

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

**Prophetic Matrix and Theological Paradox:
Jews and Judaism in the Holy Week and
Pascha Observances of the Greek Orthodox Church¹**

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A sacred Pascha has been shown to us today; a new and holy Pascha; a mystic Pascha; an all-venerable Pascha; a Pascha, which is Christ the Redeemer; a spotless Pascha; a great Pascha; a Pascha of the faithful; a Pascha, which has opened to us the gates of Paradise; a Pascha sanctifying all the faithful.

- First Sticherion, Aposticha, Vespers of Pascha

Pascha: The Novel Continuity

The origins of the Christian Feast of Pascha are well known yet shrouded in uncertainty. On the one hand, it is clear that the feast developed after Jesus as an unremarkable continuation of the Passover practices of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and the land of Israel before the Common Era.² How this feast became an annual and, later, weeklong

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented in the Bible in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Traditions section at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Vienna, July 2014.

² The diversity of Passover practices in the communities of the Diaspora and the land of Israel before 70 CE was undoubtedly influenced (or is evidenced) by the diverging emphases of the feast in the Torah itself. Exodus 12, which stipulates that the ritual is to be performed by every family, with the slaughter of a small animal, reflects a nomadic environment. Its emphasis is on the Lord's "passing over" the houses of the Israelites on the night of the slaughter in Egypt (see esp. Exod 12:26-27). Deuteronomy 16, with a single sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem on behalf of all Israel that includes bullocks as well as sheep, reflects a sedentary, agricultural environment. The emphasis is not as much on the Lord's "passing over" as on the totality of exodus from Egypt, the people's "passing" out of slavery.

observance of Jewish *and* Gentile followers of Jesus, however, is less straightforward. Among the more ambiguous aspects of these uncertain origins is the gradual refashioning of the *subject* of commemoration in the feast. After his death, many of Jesus's followers continued celebrating the annual Passover—*pascha*, in Greek—but as the movement continued to grow, the focus of commemoration eventually expanded beyond the deliverance surrounding the events of the exodus from Egypt toward the deliverance enacted in first-century Jerusalem. As time went on, the Mosaic focus remained in the commemorations, but the deliverance brought through Christ, “our Pascha” (1 Cor 5:7), gradually took center stage. Yet amid that innovation, certain elements persisted, most notably, for our purposes, the rhetorical recognition that God had somehow chosen “us” rather than “them.” As Christianity grew into and beyond the fourth century, and the feast of Pascha became increasingly historicized, the actual *subjects* of the “us versus them” continued to change, even while aspects of the rhetoric identifying “us” with “Israel” or “Zion” did not.

With these elements of novelty and antiquity, innovation and continuity, the Orthodox Christian celebration of Holy Week and Pascha—easily the liturgical highpoint of the year—comprises a variety of apparent theological, liturgical, and ethical incongruities. Among the foremost of the latter is the texts' presentation of Jews and Judaism. As Amy-Jill Levine has poignantly asked of Christian Holy Week in general, “[How] can a gospel of love be proclaimed, if that same gospel is heard to promote hatred of Jesus's own people?”³ Such an apparent contradiction in the Holy Week services has led to official amendments in the Western counterparts to these texts, but not in the East, though there have been varied calls to enact such changes from clergy and laypeople, not the least

³ Amy-Jill Levine, “Holy Week and the Hatred of the Jews,” *ABC Religion and Ethics*, April 4, 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/04/04/3470618.htm> (accessed October 2014).

of whom was, it appears, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, nearly twenty years ago.⁴

What follows below is a textual examination of the many references to Jews and Judaism in the Holy Week and Pascha services of the Orthodox Church, in light of two particular background elements: 1) the distinctive characteristics of Orthodox Christian theology more broadly and 2) the scriptural texts, namely the Prophets and Psalms, from which the liturgical texts draw. Though the present-day worshiper's actual *experience* of Holy Week and Pascha is born from a blend of hymns, biblical and liturgical readings, as well as the sight, sounds, and smells of Orthodox liturgical practice (a point that cannot be overstated), the present study admittedly extracts the hymnography of these services in order to analyze the varied images of Jews and Judaism provided therein. The purpose here is to establish some reasons for and characteristics of the presentation of Jews and Judaism in order to highlight what effects the emendation of the antagonistic references might have.

Caveats

Before proceeding too far, however, three caveats are necessary. First, the feast in Orthodox parlance is typically referred to not as "Easter" but "Pascha" (the Greek term for "Passover"). Herein lies a point that goes well beyond a mere semantic note. Orthodox Christians still call this feast by the same word used by the Greek Scriptures and Greek-speaking Jews (and Christians) before and after Jesus to refer to the celebration of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This feast, in other words, while undergoing tremendous change after Jesus, is not a creation of the Christian era, but a distinct inheritance of *the* Passover that was well in place before Jesus. To speak of the Christian festival as "Easter" but the Jewish as "Passover," or to use scare quotes when referring to the Christian celebration of Passover but none when referring to the Jewish, is to skew

⁴ See Bert Groen, "Anti-Judaism in the Present-Day Byzantine Liturgy," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 60 (2008): 369-87, here 382.

the origins and development of this feast, especially with regard to, or in favor of, the rabbinic Jewish practices that continued to develop alongside of it.⁵ The Orthodox celebration of this feast bears with it the celebration of what God has done for his people, from creation, through the exodus, the prophets, Jesus's death and resurrection, toward the expansion of God's people. Intending to encapsulate all of these events, one cannot overlook that what the Orthodox liturgical texts commemorate is not "Easter" but "Pascha"—namely, "the Lord's Pascha" (*Kuriakē tou Pascha*; cf. Ex 12:11).⁶

Second, the liturgical history of the Orthodox Holy Week and Pascha texts is an infamous mess wrapped in disorder, sprinkled with copious amounts of inconsistency. When discussing the development of the Orthodox observances specifically, one must consider both the origins of the Christian annual Pascha *per se* as well as the historical shaping of the specifically Byzantine practices.⁷ As the feast was initially an inheritance of pre-Christian Passover, liturgically, at first, the feast was more or less one celebration, one unitive commemoration of God's delivering his people (*both* in the exodus and through Christ). By the fourth century, probably in Jerusalem in connection with the holy sites, the feast was

⁵ The use of scare quotes with respect to Christian "Passover" is a common scholarly practice. See, for example, David Brakke, "Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 453-81, here 466 (with reference to Jean Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain: leur condition juridique, économique et sociale* [2 vols.; Paris: P. Geuthner, 1914]).

