

GIORGIO JOSSA

Jews or Christians?

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament
202*

Mohr Siebeck

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Giorgio Jossa

Jews or Christians?

The Followers of Jesus
in Search of their own Identity

Translated from the Italian
by Molly Rogers

Mohr Siebeck

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Authorised English translation of »Giudei o cristiani? I seguaci di Gesù in cerca di una propria identità«

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Introduction

When was it that Christianity, born as a particular current within Judaism, constituted itself as a religion different and separate from the Jewish religion? The question has been asked, and the problem has therefore been considered, since historical-critical investigation of Christian origins began. At the very beginning of this investigation, F. C. Baur wrote, for example, that »the ultimate, most important point of the primitive history of Christianity« is »how Christianity, instead of remaining a mere form of Judaism [...], asserted itself as a separate, independent principle«.¹ Until a few years ago the answer was, in any case, felt to be rather simple, contained as it was in the books of the New Testament themselves. In fact, it seems, although it was in a form that must be clarified, which will be the specific aim of these pages, that the realization of the separation was apparent from the origins, not only in the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, which speak of the Jews as mortal enemies of Jesus, thus taking their distance from them, but already in Paul, when he refers to ›Jews and Greeks‹, thus distinguishing himself from them, and even more when he recalls his former life in ›Judaism‹ (*Gal.* 1:13). But when Paul states, »There is neither Jew nor Greek [...] for you are all one in Christ Jesus« (*Gal.* 3:28; cfr. *Rom.* 10:12; *1 Cor.* 12:13; *Col.* 3:11), does this mean that he is perfectly aware that he now belongs to a new social group that will later be defined as a τρίτον γένος, a *tertium genus*, alongside the traditional ones of the Jews and the Greeks,² or does he merely express the position of a person who is still ›a radical Jew‹? And when he hints at his past behaviour in ›Judaism‹ and Luke and John indicate the ›Jews‹ as having primary responsibility for the death of Jesus, do they really express through this the completed separation of the Christian group from its Jewish origins or do they bear witness to a conflict that is still entirely within Judaism, between a new group of Jews and the authorities of the synagogue?

Actually, the problem has become acute only in the last few decades, because of the occurrence of a whole series of circumstances and of reflections that have deeply changed the historiographic understanding regarding Judaism in the first century and thus the origins of Christianity.

¹ *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, London 1873, 3.

² *Clem. Alex., Strom.* VI,5,41,6 (*Kerygma Petri*); *Arist., Apol.* 2,2. See below p. 143.

In the nineteenth century, above all among so-called ›liberal‹ Christian theologians, a notion was held of Judaism in the time of Jesus that was both strongly reductionist and at the same time decidedly critical. Having found in the presentation of the Jewish groups offered by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus³ a substantial confirmation of the picture presented in the canonic gospels, they identified the mainstream Judaism of the time as Pharisaism. Convinced as they were, on the other hand, that among the various Jewish groups only this one had survived the catastrophe of the year 70, merging into the later Rabbinism, they based their interpretation of that Pharisaism on the rabbinic literature known to us. And, unable to offer an interpretation of this literature that wasn't entirely negative, they gave an extremely critical evaluation of Pharisaism and of Judaism. Judaism seemed to be a religion in serious crisis, which had lost all the strength and the freshness of the prophetic tradition, limiting itself to the request for a more and more detailed and formal observation of the Mosaic Law.⁴ Already in Jesus' time there was thus a normative Judaism, in this view, represented substantially by Pharisaism and interpreted, in the light of later Rabbinism, in a very negative way. The preaching of Jesus was thus a deep break with respect to Judaism, which Paul's preaching had merely confirmed and aggravated. Although both of them were of Jewish origin, Jesus and Paul were really the ›founders of Christianity‹ as a new and separate religion. If something was owed to the Jewish religion, it was not due to the Pharisaic spirituality of their time, but to the ancient religion of the prophets.

