

# **Extending or Restricting the Covenant? Abraham and the People of God in Christian Tradition**

Anders Runesson  
*McMaster University*

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## *1. Introduction*

In Jewish tradition, Abraham is the center and point of departure from where the narrative of the origins of the Jewish people is weaved. Non-Jews are, in Jewish discourse, related to Adam, and even more so, to Noah.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, although some early followers of Jesus referred to a small set of laws that have been associated with Adam and Noah to govern the lives of non-Jews in the movement,<sup>2</sup> the earliest sources we have access to from the Jesus movement, the Pauline letters, connects both Jews and non-Jews to Abraham. Indeed, for Christians, the figure of Abraham is at the very heart of a theological trajectory that opens up for non-Jews the possibility of joining the covenant between the God of Israel and the Jewish people. In other words, Abraham is, in fact, a large part of the reason why Christianity developed as it did.

Such use of the figure of Abraham is by no means self-evident from the biblical stories themselves, and one may ask how this came to happen and what the effects were, more specifically, for Jewish/Christian relations and the subsequent development of a Christian identity that was detached from Judaism. The present essay addresses this problem by tracing the role of Abraham in Christian tradition. The focus shall be on the first and second centuries when the foundations of later theologizing were laid. I shall end with a comment on the current situation and possible future developments.

*2. Can People who are Not Jews become Christians? The Problem*

Christians and Jews, lay people and scholars alike, often anachronistically construct the early period in Jewish/Christian relations as if “the problem” centered on the presence of Jews in the Jesus movement. Such thinking mirrors Late Antique and modern situations. In the mid-first century, however, the perspective was the opposite: how should non-Jews who want to join the Jesus movement be dealt with? What is their place and status as followers of Jesus?

Today, Jews come together in synagogues, Christians in churches. Both religions read from the Torah/Old Testament, while Christians also read from the New Testament. Both Jews and Christians have sermons after the readings, and in both traditions people sit quietly listening to what is said by the person expounding the meaning of what has just been read. Depending on the local synagogues or churches, although I suspect it is rare, there may be some discussion after the service about what was said in the sermon.

In antiquity things were very different. There was no clear boundary between “synagogue” and “church.” Many non-Jews, Greeks and Romans, were interested in Judaism and attended synagogue services, listening to the readings from Torah. Some, but far from all of these non-Jews became interested in the group of Jews that was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. These people tended to get involved in the public interpretation of the Scriptures. Synagogue architecture was made for discussion, benches lining three or four walls of the main room and people sitting facing each other.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. The Gamla synagogue, the Golan. Facing South-West.

Discussions following the Torah reading in the synagogues could be heated, various groups debating what would be a proper response in their own time to the commandments laid down in the Torah. The Messianic Jews, or Christ-followers, would be one such group trying to convince others that their convictions constituted the right response to what they saw as the current crisis in the world. In brief, communal interaction and identity in antiquity were quite different from what we find in contemporary society. This has important implications for how we understand Jewish and Christian relations in the early centuries.

For our topic, the most important difference to note between our modern questions and those of antiquity is that, throughout most of the troubled history of Jewish/Christian relations, Christianity has posed the questions about the Jewish people in relation to themselves, seeing the Jews as ‘The Other’. Since Christians today are not Jews, this has been a question put by non-Jews, who still use the same Holy Scripture as the Jews. The question has been, and sometimes still is: what about the Jews? Are they still the People of God? If so, what about the role of Jesus in terms of salvation?

We shall return to these questions shortly. In order to understand the role of Abraham in Christian tradition we need to pay attention to the fact that in the first century, Christ-followers did not ask these questions. In fact, they asked the exact opposite questions: What about those who are *not Jews*? The Greeks and the Romans? The ‘barbarians’? Can they be part of the movement? Does the Messiah (that is, for them: Jesus), ‘work’ for them too? Do you have to be Jewish to be part of the coming Kingdom of God, the World to Come? If so, non-Jews need to become Jews before they can be counted among the righteous, the ones that will be saved.

