

# *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*

---

*Volume 1, Issue 1*

2005

*Article 10*

VOLUME 1 (2005-2006)

---

## Christian Prayer and Song in a Post-Holocaust Church

E. Byron Anderson\*

\*Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Ron.Anderson@garrett.edu

Copyright ©2005 by the authors. All rights reserved. This work is licensed to the public under the Creative Commons Attribution License. *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress). <http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr>

# Christian Prayer and Song in a Post-Holocaust Church

E. Byron Anderson

## Abstract

Because liturgy also is ritual and rite through which patterns of linguistic, homiletic, musical, and embodied practices are repeated over time and by which Christian persons are formed, we must pay close attention to the subtle ways in which the “liturgy of supersessionism” persists in our churches. To this end, this article explores questions about the Christian use of the Tetragrammaton in prayer and song; the distinction, or lack thereof, between Sabbath and Sunday; the relationship between the dating of Easter and Passover; and the ways in which Christian prayer and song portray the relationship between Israel and the Church.

**KEYWORDS:** liturgy, church year, Name, Tetragrammaton, Eucharistic prayer, collects, hymns, supersessionism

# STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

---

---

A peer-reviewed e-journal of the Council of Centers in Jewish-Christian Relations

Published by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College

## Christian Prayer and Song in a Post-Holocaust Church

E. Byron Anderson

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Volume 1 (2005-2006): pp. 103-126

<http://escholarship.bc.edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art10>

## Introduction

Over the past twenty years or more, some Christian liturgical theologians have raised important questions about the nature of Christian prayer, and especially practices of Christian worship, in a post-Holocaust, post-Auschwitz age. David Power posed these questions most directly in a series of response pieces published in 1983 and 1985. He asked, “Can we in truth celebrate eucharist after the Nazi holocaust and in face of imminent nuclear holocaust, and in a world half-populated by refugees, in the same way as we did before the occurrence of such horrors?”<sup>1</sup> Although some understood him to be asking if Christians could celebrate the eucharist at all, Power was clear that his concern was with worship “in the same way as before”, “without qualification.”<sup>2</sup> Susan White posed similar questions in her 1994 book *Christian Worship and Technological Change*: “Can we confess and intercede before a God who seems not to have heard the cries of the Jews in the death camps?” “Can we...pray in the same way to the God of classical theism, the God of power, wisdom, might and mercy, in a post-Auschwitz community of faith?”<sup>3</sup>

The answer to these questions is that while many of our churches continue to worship “in the same ways,” they should not continue to do so. The Nazi holocaust, the threat of nuclear destruction, and the events of September 11, 2001, all challenge the nature and character of Christian

worship; they call us away from the “eulogistic evasion of suffering” and into lamentation for the woundedness and destruction of God’s people throughout the world. The events of September 11 and the war in Iraq brought a short-lived soberness to worship in some Christian communities. But our memories are also short-lived, especially when they are memories of times and places far from our own homes and communities. Christian attention to the Nazi holocaust, with the exceptions of interest in Elie Wiesel’s work or in the visit of John Paul II to Auschwitz or the bizarre literature denying the holocaust, remains largely in the hands of theologians and ethicists. Their work, combined with the work of a small group of Jewish and Christian liturgists has had a kind of “trickle down” effect on Christian worship. Yet such concerns remain largely unacknowledged and unexplored in Christian worship today. Susan White noted in a recent article that her earlier questions remain unanswered and unaddressed: “Blatant examples of triumphalism, anti-Judaism and supersessionism which marked most official Christian rites of the past have been largely eliminated...[R]ecent liturgical revision has barely skimmed the theological surface of the Jewish-Christian encounter.”<sup>4</sup> As Robert Bullock also notes, while we have been able to critique theologies of supersessionism, while we have attended to the ways in which the most problematic Scripture texts and liturgies – especially those for Holy Week – have been interpreted or revised, there remains throughout much of the church “a ‘liturgy of

<sup>1</sup> David N. Power, “Response: Liturgy, Memory and the Absence of God” *Worship* 57.4 (July 1983): 328.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Power, “Forum: Worship after the Holocaust,” *Worship* 59.5 (September 1985): 447.

<sup>3</sup> Susan White, *Christian Worship and Technological Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 114-115. See also E. Byron Anderson, “Liturgical prayer in a Post-Holocaust Church,” *Encounter* 63.1-2 (2002): 27-36 where I briefly explored some of these questions in conversation with the work of Clark Williamson.

<sup>4</sup> Susan White, “‘Posthumous Victories’: Christian Worship after the Holocaust” in Martin Forward, Stephen Plant, and Susan White, eds., *A Great Commission: Christian Hope and Religious Diversity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 394. Robert Albright also provides a brief overview of some of the issues considered here. See his 1992 paper “How Official Christian Liturgical Songs and Prayers Form Christian Perceptions of Judaism” available at the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, <http://www.icjs.org/clergy/albright.html> (downloaded December 28, 2005).

supersessionism.’ It is present in liturgical structures, in the choice and use of texts, prayers, hymns and religious art....To liberate worship from these elements is an enormous task.”<sup>5</sup>

My hope in what follows is not so much to “liberate worship” as to pay close attention to the subtle ways in which the “liturgy of supersessionism” persists in our churches. Such attention is important because, while liturgy has an “event-like” character that is about present and immediate experience, liturgy also is ritual and rite through which patterns of linguistic, homiletic, musical, and embodied practices are repeated over time and by which Christian persons are formed. Mary Boys names the challenge well:

Because liturgy exercises such a profound role in forming Christians, what it teaches about our relation to Jews and Judaism requires painstaking examination. Supersessionism, a constant Christian theological theme, permeates our liturgical life. The liturgy typically reflects the “conventional account” of Christian origins—and indeed, is a principal reason for its enduring character. We thus acquire not only a distorted understanding of Judaism, but of ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

If we are to effect change in the hearts and minds of Christian people who gather for worship week in and week out, we need to attend specifically to what it is that these same Christian people hear, pray, and sing, not only during

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bullock, “After Auschwitz: Jews, Judaism, and Christian Worship” in Carol Rittner and John K. Roth, eds., *“Good News” after Auschwitz: Christian Faith within a Post-Holocaust World* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Boys, *Has God only One Blessing* (New York: Stimulus Books/Paulist Press, 2000), 200.

Holy Week but in “ordinary time” as well. Susan White reminds us of the importance of such “primary theology” in life and belief:

Most ordinary Christians ‘do theology’ through their participation in the corporate worship of the Church, exploring the geography of faithfulness in prayers, hymns, exhortations, sermons, readings, and learning the rules and limitations of ‘God-talk.’ Suffice it to say that if any of the insights from a truly post-Auschwitz Christian theology and spirituality are to find a home in the hearts and minds of Christian believers, it will be because it has been lived out in their liturgical experience.<sup>7</sup>

Given the formative nature of Christian liturgical practices, it is necessary now to expand (but not discontinue) our attention beyond the liturgical use of scripture and problematic prayer texts used in Christian observances of Holy Week.<sup>8</sup> We need to look at prayer texts and hymns used, or proposed for use, throughout the liturgical year. We must also attend to the ways in which Christians use language in the naming of God. It is also important that we not limit our attention solely to Christian *texts*. The ways in which Christians observe and theologically interpret Sunday in relationship to the Sabbath and even the calendrical relationship between Easter and Passover, although operating more symbolically in Christian life, are also part of the liturgical structures of supersessionism that have shaped

<sup>7</sup> White, “Posthumous Victories,” 397.

<sup>8</sup> For example, William Seth Adams, “Christian Liturgy, Scripture, and the Jews: A Problematic in Jewish-Christian relations,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 25.1 (Winter, 1988): 39-55; Gail Ramshaw, “Pried Open by Prayer” in E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, SJ, eds., *Liturgy and the Moral Self* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 169-175; and, most recently, Henry F. Knight, *Celebrating Holy Week in a Post-Holocaust World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

and continue to shape Christian anti-Judaism implicitly and explicitly.