It is from this perspective that one can also explain the reductive and simplistic way of approaching a difficult and unsettling problem like that of the anti-Judaism of the ancient Christian sources, and of the New Testament in particular. The completely negative evaluation of the Judaism of the time of Jesus, and the contrast made between it and Christianity, seen as a different and superior religion, in the end led to minimizing, and in any case justifying,

³ *Bell.* 2,119–166; *Ant.* 18,11–25. Josephus indicates, as is well-known, four ›schools‹, four ›philosophies‹, into which, according to him, the Judaism of his time was divided: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the followers of Judas the Galilean. But, at least in *Jewish Antiquities*, he adds that the most influential group is the Pharisees. *Ant.* 18,15: ›Because of these views they are, as a matter of fact, extremely influential among the townfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practising the highest ideals both in their way of living and in their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees‹; 18,17: The Sadducees ›accomplish practically nothing, however. For whenever they assume some office, though they submit unwillingly and perforce, yet submit they do to the formulas of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them‹ (trans. L. H. Feldman, *LCL*). See also *Ant.* 13,288. 298; 17,41.

⁴ The essential reference is the great *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* by E. Schürer, cited at p. 16. But similar positions to that of Schürer were held also by J. Wellhausen and A. Harnack.

that anti-Judaism, which on the other hand appeared as a further confirmation of a separation that had already taken place between the two religions.

But the discoveries of this past century, by furnishing scholars with an enormous quantity of new documents and forcing them to re-read even the traditional sources in a different way (in a cultural climate that had also changed radically after the Second World War), have profoundly modified this very simple picture. The Judaism of Jesus' time has seemed much richer than just Pharisaism, presenting such a variety of positions as to cause some scholars to begin speaking not of Judaism, but rather of *Judaisms*, and showing such vitality of conceptions as to cancel every idea of a religion in crisis.⁵ Pharisaism itself, on the other hand, no longer simply identified with later Rabbinism, has been recognized as a spirituality of high value, and although Jesus had to deal with it conflictually, he was surely also influenced by it in various ways. Historiography, above all Jewish historiography, has thus re-discovered the ›Jewishness‹ of Jesus, the possibility, that is, of interpreting him within strictly Jewish categories, as the representative of a typically Jewish spirituality, and has carried out what has been defined appropriately as the ›re-entry of Jesus into the Jewish people‹. And this rediscovery has inevitably posed new questions: was it then with Paul that the parting of the ways of Judaism and Christianity occurred, or did Paul just represent a current within ancient Christianity more or less generally tied to the Jewish tradition and thus still to be interpreted in a more extended manner as Jewish Christianity? And can we not interpret Paul himself (in spite of the doctrine of justification by faith) as remaining entirely within Jewish conceptions?⁶ And were not the intended addressees of his letters (though he still certainly remained the apostle of the Gentiles) still prevalently the hellenized Jews of the Diaspora?⁷ Was it perhaps the war of the Jews against the Romans of

⁵ Among the many scholars who have dealt with this theme mention is due in particular, for the quality and quantity of his essays, and in spite of his strong tendency to continue to contrast the two religions, Judaism and Christianity, J. Neusner. See for example his essay *Varieties of Judaism in the formative Age*, in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages*, edited by A. Green, New York 1986, 171–197. And cfr. also *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of Christian Era*, edited by J. Neusner, W.S. Green and E.S. Frerichs, Cambridge 1987.

⁶ And here mention must be made in particular, in spite of the too *systematic* approach and the tendency therefore to contrast Paul and Judaism, of E.P. Sanders, with his book on *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, Philadelphia 1977. See also E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*, Philadelphia 1983. Above all in the protestant scholarly tradition, the anti-Jewish character of many interpretations of the justification by faith arises from a substantial incomprehension of Jewish thought.