These were the questions that bothered and not seldom confused the first Christ-followers, who were, of course, all Jews, just like Jesus and the apostles. These were the questions that caused discussion and debate, conflict and discord. In fact, this is what called the first major council we know of, the Jerusalem Council (sometimes called the Apostolic Council), probably held 49 or 50 C.E., less than 20 years after Jesus’ death.

The council, which was meant to prevent the early movement from splitting in two parts, is mentioned in the Book of Acts, dated to the late first century, but it is referred to already in a letter that Paul wrote to Christ-believers in Galatia in modern day Turkey, in the early 50s.<sup>4</sup> If the modern question when Christians discuss other

religions, and Judaism in particular, is: “Can you be saved if you are not a Christian?” the question at the Jerusalem council was: “Can you be saved if you are not Jewish?”

At the council, some Christ-believers said no. You will have to join the people of Israel; you have to be circumcised (if you are male) and become a Jew, if you want to have a share in the world to come, the kingdom of God. Others, including the foremost leaders in the movement, opposed that view, claiming that, yes, you can be part of the Messianic age without becoming Jewish first. For non-Jews, all they had to do was to keep four commandments. Jews within the Jesus movement, however, should keep the entire Law of Moses.

After discussion, James, the brother of Jesus and the principal leader<sup>5</sup> in the Jesus movement in the Roman Empire ruled as follows:

Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogues.<sup>6</sup>

The Jerusalem Council thus made the decision that both Jews and non-Jews had *equal but different* roles to play in the Jesus movement. How did they reach that conclusion? Acts reports a few interesting arguments put forward by Peter, Paul, Barnabas (another leader in the Jesus movement, nowadays not so well-known) and James. It may be of some interest to rehearse them briefly here.

First, Peter refers to what he says is his own experience, namely that non-Jews *had already* received the Holy Spirit, that is, that God had already opened a way for them without any councils having made the decision first. God did not wait for the theologians and the church politicians—such leaders were just asked to confirm what God had already done with the gentiles, *as* gentiles. Second, during the meeting Paul and Barnabas are said to have referred to “signs and wonders” that they had done among the gentiles. The reality of such wonders was proof, as they saw it, that God looked upon non-Jews with favor and did not ask them to become Jews first. These two arguments, both Peter’s and Paul’s and Barnabas’, are based on experience, on what people perceive to be God’s doing in the current moment.

Finally, James takes the discussion in a different direction when he supports his decision by referring to the Holy Scriptures, that is, to the Torah/Old Testament, rather than personal experience. According to Acts, he chose the prophet Amos, chapter 9, which talks about the *restoration of Israel* leading to a positive reaction among all nations and peoples. When Israel is restored, the non-Jews will praise the God of Israel and thus join the Jews in their worship of God.<sup>7</sup> The theological logic is well known from other Jewish texts. For those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, prophecies like these were interpreted as being fulfilled in the present time: Jesus restores Israel and that leads to the coming of gentiles to Zion.

Now, what does Abraham have to do with all this? The short answer is: everything. If we study texts in the New Testament that mention Abraham, we soon discover that the overwhelming majority of them use Abraham to refer to the Jewish people. The Jews are the children of Abraham—non-Jews are simply referred to as “the nations” (*ta ethnē*), usually translated with the word “Gentiles” in English bibles. Even when Peter, in a speech recorded early on in the Book of Acts, refers to Abraham he says that the Jews are the descendants of the prophets and heirs of the promise God gave to Abraham:

You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’<sup>8</sup>

While the last half-sentence, a quote from Genesis, certainly seems to direct attention to non-Jews (‘all the families of the earth’), Peter continues to say that this specific reference to Abraham shows that it was *primarily* for the people of Israel that God raised Jesus from the dead. This idea is key in understanding the earliest traditions about Abraham in Christianity: *Abraham in the New Testament is referred to first and foremost to make the case that Israel is about to be restored: God’s promise to the patriarch is about to be fulfilled.*

This very fact, however, that Abraham and the prophets belong to the Jewish people, will have consequences for “the nations,” for the gentiles. No one spells that out in more detail than Paul, and we shall therefore take a look at his theology. This shall prove to be important, because this way of referring to Abraham was soon to be forgotten completely. Indeed, it would soon be turned on its head by the gentile majority church in the second century and onwards.

