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BASTARDS AND BELIEVERS

Jewish Converts and Conversion from the Bible to the Present

Edited by Theodor Dunkelgrün and Paweł Maciejko

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Chapter 2

Ex-Jews and Early Christians

Conversion and the Allure of the Other

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The “ex-Jews” and “early Christians” of my title refer to ancient Christians who have—sporadically and occasionally—been portrayed as former Jews. None of these ancient Christians ever refer to themselves as converts from Judaism, nor do their contemporaries. Other people have decided, sometime after these Christians died, that they had once been Jews. My interest in these putative ex-Jews does not lie in determining the facticity of these labels, whether so-and-so had ever really at some time been a Jew. Instead I want to explore the processes by which these people were imagined to have once been Jewish and disclose what cultural, social, or political functions such postmortem identifications may have played. What is the appeal of the converted Jew, in both ancient and modern contexts?

“Conversion,” a recurring theme in religious studies for much of the modern period, is enjoying something of a heyday: witness the recent appearance of The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion. Yet it is a theoretically challenging term, often reproducing precisely what it should call into question: the boundaries and borders of religions and even the stability of the category of “religion” itself. Even as we define and redefine it, widening its ambit to incorporate new methods and traditions, conversion remains strangely undertheorized. Shane P. Gannon points out in an article on Buddhist conversion, “The study of the meaning of conversion as an object of critical inquiry has been overlooked by most scholars in the field of the study of religious conversion.” Gannon further asks, “What is the framework that has made conversion so meaningful that academics think its study is important?” Gannon proposes we adopt a hermeneutics of conversion: asking not why or whether so-and-so has converted but rather what kind of meaning interpreters of the conversion make out of it.

In this essay I focus on three ex-Jewish early Christians as test cases in a larger study of the hidden ideologies at work in the (re-)production of converted Jews. Two of these figures, Epiphanios of Cyprus and Romanos, known as Melodos, were posthumously transformed into converted Jews by admiring followers in the early middle ages. Epiphanios’ Jewish identity was a matter of ancient and medieval contention, ultimately set aside by modern scholars. Romanos’ ex-Jewishness has, by contrast, emerged out of a murky medieval past to find more solid traction in modern scholarship. The third figure, Ambrosiaster, has been bequeathed and stripped of an ex-Jewishness fabricated (like all of his biography, and his very name) entirely by modern scholars. By bringing the Jewish origins of these three figures together, I hope to begin crafting my own hermeneutics of conversion: What meaning emerges out of these narratives of ex-Jewishness, in antiquity and in our own scholarly contexts?

Epiphanios

Let me begin with Epiphanios. I spend a bit more time with him than with my other examples for two reasons: First, in a recently completed book on Epiphanios and the culture of late ancient Christianity, I consider at length, in a final chapter, his various hagiographic "afterlives." Second, Epiphanios’ ex-Jewishness has the longest history of our three examples, beginning in the century after his death and continuing into our own era. Epiphanios of Cyprus is most famous in the annals of Christian history as the master fighter of heresy: his Panarion, or “medicine-chest” against heresies, purports to catalog and refute eighty Christian heresies from the first human to his own time, in the late fourth century. Like an increasing number of bishops in the fourth and fifth centuries, Epiphanios began his religious life as a monk: after being raised in Palestine, he sojourned among the monks of Egypt, founded a monastery back in Palestine, and was eventually made bishop of the city of Constantia (formerly Salamis) near the east coast of the island of Cyprus. His provincial posting did not prevent him from casting a long shadow across the fractious Christian world during his career: there are few
ecclesiastical conflicts in the last quarter of the century in which Epiphanius does not make an appearance.

Epiphanius was first described as a former Jew in the saint’s life written by his followers, perhaps as early as the late fifth century. Although orthodox churches today still retain the charming story of a backcountry Jew converted by contact with Christian holy men, scholars have eschewed this portrait of Epiphanius. Instead they rely on evidence from silence: no mention is made of this famous bishop’s ex-Jewishness during his lifetime, despite his seeming ubiquity across the late fourth-century Christian world. One might imagine that the equally acerbic Jerome, the Latin monk who worked closely with Epiphanius and praised him as “five-tongued” (πεντάγλωσσος), would mention this historical detail, yet he remains silent. The same goes for the church historian Sozomen, writing only a few decades after Epiphanius’ death and, like the bishop himself, of Palestinian origin.

To this argument from silence we might also add a single, tantalizing sound bite extracted from the booming patristic echo chamber of the eighth-century iconoclastic debates. During this period, partisans and enemies of the sacred image pored over the texts of the “learned fathers” of the ancient church in order to bolster their arguments for (and against) icon veneration. Epiphanius was concatenated with other patristic witnesses for the iconoclasts, who quoted from a lost letter from Epiphanius to the emperor Theodosius in which the bishop decries the presence of images of apostles and Christ in churches and begs the emperor to stamp out this new “idolatry.” In the beginning of this letter, Epiphanius attests to the Nicene orthodoxy of him and his parents, making impossible any claim that he was raised Jewish.

This fragment testifying to his Nicene Christian upbringing, as well as other fragments and summaries of this letter, in fact survives in the iconophile refutation of the patriarch Nicephoros. In his discussion, Nicephoros cites this letter in order to prove it is a forgery: “Now he reports of himself, in this letter, that he has followed the faith of the Nicene fathers from an early age: and how his parents were born in it, and they kept this confession. But that holy Epiphanius, as we know, was born a ‘Hebrew of Hebrews’ [Phil 3:5]. And his parents died in that Hebrew religion: but not until he was sixteen years old was he initiated into the Christian faith and received the divine baptism.” Scholars consider about two dozen words of this passage a genuine “fragment” of Epiphanius’ letter to Theodosius (those words are represented in italics in the quote), although it is not clear that Nicephoros even pretends to cite the (purportedly forged) letter directly here. None-theless, the modern argument to consider Epiphanius’ Letter to Theodosius genuine has, for many readers of Epiphanius, secured his place as the Christian child of Christian parents.

I will demur, once more, on the hard historical question: whether to believe the authors of Epiphanius’ vita and Nicephoros over the iconoclasts and late twentieth-century scholars of patristics, or vice versa. Instead I want to step back and ask, what is at stake here? What desires, and fears, are being articulated in the matrix of Epiphanius’ Jewish childhood, in ancient and modern contexts? Why has it sometimes made sense to see Epiphanius as a convert from Judaism, and other times not? It will help to start with the vita itself.