### Lenses for Reading Christian Liturgical Texts

Before turning to a selective analysis of resources found in recent liturgical books and hymnals, it will help to name the “lenses” through which I am reading these resources and the structures that guide my assessment. First, we must move away from understanding the history of God with Israel as merely a history that *prepares* for the gospel and the church and learn that such history “surrounds the gospel as its horizon, context, and goal.”<sup>9</sup> Second, acknowledging that many of the ways in which Christians have narrated salvation history has left “no room for the continuing existence and vitality of Judaism” requires us to provide “more nuanced and textured ways of relating God’s salvific work throughout history.”<sup>10</sup> Third, we must learn to see that Christian liturgical texts and practices, as well the interpretation of these, often lead to differing understandings of the relationship between Israel and the Church. That is, in addition to more obvious forms of displacement or supersessionism, we need to attend to the ways in which the relationships between first and second covenant, first and second testament, Israel and Church are portrayed by images or theologies of promise and fulfillment, or as a linear evolution from the less true to the more true or from the incomplete to the complete. And, it will be helpful for us to pay attention to and affirm those texts and practices that

affirm the complementarity or interdependence of Israel and the Church.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, it is important to note what I am not attending to in this review and analysis. First, the three “lenses” I am using immediately raise Christological and anthropological questions that are largely implicit in the discussion that follows but beyond the scope of this paper. Such questions include the character and purpose of the work of Christ as well as the nature of what Christians receive in or through Christ. For example, can we understand “new life in Christ” in a non-supersessionist way? Second, because of the attention given by others to the particular problems posed by Holy Week and the common lectionary, as noted earlier, I have largely set both aside in order to cast a wider net. In this analysis, I include questions about the pronouncability and use of the Name in Christian prayer; the distinction, or lack thereof, between Sabbath and Sunday; and the relationship between the dating of Easter and Passover. After addressing these themes, I want to look more generally at several, I hope, representative prayer and hymn texts.

### Pronouncing the Name of God

The question here is not how to pronounce the Name of God, the Tetragrammaton; contemporary biblical scholars are generally agreed upon the way in which to pronounce the Name. Nor is the question what the name of God is or should be, as in contemporary discussions concerning the gendered name of God. Rather, the question is whether and why Christians should vocalize the Tetragrammaton in Christian worship in light of the long tradition in Judaism of

<sup>9</sup> R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 176.

<sup>10</sup> Boys, *Has God only One Blessing*, 211.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 219. I am drawing here on Boys’ summary and critique of four categories of relationship described by Laurence Hull Stookey in “Marcion, Typology, and Lectionary Preaching,” *Worship* 66.3 (May 1992): 251-262.

not vocalizing the Name, the taboo against doing so, and the practice of substituting other names such as *Adonai*.

Jewish and Christian traditions and scholarship seem to agree that the primary motivation for the taboo against pronouncing, or even writing, the Name comes from a fear of profanation of God's name, a fear grounded in an interpretation (for some a misinterpretation) of the third commandment against the misuse of God's name (i.e., "taking the Lord's name in vain") and in the understanding that to use a name is to exert a form of control over the one named. Scholars cannot provide a certain date when pronunciation of the divine name was no longer permitted. They do suggest that the Name was "originally spoken by priests in the temple in pronouncing benediction" and that there was a gradual diminishment in pronunciation and audibility after the destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>12</sup> The early Christian community seems to have honored the tradition of not speaking or writing the Name, at least if we attend to the "absence of the Tetragrammaton and its almost universal replacement by [*kyrios*]" in Christian copies of the LXX.<sup>13</sup>

How, then, have contemporary Christians come to use the Name? Why do Christians increasingly pronounce the Name in worship, if Jews do not do so? As Michael Gilligan observes, the liturgical use of the Name and its appearance in Christian song is a recent innovation, perhaps the result of the French and English versions of the Jerusalem Bible.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>G. H. Parke-Taylor, *YAHWEH: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), 10, 79, 86-88.

<sup>13</sup>George Howard, "The Tetragrammaton and the New Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96.1 (March 1977): 74.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Joseph Gilligan, "The Tetragrammaton in God's Word and Liturgy," *Liturgical Ministry* 5 (Spring 1996): 79, 82. Gilligan helpfully summarizes Catholic positions on the use of the Name in Catholic liturgy; he concludes, "this term should have no place in our liturgy" (84).

But, given the amount of attention the church now gives to the ways in which ritual language forms persons in structures of power and belief, I find it surprising that questions about the use of the Name are generally ignored. For example, Mary Collins, in the context of discussing inclusive language and the church's privileging of "Father" as the name of God, talks about the fact that the Name and Abba are "privileged names for the God of Jesus." Her critique of Abba/Father leads her to argue that the Name is the "sole normative biblical revelation of the divine name."<sup>15</sup> But given this argument, she neither considers how the Name is privileged for both Christian and Jew nor the consequences of such privilege (such as not using it liturgically). Missing in much discussion is the awareness of any tension between the privileged use of a name and the reservation of that privilege to particular people, places, or liturgical contexts. And, despite regional Roman Catholic prohibitions against the public use of the Name in worship, such as the 1986 *Ecumenical Guidelines* of the Province of Chicago, it continues to appear (primarily) in contemporary Roman Catholic music and worship resources.<sup>16</sup>

Some might question why this should be an issue in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Johanna van Wijk-Bos answers this question as boldly as anyone. She argues that willingly ignoring "Jewish scruples regarding the name of God" such

<sup>15</sup>Mary Collins, "Naming God in Public Prayer," in Mary Collins, ed., *Worship: Renewal to Practice* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1989), 223.

<sup>16</sup>The 2004 edition of *Breaking Bread* (Portland, OR: Oregon Catholic Press) contains five songs or psalm settings that make use of the Name. Among recent Protestant collections, *Renew: Songs and Hymns for Blended Worship* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1995) contains one, Dan Schutte's "Sing a New Song", also found in *Breaking Bread*. Given that all five pieces in *Breaking Bread* were written in the early 1970s, it is highly plausible that experiences with the then new Jerusalem Bible (1966) shaped the writing of these texts.

as in Wellhausen's work leads to "an implicit lack of respect for Jews...accompanied by an explicit lack of respect for God's name."<sup>17</sup> It is not only disrespect that concerns her, but also the consequences of that disrespect: "The full vocalization of the Tetragrammaton partakes of the 'teaching of contempt' that is an aspect of the hatred of Jews that made the Shoah possible."<sup>18</sup> She argues that Christians, on the one hand, have "feigned innocence of the connections between the silence surrounding the Shoah and the spokenness of God's name" and, on the other hand, combined this innocence with an arrogance that suggests it is universal practice to pronounce God's name and that the taboo against such pronunciation is a superstition to be set aside (as did Protestant reformers such as Calvin).<sup>19</sup> Whether in feigned innocence or in arrogance, Christians – and here those responsible for shaping Christian worship – must ask ourselves if we continue to treat the prohibition as superstition, as part of the "old" covenant, or as simply not applying to Christians. We need ask ourselves what it means to truly honor the divine Name. Then, as Michael Gilligan suggests, we might ask ourselves what simple charity for

God's people requires of us.<sup>20</sup> We should not use the Name in worship, but we should sing and pray "Blessed be the Name."

## Time

Christianity interprets time theologically in the annual cycle of feasts and fasts that mark the liturgical year and sanctoral cycle, in the weekly observance of the Lord's Day/Sunday, and in the daily cycle of the liturgy of the hours. In each of these cycles, liturgical historians have noted the potential and real Jewish sources of Christian observance. But in speaking of Jewish sources of Christian practice, the church has easily allowed itself to celebrate and interpret its practices as displacements of and replacements for Jewish liturgical practices. Here I focus on two questions that symbolize and continue to shape the relationships between Christianity and Judaism: the relationships between Sabbath and Sunday and between the dating of Passover and Easter.

**1. Sabbath and Sunday.** As Walter Burghardt notes so clearly, "In the Christian mentality there is a traditional tension, if not an endless embarrassment, between two holy days: the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. We speak of our Sunday as 'replacing' the Sabbath, and in so doing we don't quite know what to do with what we have 'replaced.' For all practical purposes it has disappeared, is no longer of concern to us."<sup>21</sup> Even in her wise and pastoral book *Receiving the Day*, Dorothy Bass both calls Christians to "honor the sabbath as belonging first of all to the Jews,

<sup>17</sup>Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, "Writing on the Water: The Ineffable Name of God" in Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky, eds., *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of The Hebrew Scriptures* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 48.

<sup>18</sup>van Wijk-Bos, 49.