3. *Abraham as a Gate for Non-Jews to Enter the Fold of God's People: Paul*

Paul dedicates several sections in his letters, especially in his letter to the Christ-believers in Rome, to expound the way in which Abraham now, in his own time, opens up the gates for the non-Jews to become accepted within the people of God—*without* first having to become Jews and follow Jewish Law.

In brief, Paul envisions the people of God to have been expanded to include two groups of people, the Jews and the non-Jews, a solution similar to what we saw above with regard to the Jerusalem Council. Interestingly, Paul does not refer much to Jesus to bolster this claim; rather, he refers to Abraham. The question is: why?

Paul's text is, admittedly, hard to penetrate, and arguments put forward in his letters can be complex and sometimes seem incoherent. However, there may be a rather straightforward solution to this problem. For Paul, the key is that, in the Genesis story (chs. 12-25), Abraham appears as both uncircumcised and circumcised in different stages of his life. That is, Abraham is both like the non-Jews *and* like the Jews in Paul's contemporary world.

What is more, God calls Abraham righteous *before* he was circumcised. This means to Paul that people in the first century who were not circumcised can also be righteous, can also attain a state of righteousness without being Jewish, without keeping Jewish Law. The question then switches from an *if* to a *what*: it is no longer about *if* gentiles can attain righteousness, but *what* they have to do to become righteous in God's eyes. And Paul's answer is that they need to do exactly the same as Abraham did when he was pronounced righteous by God *before* circumcision—he *trusted God*:

And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

Trust in God is *the* center of Paul's theological worldview. It is more important than anything else, even more important than keeping the Jewish law,<sup>9</sup> since God God-self has declared that trust is what it takes to make people *righteous*, a quality which in turn opens up the gates to the World to Come, i.e., leads to salvation. Non-Jews are, then, adopted into the people of God as non-Jews, on the basis of trust in

the God of Israel, Abraham's God. In this way, God's promise to Abraham is being fulfilled. In Genesis 17, God says to Abraham:<sup>10</sup>

As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:4)

Few Jews would have been opposed to a message that trust is at the heart of the relationship between God and humans. For Paul, however, as an apostle of the Christ, trusting God is more narrowly defined as *trusting the message that Jesus is the chosen one*, the Messiah. There is a direct connection between the trust in God displayed by Abraham and the trust Paul and others had in the Messiah, Jesus, whom the same God had now sent.

But then Abraham, *after* this episode in which he was declared righteous, was circumcised. We read in Genesis 17 that Abraham was 99 years old when this happened. So, what is the point with getting circumcised if you are already righteous through your trust in God? Paul's answer is that Abraham's circumcision *confirmed* what had already taken place, namely Abraham's status as righteous. For Paul, circumcision is equivalent to being Jewish, and to keeping the Jewish Law, but righteousness cannot be contained within or exhausted by the sign of circumcision. In his letter to the Galatians, he writes that everyone who is circumcised has to keep the whole Law of Moses (Gal 5:3). Those who are not Jewish, however, must not become Jews, i.e., undergo circumcision, since that would be a sign of mistrust, of disbelief: The God of Israel has already accepted non-Jews *as* non-Jews, fulfilling his promise to Abraham through his Messiah Jesus. Abraham is, then, a father to both non-Jews who trust, and Jews who trust. What keeps the people of God together in the current moment, what constitutes their most important identity marker as the People of God, is their trust in the one God of Israel and his Messiah.