In the vita, we meet a young Epiphanius just before his father dies, leaving behind a widow, Epiphanius, and a sister. After a pair of illuminating encounters with a Jew and a Christian, each interested in buying young Epiphanius’ donkey, Epiphanius is adopted by Trypho, a wealthy Jewish man “learned in the Law” (νομοδιδασκαλος), who hopes to marry him to his daughter. When the man and his daughter die, Epiphanius inherits their fortune. A chance encounter as he rides toward his inherited estate transforms Epiphanius into a Christian and a monk: he witnesses a Christian giving his garment to a poor beggar and has a vision of a shining garment descending from heaven to replace it. The rest of the vita combines standard hagiographic fare—exorcism, asceticism, encounters with kings, miracles, unwitting ordination—with particular aspects of Epiphanius’ career: the founding of monasteries, conflicts with bishops (especially John of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom), and attacks on heretics.

At no point in the rest of the vita—until a strange moment at the very end—do we hear explicit mention of Epiphanius’ Jewish origins. The absence of Epiphanius’ Jewishness might suggest the absolute absorption of one religion into another: a tale of supersession so total that no trace of the previous Jewish identity remains. Yet, I would argue, the vita is actually artfully coy on the matter. Later in the vita, as Epiphanius and his companion begin a journey in Egypt, they encounter an Alexandrian Jew named Aquila, “learned in the Law.” It is probably not a coincidence that the vita had applied the same epithet to Epiphanius’ adoptive Jewish father, Trypho. Should we not indeed be reminded of Epiphanius’ rigorous education “in all matters of the Law” when he engages in a two-day “debate about the Law” (ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου διαλέγεσθαι) with Aquila? Were it not for the opening chapters of the vita, we might view this incident like any of the numerous conversion
stories that populate Epiphanius’ life. But echoes of Epiphanius’ former Judaism, conspicuous by their very faintness, linger behind this passage. Likewise, later in the vita, another Jew named Isaac “attached himself to Epiphanius and was instructed by him and was baptized.” In this case, too, there is a subtle verbal allusion to Epiphanius’ Jewish education: like the young Epiphanius, this Isaac “observed the Law of Moses with precision [μετὰ ἀρπαζείας].” Isaac is a double of Epiphanius: a convert from Judaism who becomes a monk and the bishop’s lifelong companion.

These hints at an otherwise forgotten Jewish life are compounded by an incident just after Epiphanius’ death. At the end of his life, on his way back from Constantinople, where he had unwittingly participated in John Chrysostom’s downfall, Epiphanius dies on the boat during a storm. As his body is laid out, before the ship makes port at Cyprus, one of the curious sailors approaches the body:

Now one of the sailors, to whom Epiphanius said while he was yet living, “Do not test, lest you be tested,” moving toward Epiphanius’ feet, wished to lift up Epiphanius’ cloak and see if he was circumcised [δειν ει ξυπερτιμως οτιν]. But Epiphanius, even though he lay dead, raised up his right foot and gave it to him in the face, and cast him to the stern of the ship. He lay dead. For two days [the sailor] lay as if dead. On the third day, the sailors lifted him and brought him to Epiphanius. When they set him down at his feet and he touched his feet, straightaway he stood up.

We are not told how or why this sailor thought to make this postmortem inspection; nor do we see beyond Epiphanius’ high-kicking foot. Yet the opening chapters have made it clear, sight unseen, what lies underneath that cloak. How do we reconcile this sudden shyness with the fulsome description of Epiphanius’ youthful Jewishness?

We might be reminded of the curious ending of the perhaps contemporaneous Life of Pelagia, in which narrative fulsomeness likewise combines with postmortem reticence. In this story, a wealthy prostitute and actress named Pelagia is converted by a bishop and, after her baptism, sneaks away and lives as a eunuch (named Pelagios) on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. When he dies, the clergy and monks of Jerusalem, upon finding out the “true” gender of their beloved local monk, try (in vain) to keep the truth from local mourners. In Patricia Cox Miller’s elegant reading of the Life of Pelagia, this “luminous detail” opens up to allow a view of the contradictions of the concept of “holy women” in late antiquity: “paradoxes whose allure is the truth of female holiness.” Both of these narratives try to cover up what we know is there, a truth that embodies impossibilities and contradictions. The coyness at this last moment of Epiphanius’ life amplifies the teasing nature of his former Jewishness at multiple moments in the vita. Perhaps the Life of Epiphanius, with its evanescent Jewish past, signals another alluring paradox embedded in the matrix of ancient Christianity: it is not just the impossibility of the “holy woman” that haunts (and tantalizes) late ancient Christians but also the Jewish roots of this increasingly anti-Jewish religion.

On the one hand, Epiphanius’ richly narrated Jewish childhood can shade almost imperceptibly, and unproblematically, into his Christian monastic sainthood. The dead man’s kick, however, suggests the fear attached to this easy assimilation. If the saint’s Jewish past could rest so lightly on his saintly Christian present, where is the divide between Jew and Christian, after all? The vita is not unremittingly anti-Jewish: Epiphanius’ adopted Jewish father, Trypho, for instance, and the Christian who converts Epiphanius are identically labeled “marvelous” (θαυμαστός). Nonetheless, the lines are supposed to be rather clear: that same “marvelous” Christian remarks to the young Epiphanius, upon learning he is a Jew, “The Jews are an abomination [βασιλεύμε] to the Christians, and the Christians to the Jews.” Epiphanius’ own semihidden Jewish past, cloaked in miraculous orthodoxy, does not quite fit into this segregationist scheme.

Epiphanius’ Jewish origins are both harmless and harmful, like Pelagia’s flexible, but ultimately fixed, gender. We might imagine both saints’ lives as parables of hagiographic “drag,” a light cloak barely concealing a potentially dangerous, and not quite past-tense, identity underneath. Marjorie Garber famously described transvestism as a signal of categories in crisis; certainly scholars have argued convincingly that, even into the fifth century, the categories of “Jew” and “Christian” existed more as ideological frames than as clear social realities. Epiphanius’ ex-Jewishness works between these formative ideological lines, desiring separation yet reveling in the possibility of blurred lines and boundaries.