<sup>19</sup>van Wijk-Bos, 52. On Calvin, see his commentary on Exodus 6.2 in *Harmony of the Law*, Vol. 1, as downloaded July 20, 2005 from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iv.vi.i.html>. But, Calvin's commentary on the third commandment in the *Institutes* reveals his clear respect for God's name: "The purpose of this commandment is: God wills that we hallow the majesty of his name. Therefore, it means in brief that we are not to profane his name by treating it contemptuously and irreverently" (II.viii.22). *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 388.

<sup>20</sup>Gilligan, 84. A related point, beyond the scope of this argument, is to acknowledge that accuracy in translation of and reading the Hebrew text requires that we also discontinue using "Jehovah".

<sup>21</sup>Walter J. Burghardt, SJ, "Sabbath and Sunday Belong Together," *Living Pulpit* 7.2 (April June 1998): 8.



not only in the past but also today” and transfers the Sabbath to Sunday for Christians; she both distinguishes the seventh day from the first/eighth day and collapses Sabbath into Sunday.<sup>22</sup>

There are various arguments for the development of Sunday as the Christian day for gathering and worship, most beyond the scope of this paper. Among these are arguments concerning the desire of Christians to distinguish themselves from Jews, the interpretation of Jesus’ sayings about the Sabbath as challenging the very keeping of Sabbath (Mt 12.1-14, Mk 2.23-2.6, Lk 6.1-11), and the gospel stories of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples on the evening of the first day (Lk 24.13ff, Jn 20.19ff).<sup>23</sup>

Some of these arguments clearly operate out of a displacement or supersessionist understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church. But, as Mark Searle argued, “There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the early Church saw Sunday as a Christian Sabbath. There is some evidence to suggest that some Christian groups considered the law of Sabbath observance binding on Christians as well as Jews, so that both Saturday and Sunday were highly significant days.” Yet even Searle cannot receive the Sabbath on its own terms. In his very next sentence he writes, “But the consensus that generally came to prevail is that what the Sabbath represented had actually *been realized* [my emphasis] in the whole new age

<sup>22</sup>Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 52.

<sup>23</sup>Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 178.

ushered in by Christ, of which the first day of the week became the symbol.”<sup>24</sup> Later in the same article, he writes,

Whereas the Sabbath is a day of rest from labor, a momentary participation in the rest of God which preceded creation and will follow history, Sunday represents the altogether more radical idea that the life of the world to come is already here. It lasts not twenty-four hours, but from the resurrection of Christ unto ages of ages. Sunday is the eighth day, shattering the treadmill of the seven-day week....<sup>25</sup>

Note his argument: not only does Sunday *realize* what Sabbath *represented*, but it “shatters” the week as well. For Searle, the themes and images “associated with the Hebrew sabbath have now *passed over* [my emphasis] into the new age as characterizing the life-style of those who have passed from life to death.”<sup>26</sup>

Similar but more clearly supersessionist concerns appear in a collection of essays by evangelical biblical scholars. They argue, for example, that the Sabbath is a covenant sign meant only for Israel and only for the duration of the

<sup>24</sup>Mark Searle, “Sunday: The Heart of the Christian Year” in Maxwell Johnson, ed., *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Pueblo, 2000), 63.

<sup>25</sup>Searle, “Sunday: The Heart of the Christian Year,” 71. Adrian Nocent provides helpful correctives to such positions as he reports Eusebius’ observation that the early church was able to hold Sabbath and Sunday in juxtaposition without conflict and with his reminder that the idea of Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day of rest was not possible prior to Constantine’s conversion. See Adrian Nocent, “Christian Sunday” in Eugene J. Fisher, ed., *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990), 133, 137.

<sup>26</sup>Searle, “Sunday: The Heart of the Christian Year,” 75.

covenant with Israel.<sup>27</sup> The commandment concerning the Sabbath has been fulfilled in Christ, who has reinterpreted the commandment, giving it “positive, though not literal force.”<sup>28</sup> And, because the first Christians “grasped the significance of Jesus’ teaching” about the Sabbath, they were able to treat the Sabbath “as a shadow of the past.”<sup>29</sup> Each of these comments continue several different anti-Jewish perspectives including the limitation of the covenant law to Israel, the suggestion that God’s covenant with Israel has come to an end, the idea that there is a difference between “literal” and “positive” or “moral” force in interpretation of the law, and the understanding of Israel living in a “shadowy past” while the church now lives in the light of Christ.

The collapse of the distinction between Sabbath and Sunday/Lord’s Day is portrayed in a hymn written in 1862 by Christopher Wordsworth, “O Day of Rest and Gladness.” The text that follows is the altered version provided in the *Episcopal Hymnal 1982*.<sup>30</sup>

O day of radiant gladness, O day of joy and light,  
O balm of care and sadness, most beautiful, most bright;  
this day the high and lowly, through ages joined in tune,  
sing “Holy, holy, holy,” to the great God Triune.

This day at the creation, the light first had its birth;  
this day for our salvation Christ rose from depths of earth;  
this day our Lord victorious the Spirit sent from heaven,  
and thus this day most glorious a triple light was given.

This day, God’s people meeting, his Holy Scripture hear;  
His living presence greeting, through Bread and Wine made near.  
we journey on, believing, renewed with heavenly might,  
from grace more grace receiving on this blest day of light.

That light our hope sustaining, we walk the pilgrim way,  
at length our rest attaining, our endless Sabbath day.  
We sing to thee our praises, O Father, Spirit, Son;  
the Church her voice upraises to thee, blest Three in One.

In his original closing stanza, Wordsworth returned to his original opening phrase “O day of *rest* and gladness” with an emphasis on rest.

May we, new graces gaining from this our day of rest,  
attain the rest remaining to spirits of the blest;  
and there our voice upraising to Father and to Son,  
and Holy Ghost be praising ever the Three in One.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Harold H. P. Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament” in Don A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 30, 34.

<sup>28</sup>A. T. Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective” in Carson, 394.

<sup>29</sup>D. A. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels” in Carson, 85.

<sup>30</sup>(New York: Church Pension Fund, 1985), 48. The same altered version of this text appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 470, and in *The New Century Hymnal* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995), 66. The latter has altered the gendered name of the Trinity in the fourth stanza. The *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 251, preserves most of Wordsworth’s original final stanza.

<sup>31</sup>*The Hymnal 1940 Companion* (New York: Church Pension Fund, 1951), 294.

On the one hand, this hymn offers a clear Christian understanding of Sunday as both the first day of the week and the eschatological eighth day on which Christians gather for worship and sacrament in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, it reflects the Church's historical, but arguably unnecessary, borrowing of the theology of the Sabbath day of rest. And, where Wordsworth did more to develop the image of Sunday as the "day of rest" in his original, he avoided naming the day as the Sabbath, which the altered version now explicitly names.

Similar problems appear in a recent collection of prayers based on the Revised Common Lectionary and proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts.

On this day of rest and gladness,  
we praise you, God of creation,  
for the dignity of work and the joy of play,  
for the challenge of witness  
and the invitation to delight at your table.  
Renew our hearts through your Sabbath rest,  
that we might be refreshed to continue in your work  
of restoring the world to wholeness.<sup>32</sup>

On the one hand, this prayer works faithfully with the designated readings for the day, Deuteronomy 5.12-15, the commandment to observe the Sabbath, and Mark 2.23-3.6, Jesus' interpretation of the Sabbath. With the exception of the line "for the challenge of witness and the invitation to delight at your table", the writer has drawn on an accurate reading of Sabbath theology. On the other hand, the writer

<sup>32</sup>*Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 70. Although the way this prayer is used for Sunday is problematic, it could be appropriately and beneficially used in morning prayer on Saturdays.

makes no distinction between Sabbath and Sunday. Sunday becomes "this day of rest and gladness."

