegete for the Christian community, in service of the Church. In his case as well, the authority of the Bible to compel certain forms of behavior could be compromised by the practical needs of his Gentile community to retain the Bible while also rejecting much of it.
Discussion

The topic of biblical authority provoked intensive discussions and debates among early Christian writers. All of those surveyed here face the same fundamental challenge: how to affirm biblical authority in some ways while rejecting it in others. They deny the binding authority of most if not all the legal commandments of the Hebrew Bible. These conclusions, however broadly shared among Christians, directly clash with most Jews' understandings of biblical authority. This inevitably divides the two communities, for out of a shared text emerge mutually exclusive claims.\(^{27}\)

In the context of modern Jewish-Christian relations, we face here a distinctively Christian scandal of particularity. The underlying social reality of early Christianity—the emergence of majority- or exclusively Gentile churches—encouraged these particular readings of the Bible that legitimated this development, and which is largely normative through the present. These writers, unlike the gnostics, come from communities that refuse to reject the Bible but likewise refuse to impose its many onerous requirements on their members. At the time, practical or missionary concerns, among others, stood in the way of commandments such as circumcision and food laws in their communities. By contrast, non-Christian Jews, and some Jewish Christians, were uninterested in forming such religious communities, and therefore did not reject biblical authority as unacceptably coercive. Without this particular context, Jews inevitably found and find such Christian biblical readings scandalous.

Likewise scandalous to Jews is the writers' explicitly Christological hermeneutic, in which they largely see the Hebrew Bible from this particular perspective. This should not be construed too narrowly; not every verse is read as a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus. Nonetheless, the Bible's authority is largely understood as a guide to Christian religious life, which includes its role as a reliable witness to and resource for understanding Jesus, and also includes a broader role in shaping the rituals, behaviors, and organization of Christian communities.\(^{28}\) This hermeneutic naturally shapes all views of the authority and the influence of the text, because certain parts of the text, and certain roles for the text, are privileged over others. Sections of laws, for example, are downplayed, in favor of sections on eschatology or the fate of the Gentiles. In
all cases, decisions about authority should be seen as negotiations about the Bible’s relevance. The text’s influence is naturally greatest in those areas of religious life where the community places the greatest emphasis. For the formative early Christian generations, the emphasis was on the humanity and person of Jesus and the creation of a new religious movement separate from the Jews and Judaism.\textsuperscript{29}

In my focus on biblical authority, and the specific claims made for the text by early Christians, I hope to have provided both modern Jews and Christians a clearer understanding of the reasons for these conclusions, and the reasoning used by those who formulated them. This fuller understanding is vital, because in modern inter-religious dialogue and Jewish-Christian relations, the conclusions that are reached by individual writers are not the only things that are relevant. Theological assumptions need to be made explicit, and the reasoning process needs to be visible, for only then is a sympathetic if critical discussion possible.

Also, context is key, for Christian views of biblical authority arose in the highly unsettled early period and yet they determined (perhaps circumscribed) all subsequent thought. For example, Paul’s need to rebut Jewish Christian counter-missionaries in the mid-first century differs from Irenaeus’ and Origen’s anti-gnostic polemic. With this fuller knowledge, Christians can better relate to their own traditions by recognizing how these conclusions were reached, and what factors were influential. It is surely not my hope (or even my place to hope) that modern Christians’ understanding of the reasons and reasoning behind these views of biblical authority will prompt doubts or questions about them. Rather, it is to move discussion beyond the simplistic sense of an unbridgeable, even primordial opposition between Jews and Christians regarding the Bible, and to see the contingency and complexity of the arguments used to support the claims.