The vita remains untranslated into English, and it has received little attention in recent scholarship. Yet this was not always the case. The Greek life continued to circulate throughout the middle ages, translated into Latin by early modern Catholic hagiographers, whence it was quickly taken up in
the resuscitated post-Reformation genre of church history. The Catholic French historian François-Armand Gervaise revived the story of Epiphanius as a Jewish convert in his biography of the saint written (as the title tells us) as an “apologie contre les Protestants.” Gervaise’s younger, and more influential, contemporary Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont dismissed the vita as unreliable, but it resurfaces occasionally in the French historiography of Jews in the nineteenth century. The story was also picked up, with some tepid endorsement, by the seventeenth-century British church historian William Cave, whose Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum historia literaria was repeatedly translated, revised, and rewritten throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The story eventually secured a tenable place in Anglophone histories (biblical, Jewish, and Christian) of the nineteenth century. Here a lightly romanticized, nascent (but always potentially anti-Jewish) philosemitism latches on to the story, articulating a tentative fascination with a past Jewish authenticity. Philip Schaff, the German émigré who pioneered “church history” in the United States, remarked that, if the story is true, Epiphanius would be “the first example, after St. Paul, of a learned Jewish convert and the only example among the ancient fathers.” The parallel between Epiphanius and Paul is telling: Paul, famously “all things to all people,” occupied a strange, intermediate space as a “Hebrew of Hebrews” and apostle to the gentiles. Epiphanius, ex-Jew and “Father of the Church,” is being similarly positioned in the Victorian era.

The fascination with the conversion of Epiphanius appears in a late Victorian piece of fiction. Thomas Wimberley Mossman, an Anglo-Catholic clergyman with a penchant for “primitive” church history, wrote a slim novel in 1874 entitled Epiphanius: The History of His Childhood and Youth Told by Himself: A Tale of the Early Church. Mossman’s sole venture into literary fiction comes amid a century-long fascination, in the Victorian era, with “early church novels,” which transposed the strained religious and cultural struggles of Britain into the bygone days of emperors, mystery cults, and martyrs. Although Mossman claims in a preface to be working primarily from his own imagination, taking only a “bare outline of names and alleged facts” from the Greek vita, in fact his novel follows the outlines of the vita rather closely, especially its opening chapters. Throughout the novel, Mossman emphasizes the natural continuity between Judaism and Christianity, a continuity embodied not only in Epiphanius’ conversion from Jew to Christian in the first half of the novel but also in the way Jewishness remains deeply embedded in Mossman’s ideal Catholic orthodoxy.

Epiphanius’ religious origins in the novel are so ancient, in fact, that his Jewishness precedes the Jewish covenant itself: “I should mention,” Mossman writes in Epiphanius’ first person, “that neither my father nor my mother belonged by descent to the race of Israel. They were sprung from those ancient inhabitants of the land of Canaan, most of whom were destroyed by Joshua. . . . Our forefathers had given up their idols, and become worshippers of Jehovah many ages back.” Epiphanius’ Jewishness is purely religious, stripped of racial identification, yet still embedded in the soil of the promised land of the Jews. We might relate Mossman’s disentanglement of “religion” and “race” to his late nineteenth-century context: a time during which national and racial identities were seen as coterminous, and the rise of Jews and former Jews in British political life brought religious, racial, and national categories into question.

It is curious, then, that Mossman actually augments Epiphanius’ Jewish identity as the novel progresses. When Epiphanius encounters the monk who will ultimately inspire his conversion, and the monk asks Epiphanius, “Who and what art thou, my son?” Epiphanius responds, “I am a Jew, both as to race and religion.” We know, of course, this is not the case. Later in the novel, Epiphanius also refers to his Israelite “forefathers” who “conquered” and displaced the Canaanites. How do we explain this sudden racialization of Epiphanius’ Jewishness? I think one answer lies in the allure of ancient Judaism, in all of its fullness, to Mossman’s Anglo-Catholic sensibility. Throughout Mossman’s novel, Epiphanius attests to the deep affinity and continuity between the Jewish past and the Catholic present. The authentic core of Judaism is absorbed into Christianity, and the intensification of Epiphanius’ Jewishness embodies this process of religious absorption.

Indeed, it is his Jewishness that prepares him directly for his later Christian conversion: at the feet of Tryphon, his adoptive father and a scribe, Epiphanius claims to have learned “those Messianic traditions which have been so clearly fulfilled in the Life and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So potent is this intuitive knowledge of the messianic figure of Jesus in Tryphon’s household that his daughter, Salome, as she approaches death, engages her father in a dialogue on Jesus’ divinity and, based solely on a reading of Ezekiel, has Epiphanius seal her forehead with a tau cross before she dies. Like Epiphanius’ Jewishness in his Greek vita, the Jewish youth of
Epiphanius in Mossman’s novel slowly fades away after his conversion, appearing in his early monastic life only to highlight, once more, the great overlap of true Judaism and Christian faith: psalms are chanted similarly in the synagogue and the “Catholic Church,” and biblical texts’ original Hebrew voice speaks more clearly to Christian truth.52 The novel was published during Benjamin Disraeli’s tenure as British prime minister, another formidable Christian who wore his ex-Jewishness lightly, and a bit querulously, and whose career called into question the links between race and religion.53 Mossman’s Epiphanius contributes to the deployment of ancient Jews (and converted Jews) by late Victorian Britons seeking to reimagine the pristine roots of “primitive” Christianity. Not only were the English struggling with their own “Jewish question,” but Judaism (ancient and modern) became a powerful wedge in debates over faith between Catholics and Protestants.55 Literate and literary Jewish converts served multiple political, cultural, and religious purposes throughout the nineteenth century, and Epiphanius’ ex-Jewishness made him an amenable figure in this regard.56

Since the mid- to late twentieth century, however, this romantic desire for pristine Jewish roots has dissolved in a haze of more skeptical scholarship. Particularly since the publication of Jon Decho’s 1974 dissertation on Epiphanius and Origenism,57 which contained a thorough review of Epiphanius’ biography, scholars have tended to discount the legends of Jewish origin, if they mention them at all (and they typically do not).58 I think one answer lies in the comparative imperial contexts—Roman and British—in which Epiphanius’ Jewishness had been nourished. Perhaps we might read both patrician and Victorian desire for Epiphanus’ ex-Jewishness in the context of (admittedly, quite different) colonial logics that grappled with the absorption and “conversion” of the other (as the work of Gauri Viswanathan has explored).59 Our more recent reluctance to acknowledge the ex-Jew Epiphanius might stem, therefore, not from distaste for ancient Jews but from the opposite, a kind of prim, even postcolonial respect: we have learned the sailor’s lesson and will not prudently lift that cloak for our own delectation.