It may seem a weak point upon which to dwell, but as long as Christians continue to displace Sabbath with Sunday, combining the theologies of one with the other, we not only perpetuate the kind of arguments that suggest the ending of one somehow imperfect covenant and the beginning of another more perfect covenant, but we make Judaism as a community of living religious practice invisible to Christian congregations and the culture at large. Also, by collapsing Sabbath into Sunday, we lose the eschatological symbol of Sunday through which we are taught that the church is *not* the completion of God's covenant but a place in which we continue to await that completion. The challenge to the church is not to choose between the days, but to learn to celebrate and theologize about them in coherent and, need I say, biblically informed ways.<sup>33</sup>

**2. Easter.** A similar question about the symbolic structuring of time concerns the annual determination of the date of Easter. Most Christians are unaware of how the date of Easter is determined; they are only conscious of the fact that it "moves" and that this movement creates problems for families and school systems in scheduling spring break (perhaps a problem peculiar to the United States). The latter

<sup>33</sup>For example, congregations might be invited to consider the following statement: "Sunday is first of all a memorial celebration of Christ; Sabbath a memorial of creation, of God as Creator and humanity as co-creator. Yet, both days center on life, given by God and still to be realized and manifested in its fullness. Sabbath rest and Sunday rest, while related, are differently based and interpreted." Eugene Fisher, "A Case Study: Sabbath and Sunday" in Eugene J. Fisher, ed., *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990), 119. Christian congregations might also consider the relationship between Sunday as the first day of the week, and therefore a "work day," and its call to offer itself through the liturgy, the public "work" of worship.

problem has led the secular community either to advocate a fixed date for Easter or to separate the scheduling of break from the Easter calendar. That the two have been so closely related reflects the American mythology of itself as a “Christian” nation.

Although the problem of spring break does affect church communities, it is not what has motivated the church to seek a common date for Easter. Rather, the primary question or problem about Easter that has received attention among the ecumenical Christian community has been the inability of the Western (Catholic and Protestant) and Eastern (Orthodox) churches to celebrate Easter on the same day in most years. For the most part, this problem was created by the West’s acceptance of the Gregorian calendar and the East’s continued reliance on the Julian calendar. Both East and West have sought to remain faithful to the canons of the Council of Nicea; both are aware of the fractured witness the calendrical disagreement causes; both are aware of potential new fractures within the church should certain proposals be enacted. But what do these discussions have to do with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism?

The canons of the council of Nicea regarding the date of Easter can be read as deliberately anti-Judaic, as they seem to separate Easter from Passover calculations. But, without disregarding the anti-Judaism present in the fourth-century church, it is important to note that two things were being addressed by Nicea: one was the desire to set a common date for the celebration of Easter throughout the church (sought then as today); the second was to address the fact that “in the third century the day of the feast [Passover] came to be calculated by some Jewish communities without reference to the equinox, thus causing Passover to be celebrated twice in some solar years. Nicea tried to avoid this by linking the principles for the dating of Easter/Pascha

to the norms for the calculation of Passover during Jesus’ lifetime.”<sup>34</sup>

One of the proposals that circulated several times during the late-twentieth century would have established a fixed date for Easter on the Sunday following the second Saturday in April. This proposal generally met the criteria established by Nicea and kept the date of Easter in connection to the natural lunar and solar cycles that have determined its date from the beginning. What this proposal did not do was preserve any necessary connection between Easter and Passover, the importance of which the ecumenical community acknowledged in a 1970 consultation:

The relation between Easter and Passover needs careful consideration not only for the historical reason that Christ’s Passion and resurrection took place in the days of the Jewish feast....The Christian religion is essentially rooted in the revelation given to the Jewish people. Therefore, it is important for the Christian Church to celebrate its Easter feast in some chronological proximity to the Jewish feast. However, the Christian Church is conscious of the fact that there is need to interpret this proximity as an intention of friendly relationship and not to give the impression of the presumption that the Christian Easter is the true Pesach.<sup>35</sup>

Given the early stages of development in modern Jewish-Christian dialogue when this was written, as well as the difficulties created in that dialogue following the 1967 war,

<sup>34</sup>“Towards a Common Date for Easter: WCC/MEC Consultation,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 41.2-3 (1997): 239.

<sup>35</sup>“Report of the Consultation on a Fixed Date for Easter, Chambécy, March 1970, organized by Faith and Order,” *Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971): 177, cited in Dagmar Heller, “A Common Date for Easter: A Reality in the New Millennium” *Studia Liturgica* (2000): 246.

this seems a bold statement. “Chronological proximity” may be the practical concern, but the “theological proximity” of Passover and Pascha in God’s revelation to Israel seems to require the chronological symbol. At the same time, the chronological proximity between Passover and Easter, and the fact that Easter always follows Passover, has provided a context in which the church has been able to continue its theologies of displacement and supersessionism. It would be helpful for our churches to hear more explicitly the nature of its rootedness in the revelation to Israel and to explore the consequences of the vine severed from its roots.

The ecumenical conversations have continued. A 1997 consultation reaffirmed the importance of the chronological and theological relationship between Easter and Passover:

The Church needs to be reminded of its origins, including the close link between the biblical passover and the passion and resurrection of Jesus – link that reflects the total flow of salvation history....A fixed date would obscure and weaken this link by eliminating any reference to the biblical norms for the calculation of the Passover.<sup>36</sup>

Some may want to question what is intended by “the total flow of salvation history” in this statement. It is neither defined nor developed in the consultation report and warrants further ecumenical and Jewish-Christian conversation. Nevertheless, as a result of this consultation the proposal for a fixed date for Easter was set aside in favor of three working principles: a reaffirmation of the Nicene norms, a commitment to calculate the needed astronomical data “by the most accurate possible scientific means,” which offers the hope of resolving the differences created by the two calendars, and the intent to use the meridian of Jerusalem as the reference point for such calculations,

<sup>36</sup> “Towards a Common Date for Easter: WCC/MEC Consultation,” 242.

which provides not only time *and* place in relationship to Israel but also helps resolve the astronomical differences between the northern and southern hemispheres.<sup>37</sup>

At one level, some might suggest that maintaining the calendrical relationship between Passover and Easter is *merely* symbolic. This, of course, misunderstands what a symbol is and does. Rather, it is more accurate to say that this relationship is *fully* symbolic, because the reality of Easter participates in and depends upon the reality of Passover, both as symbols of “God’s mighty deeds”.

Without this symbolic relationship, such hymns as “The Day of Resurrection” or “Come, ye faithful, raise the strain,” written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by John of Damascus and entering ecumenical hymnic repertoire in John Mason Neale’s translations, make little theological sense. The first links Easter directly with the Passover, the second with crossing the Red Sea:

The day of resurrection! Earth tell it out abroad;  
the passover of gladness, the passover of God.  
From death to life eternal, from earth unto the sky,  
our Christ hath brought us over, with hymns of victory....

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness;  
God hath brought forth Israel, into joy from sadness;  
Loosed from Pharaoh’s bitter yoke Jacob’s sons and daughters,  
led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.<sup>38</sup>

These two hymn stanzas, like the Passover haggadah and the Eucharistic prayer, provide the means for

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> See *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 303 and 315.

remembering that what God has done God continues to do with us as Jew and as Christian. If we have been grafted onto the vine that is Israel, then Passover and exodus is a shared story, as these hymn stanzas insist.<sup>39</sup> Maintaining the calendrical relationship between Passover and Easter, therefore, is a way for Christianity to maintain not only chronological but also historical and theological relationships to Judaism through which it more faithfully “remembers” itself. Christians are reminded that we are the ones grafted onto the vine rather than, as theologies of displacement seem to suggest, a body painfully remembering a limb now severed from it. As does the collapse of the necessary relationship between Sabbath and Sunday, without this relationship, the church is provided one more means by which it makes Judaism invisible to itself if not to the world.

**3. Additions to the Calendar.** Here I briefly note one other consideration regarding the symbol of liturgical time in Jewish-Christian relationships. In a response paper presented at a meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy, Lawrence Hoffman made the following point:

Insofar, then, as the Holocaust requires changed behavior, we must encode that message in symbolic discourse, and this the liturgy does, precisely because regularized liturgical experience shared with one’s community reinforces the symbol as a connecting bonding element in the ritualizing group. Its members are

<sup>39</sup>*Nostra Aetate*, §4 makes this clear: “On this account the church cannot forget that it received the revelation of the Old Testament by way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can it forget that it draws nourishment from that good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (see Rom 11:17-24).” See [http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/catholic/Nostra\\_Aetate.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/catholic/Nostra_Aetate.htm)

socialized into sensing that deeper message which makes a symbol what it is.<sup>40</sup>

Hoffman argued that Christians need to “construct our worship so that the Holocaust appears as a symbol” by adding observances of Yom HaShoah to the Christian calendar of feasts and fasts.<sup>41</sup> At the time, he noted that its observance had been added to some Christian calendars but was absent from liturgical books.<sup>42</sup> Twenty years after his proposal, some denominations have made statements about it, added it to unofficial calendars, and developed liturgical resources.<sup>43</sup> Some seminaries, especially those that have programs in Jewish studies or centers for Jewish-

<sup>40</sup>Lawrence Hoffman, “Response: Holocaust as Holocaust, Holocaust as Symbol” *Worship* 58.4 (July 1984): 337.