In sum, Paul refers to Abraham as the father of both Jews and non-Jews, a radical step even among the Christ-believers in the first century. He managed to make this theological move by referring to trust in God as the quality that unites Jews and non-Jews: they become brothers and sisters. *But they are not to become identical twins.*<sup>11</sup> Circumcision is legitimate for Paul, and it means that the Law of Moses must be kept by those to whom it was given, that is, the Jews. It must *not* be kept by those to whom it was not given: the non-Jews. If non-Jews would like to keep the Jewish Law, that would mean,

according to Paul, that they lack trust in God, who had already, without the law, proclaimed them righteous by trust alone.<sup>12</sup>

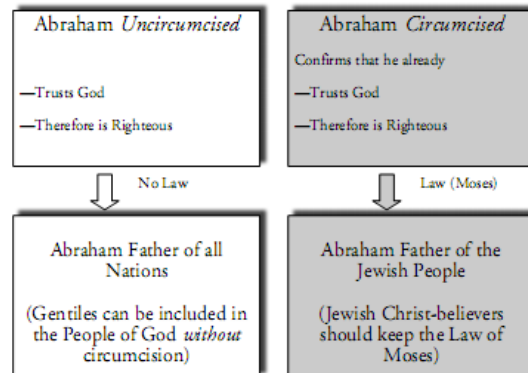


Figure 2. The Role of Abraham in Paul's theology of gentile inclusion.

If 'trust in God' for Paul is trusting that Jesus was the Messiah, then all Jews and non-Jews who trust in this announcement that the Messiah had come are saved, that is, they will be part of the World to Come. But what happens to the children of Abraham who pass on this one? Can Abraham save them? Are they still the children of Abraham, even if they lack what Paul would define as "trust in God"?

One would assume that Paul is now forced to say no, they are not, since he has put down all his authoritative skills as interpreter of the Holy Scriptures on the single fact that trust is all that matters, nothing else, and trust in his case is focused on Jesus as the Christ.

The first thing to note when we ask this question is that non-Jews, "the nations," are not on Paul's radar when this discussion comes up. If they don't trust in God's promises, they cannot, by definition, be the children of Abraham, and thus will not be among the people prepared for the coming world. There is nothing else, apart from their trust, that will catch them when they fall, so to speak.

But Abraham was circumcised after he was declared righteous, that is, he entered into a covenant with God that was to be elaborated further on Mount Sinai when the Law of Moses was given. And God loved him as the father of the Jewish people. *Interestingly, love is, contrary to much of what the church has taught on this topic, what counts for Paul in a situation like this.* Indeed, in his letter to the Romans Paul goes on to say that, yes, all Jews collectively, regardless



of whether they believe that Jesus was the Messiah or not, remain the chosen people. He even states, without saying how, that he is convinced that *all Israel* will be saved.<sup>13</sup> And the reason? God loved Abraham, God loved the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Consider the following quote:

As regards the gospel they are enemies for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Rom 11:28-29)

In other words, the earliest Christian use of the figure of Abraham, Paul's letters, results in a theological worldview in which Jews and non-Jews who believe that Jesus was the Messiah belong to the People of God and are thus among the saved. In addition to such statement, we also have to note that even Jews who *do not* believe that Jesus was the Messiah will, ultimately, be fine too, since they remain elected and God loves his people.<sup>14</sup>

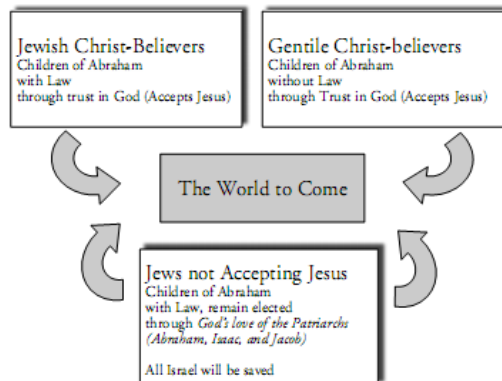


Figure 3. Paul's theology of Salvation: Jews and gentiles.