⁷ It is the hypothesis, strongly innovative with respect to the prevailing orientations of the present New Testament exegesis, although it was already present in other scholars (see, for example, W.D. Davies), advanced by L. Troiani in *Per una riconsiderazione degli "Ελληνες nel Nuovo Testamento*: Athenaeum 66 (1988) 179–190; *Il giudeo-ellenista e le origini del Cristianesimo*, in *Contributi dell'Istituto di Storia Antica* (Università Cattolica),

66–74, in which the Christians certainly did not participate, that made the situation change rapidly, causing the separation?⁸ Or is it necessary to wait for the birth of rabbinic Judaism and the disappearance of Jewish Christianity, thus reaching the revolt of 132–135, to be able to call this separation truly accomplished?⁹ Does the anti-Judaism in the gospels of Matthew and of John (but today often the gospel of Luke is also added) indicate necessarily a separation that had already occurred or is this anti-Judaism, on the contrary, a sign of a discussion still completely within the Jewish community?

Of course, the problem was soon perceived and addressed. In particular, in 1989 an interesting symposium was held in Durham, in Great Britain, with the title *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A. D. 70 to 135*,¹⁰ essentially dedicated to this theme. And in that symposium contributions of great value were given, which were further enriched when the proceedings were published.¹¹ The general impression, however, is that, as often happens

vol. XVIII, Milano 1992, 195–210, and in other articles, many of which have been collected recently in Idem, *Il perdono cristiano e altri studi sul cristianesimo delle origini*, Brescia 1999. It is not a question, in any case, of replacing the definition of Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles with that of the apostle of the lost sheep of Israel, but of exploring this possibility as well.

⁸ In spite of Harnack's belonging to the liberal school of theology, this was already his conviction. See A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* I, Leipzig 1924, 70–71: »It was the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple that seems to have provoked the definitive crisis, which ended with the complete break«. This idea was taken up again in particular by S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, London 1951. See also, by Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the political Factor in primitive Christianity*, Manchester 1967, and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*, London 1968. And cfr. L. Gaston, *No Stone on Another. Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the synoptic Gospels*, Leiden 1970.

⁹ It is the hypothesis of many of the authors who participated in the symposium in Durham, which I will mention at once, and of J. D. G. Dunn and P. S. Alexander in particular. Also supporting this view was S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers. Jews and Christians 70–170 C. E.*, Minneapolis 1995, 2–11, 285–288 (288: »The significance of the Jewish War should not be belittled, yet a number of the texts we have considered confirm our suspicion that the events associated with the Bar Cochba rebellion had a more dramatic effect on Jewish-Christian relations«).

¹⁰ Among the many images and definitions that are used to indicate the phenomenon I am dealing with (»Rebecca's children«, »the parting of the ways«, »the break«, »a familiar conflict«) this one of the parting of the ways can seem in fact the closest to reality. However, not even this definition, in my opinion, indicates exactly the way in which the facts occurred. What made Judaism and Christianity two clearly distinct religions was in fact not so much the progressive parting of their respective paths (nor was it so much the exclusion of the followers of Jesus from the Jewish community) as it was the constituting of Christians into distinct and separate communities. It was not, therefore, the paths of the Jews and of the Christians that progressively divided, but it was above all the Christians, who, when faced with the lack of reception of their messianic preaching, separated from the Jews. And it is thus this process of separation that I will try to delineate in the pages that follow.

¹¹ *Jews and Christians. The Parting of the Ways A. D. 70 to 135*. The second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on earliest Christianity and Judaism (Durham, September, 1989) edited by J. D. G. Dunn, Tübingen 1992. And to the theme of the separation J. D. G.

in matters regarding the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, the theme, except for some praiseworthy exceptions, and in spite of repeated statements to the contrary, was dealt with from a perspective that was more theological than historical. In the words of its chairman, J. D. G. Dunn, who in his paper¹² had criticized the ›comparison of patterns of religion‹ made by E. P. Sanders and the contrast between Judaism and Christianity made by J. Neusner and had emphasized how even anti-Judaism is not necessarily evidence of separation, the ›question‹, defined in fact as ›theological‹, of the Durham symposium was ›how and why the Jewish national particularism and the Christian christological particularism came into ever sharper confrontation until a decisive parting of the ways was unavoidable‹. Judaism and Christianity were thus not seen as two social entities in constant historical development and in reciprocal dependence, but were considered a priori as two religious forms having contrasting theological characteristics: national particularism on the one hand, and christological particularism on the other. And the question, also formulated in terms that were more theological than historical, was consequently the following: was the ›parting of the ways‹ of the two religions »unavoidable from the first«?¹³