<sup>41</sup>For which the volume edited by Marcia Sachs Little and Weissman Gutman, *Liturgies on the Holocaust: An Interfaith Anthology* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International), 1996, is a significant resource.

<sup>42</sup>Hoffman, 338.

<sup>43</sup>For example, in May 2000 the General Conference of the United Methodist Church offered the following resolution: “Therefore, be it further resolved, as a sign of our contrition and our solidarity with the Jewish community, the General Conference urges the promotion of observance of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, each spring in United Methodist local congregations and urges the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, in cooperation with other agencies of The United Methodist Church, in a time of increasing anti-Semitism, to work both with our own denomination’s history with regard to this tragedy and find ways to support the work against anti-Semitism in the world today and to prepare resources for local congregations to observe Yom HaShoah.” (Citation from <http://www.icrelations.net/en/?id=992>, downloaded July 7, 2005.) The United Methodist Church has followed up on this by including Yom HaShoah in the annual pocket calendar it provides pastors (although for 2005, it shares space with Nurses’ Day and May Fellowship Day) and by providing a liturgical resource. The National Association of Pastoral Musicians included the day on its calendar and also provided a list of musical resources for its observance. See <http://www.npm.org/Planning/yearc/yomhashoah.htm>.

Christian dialogue, such as General Theological Seminary in New York, have incorporated it into their liturgical cycles. But it remains largely absent from Christian consciousness and observance. Falling two weeks after Passover, and usually two weeks after Easter, its observance adds a crucial note of lamentation to the fifty days of Easter and a balance to what congregations have heard and experienced in Holy Week.

A similar interruption in the festival calendar of the church year is the December 28 remembrance of the “holy innocents.” As with any midweek service, except in those communities that have sustained a tradition of daily prayer or Eucharistic liturgy, few churches pay any attention to this story. It is perhaps a cruel joke the church has played on itself in that, even as it revels in the twelve days of Christmas, those first days following Christmas are the days on which the church remembers stories of martyrdom (Stephen and Thomas Beckett), the slaughter of the innocents, and the Holy Family as refugees fleeing their home. And yet, in the light of this discussion, the Holy Innocents provides an opportunity for the Christian community to lament its role in the destruction of the Jewish people. For example, the *Book of Common Prayer* lectionary appoints readings from Jeremiah 31.15-17 (Rachel weeping for her children) and Matthew 2.13-18. The collect for the day sets the tone for remembrance and lamentation.

We remember today, O God, the slaughter  
of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod.  
Receive, we pray,  
into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims;  
and by your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants  
and establish your rule of justice, love, and peace....<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup>*The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1977), 238.

Some of the prayers appointed for this day are more limited in their focus and less amenable to use in lamentation. The opening prayer for this day in the *Sacramentary* begins “Father, the Holy Innocents offered you praise by the death they suffered for Christ.” The concluding prayer commends the innocents because, “by a wordless profession of faith in your Son, the innocents were crowned with life at his birth.”<sup>45</sup> While the *Sacramentary* prayers seem to offer a redemptive interpretation of the senseless slaughter of the children and a commemoration of their “birth” as martyrs, the prayers not only put unlikely words into the mouths of the children but also avoid any awareness of the ungodliness of their destruction. When appropriately framed by scripture and prayer, remembrance of the Holy Innocents can provide the Church a specific opportunity to remember, especially, the children killed in the Shoah, as well as all innocent victims.

### Liturgical Prayer

I have been attempting to emphasize the ways the regard (or disregard) with which the church uses two of its symbols – language about God and the marking of time – are significant, if unattended to, components in the church’s liturgical practices. Although I have given some attention to specific liturgical texts in the preceding sections, in the following sections I want to look more directly at specific liturgical texts – collects, intercessions, Eucharistic prayers as well as hymns and songs. I will focus my attention on liturgical texts intended for Christian liturgy outside of Holy Week. As I indicated earlier, others have written about the specific problems in Holy Week lectionary and liturgical texts, especially those for Good Friday, but few have attended to “ordinary” liturgical practices outside of Holy Week. As the examples I provide will demonstrate, we are

<sup>45</sup>*The Sacramentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1985), 124.

hard-pressed to find blatant examples of displacement or supersessionism in contemporary liturgical texts. In some cases, we will see more explicit and non-typological attention provided to the images and narrative of the Hebrew scriptures. In others, there remains a theology of the linear progression of salvation history. But what also becomes clear in reviewing these resources is that, perhaps in the attempt to address anti-Judaism in previous texts, negative images have not been traded for positive images but for absence and silence. The examples that follow are intended to be representative rather than comprehensive.

**1. Collects and Intercessions.** Because the liturgical books of most church communities have been revised since the 1970s, explicitly anti-Jewish language has largely disappeared. In its place we find prayers like the following excerpt from a Lenten intercession in the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship*:

For Christians of every land,  
*we ask new unity in your name.*  
 For Jews and Muslims and people of other faiths,  
*we ask your divine blessing.*  
 For those who cannot believe,  
*we ask your faithful love.*<sup>46</sup>

On the one hand, the prayer neither anathematizes Jews (or Muslims) nor seeks their conversion. It provides, if only briefly, an answer to the question “has God only one blessing?” On the other hand, the prayer is structured in a way that moves, even visually, in descending order from Christians to Jews to “those who cannot believe.” In contrast, the same book provides among its “prayers for various

occasions” (but without any suggestion of the occasion on which it might be used) a collect “For Jews”:

Almighty God, you are the one true God,  
 and have called forth people of faith  
 in every time and place.  
 Your promises are sure and true.  
 We bless you for your covenant given to Abraham and Sarah,  
 that you keep even now with the Jews.  
 We rejoice that you have brought us into covenant with you  
 by the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
 himself a Jew, nurtured in the faith of Israel.  
 We praise you that you are faithful to covenants made  
 with us and Jewish brothers and sisters,  
 that together we may serve your will,  
 and come at last to your promised peace.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to naming the continuing nature of God’s covenant with Israel, this prayer suggests not only a more equal relationship between Christians and Jews but also the need for Jews and Christians together to seek and serve God’s will.

Two prayers in the collection prepared by the International Consultation on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) provide another opportunity to contrast the way in which Judaism is imaged. The first collect, for the vigil mass of Christmas, reminds the church of the continuity of God’s covenant with Israel and asks that we be included among the people in whom God delights:

<sup>46</sup> *Book of Common Worship*, 236-237.

<sup>47</sup> *Book of Common Worship*, 815.



God of Abraham and Sarah,  
 of David and his descendents,  
 unwearied is your love for us  
 and steadfast your covenant;  
 wonderful beyond words is your gift of the Saviour,  
 born of the Virgin Mary.  
 Count us among the people in whom you delight,  
 and by this night's marriage of earth and heaven  
 draw all generations into the embrace of your love.<sup>48</sup>

The historical narrative leads to but does not culminate with the one born of Mary. The Abrahamic covenant to which God has been steadfast continues as something into which we ask to be included.

In contrast, a second collect, for the fifth Sunday of Easter (year B), draws directly on the imagery of Christ the true vine found in John 15:

O God, you graft us on to Christ, the true vine,  
 and, with tireless care,  
 you nurture our growth in knowledge and reverence.  
 Tend the vineyard of your Church,  
 that in Christ each branch may bring forth  
 to the glory of your name  
 abundant fruits of faith and love.<sup>49</sup>

As is clear in the text on which this is based, Christ and church have displaced Israel. Rather than echoing the promise of Isaiah 5, "for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is

the house of Israel," and locating Christ in the vineyard, all other vines have disappeared. (If this point were not clear enough in prayer and scripture text, the annotations for these verses provided in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* make explicit that "the true vine Jesus was the true Israel, fulfilling the vocation in which the old Israel had failed."<sup>50</sup>)

A final example of a collect based on the scripture texts of the day or season is this prayer from the Consultation on Common Texts collection, written as a general prayer for the first weeks after Pentecost during which the revised common lectionary selections from the first testament follow the narrative of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

To fulfill the ancient promise of salvation, O God,  
 you made a covenant with our ancestors and  
 pledged them descendents more numerous than the stars.  
 Grant that all people may share  
 in the blessings of your covenant,  
 accomplished through the death and resurrection  
 of your Son and sealed by the gifts of your Spirit.