Romanos Melodos

If modern scholarship has refused the temptation to imagine anything surprising under Epiphanius’ episcopal cloak, they have been more eager to flesh out the meager Jewish origins of the biographically challenged Romanos, the sixth-century hymnographer known as Melodos.60 Like Epiphanius’, Romanos’s possible ex-Jewishness derives from a posthumous admirer, although instead of a dozen chapters of hagiography, we possess a single half verse of hymnody:

Although [μῆν] of the Hebrew people,
he possessed [εἴχεν δὲ] a steadfast spirit.61

The hymnographer enjoys plays on words: Romanos was no longer Ἐβραῖος (Hebrew) but ἑβραῖος (steadfast); he continues that Romanos was no longer “Saul” (Σαῦλος), causing “trouble” (σάλος), but “Paul, calming guide.”62 There is little biographical information here, certainly less than in the other Byzantine sources on this saint’s life.63 From these other sources, we learn that Romanos was from Emesa in Syria and had been a deacon in Beirut before coming to Constantinople; there, we are told in multiple, ecclesiastical sources, he received a “gift” (χάριμα) from the Virgin Mary and chanted “around 1000” liturgical poems called kontakia.64

How, then, did our later—eighth- or possibly ninth-century—hymnographer decide that Romanos was “of the Hebrew people”? One scholar has posited that this Byzantine poet, ignorant of the diversity of Syrian religious life, thought all Syrians were “Hebrews,”65 but such conflation of Syrians with Jews (or Hebrews, or Palestinians, or “Semites”) is perhaps, as we shall see, a peculiarly modern one.66 Indeed, while the significance of Romanos’ vague Jewish roots to this anonymous hymnographer must remain opaque, its afterlife among modern scholarship is quite rich.

It is rare to find a modern publication on Romanos that does not, at least in a footnote, cite this tradition of Romanos’ Jewish past.67 For some it is a matter of established fact;68 for others, it is a late, and unreliable, tradition that must be addressed before being dismissed.69 In other publications, it is a point of contention left unanswerable.70 So Seth Schwartz writes in his recent survey of ancient Judaism (while contemplating “the new Jewish culture” under Byzantine rule), “Does it matter that the hellenophone Christian who was the alleged originator of the new liturgical poetry, Romanos the Melode, was, according to one Byzantine source, a baptized Jew?”71 Whether the answer is yes, no, or maybe, this biographical datum seems to have become fixed in the scholarly apparatus of Romanos studies.72

Some scholars have attempted to find “proof” of Romanos’ conversion in his musical works. Yet efforts to link Romanos’ Jewish past to the contents
of his kontakia prove fruitless: for every scholar who asserts “the absence of almost all anti-Jewish polemic in his hymns,”73 another asserts “Romanos’ frequent and virulent anti-Jewish polemic.”74 (And, of course, both an absence and an intensity of polemic can be marshaled for either conversion or nonconversion.) If content is no guide, others have turned to musical form. Frequently Romanos’ Jewishness is tied to the metrical form—the kontakion—that he purportedly introduced into Byzantine liturgical poetry.75 The kontakion is said to possess “Semitic” qualities that connect Romanos’ Greek poetry with poetic forms in ancient Hebrew, Christian Syriac, and even late ancient piyutim (Jewish liturgical poetry). The musical connection, in turn, is explained by Romanos’ geographic and—occasionally—ethnic and religious origins. The three terms—Syrian, Semitic, and Jewish—flow into each other, as when Ephrem Lash remarks that Romanos “was originally from Emesa (modern Homs) in Syria and was of Semitic, quite possibly Jewish, ancestry.”76 Liturgiologist and musicologist Eric Werner placed Romanos in a carefully charted genealogy from biblical songs to Christian and Jewish liturgical music in the Middle Ages.77 It was Romanos, “the converted Jew,” who introduced the “alien elements” from “Semitic sources” into Byzantine literature.78 While not all subsequent studies use such forceful phrases to describe the foreign, Semitic, ex-Jewishness of Romanos, the echoes of its allure remain fairly constant.

That allure, as Laura S. Lieber notes, is entirely about ongoing connections between Jewish and Christian cultures in late antiquity, and “it is tempting to imagine direct paths of cross-cultural influences” between Romanos, Jewish poetry, and Syriac poetry.79 But what exactly is that temptation, and how does Romanos embody it? Why indeed should his possible ex-Jewishness remain so prominent even as Epiphanius’ has faded? For both men we can speak of eastern Mediterranean origins, possible familiarity with non-Greek languages or literary forms, and relatively frequent and (arguably) ambivalent discussions of Jews and Judaism. Yet Epiphanius’ former Jewishness slips quietly into legend, while Romanos’ continues to draw attention (even in a 2014 work by Lieber, who claims scholars “rarely” take it at face value).80 The magic word in the life of Romanos appears to be Syria: a freighted geographic, linguistic, and ethno-religious label since the formative studies of F. C. Burkitt and F. C. Baur at the turn of the twentieth century. To quote a survey essay by Christine Shepardson, “Much of the persistence of the Otherness of eastern Syria relates to the history of Syriac Christianity, a history that in western scholarship has always provided an odd, unorthodox Other, as well as a tantalizing linguistic link to the words of Jesus.”81 To be Syrian—or more precisely, to speak Syriac—was to share in the lyrical tones of the authentic Christianity of Jesus and his apostles, a primitive authenticity tinged with the alluring traces of the Other.82 In scholarship, Syria is the home of that most primitive yet enduring of almost Christian heretics: the Jewish Christian, the “missing link” between a biblical past and an orthodox present.83 Syria paradoxically signaled proximity without identity to pre-Christian Judaism: Syriac is not quite Hebrew in the same way Syria is adjacent to Judea. In this light, Epiphanius’ Palestinian origins become a liability: to grant him a former Jewishness in Judea would be simply too much otherness for his subsequent Christianity to contain (witness Mossman’s attempts to deracialize Epiphanius’ Jewishness).