Even the choice of the chronological time-frame taken into consideration in the conference, which with its reference to the wars of the Jews against the Romans seemed to reveal a just attention to the general historical circumstances of the separation, was in reality conditioned by this point of view. The period examined in the symposium was in fact the one between the two Jewish revolts against Rome (70–135), but this period was considered decisive not so much for the intensification of the hostility of the Jews towards the Romans and for the development of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world, as for the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and the disappearance of Jewish Christianity. P. S. Alexander in particular wrote: »The story of the

Dunn has in the meantime dedicated a specific monographic work: *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, London-Philadelphia 1991.

¹² *The Question of Anti-semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period*, in *Jews and Christians*, cit., 177–211.

¹³ J. D. G. Dunn, *Preface*, in *Jews and Christians*, VIII–IX. What does ›unavoidable from the first‹ actually mean? Precisely for the origins and the development of christology, which I also consider decisive in the separation of Christianity from Judaism, the most recent investigations, shared by many of the participants at the symposium, emphasize strongly the role of the Jewish conceptions of the time, above all in relation to the titles of lord and of son of God, and thus to the superhuman, divine nature attributed to Jesus by the early community. Therefore, one can legitimately maintain that from this point of view the separation was not at all ›unavoidable from the first‹. At a certain point, however, it became so in historical reality, which was not marked only by a growing faith in the divinity of Christ and by the progressive predominance of rabbinic Judaism, but was also familiar with the criticism by the Hellenists of the Mosaic Law and with Paul's preaching among the Gentiles.

parting of the ways is in essence the story of the triumph of Rabbinism and of the failure of Jewish Christianity to convince a majority of Palestinian Jews of the claims of the Gospel«. ¹⁴ And he added significantly: until Rabbinism triumphed and Jewish Christianity disappeared »there was always the possibility that the Jewish Christians would succeed in christianizing Israel«. ¹⁵

Analogous observations can be made for the fine book that J. D. G. Dunn has dedicated to the theme in the meantime. Certainly, here there are not any essays by various authors regarding various aspects of the problem, inevitably thus characterized by strong heterogeneity of points of view and of conclusions, but rather a single study of considerable breadth carried out from a perspective that is rigorously unitary and coherent. From Jesus' preaching until 135 (in reality, until the last New Testament writings) the development of Christian thought in its relationship with the Jewish tradition is followed with competence and extreme rigour. I will thus make constant reference to this volume in the pages that follow. And yet even here the impression is that it is a more theological than historical work, characterized by a praiseworthy ecumenical effort, but carried out from too unilateral a point of view. In fact, once the »four pillars of Judaism in the second temple«, to use E. P. Sanders' phrasing, have been identified in monotheism, the election of Israel, the Law, and the temple, the author demonstrates that Christianity, although it later questioned (but in inverse order) all four of these pillars, still remained firmly within the Jewish tradition of thought (the doctrine, therefore, not the community) not only until 70, but even until 135. If, in fact, before this date for the emerging authorities of Rabbinism »the parting of the ways had already happened«, »for John the Evangelist, the faith he proclaimed by means of his Gospel was still a form of second

¹⁴ »*The Parting of the Ways: from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism*, in *op. cit.*, 3. The point of view indicated by Alexander is undoubtedly that of rabbinic, and thus Palestinian Judaism. But in analogous terms Dunn also expresses himself, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism*, *cit.*, 238–240: the period between the two Jewish revolts (66–70 and 132–135) was decisive for the parting of the ways. At that time in fact, rabbinic Judaism emerged as normative Judaism and then Jewish Christianity lost strength. One should keep in mind that, differently from Italian, English has no specific term to indicate the phenomenon of what is called in Italian *Giudeocristianesimo*, but speaks almost always more generically of Jewish Christianity. In the rest of this book I will distinguish instead between Jewish Christianity, meant as Christianity of Jewish origin, and Judaeo-Christianity, meant as Christianity that keeps a Jewish identity. This specific phenomenon will be discussed more fully later in this text.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, 24. But why should the existence of this possibility necessarily mean that the parting of the ways had not yet occurred? Does this separation necessarily presuppose that between Judaism and Christianity there were no more contacts and intermediate groups? And was it thus necessary, to make this happen, for rabbinic Judaism to become strong and for Jewish Christianity to disappear?