For Paul, a newer covenant cannot abolish an older covenant, as he says in Galatians.<sup>15</sup> The covenant on Sinai when the Jewish law was given cannot abolish the covenant with Abraham. Likewise, it seems, the covenant with Jesus cannot abolish the covenant at Sinai.

This may all seem foreign to Christians and Jews and Muslims today. It certainly does not sound like Christian theology. Indeed, and there is a reason for that—which is also connected to Abraham. We

need to enter the second century in order to understand how this development happened.

#### 4. *Abraham as Abolishing Judaism: Ignatius*

About 70 years after Paul wrote, in the early second century, we find the first outright attack from a Christ-follower on Jewish identity as invalid, as out of date, and no longer helpful to anyone, including the Jews. Ignatius, a bishop living in Antioch in Syria during this time, says outright that Judaism is something that belongs to the past. From the day “Christianity” arrived, “Judaism” is no more.<sup>16</sup> Judaism is, simply, incompatible with Christianity. A quote from one of his letters will indicate the basic approach:

It is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity—in which every tongue that believes in God has been gathered together. (*Magn.* 10.3)

Later in church history, around the fourth century, a Christian scribe found even such a statement to be too weak, and wanted to clarify what was meant by adding the following:

It is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice a Judaism, which has now come to an end. *For where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism.* For Christ is one, in whom every nation that believes, and every tongue that confesses, is gathered unto God. And those that were of a stony heart *have become the children of Abraham, the friend of God;* and in his seed all those have been blessed who were ordained to *eternal life* in Christ. (*Magn.* 10.3; long recension)<sup>17</sup>

What happened here? What is it that is claimed, and how on earth did a church in which Paul was treated authoritatively and read on a regular basis get to this place? The fact that a scribe as late as the fourth century feels it necessary to reinforce and clarify an anti-Jewish message shows us that this was a question of importance even at this time; the obvious conclusion from this is that there still existed in the fourth century Christ-followers among the Jews as well as non-Jews,

who found Judaism important for their identity as Christ-believers. For some reason, the powerful in the mainstream church wanted to eliminate such versions of Christ-belief. While clearly there were political and social issues at stake, issues that would provoke such a theology, for our purposes here I would like to focus more on what happened in the text, in the theology, and Abraham's role in that process.

Judaism is now, according to Ignatian theology, gone, but Abraham, who was always in the New Testament regarded as the father of the Jewish people, is still there. But *how* is he there? Ignatian tradition, and church tradition generally, focused exclusively, contrary to Paul, on Abraham as *uncircumcised*, as without the Jewish identity that he received in Genesis 17. 'Trust in God,' or 'faith' or 'belief in God,' defined as acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, was made the *exclusive* criterion for people, anyone, who wanted to make it into the world to come.

For Ignatius and later church tradition, to be Abraham's friend, to be a child of Abraham, is the *exclusive* right of Christians, meaning non-Jewish believers in Christ. There is a direct line of continuity between Abraham—and the prophets of the Hebrew Bible—to Ignatius and the church. And there is no room for God's love of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as applied to the Jewish people *as Jews*. Indeed, even if Jews *did* accept Jesus as the Messiah, they could do so only at the exclusion of their Jewish identity, including a rejection of the Jewish law. In the Ignatian theological worldview, the Jews as a people and Judaism as a religion were no more. They were disinherited, no longer God's people or Abraham's children.