Yet Romanos is safely removed—in fact, doubly so—from the pre-Christian, Jewish past. For Romanos the Syrian is precisely not quite a speaker of Syriac, and so not directly tied in this linguistic (cultural, ethnic) sense to the original and alien world of Jesus. He is Syrian, transmuting more vague Semitic literary forms in Byzantine, poetic Greek. In this way he represents both the safety and poignancy of “mature” Christian orthodoxy: the hope for things not quite lost. He is a doubly inscribed border figure, crossing invisibly (since we possess no writings of his in Syriac) from the primitive Semitism of the apostles into the refined Hellenism of the church. If Epiphanius’ Jewish past invokes the allure and fear of the cross-dresser, artlessly concealing a hidden, yet not quite effaced, identity, then Romanos perhaps invokes the figure of the racial hybrid, the borderland “mimic man” whose whiteness (that is, his Greekness, Christianness) ultimately wins out. Anne McClintock describes Rudyard Kipling’s Kim, a “two-sided man,” as a figure who “embodies symbolic ambiguity and ethnic hybridity.”84 In the imperial logic McClintock analyzes, the tinge of “otherness” of the ethnic hybrid is a visible—yet not too visible—reminder of the power of empire. The pleasing poetic strangeness of Romanos in a similar fashion marks the power of Christianity, which has absorbed (but not quite digested) the “otherness” of its past.

Ambrosiaster

With the fourth-century Latin Christian author Ambrosiaster, we encounter a former Jew entirely of modern concoction.85 While it has not played as central a role in studies of Ambrosiaster as in studies of Romanos, the Latin
author's putative ex-Jewishness remains a constant hum in the background noise of his reconstructed persona. “Ambrosiaster,” as he has been known since the early modern period, is the purported author of two seemingly well-known but anonymous treatises circulating in Rome in the 380s: a commentary on Paul’s letters and a book of scriptural “questions and answers.” His writings circulated in the Middle Ages under the names of Augustine, Ambrose (his moniker signals his Ambrosian flavor), Hilary of Poitiers, and others. Recovered from the mists of pseudonymity and anonymity by Renaissance scholars, his biography has been inferred from hints in his texts and context. That Ambrosiaster might have been a convert from Judaism was first suggested by Germain Morin in 1899. On multiple textual and historical grounds—only in part based on Ambrosiaster’s knowledge of Judaism—Morin identified Ambrosiaster with Isaac, a Jewish convert living in Rome who supported Damasus’ rival, Ursinus, in the violent episcopal elections of the 360s. Morin later abandoned this identification, moving on to attach the names of other known figures to Ambrosiaster; neither of these later figures was Jewish.

While few scholars have tried to resuscitate Ambrosiaster’s identity as “Isaac the Jew,” his possible ex-Jewishness remains a very live question. Indeed, as early as 1900, it was this aspect of Morin’s original argument that drew scholarly attention and approbation. Detached from any identifiable figure, Ambrosiaster’s former Jewishness began to occupy the scholarly biographical imagination more as a general question of “religious origins” than as an attempt to link him with a named historical figure. Particularly compelling evidence, it seems, was Ambrosiaster’s supposed knowledge of Jews and Judaism. In his magisterial 2001 survey of early Christianity, Henry Chadwick writes, “The anonymous author knew much about synagogue usage, and once allows himself to say that the ideal expositor of scripture is a converted Jew. He may have been referring to himself.” More recently, David Hunter has suggested that “the matter [of Ambrosiaster’s Jewish origins] is worth reconsideration, if only because of his frequent references to synagogue practice... Ambrosiaster’s unusual interest in and sensitivity to Jews and Judaism remains to be accounted for.”

It is debatable how much “sensitivity” we should infer from an author who included, among his Liber questionum, a treatise later copyists saw fit to title “adversus Judaeos.” In her study of Ambrosiaster, Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe remarks, “Anti-Jewish sentiment is not absent from Ambrosia-

ster’s work but it is more muted than found in, for example, John of Chrysostom’s [sic] writing.” We might call this damning with faint praise or, at least, setting the anti-Jewish bar rather low: John Chrysostom’s own notorious sermons “against Judaizing Christians” provided endless grist for the hungry mills of Christian anti-Judaism well into the modern period. Even if we grant that Ambrosiaster is notably less anti-Jewish than his contemporaries, I nonetheless suggest that it is Ambrosiaster’s “unalready interest,” rather than his sensitivity, that has provoked repeated biographical speculation.

Even Lydia Speller, in her brief but compelling refutation of Morin’s argument, focuses specifically on Ambrosiaster’s “interest in Judaism.” She closely examines four passages from his Pauline commentary to argue that, on the one hand, Ambrosiaster’s knowledge of Jewish custom need not derive from personal experience and, on the other, his attention to Jewish detail was shared among other (more clearly non-Jewish) Christians. She notes, “His knowledge of Jewish customs does not appear more detailed than, for example, that of Jerome,” an observation echoed twenty-five years later by Lunn-Rockliffe.

This contrast between Jerome and Ambrosiaster is telling: two Latin-speaking, well-educated Christians with scriptural expertise and a vested interest in the theological and ecclesiological issues of their day, both of whom frequently, and ambivalently, drew on Jewish knowledge to articulate Christian concepts.

Why should Ambrosiaster’s Jewish knowledge evoke firsthand experience when Jerome’s does not? What distinguishes Ambrosiaster from other early Christian authors who express deep, and not always negative, interest in Judaism, from Origen through Augustine? It is, of course, Ambrosiaster’s anonymity, his blank persona, that allows for the ascription of a Jewish past. Jerome loudly, and defensively, trumpeted his own Christian credentials, especially in the face of accusations of “fraternalization” with Jews. In the case of Ambrosiaster, however, who has been constructed out of whole cloth in modernity, there is no resistance or—in the imagery of the vita of Epiphanius—no bucking foot to reassert difference where similitude slips in. Ambrosiaster’s biographical “drag” is more successful because we can never know what his fabricated cloak is “really” covering up. He passes between Jew and Christian with little friction, allowing our biographical imaginations to pass with him.

Here, I think, we can begin to attend to the complex of anxieties and desires that emerge out of our three case studies. The first set of concerns is
epistemological, evident most clearly in the ancient sources on Epiphanius but also to some degree in modernity.¹⁰² Both the late ancient vita and its Victorian descendant betray an imperial fascination with the boundary between knowing and being. If knowledge derives from contact and experience (as readers of Ambrosiaster seem to suggest), where is the line between knowing a thing and becoming it? Or, to turn the question around, need we assume that deep knowledge of a thing can only come from having been that thing? We can sense this anxiety acutely in ancient Christian attention to Jews and Judaism, particularly in the post-Constantinian period: Can Christianity come to know Judaism without the risk of sliding ontologically backward, somehow re-creating Jews or unbecoming Christians? Can Christianity—like Epiphanius the monk-bishop—leave a Jewish past behind, or does it threaten to creep back in, only lightly covered by the dead man’s cloak? Behind this epistemological anxiety (evident, above all, in Mossman’s novel) lurks a desire to embrace and contain the historical and religious other: to flirt with becoming through acts of knowing.¹⁰³ Modern scholarship continues to produce this complex of fear of and desire for the other: Does Romanos’ faint “Semitic” accent enrich later Christianity with a duskily authentic alterity, or does it introduce “alien” notes into Christian history?