temple Judaism«.¹⁶ On the contrary, after closely examining Paul, Luke, Matthew and John, it may certainly be said that »none of these first-century Christian writers would have accepted the proposition that they had denied or abandoned the Law« and even on the theme of the election of Israel, the separation did not appear unavoidable yet, but would become so only with rabbinic Judaism.¹⁷ In fact, the period between the two Jewish revolts (66–70 and 132–135) would be truly decisive. Actually, only then would rabbinic Judaism emerge as normative Judaism and only then would Jewish Christianity lose strength. But until that moment the whole story had not yet been told.¹⁸ Thus, even here there is a comparison that is exclusively doctrinal and considered mostly from the point of view of Christian theology only (it is no accident that the second part of the title of the book speaks of the meaning of the separation »for the character of Christianity«), without there seeming to be any true involvement of the social realities of the Jews (above all those of the Diaspora), not to mention those of the Gentiles.¹⁹

Greater attention to the historical context of Christian origins is no doubt found in the acts of the two seminars on the ›rift‹ held in 1993 in the Romand region of Switzerland, the first of them fruit of the collaboration of the Universities of Lausanne and Manchester, the second of those of Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel and Fribourg.²⁰ The publication is in fact divided into three paths of research, the first of which is purely historical: it attempts to recompose the picture of Judaism before the year 70.²¹ And it is this publication that leads to some interesting new information with respect to the Durham symposium and Dunn's book. First of all, the starting point for the research is a stronger recognition of the variety of aspects and of the vitality of the Judaism of the first century. And this recognition not only has a decisive effect on the singling out of the historical precedents and of the remote causes of the ›rift‹, but thus also anticipates its occurrence. In fact, while F. Siegert maintains that the later separation of Christianity

¹⁶ *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism*, 229.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 162.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 161, 238–240. A general adhesion to this hypothesis in the two volumes is found also in the book already cited, which is well documented and very well balanced, by S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers. Jews and Christians 70–170 C. E.* Even if the time frame examined by the author goes in fact from 70 to 170 CE. (and the book for this reason seems less relevant than the other two to my discussion), the decisive moment of the break between the Jews and the Christians is proposed as 135.

¹⁹ This is perhaps what is lacking most. The opinions that Greco-Roman authors had of Jews and Christians are treated, in fact, in only two pages (241–242). A just amount of space is given to this opinions by Wilson, *op. cit.*, 1–35.

²⁰ *Le déchirement. Juifs et chrétiens au premier siècle*, édité par D. Marguerat, Genève 1996.

²¹ F. Siegert, *Le judaïsme au premier siècle et ses ruptures intérieures*, in *Le déchirement*, cit., 25–65; C. Tuckett, *Les Pharisiens avant 70 et le Nouveau Testament*, *ibidem*, 67–95.

from Judaism goes back to precisely that variety of aspects²² and C. Tuckett tends to explain the contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees through the very close relationship that existed between them,²³ greater attention to the historical context also leads to a different evaluation of the final moment and of the decisive reasons for the ›rift‹. The final end of the separation between Jews and Christians is not placed, as at the Durham conference and in Dunn, as late as the war of 132–135, but is moved to the end of the first century. And the principal reason for the separation is not seen, as at Durham and in Dunn, in christology, but rather in the question of the Mosaic Law and of the means of reconciliation.²⁴ There is thus doubtless greater attention given to the historical context of the separation. But on the one hand, once again, this historical context is almost exclusively that of Palestinian Judaism, without any attention to the Judaism of the Diaspora, much less to the Gentiles. And on the other hand, once this historical context is indicated as Palestinian Judaism, all the rest of the book is dedicated in substance to the single doctrinal positions of the various New Testament writers.