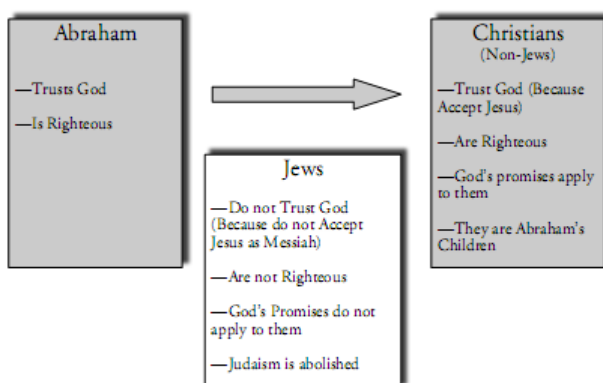


Figure 4. Ignatian Abrahamic theology of Jews and gentiles.

Obviously, this is the exact opposite of Paul's Abrahamic theology. To put it bluntly, the question in the second century, at least for Ignatius, and onwards is no longer: 'how can we get *non-Jews* into the people of God?' but rather: 'how can we exclude the *Jews* (as *Jews*) from the people of God (and thus from salvation)?'

Contrary to Paul's theological principle that a younger covenant cannot abolish an older covenant, Ignatian tradition did just that: the covenant of Jesus abolishes all other covenants, even Judaism itself.

Ignatius' version of Abrahamic religion, that is, Abrahamic religion is Christianity and Christianity only, won the day—indeed, this became standard Christian theology for centuries. Abraham was, originally, the gate through which to include non-Jews, but the gentiles slammed the door behind them and threw out the Jews, both those within the Jesus movement and those outside it.

Quite recently, things have started to change in this regard, and Ignatian use of Abrahamic traditions have been questioned by what is today the highest authority in the Catholic church and in other churches: the pope and the archbishops of protestant and other churches. Since the 1960s, many churches have begun to return to a theology that lies closer to the earliest evidence we have of Christian theology. For these churches, the Jewish people are to be understood as the people of God; God's decisions and election are irrevocable. So, we may ask, in this era of Christian theological awakening, what happens to Abraham now?

##### *5. Conclusion: Who "Won" – Paul or Ignatius or none of them?*

In the earliest Christian tradition, the children of Abraham referred to the Jewish people, whether they were Christ-believers or not did not matter to most of them. There were Jews who were 'good' and obedient to God, or 'bad' and 'disobedient,' but they were still the children of Abraham. Paul introduced the radical idea that even non-Jews were to be considered children of Abraham, *if* they trusted in God's chosen Messiah. Later church tradition removed the Jews, and only (non-Jewish) Christians were labeled 'the children of Abraham.'

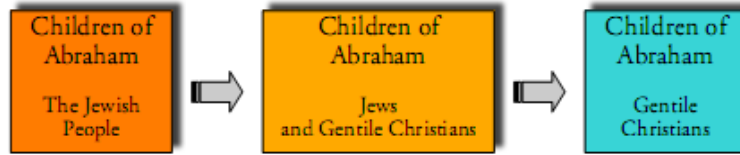


Figure 5. The early development of Abrahamic theology in Christianity.

Today most Christians, when they hear the expression ‘Children of Abraham,’ think not only of Jews and Christians, but also of Muslims. The concept of Abrahamic religions now refer to three monotheistic traditions.

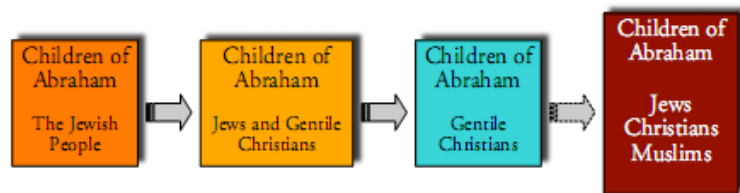


Figure 6. Recent Development of Abrahamic theology in Christian tradition. The last stage is not unique to Christianity; it has become common to speak about Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the Abrahamic religions.