These epistemological concerns also become ethical ones, particularly in our modern (or postmodern) historiographic context. We have become self-reflexively aware, in the past decades, of the intertwined processes of knowledge and power: power as a means of extracting and validating knowledge, and knowledge as a tool for authenticating and enabling power. Much of the disciplinary apparatus of the modern university—not to mention the specific disciplinary history of “religious studies”—relies on the deeply colonialist interpenetrations of knowledge and power. In the wake of such coming to terms with our own disciplinary pasts, it makes sense that we should desire knowledge of the other that is untainted, either in its acquisition or in its usage, shorn of overtly supersessionist value. Again, the contrast between Jerome and Ambrosiaster is instructive: all that separates them is biographical fixity. Once Ambrosiaster as a subject floats free of personal context, we see the possibility of recuperating his Jewish knowledge, making it safer, cleaner, than Jerome’s: if he is, or was, or could have been Jewish, we receive his Jewish knowledge differently. If we imagine Epiphanius in Christian drag, and Romanos as the almost-white ethnic hybrid, then Ambrosiaster comes to us like Tiresias, the Greek prophet who can

impossibly—yet reassuringly—speak the truth of feminine identity in a male voice.¹⁰⁴ Unlike Pentheus, whose tragically incompetent gender passing ends in dismemberment and horror, Tiresias, the male ex-woman, could speak more authoritatively about the experience of womanhood than the goddess Juno herself.¹⁰⁵ So, too, Ambrosiaster may not always tell us the things we want to hear about ancient Jews and Judaism, but his knowledge is authentic and reliable.

Concerning histories written from or about the margins, Michel de Certeau writes that we can “either maintain that the personal status of the author is a matter of indifference (in relation to the objectivity of his or her work) or that he or she alone authorizes or invalidates the discourse (according to whether he or she is ‘of it’ or not).”¹⁰⁶ In the reconstruction of ancient Christian and Jewish lives, there is, seemingly, a third space in between “of it” or not”: no longer it, the converted Jew, the early Christian ex-Jew. Our attention to the convert may be explained—in part—by our desire for a “native” informant who is at once authentic yet also willing to speak. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak cautions us to be on guard for “the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of the Other as the Self’s shadow.”¹⁰⁷ In these doubled figures, we imagine the longed-for native informant speaking willingly to us; the early Christian ex-Jew embodies the fantasy of innocent knowledge.
31. The prophecy in Isa. 56:3–6 also includes a word to eunuchs, which seems to be in debate with Deut. 23:2, where the Israelites are instructed to exclude eunuchs from the community of the Lord. The end of this passage in Deuteronomy—referring to the Amnonite and Moabite (Deut. 23:4–7)—is explicitly referred to in Neh. 13:1–2.

32. The prophecy is anonymous, like all the secondary prophecies attached to the book of Isaiah. See, among others, Westermann, Isaiah 40–66, 305; Paul, Isaiah 40–66, 406.

33. NRSV; similarly NJPS, reading "strangers" for "aliens."

34. See, e.g., Jer. 7:6, 14:8, 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5; Job. 31:32; Ps. 94:6.


36. NRSV: "the alien residing within you" (22:7); "the alien" (22:9); NEB: "the alien" (in both verses); etc.

37. Compare ba-ger asher yagur be-Yisra'el with ba-ger bagar be-Yisra'el (Lev. 20:2), ba-ger bagar be-tokhekhem (Lev. 16:29 and often), and similar phrases.

38. See Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1–2, and above, n. 3.

39. They are defined here in similar terms to the prophecy of 14:7. Compare "the one who resides [or sojourners, yagur] in Israel" (14:7) with "the ger who reside among you" (47:21), and this chapter's n. 36.

40. 1 Chron. 2:2, 29:15; 2 Chron. 2:16, 30:25. The term is avoided by Ezra–Nehemiah and Esther, while Zechariah and Malachi each refer once to the ger (Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5), in the traditional, social meaning of the term (see n. 5).

41. "For we are gerim [NJPS: sojourners] with you, mere transients like our fathers."

This is a plural rephrasing of the figure of Ps. 39:13.


44. The title occurs in Chronicles only once more, regarding the extension of Josiah's reform (2 Chron. 34:7). A plural form of this title ("The Lands of Israel") also occurs once in Chronicles, in 1 Chron. 3:2. For a discussion of this term, see Japhet, Ideology, 282–84.


CHAPTER 2

My thanks to audiences at the North American Patristics Society and the University of Pennsylvania who heard an earlier version of this paper and offered invaluable feedback.

1. Not least because such certainty is implausible, but additionally because of the almost endless series of assumptions that must be made about what "real" Jews would have known, seen, and thought in the first centuries. See, for example, W. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?" Harvard Theological Review 53 (1960): 143–53.


6. Andrew S. Jacobs, Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity (Oakland, 2016), 221–61. I draw on several pages of this chapter in my analysis in the present chapter.

7. On the Panarion, see Aline Pourkier, L'héritologie chez Épiphane de Salamine (Paris, 1992); and Young Richard Kim, Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodoxy World (Ann Arbor, 2015).


extremely grateful to Professor Rapp for sharing with me her dissertation, including her critical edition of the Vita Epiphanii that forms volume 2 (from which I cite later).


16. The violent scene of Epiphanius' ordination recalls his own description of the forced ordination of Jerome's brother Paulinianus (see n. 10).


20. In addition to the conversion of Epiphanius and his sister, there is the conversion of a Saracen, subsequently named John; a philosopher also named Epiphanius; another philosopher, named Eudaimon; and the imperial siblings Arcadius, Honorius, and Prokian (Vita Epiphanii 17, 38–43, 51, 83–91 [Rapp, "Vita of Epiphanius," 2:67, 96–103, 112–14, 155–163]).

All of these conversions are effected by Epiphanius' miracles: only Aquila is converted through discourse with Epiphanius.

21. *Vita Epiphanii* 82 (Rapp, "Vita of Epiphanius," 2:155); the same phrase was used of Epiphanius' tutelage in the Law and Hebrew by Trypho.