For Jews, the goal is similar, and in my discussion I seek to overcome widespread ignorance about this subject. Christian thought on the topic of biblical authority is complex, and it is tempting to assume that all Christians, because of agreement on some issues, use the same logic for the same reasons. The largely over-simplistic judgment many Jews hold—Christians just neglect or entirely dispense with the Hebrew Bible—is a result both of indifference and of centuries of religious polemics, which encourages participants to highlight the most extreme
positions and also those most unfavorable to one's opponents. In the latter case, accusations of inconsistency by Jewish anti-Christian polemics focused on the tensions in Christian views. Furthermore, disagreements reflect different ideas about the nature of biblical authority, which Jews traditionally analyze in terms of binding requirements for ritual and moral actions.

My stated goal of providing a clearer understanding of deep differences may appear inauspicious for future dialogue. However, the reasons and reasoning of these early Christians in their discussions of biblical authority, regardless of the conclusions they reach, can certainly be conducive to dialogue, for these take us beyond the simple claim that Jews and Christians fundamentally disagree about how to read the Bible. The challenges of making an ancient text relevant, of adapting to new circumstances, are relevant to Jews and Christians alike; Jews, in their own contexts, do much the same. Even the methods used by these Christian interpreters are deeply indebted to Jewish midrash and exegesis. Out of a sympathetic and learned engagement with the traditions and beliefs of another tradition, something that has only begun to happen, Jews and Christians will hopefully deepen their discussions of this complex topic.

Notes
1. Muslims of course also revere the Bible, or more specifically some of the biblical narratives, as an earlier form of divine communication. However, the actual text plays a far less prominent role. Also, there are many differences between Jewish and Christian versions of the Hebrew Bible, such as the name itself (the Jews' Tanakh or the Christians' Old Testament) and the order of the books.
5. I do not consider the presentation of Jesus' views of the Law in the Gospels. Not only do these vary between the Gospels, complicating attempts at synthesis, but they are of limited relevance, especially when most traditionally Jewish in affirming the continuing obligation to observe the Law (e.g. in Matthew). In an increasingly Gentile church, they are largely ignored or rejected. On the marginalization of Law-observance (i.e. so-called Jewish Christianity), see Dunn, James D. G., Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into

6. See the essays in Porter, Stanley, ed. Paul and his Opponents (Leiden: Brill, 2005). Scholars now generally refrain from presuming that the opponents in the different churches are all related or represent one single faction.


10. This is arguably the most contested topic in Pauline thought; a helpful recent collection of essays on this topic is Dunn, James D. G., ed., Paul and the Mosaic Law (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).


12. This is debatable; Rom 3:23-24 suggests this; also, Luke provides some evidence of this accusation, in Acts 21:20–21.


15. He charges the Jews with being less observant than Christians, for they add to and subtract from the Law, and do not act with altruistic motives (4:12:4).

16. There are some parallels to this emphasis on the Decalogue in Paul’s writings as well (e.g., Rom 13:8–10), though unlike Irenaeus he is not explicit about this.


19. Cited in the Philocalia, a later collection of his writings, at 1:28; see von Campenhausen, Formation, 308.


22. In his views on allegorical interpretation, he was also influenced by Paul (e.g., Gal 4:24) and non-Jewish Hellenistic writers; see Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 12–13.

23. See the discussion and references in Hanson, *Allegory*, 11–36.


26. E.g., Comm. on Matt 17:7; Comm. on Romans 2:9; Celsus 2:2; 5:48; First Principles 4:17; see Hanson, *Allegory*, 307–08.

27. This is not to suggest that, unlike Christians, Jews were or are literal interpreters of Scripture; their readings can be allegorical, and sometimes fanciful and far-fetched.

28. As scholars now recognize, there was in fact no clean, early break between Judaism and Christianity, or between Jews and Christians. The desire to demarcate sharp boundaries for religious communities was largely a goal of elite religious leaders, Jewish and especially Christian, and undermined in reality in many places and times; see Becker, Adam and Reed, Annette Yoshiko, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews & Christians in Late Antiquity & the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

29. See the introduction in Brown, ed., *Biblical Authority*, xiii.

30. Interestingly, such criticisms appear in Christian texts; from the first few centuries, see Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 10 and Origen’s *Celsus* 2:1–6.