The first portion of the prayer is almost identical to the prayer from the Christmas vigil mass above. Unlike that prayer, however, it seems to ignore the very narrative upon which it has drawn. It is surprising to hear that God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah was "accomplished" through Christ, much less that that covenant was somehow incomplete.

**2. Eucharistic Prayers.** Williams Seth Adams offers the observation that "the language of the church's

<sup>48</sup>*Opening Prayers* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>49</sup>*Opening Prayers*, 42.

<sup>50</sup>This comment appears in the annotation for John 15:1-11 in both the *New Oxford Annotated Bible Revised Standard Version* and *New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford, 1977 and 1991).

Eucharistic praying was the most basic language of Christian faith and theology. What was believed was recapitulated in the Great Thanksgiving.<sup>51</sup> In the context of this discussion, the Eucharistic prayer is both a gift and a problem for the church. It is in Christian celebration of the Eucharist that Christians are most explicitly drawn into contact with the vestiges of Jewish prayer practices. And, it is in the Eucharistic prayer, particularly the preface, that God's covenant with Israel and the church is now most explicitly named (or ignored, as is the case with most of the Eucharistic prefaces and prayers in the *Sacramentary*). When these prayers do attend to God's covenant with Israel, two problems often appear. First, as Henry Knight argues, they have too often conveyed "structural supersessionism, omitting any but the subtlest affirmations of the covenantal story of Israel." Second, they have failed "to acknowledge the covenantal history of Israel as a key component of this act of thanksgiving, except, perhaps, as a prefiguration of the salvation history that follows and fulfills its promise."<sup>52</sup>

In his essay Adams provides a critical reading of Eucharistic Prayer B in the *Book of Common Prayer*, noting the ways in which these problems occur. The following portion immediately follows the Sanctus:

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love  
which you have made known to us in creation;  
in the calling of Israel to be your people;  
in your Word spoken through the prophets;  
and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son.  
For in these last days you sent him

<sup>51</sup>William Seth Adams, "Christian Liturgy, Scripture, and the Jews: A Problematic in Jewish-Christian Relations," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 25.1 (Winter, 1988): 53.

<sup>52</sup>Knight, *Celebrating Holy Week*, 64, 65.

to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world.  
In him, you have delivered us from evil,  
and made us worthy to stand before you.  
In him, you have brought us out of error into truth,  
out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.<sup>53</sup>

Adams asks how this text, and especially the last sentence, is to be understood:

What is the context for error, sin, and death? Is this sentence to be viewed historically, suggesting that the early Christians were led out of the community of the Jews into the 'true faith'? Is it to be understood in some private, particularist fashion meaning that before 'conversion' each Christian was in error, sin, and death but has not been led from that to truth, righteousness, and life?<sup>54</sup>

As in many contemporary Eucharistic prayers, the place of Israel in God's history with humanity is reduced to the "calling of Israel" and the prophets. While we might debate the purpose of such narrative in the Eucharistic prayer, we also might fairly ask what more we can expect in such a prayer, where we cannot say everything, and in a form that some experience as "long." The very form requires allusion and metonymy. Perhaps the problem is not primarily the prayer form but the linear ways in which we experience time and through which we develop narrative.

In contrast to the prayers found in the *Book of Common Prayer* or in the *Sacramentary*, new prayers have been

<sup>53</sup>*Book of Common Prayer*, 368.

<sup>54</sup>Adams, 54.

crafted that seem to more faithfully, if not more comprehensively, articulate the narrative of God with Israel as well as with the church.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most typical of these new prayers is this preface from *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.

It is right and a good and joyful thing  
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,  
Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
You formed us in your image  
and breathed into us the breath of life.  
When we turned away, and our love failed,  
your love remained steadfast.  
You delivered us from captivity,  
made covenant to be our sovereign God,  
and spoke to us through the prophets.<sup>56</sup>

A similar text appears in the supplemental liturgical resources approved for use in the Episcopal Church:

Glory and honor are yours, Creator of all,  
your Word has never been silent;  
you called a people to yourself, as a light to the nation,

<sup>55</sup>No contemporary prayer, however, narrates this history as comprehensively as the late fourth century prayer found in the Apostolic Constitutions, Book VIII, which offers in some detail the story of creation, Fall, flood, exodus, giving of the Law, and entrance into the promised land. See R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 105-106. We find liturgical precedents for such recital of God's saving history in Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135 and 136.

<sup>56</sup>(Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 36. The same text serves as the "ordinary" prayer in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: United Methodist Published House, 1989), 9.

you delivered them from bondage  
and led them to a land of promise.  
Of your grace, you gave Jesus  
to be human, to share our life,  
to proclaim the coming of your reign  
and give himself for us, a fragrant offering.<sup>57</sup>

Both of these texts anchor the Eucharistic prayer in the narrative of the first testament. Although neither text suggests the church's displacement or supersession of Israel, nor does either explicitly name Israel within this narrative. Both of these texts suggest that the narrative of creation, fall, captivity and deliverance is the whole of the church's concern with the first testament narrative and, in doing so, create a context in which to hear the narrative of Jesus as repeating God's redemptive response to fall and captivity. One interesting difference between the two, however, is the way in which they name the subject of God's actions. In the United Methodist prayer, "we" are the ones who have fallen, been delivered, and heard the prophets. The contemporary community is inserted into the first testament narrative. A question we can ask of this text is whether it intends to graft the contemporary community into the narrative of Israel, or if the contemporary community displaces Israel in the narrative. Displacement is not a question in the Episcopal prayer, rather a subtle form of supersession and exclusion; "they" are ones called, delivered, and promised, but Jesus shares "our" life and offers himself for "us."

Two other examples help address some of these concerns. The first, also from *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, is from a prayer for the first Sundays in Lent.

<sup>57</sup>From Eucharistic Prayer 3 in *Enriching our Worship 1* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1998), 63.

You brought all things into being and called them good.  
 From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image  
 and breathed into us the breath of life.  
 When we turned away, and our love failed,  
 your love remained steadfast.  
 When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights,  
 you bore up the ark on the waters,  
 saved Noah and his family,  
 and made covenant with every living creature on earth.  
 When you led your people to Mount Sinai  
 for forty days and forty nights,  
 you gave us your commandments  
 and made us your covenant people.  
 When your people forsook your covenant,  
 your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights;  
 and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.<sup>58</sup>

Following the Sanctus, the narrative of the forty days resumes, recounting Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Through attention to the repetition of the forty days, this prayer provides the common narration of creation, fall, deliverance, law, and prophets. What is different from the first example is that this narrative not only names specific people and attends to the continuity of God's covenant with those people but also grafts into the narrative the contemporary community without displacing Israel.

<sup>58</sup> *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 60. While we might appropriately argue that the *anamnetic* character of liturgical prayer makes possible our memory of being joined to Israel at Sinai, for Christians to make a liturgical theological claim that we were "made covenant people" at Sinai is to forget when, by whom, and in whom we have been joined to this covenant.

This next example, from the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* but created by ICEL, offers a different way of telling the story. The preface that opens the prayer focuses entirely on creation, culminating in the creation of humanity. The section below immediately follows the Sanctus. It opens by referring back to the creation narrative of the preface.

All holy God,  
 how wonderful is the work of your hands!  
 When sin had scarred the world,  
 you entered into covenant to renew the whole creation.  
 As a mother tenderly gathers her children,  
 as a father joyfully welcomes his own,  
 you embraced a people as your own  
 and filled them with longing  
 for a peace that would last  
 and for a justice that would never fail.  
 Through countless generations  
 your people hungered for the bread of freedom.  
 From them you raised up Jesus, your Son,  
 the living bread, in whom ancient hungers are satisfied.<sup>59</sup>

Like the other prayers, this prayer moves quickly from creation to fall (if only by allusion) and then on to the covenant. Although it attends to issues of gender balance in its imaging of God and expresses a concern for peace and justice, all issues of concern to many contemporary communities, it reduces Israel to an anonymous "people". At the same time that it acknowledges that Jesus was one of these people, it ignores the first testament narratives in which God satisfies the hungers of the people and, by its

<sup>59</sup> *Book of Common Worship*, 143.

allusion to John 6.49-51, creates a perhaps unintended supersessionist structure.