24. Patricia Cox Miller, "Is There a Harlot in This Text? Hagiography and the Grotesque," in *The Cultural Turn in Late Antiquity: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, ed. idem and Dale B. Martin (Durham, N.C., 2005), 87–102; the "luminous detail" (from Ezra Pound via New Historicism) of the "attempted cover-up" is at 91; the final quote at 97.


27. *Vita Epiphanii* 7 (Rapp, "Vita of Epiphanius," 2:57–58). The division is supposedly so sharp between the two groups that when Epiphanius, earlier in the vita, meets a Christian, Cleobius, he has never heard of Jesus; Cleobius, who does not know Epiphanius is Jewish (but nonetheless asks his religion), tells him, "He is the son of God, whom the Jews crucified" (*Vita Epiphanii* 4 [Rapp, "Vita of Epiphanius," 2:54]).

28. Drag (as opposed to gender passing) relies on the transparency of the disguise: "There has to be some telltale, not the gross five o'clock shadow or the limp wrist of the amateur, but something readable, a foot that is too big, a subtle gesture or the peculiar grain of the voice." Oscar Montero, "Lipstick Vogue: The Politics of Drag," *Radical America* 22.1 (January–February 1988): 41, quoted in Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London, 1997), 149.

29. Garber, *Vested Interests*, 16–17. Coats—removed, replaced, donated, and discarded—form a notable leitmotif in the vita, signaling an interest in appearance and "reality," as well as a commonplace metaphor for conversion: *Vita Epiphanii* 7 (Lucian the monk gives his cloak to a beggar, inspiring Epiphanius' conversion); 28 (Epiphanius gives his cloak to a resurrected Persian youth on his way back to Palestine); 46 (recalling Matt. 9:20–22 and par., a possessed woman tears off a piece of Epiphanius' cloak); 81 (Epiphanius gives his cloak to a pair of con artists) (Rapp, "Vita of Epiphanius," 2:57, 87–88, 106–7, 153–55).


31. On the manuscript history of the *Vita Epiphanii* and its confused authorship by Thomas Wimberley Mossman's day, see Jacobs, *Epiphanius*, 249n99.


35. William Cave's widely read and translated *Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum historia literaria a Christo nato usque ad saeculum XIV* (London, 1688), 184, describes the vita as "magnum parrem fabulosum" but still reports that Ephiphanius' parents were Jewish ("parentibus, ut videtur, ortus Judaei").

36. See William Cave, *Lives of the Most Eminent Fathers of the Church*, rev. Henry Cary (Oxford, 1840), 2:206–8. Cave is routinely cited by Philip Schaff (see note 39) and other Anglophone historians. However, note that a contemporary encyclopedia, also relying on Cave and Johannes Fabricius (who says the vita deserves "exiguam dilem"): *Bibliotheca Graeca* [Hamburg, 1727], 7:415, calls the story of Jewish origins "more or less of a fabulous nature," while still citing the vita as one of its sources: *The Supplement to the Penny Cyclopedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (London, 1851), 1:533. Cave's treatment of Ephiphanius' prior Jewishness (read as "an orthodox Jewish-Christian") also appears in eighteenth-century debates over Unitarianism, as studied and recapitulated in the nineteenth century: "An Account of the Controversy Between Dr. Priestly, Dr. Horsley, and Others," *General Repository* 1 (1812): 273n.


40. On an earlier period, see Jacobs, "A Jew's Jew."


42. The frontispiece also contains the sparer title *Saint Epiphanius*.

43. The fullest study of these novels is Royal W. Rhodes, *The Lion and the Cross: Early Christianity in Victorian Novels* (Columbus, 1995). For additional sources and discussion of early Christian novels, see Jacobs, *Epiphanius*, 242–45.

44. Mossman has added some characters and incidents and entirely transformed Ephiphanius' ordination to the priesthood, which is conducted by force in the vita (Vita Epiphani 60 [Rapp, *Vita of Epiphanius*, 126–27] and happens without much incident in the novel (Mossman, *Epiphanius*, 134–35). This respect for the priesthood and episcopacy seems of a piece with Mossman's attempts to naturalize Catholicism in the patriotic period.

45. Conversion was a key element of Victorian early Christian novels, which often reflected anxieties of Victorian religious pluralism.

46. Mossman, *Epiphanius*, 9–10. Even Epiphanius' contemporaries retain this "pre-Jewish" Jewishness, as his father's relatives speak "in the ancient dialect of our tribe, which was spoken two thousand years ago, before the Children of Israel came out of Egypt" (ibid., 11).


48. Mossman, *Epiphanius*, 76. See also 46: "Ever since I could remember, I had an intense longing to learn all I could about the language, and history, and religion, and traditions of our forefathers" (emphasis added).

49. Ibid., 108.

50. Ibid., 44. Mossman also subtly dissociates these "Messianic traditions" from the knowledge of other Jewish contemporaries: "Tryphon belonged to what may be called the elder school of Hebrew expositors of the Sacred Scriptures: that school which, now that I am writing in extreme old age, is almost, if not entirely, extinct among the Jews themselves, but whose traditional expositions of the Messianic prophecies have become a priceless heritage of the Catholic Church" (ibid., 43).

51. Ibid., 60–67. As they are both crying profusely at the time, Epiphanius quite explicitly refers to this as Salome's "baptism" (ibid., 68).

52. Ibid., 103, 113–15.


54. Literal Jewish conversion both precedes and undergirds the more broad-ranging debates of Victorian England about "the Jewish question" (which penetrated multiple ethnic, religious, and political debates). On this background, see Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, 15–56. Jewish converts to Christianity themselves also played a notable role in these debates, and also deployed Epiphanius. See A. Bernstein, "A Historical Sketch of the Controversy Between Christianity and Judaism, Chapter 1," *Hebrew Christian Witness and Prophetic Investigator* 1 (1877): 88, where Bernstein describes Epiphanius as "another celebrated
Hebrew Christian of that epoch" and cites Cave as his source. The *Hebrew Christian Witness* was edited by Moses Margoliouth, himself a convert from Judaism who wrote a three-volume *History of the Jews in Great Britain* (1851), on which see Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion*, 29–30. Alfred Edersheim (see n. 37) was another "Hebrew Christian" of the period who was mistakenly rumored to be taking over editorship of the *Hebrew Christian Witness* from Margoliouth (*Hebrew Christian Witness* 1 [1877]: 376).