This shows us that the story of Abraham is not over. Today people more than ever engage in discussions and dialogues, in which Abraham’s name is evoked. Tradition is never still, it is never frozen in time, although sometimes it may seem as if it were. Tradition is constantly changing, both as a result of discussions *within* each religion, and as a consequence of people meeting and listening to what others, ‘outsiders,’ have to say. New meanings are always discovered, some good, others not so good. We need to learn how to discern the difference.

Already in the earliest Christian tradition, people recognized this and asked about criteria for how to choose between good and bad. One of the answers, in the Gospel of Matthew, was that that which brings forth good fruit is true and should be encouraged, listened to, and learnt from.<sup>18</sup> It would seem, from this perspective, that meanings

and interpretations that bring forth peace and respect among people of different religious backgrounds qualify as good interpretations from a contemporary Christian point of view. The growing emphasis on Abraham's children defined as Jews, Christians, and Muslims may thus become increasingly important in Christian tradition.

For a long time, for centuries, people seem to have focused on what is distinctive and unique about their traditions, and put emphasis on such characteristics when defining who is in and who is out, who gets a share of the pie and who does not. But nowhere, as far as I know, has it been written that whatever is shared among traditions is unimportant and could be neglected.

Perhaps we should ask: What if truth lies primarily in that which we share with others? What if the unique aspects of our respective traditions are there to teach us to respect and appreciate the beauty of the other, remaining true to our own religious identities? Perhaps, if we took such questions seriously and acted accordingly in lived as well as in written theology, Abraham—and Sara—would be allowed to embrace all their children, without one of them enviously pushing the others away. Such a development may indeed turn into reality the 12<sup>th</sup> century illumination from the Bible of French Souvigny, depicting Abraham with representatives from all three religions on his lap. A kind of prophecy fulfilled, if you like.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 7. Abraham embracing Jews, Christians and Muslims. Illustration from the Bible from Souvigny, 12<sup>th</sup> century.

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#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> While Rabbinic literature refers to Adam occasionally as it theologizes the place of non-Jews, Noah has become the central figure for such narratives. The doctrine of the Seven Noahide commandments, on the basis of which gentiles will answer before the God of Israel, is today firmly established in Judaism and even missionized to non-Jews by some Jewish groups.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 15:1-35 is often discussed in this regard. For a full discussion of the Noahide commandments as well as this passage, see Klaus Müller, *Tora für die Völker: Die noachidischen Gebote und Ansätze zu ihrer Rezeption im Christentum* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> The closest modern architectural parallel to the interior of ancient synagogues would probably be the British Parliament. The room was made for interaction.

<sup>4</sup> See Acts 15:1-35; Gal 2:1-10.

<sup>5</sup> Together with James, Cephas, or Peter, and John were widely regarded as the “pillars” of the movement. See Gal 2:9.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 15:19-21. Repeated in Acts 21: “When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. *Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law.* But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.” (Acts 21:20-25)

<sup>7</sup> Amos 9:11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 3:25.

<sup>9</sup> This is so even if trust does not negate law observance, but rather enforces it, as Paul insists in Rom 3:28-31. We shall return to this below.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 12:3; 17:4

<sup>11</sup> See 1 Cor 7:17-18.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gal 5:4-6.

<sup>13</sup> Rom 11:26.

<sup>14</sup> This is a somewhat different perspective from that which comes to the fore in John 8. There, the disconnect with Jesus harms the status of these people as children of Abraham. Paul would not agree with John.

<sup>15</sup> Gal 3:17.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Ignatius, Magnesians 8-10.

<sup>17</sup> Dated ca 4<sup>th</sup> century. For a discussion of the manuscript evidence, see Bart Ehrman’s introduction to his translation of the letters of Ignatius, Loeb Classical Library 24, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 203-217.



<sup>18</sup> Matt 7:18.

<sup>19</sup> Recent literature dealing with the question of Jewish and Christian relations, theology and identity is vast. Two suggestions for further reading: William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (New York: T & T Clarke, 2006); Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).