If these prayers are, in the end, inadequate, is there a different way to tell the story in prayer? Here is one example that might have some possibilities. This comes from the United Church of Christ *Book of Worship*.

We give you thanks, God of majesty and mercy,  
for calling forth the creation and raising us from dust  
by the breath of your being.  
We bless you for the beauty and bounty of the earth  
and for the vision of the day when sharing by all  
will mean scarcity for none.  
We remember the covenant you made  
with your people Israel,  
and we give you thanks for all our ancestors in faith.  
We rejoice that you call us to reconciliation with you  
and all people everywhere  
and that you remain faithful to your covenant  
even when we are faithless.  
We rejoice that you call the entire human family  
to this table of sacrifice and victory.<sup>60</sup>

By its attention to creation and God's covenant faithfulness and its relative inattention to fall and redemption (the first expected, the second unexpected in a Calvinist tradition), the prayer avoids the displacement of Israel seen in some of the earlier examples. It also provides a sense that God's covenant with Israel continues to unfold in, but not be superseded by, the narrative of Jesus. And yet, the "people

<sup>60</sup>*Book of Worship: United Church of Christ* (New York: United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, 1986), 45.

Israel" is linked with "our ancestors in faith;" Israel is "history" rather than part of God's continuing covenant community.

The problems identified at the beginning of this section continue. We have not yet found ways to pray that fully acknowledge and affirm the continuing history of God's covenant with Israel as central to Christian prayer or in the central prayer of the church. And, the fact that even the best of these texts are likely to go unused by the churches that published them – as their use is not mandated by these churches – gives all liturgists reason to remember that "just fixing the text" (whether a translation or newly created text) will not solve the problems we face. Kendall Soulen, in faith-filled hope, suggests, "even if there were such a time [when the living membership of the church included no Jews] the presence of the church's living Lord, the Jew Jesus Christ, ensures that the church remains essentially a table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles."<sup>61</sup> Even so, it is hard to imagine a fellowship in which part of the family remains invisible and unacknowledged.

### Hymnody and Liturgical Song

The various kinds of problems I have identified in regard to the name of God, time, and liturgical prayer are also present in hymnody and congregational song. What we discover in looking through recent hymnals is that, while each hymnal represents a broad historical collection of material, the problems are not specific to either one historical period or tradition. Our hymns and songs provide images of Jewish promise and Christian fulfillment, especially during the Advent and Christmas seasons; of the first covenant being perfected in or by the second; of Christian displacing or superseding Jew; and of "us" (Christian) versus "them" (Jewish), especially but not only

<sup>61</sup>Soulen, *The God of Israel*, 173.

during Holy Week. In some hymns, these problems overlap. But, there are also hymns that help us sing about the continuity and complementarity of God's covenant with Israel and the Church. Again, what follows is intended to be representative rather than comprehensive.

Three hymns provide examples of the Christian "perfecting" of Jewish practice and belief. The first comes from Aquinas' hymn "*Pange lingua gloriosi*," in Edward Caswall's nineteenth century translation "Sing, my tongue, the savior's glory." In *Breaking Bread* this particular stanza is accompanied by a rubric indicating that it is to be "sung while the priest, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament," thereby visually and physically marking not only sacramental adoration but also liturgical supersessionism.

Down in adoration falling, this great sacrament we hail;  
over ancient forms of worship newer rites of grace prevail;  
faith will tell us Christ is present,  
when our human senses fail.<sup>62</sup>

While Protestants generally have a historical strong negative response to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and so are disinclined to sing the first line of this stanza, it is the second line that is the greater problem. Aquinas reflects a traditional Christian understanding of "Old Testament sacraments" (e.g., the temple sacrifices) as adumbrations or prefigurations and, therefore, imperfect forms of the church's sacraments needing to be displaced or perfected in Christ.<sup>63</sup>

A second example, now only a century old, is Vincent Stuckey Stratton Coles' "Ye who claim the faith of Jesus," a hymn in praise of Mary written in 1906 for the *English*

<sup>62</sup>*Breaking Bread*, 65.

<sup>63</sup>As we see, for example, in Ambrose, "On the Mysteries" I.12.

*Hymnal*. The *Hymnal* 1982 added a fourth stanza, a paraphrase of the Magnificat by F. Bland Tucker. The following is the second stanza:

Blessed were the chosen people  
out of whom the Lord did come;  
blessed was the land of promise  
fashioned for his earthly home;  
but more blessed far the mother,  
she who bore him in her womb.<sup>64</sup>

While we sing of the blessing of the people and land Israel at the beginning of this stanza, this blessing is all in the past tense. What is more, we end the stanza proclaiming Mary as "more blessed far" all the while ignoring her Jewishness. Again, Protestants and Catholics will differ in the reading of this stanza given the varying range (or absence) of devotion to Mary. Several simple alterations, hardly radical in the current generation of hymnal editing, could address these concerns: "Blessed is the chosen people... blessed is the land of promise... blessed, too, is Mary, mother...."

A third example is Fred Pratt Green's text "Seek the Lord who now is present," a faithful paraphrase of Is 55:6-11 written in 1989 at the request of the *United Methodist Hymnal* committee. The problem in this hymn is not the paraphrase but the "coda" Pratt Green created for the hymn:

God is love! How close the prophet  
to that vital gospel word!  
In Isaiah's inspiration  
it is Jesus we have heard!<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup>*Hymnal* 1982, 268 and 269 and *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 197.

In this stanza Pratt Green is doing nothing different than what the New Testament does – reading the Hebrew scriptures in light of the church’s experience of Christ. But, while it has become common in some circles to refer to Isaiah as the “fifth gospel” in light of the ways in which it has been used by the church, Pratt Green’s “coda” suggests that God’s word is hearable in Isaiah only because of its proximity to the “vital gospel word” rather than as the scriptural and prophetic word it is.

Two hymns provide examples of Christ or Christians displacing Judaism. Both of these examples provide relatively faithful yet problematic paraphrases of the Transfiguration narrative (Mt 17:1-8, Mk 9:2-8, Lk 9:28-36). The first, “Christ upon the mountain peak,” was written by Brian Wren in 1962 and revised in 1977. (The 1977 version begins “*Jesus on the mountain peak.*”) Stanzas two and four read:

Trembling at his feet we saw  
Moses and Elijah speaking,  
All the prophets and the law  
shout through them their joyful greeting: Alleluia!...  
This is God’s beloved Son!  
Law and prophets fade (1977: *sing*) before him;  
First and last and only one,  
Let creation now adore him: Alleluia!<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *United Methodist Hymnal*, 124. It is Pratt Green himself who calls this stanza a “coda”. See Fred Pratt Green, *Later Hymns and Ballads and Fifty Poems*, commentary by Bernard Braley (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing, 1989), 39.

<sup>66</sup> The 1962 version appears in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 260, and the *Hymnal 1982*, 129 and 130. The 1977 version appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 74.

The second hymn is Thomas Troeger’s 1985 text “Swiftly pass the clouds of glory”. Stanza one reads:

Swiftly pass the clouds of glory,  
heaven’s voice, the sizzling light;  
Moses and Elijah vanish;  
Christ alone commands the height....<sup>67</sup>

Both hymns accurately paraphrase the gospel stories on which they are based, but both also say or imply the same thing: Judaism, represented by Moses and Elijah, vanishes in the presence of Christ. Wren seemed to have seen this as a possible interpretation and, as he has continued to do as his theology develops, altered his text. But note, too, the contrast and similarity between Wren’s early version and Troeger’s text. It is perhaps a modest difference between “fading” and “vanishing,” but it is a difference. The similarity, however, remains: whether the law and prophets fade, sing, or vanish, in the end it is “Christ alone” who remains.