60. Even his chronological location in the "sixth century" is conjectural, since our sources merely tell us he came to Constantinople "in the reign of Anastasius," which scholars have determined refers to Anastasius I (491–518). The various arguments are laid out by Paul Maas, "Die Chronologie der Hymnen des Romanos," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 15 (1906–7): 1–44.

61. The text, which may date to the eighth or ninth century, is reproduced with French translation by J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélède et les origines de la poëtie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 169; it is also printed (without translation) and discussed in Maas, "Die Chronologie," 30–32.

62. See the discussion of Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, 179, on this passage.

63. Although scholars have wrung creative biographical data from these few lines. See, for instance, Jefim Schirrmann, "Hebrew Liturgical Poetry and Christian Hymnology," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 44 (1953): 123–61, who infers from the reference to Saul and Paul that Romanos not only was "born in a Jewish family" but was also "apparently christened only as an adult." (156n86: "The poet [is] compared to St. Paul—probably an allusion to his baptism as an adult").

64. See the sources collected by Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos*, 159–64.


68. Bethja Bayer, "Romanos Melodor, in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), 14:238, describes Romanos as "born of a Jewish family in Emesa... It is not known whether his parents had already converted to Christianity or whether he did so himself in his youth." The text is unchanged in the second (2007) edition (17:405).

69. Miloš Velimirović, "Romanos Melodor, St.," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph P. Strayer (New York, 1988), 10:516, concludes, "Theories of Romanos' Jewish origin have been questioned and are denied by the most knowledgeable specialists.


72. Most scholars cite the work of Maas, "Die Chronologie," who affirms the "Jewish lineage" (jüdische Abkunft) of Romanos (based on the hymn cited earlier) on 31–32.

73. Maas, "Die Chronologie," 31, quoted and translated by Eric Werner, "Hebrew and Oriental Christian Metrical Hymns: A Comparison," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23.2 (1950–51): 425. See also Ephrem Lash, *On the Life of Christ: Kontakia* (San Francisco, 1995), xxvi: "Romanos' moderation toward the Jews, despite the mood of the day, was one of the reasons cited by the great classical scholar Paul Maas, a Jewish immigrant from Hitler's Germany, for thinking that Romanos himself was of Jewish stock." Maas was one of several Jewish classicists who found refuge during the war at Oxford. This irenicism is somewhat predictably also found in Marcus Plesset, "Romanos Melodor," in *Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn (Cambridge, England, 2005), 383.

74. R. J. Schork, *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist* (Gainesville, Fla., 1995), 5. Schork does not find this fact necessarily dispositive, since it might reflect "the exaggerated zeal of a recent convert." See also Nicholas De Lange, "Jews in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge, England, 2005), 409: "The hymns of Romanos, for example, himself said to have been of Jewish origin, include attacks on the Jews.


Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford, 2008), 650: "There were traditions that Romanos himself was a Jewish convert. He was most likely a Syrian by birth."


78. Werner, "Hebrew," 402–3. He refers to Romanos as "the converted Jew" on 414 (where he also suggests that Andrew of Crete might have been "of Jewish descent"). He cites Maas as providing evidence "beyond any possibility of a doubt, corroborating the fact of Romanos' Jewish extraction" (424–25), and concludes his essay by comparing Romanos, the Jewish liturgical hymn "U-Netaneh Tokef," and the "Dies irae." Much of this essay is reproduced in Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium* (New York, 1959), vol. 1. In the second volume, published later (Jerusalem, 1984), 140, Werner refers to Romanos as "the Jewish apostate."


80. Lieber, *A Vocabulary of Desire*, 11. Scholars writing on Romanos still cited Ephraim's Jewishness well into the twentieth century. See Schirmann, "Hebrew," 155, immediately preceding his discussion of Romanos: "Prominent converts are known to us by name within Byzantine Christendom: among them was even a Father of the Church, Ephraimius, born in Palestine."

81. Shepardson, "Syria, Syrac, Syrian," 458. See also ibid., 465: "Whether in texts from the first or the twentieth century, Syria frequently emerges as an exotic Other, tantalizingly near yet unquestionably culturally distinct from the western authors' realm of the familiar."

82. F. C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London, 1904), 7: "The inhabitants of the city [Edessa] and the district spoke a dialect of Aramaic akin to, but not identical with, that spoken in Palestine by our Lord and His apostles."


87. Morin begins his argument with a comparison of Ambrosiaster's works and a purported text of "Isaac the former Jew," *Liber fidei* (PG 33:1541–46): Morin, "Ambrosiaster," 102–8. After these "assez arides" discussions (102), Morin turns to three overlapping characteristics between Isaac and Ambrosiaster: distaste for the Roman clergy (109–110), knowledge of Jews and Judaism well beyond what he might glean from scriptures (111–13); "prédisposition marquée pour certaines coutumes de la religion israélite" (113); and particular knowledge of Roman law. I cannot agree with the statement of Lydia Spiller, "Ambrosiaster and the Jews," *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 72, that Morin's "hypothesis primarily rests on Ambrosiaster's knowledge of the customs of the Jews" (emphasis added).


91. In its annual summary of *Patristica* (compiled by editor C. H. Turner), the *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1900): 154, lauds Morin's article ("by far the most important of Dom Morin's recent contributions to patristic studies") but curiously reverses the order of the argument: after discussing Morin's original point that Ambrosiaster was "unusually well informed in all that pertained to Judaism," the summary continues, "Dom Morin then reminds us that history tells us of a converted Jew, of the name of Isaac." (emphasis added). As I pointed out earlier, Morin actually discusses the linguistic and theological commonalties between Isaac and Ambrosiaster first. Turner continued to champion the identification of Ambrosiaster with Isaac even after it had been abandoned by Morin: C. H. Turner, "Nicaetas and Ambrosiaster II," *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1906): 355–72.

92. Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2001), 379. I have been unable to trace Chadwick's reference and am informed by David Hunter that several other scholars of Ambrosiaster (much more qualified than I) have likewise been unable to locate it (personal communication, April 13, 2009).


94. Ambrosiaster, *Liber questionum* 44 (CSEL 50:71–81); the title (like many texts transmitted *Adversus Judaeos*) seems to be later. The context, however, is fairly typical of the genre, as when Ambrosiaster calls Jews "miserable and two-faced" (*perfidi et duplici*). Arguments from content like this cannot be determinative, of course: see the paradoxical readings of Romanos cited earlier.
CHAPTER 3