But the parting of the ways of Judaism and Christianity is above all a historical problem, which necessarily involves as protagonists, together with the Palestinian Jews and the Christians of Jewish origin, the Jews of the Diaspora and the Christians of Gentile origin as well. It is really surprising that, to an absolutely prevalent degree, the phenomenon we are addressing has been taken into consideration from an exclusively Palestinian point of view, looking on the one hand at the increasing predominance of Rabbinism and on the other hand at the slow disappearance of Jewish Christianity, both

²² »The internal diversity in Judaism before the year 70 largely explains what happened shortly afterwards between it and the church« (*Le judaïsme au premier siècle*, cit., 25). »In some ways, the break between the church and Judaism repeated the divisions within the latter« (*op. cit.*, 26). And in this way even the plurality of positions in early Christianity can be attributed to the plurality of positions in the Judaism of the first century. See, for example, J. N. Carleton Paget, *Jewish Christianity*, in *The Cambridge History of Judaism III. The early Roman Period*, edited by W. Horbury, W. Davies and J. Sturdy, Cambridge 1999, 743–746.

²³ »It is precisely because they resembled each other so closely that they opposed each other so violently. And the very virulence of their opposition could indicate clearly, paradoxically, the closeness of their kinship« (*Les Pharisiens avant 70*, cit., 95). This thesis of the similarity between Jesus and the Pharisees has come forward so strongly in scientific research as to be adopted by ecclesiastical teaching. See, for example, the recent document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission *Il popolo ebraico e le sue Sacre Scritture nella Bibbia cristiana*, Città del Vaticano 2001.

²⁴ D. Marguerat, *Introduction*, in *Le déchirement*, 19: »The interpretation of the Torah, as such, was not enough [...] to cause the separation; emerging rabbinic orthodoxy never resembled inquisitorial strictness. [...] It was, however, precisely over a question of the Torah, and not over the question of the true Messiah, that the paths were to part«. Siegert, 65: »The break between Judaism – above all unified Judaism after 70 – and the church cannot be understood so much as a dissension over the question of the true Messiah as a competition among the means of reconciliation«.

influenced by the Jewish wars of 66 and of 132. From this perspective it may also be understandable, although it is paradoxical, that one can state, as S. C. Mimouni does, that »before 70, and to some extent until approximately the year 100, it is possible to claim that there were, among others, some Christian Jews, just as there were some Sadducean Jews, some Pharisaic Jews, and some Essene Jews. Around these Christian Jews, just as there were, on the other hand, around most of the Jewish groups, proselytes and sympathizers [...] gathered, who were themselves of pagan origin«;²⁵ or even that until 135 »Christianity did not yet exist except as a current within Judaism«.²⁶ In Palestine (and perhaps also in Syria) things might even have been this way. But alongside Palestinian Judaism there was the Judaism of the Diaspora and alongside Christianity of Jewish origin there was Christianity of Gentile origin. And between the two extremes of Judaism of essentially Aramaic origin and Christianity of exclusively Greek origin there were the intermediate social categories of the ›Greek‹ Jews, thus with Hellenistic sympathies, and of the ›God-fearing‹ Gentiles, that is, Gentiles with Jewish sympathies. The spreading of Christianity was not limited to Palestine, but, already in the decade from 40 to 50, mainly because of these intermediate categories, had touched the principal centres of Hellenistic-Roman culture.