A different kind of “displacement” can be heard in the hymn “Lord, Christ, when first you came to earth” by Walter Russell Bowie. It was written in 1928 at the request of the dean of Liverpool Cathedral for “an Advent hymn in the *Dies irae* mood,” that is, a mood of Christ present in judgment upon the world.<sup>68</sup> Although Bowie certainly may have had the First World War defeat of Germany in mind when he wrote this, he could not have anticipated the human destruction of the Second World War and the Shoah. *The Presbyterian Hymnal* keeps it as an Advent hymn; the *Hymnal 1982* groups it as a hymn for “Social Responsibility.”

<sup>67</sup> *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 73, and the recent United Methodist hymnal supplement *The Faith We Sing* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 2102.

<sup>68</sup> *The Hymnal 1940 Companion*, 313.

Lord Christ, when first You came to earth,  
 upon a cross they bound You,  
 and mocked Your saving kingship then  
 by thorns with which they crowned You;  
 and still our wrongs may weave You now  
 new thorns to pierce that steady brow,  
 and robe of sorrow round You.

O wondrous [H82 *awesome*] love, which found no room  
 in life, where sin denied You,  
 and, doomed to death, must bring to doom  
 the power which crucified You,  
 till not a stone was left on stone,  
 and all a nation's pride, o'erthrown,  
 went down to dust beside You.<sup>69</sup>

One of the questions this text raises is the extent to which a particular social context shapes the way in which we interpret a text. We can only guess how the second stanza would have sounded to a British man or woman in 1931 when it was published. This hymn also reflects theological themes of personal and social responsibility that (re-)emerged with the social gospel movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While our eyes and ears, attuned as they are in this essay to the place of Jews and Christians, are easily stopped by the ways in which the first stanza creates an “us” versus “them” relationship between Christian and Jew, Bowie’s concern is with continuing Christian failure to live the love of Christ; it is our wrongs that weave the crown of thorns. But even with this call to responsibility, Bowie equates “Christ-denying Christians” with “Christ-

<sup>69</sup>This version from *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 7, in which “You/Your” have replaced “thy/thee” found in the *Hymnal 1982*, 598.

denying Jews” and points to the consequences brought upon people by such denial. Those who deny Christ must be doomed, overthrown, turned to dust. The consequences of denial continue to be portrayed in the third stanza:

New advent of the love of Christ,  
 shall we again refuse thee,  
 till in the night of hate and war  
 we perish as we lose thee?...

If Bowie’s hymn remains relatively unknown, a more familiar as well as more problematic song is Sydney Carter’s “Lord of the dance.” Even with the careful efforts of some hymnal committees to exclude it from publication, it continues to find its way into contemporary hymnals and songbooks.<sup>70</sup> On the one hand, it is a song that simply and accessibly outlines the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ. On the other hand, it is also a song that sets up scribes, Pharisees, and “the holy people” as those responsible for the Christ’s scourging and crucifixion. In stanzas two and three Carter writes,

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,  
 but they would not dance and they would not follow me;  
 I danced for the fishermen, for James and John;  
 they came to me and the dance went on....

<sup>70</sup>It appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 302; *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 261; *Breaking Bread*, 538; and in *Journeysongs* (Portland, OR: OCP, 2003), 764. All of these are published with the explicit approval of their denominations or the USCCB Committee on the Liturgy. It was included in *The United Methodist Hymnal* only after one of the church’s bishops used it as a centerpiece in a sermon he preached, during which he complained about its absence from the then proposed hymnal, at the 1988 General Conference of the United Methodist Church at which the hymnal was received and approved.



I danced on the Sabbath when I cured the lame,  
 The holy people said it was a shame;  
 They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high;  
 And they left me there on a cross to die....

Throughout the song Carter makes a seemingly anonymous “they” the guilty. Where in Bowie’s hymn the contemporary congregation moves from “their” denial to its own, at no point in Carter’s song does the singing congregation make that transition. Rather, the congregation (or solo singer) speaks *in persona Christi* to accuse the Jews. Unfortunately, an adage about congregational hymns is more often true than not: “never mind the words, we only like the tune.” Yet, it is by means of the fondness for the tune that the text and its theology work their way into memory and belief systems. Had Carter not set his text to the very singable and now familiar Shaker melody we know as “Simple Gifts,” it may not (as it should not) have remained in the repertoire.

Having provided critical readings of a small selection of texts from current hymnals, I think it helpful to note positive examples that are in these same books. These next two examples come from opposite ends of the Christian era, the first by Gregory the Great (sixth century) and the second by our contemporary Brian Wren.

In his Lenten hymn “The glory of these forty days,” in the 1906 *English Hymnal* translation by Maurice Bell, Gregory the Great provides a summary of the biblical narrative around the theme of fasting. He makes no distinction between first and second testament or between Israel and the church. He begins with reference to Christ’s forty days of fasting, but does not elevate that fast above the fast of other biblical figures. All of them, Gregory writes, provide models for our own fasting. Stanzas two through four follow:

Alone and fasting, Moses saw  
 the loving God who gave the law;  
 and to Elijah, fasting, came  
 the steeds and chariots of flame.

So Daniel trained his mystic sight,  
 delivered from the lion’s might;  
 and John, the bridegroom’s friend became  
 the herald of Messiah’s name.

Then grant that we like them be true,  
 consumed in fast and prayer with You;  
 our spirits strengthen with Your grace,  
 and give us joy to see Your face.<sup>71</sup>

Brian Wren’s 1985 hymn “God of many names” provides an example of a recent attempt not only to address the problem of naming the Triune God when gendered names seem inadequate but also the problem of the relationship between Jew and Christian, Israel and the church:

God of many names, gathered into One,  
 in your glory come and meet us, moving endlessly becoming,  
 God of hovering wings, womb and birth of time,  
 Joyfully we sing your praises, breath of life in every people....  
 God of Jewish faith, exodus and law,  
 in your glory come and meet us, joy of Miriam and Moses,  
 God of Jesus Christ, rabbi of the poor,  
 Joyfully we sing your praises, crucified, alive forever....<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup>This text is in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, 87, the *Hymnal 1982*, 143, and *Breaking Bread*, 127.

<sup>72</sup>*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 105, sts. 1-2.

Here is a summary of God's creating and redeeming history with the world. Although it offers a chronological sequence according to the biblical narrative, it does not suggest a history being displaced or a tradition being perfected. Also, because the text supplies God's history more by image than by narrative, a full understanding of the text is only possible when one has read (or heard) the biblical narrative in both testaments.

### Conclusion

A reading of Christian liturgical texts with particular attention to how these texts describe or interpret the relationship between Christianity and Judaism may feel to some, as has been true of first encounters with issues of inclusive language, as an awkward and unnecessary restraint on the language of Christian prayer, yet one more form of liturgical legalism. But only through such attentiveness does the liberation of Christian worship from its anti-Judaic history become possible. We should not be surprised, though we often are, that, in wrestling with the angel of God (or the demons we create), we come away from our engagement bearing the marks of the encounter. We walk away with a limp, a limp that might slow us down enough to pay attention to what and how we pray. We learn, as Henry Knight suggests, to "walk haltingly, examining our hymns, prayers and gestures for contempt and disdain and for hidden and subtle forms of supersessionism."<sup>73</sup>

Through this exploration of symbol, language, and text, we see two things. First, the difficulties are not confined to either one ecclesial tradition or one historical period. Appropriate and inappropriate texts appear throughout the church's history. Second, the transformation of the ways we pray that are appropriate to our post-Holocaust context are

possible yet difficult. The ritual character of liturgical prayer, especially the weekly (or daily) repetition of particular prayers and hymns over time, has written Christian theologies of displacement and supersession deep in our bones. Rewriting these theologies will require the same intentional, careful, and regular practice. Even then, the way ahead is not easy – as the church's attempts to recover the eschatological character of Advent and the baptismal character of Lent demonstrate. Yet the importance of something like the recovery of Advent should not be underestimated. That is, in the season when the church most persistently speaks of promise and fulfillment, recovery of the eschatological themes of Advent provide the reminder to the church that God's promise is not yet fulfilled. We still wait for Messiah. We still wait for the endless peace and the kingdom upheld with justice and righteousness (Is 9:7). With Israel the church waits and prays for the renewal and repair of creation. In the meantime, we have need of clear-sighted, honest, and faithful lamentation and thanksgiving.

---

<sup>73</sup> Knight, 34.