The fact is that in this unilateral way of considering the problem, one can see, in my opinion, with absolute clarity, in the ecclesiastical as well as in State Universities, the ill-advised separation between Jewish and New Testament studies, on the one hand, and studies of ancient Christianity, on the other. Having begun my studies as a historian of ancient Christianity in the State University, when I dealt with the conception that was then quite widespread of an early separation of Christianity from Judaism and of its rapid characterization as a Hellenistic-Roman religion (as examples for the rest, we can cite in Italy the names of M. Sordi and M. Simonetti, or even of P. Siniscalco), for years I felt the need to call greater attention on the part of my colleagues to the Jewish components of this Christianity and to the fact that it remained for a longer time within the Jewish tradition.²⁷ However, having become with the passing years a scholar of Judaism and of the New

²⁵ *Le judéo-christianisme ancien. Essais historiques*, Paris 1998, 19. But in a note, still more paradoxically, the author adds, »To say it differently, the pagans drawn together by Paul to faith in Jesus as the Messiah were only proselytes and sympathizers of Judaism and not yet Christians«. Thus, even the Gentile members of the Pauline communities were only Jews.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, 40. Coming from the same strictly Palestinian point of view, although it is more prudent in its conclusions, is the article by R. Penna, *Che cosa significava essere giudeo al tempo e nella terra di Gesù. Problemi e proposte*, in *Mysterium Regni ministerium Verbi (Mc 4,11; At 6,4)*. Scritti in onore di mons. Vittorio Fusco editi da E. Franco, Bologna 2001, 137–156, now also in R. Penna, *Vangelo e inculturazione. Studi sul rapporto tra rivelazione e cultura nel Nuovo Testamento*, Cinisello Balsamo 2001, 63–88.

²⁷ See, for example, my books on *Jesus and Palestine liberation movements* and *The*

Testament, and having thus entered into closer contact with the ecclesiastical institutions, I cannot today refrain from noting the worrying absence from the horizon of these studies of a really significant reference to the Judaism of the Diaspora and to the Greco-Roman world, as if the discovery of the Jewishness of Jesus and of ancient Christianity suddenly cancelled the very rapid spread of the Christian message outside of Palestine and in the pagan environment. It is instead necessary, just as a historian of Christianity today takes into greater consideration the results of the research of the scholars of Judaism and of the New Testament, with the *rediscovery* in particular of the so-called Jewish Christianity of Syro-Palestinian origin,²⁸ for these scholars also to take into greater account the research of the historians of ancient Christianity, with their greater attention to the diffusion of the Christian message among the Jews of the Diaspora and in the Greco-Roman world.

This appears to be true also from another point of view, voiced above all by at least a part of the Anglo-Saxon world. In the studies reported here so far, the separation of Christianity from Judaism has been considered, as I said, almost exclusively as a doctrinal problem. The tradition of Jewish studies and even more certainly of New Testament studies, is in fact a tradition of studies that are prevalently theological. But the separation of Christianity from Judaism is a problem that is not only doctrinal, but also social. The causes of the separation are social as well as theological. This has been emphasized well by J. T. Sanders in a book that was published in 1993.²⁹ As the author has rightly taken pains to clarify, the subject of the book is not anti-Semitism or the Jewish Christian polemic, and thus is not the separation of Christianity from Judaism, but is instead the relationships between Jews and Christians.³⁰ The connection between the two subjects is in any case quite clear. And the new information in the book is important. As at the conference in Durham, the period considered reaches 135, because after that year for the author Judaism and Christianity were two separate religions.³¹ But the fact remains that the historical reality under consideration is not just

Christians and the Roman Empire, cited below. This is shown, I believe, once again in my recent book *Il cristianesimo antico. Dalle origini al concilio di Nicea*, Roma 2000.

²⁸ Besides Mimouni, already cited, see in particular the recent, fine book *Verus Israel. Nuove prospettive sul giudeocristianesimo*. Atti del colloquio di Torino (4-5 novembre 1999) editi da G. Filoramo e C. Gianotto, Brescia 2001 (but with contributions of quite varying quality).

²⁹ *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants. The first one hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations*, London 1993. A very similar point of view can be found also in E. W. Stegemann – W. Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement. A social History of its first Century*, Minneapolis 1999. For a general picture of the social condition of the first Christians, a useful work is also R. Aguirre, *Del movimiento de Jesús a la Iglesia cristiana. Ensayo de exégesis sociológica del cristianismo primitivo*, Estella 1998.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, XVIII.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, XXI.

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