⁶ Relatedly, but less significantly, "Holy Week" in Greek Orthodox texts is more commonly called "Holy and Great Week" (*Hagia kai Megalē Hebdomas*) or sometimes simply "Great Week."

⁷ On the early origins of the feast more broadly, see especially S.G. Hall, "The Origins of Easter," *Studia Patristica* 15 (1984): 554-67; Paul F. Bradshaw, "The Origins of Easter," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 81-97; Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York: Pueblo, 1986), esp. 1-78, and Clemens Leonhard, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

more or less “historicized.” Rather than commemorate the deliverance of God’s people as a holistic event, the observances were partitioned into the observance of Christ’s death on one day and his resurrection on the other. From there, the rest of the Holy Week observances grew. These observances, furthermore, underwent a complex evolution in the Byzantine era, which essentially involved, as Robert F. Taft describes, “a three-step process of mutual borrowing”: 1) the Great Church of Constantinople’s fusing of the liturgical practices of the monks in Palestine with its own (as a result of the Studite reforms especially); 2) Jerusalem’s subsequent importing of this newly formed hybrid rite back from Constantinople, and 3) the codification of this latter hybrid into what is now, more or less, the “Byzantine rite.”⁸ This evolution and repeated hybridization have left much liturgical diversity and inconsistency in contemporary practice.⁹

⁸ Robert F. Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence: The Paschal Triduum in the Byzantine Church,” in *La celebrazione del Triduo pasquale: anamnesis e mimesis. Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Liturgia, Roma, Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, 9-13 maggio 1988* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1990), 71–97 (here 74), reprinted in *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), no. V. Cf. Robert F. Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities: The Byzantine Holy Week Triduum as a Paradigm of Liturgical History,” in *Time and Community: In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley*, ed. J. Neil Alexander (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral, 1990), 21–41, reprinted in *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond*, no. VI. The above summary of the liturgical development of the contemporary “Byzantine rite” is admittedly brief and only begins to hint at the intricacies involved. For far fuller accounts, see, in addition to these two essays by Taft, Gabriel Bertonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972); Sebastia Janeras, *Le Vendredi-Saint dans la tradition liturgique byzantine: Structure et histoire de ses offices* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1988), and Alkiviadis C. Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 1992), 1–19. On the Byzantine rite more broadly, see Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992).

⁹ Regarding the liturgical inconsistencies in present practice, see Pavlos Koumarios, “Liturgical Problems of Holy Week,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 46 (2002): 3–21.

An examination of the anti-Jewish hymns in light of the tradition history of the liturgical texts would undoubtedly be—and has been—incredibly valuable, but what follows below is primarily a *synchronic*, rather than *diachronic*, examination that explores how Jews and Judaism appear in the texts as practiced contemporarily rather than in the multi-faceted development of the individual pieces, each of which originates from often significantly different times and places.¹⁰ This synchronic focus, moreover, demands a third caveat. Partly due to the complicated liturgical history as well as the decentralized structure of the Orthodox Church as a whole, one cannot speak of *the* Holy Week and Pascha texts of *the* Orthodox Church. While many of the significant portions are the same across the various Orthodox ecclesial centers, each church nonetheless has its own traditions. In the case of this study, I have chosen to analyze the texts as commonly practiced in one particular Orthodox tradition: that of the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the largest of the Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States.¹¹ Though, again,

¹⁰ This is not to disregard the significance of the provenance of the various pieces of Holy Week and Pascha, both in terms of 1) the fourth-century historicization of the feast—which appears to have perpetuated more anti-Jewish elements—as well as 2) the more divisive “Gentiles-versus-Jews” aspects that originate in the liturgical rites and hymnography of Constantinople—the politically tumultuous heart of the Byzantine Empire—rather than those of Palestine (cf. Elizabeth Theokritoff, “The Orthodox services of Holy Week: The Jews and the New Sion,” *Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review* 25 [2003]: 25-50, here 30).

¹¹ The moveable (variable) portions of the Holy Week and Pascha services are found respectively in two liturgical books, the *Triodion* and the *Pentecostarion*. For a history of these texts, including the critical editions, see Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha*, 5-13 (esp. 11-13). There is no “official” Greek/English compilation of the Holy Week and Pascha texts, but the most widely used (including both the moveable/variable as well as immovable/fixed portions in both Greek and English) in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is George L. Papadeas, comp., *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai tēs Megalēs Hebdomasos kai tou Pascha/Greek Orthodox Holy Week and Easter Services* (New English trans.; South Daytona, FL: Patmos, 2007). Regarding Papadeas’s compilation (which was first published in 1963), Cavilas makes an apt observation: “This book has been reprinted several times and has enjoyed considerable popularity. Because of this, it could be

the principal texts considered below are common to the majority of Orthodox practices, I make no claims with regard to how these services are practiced in any other Orthodox jurisdiction. This approach is simply a matter of focus and does not intend to underestimate the diversity and significance of the varied social and liturgical environments in which the relevant texts are sung and heard—environments, moreover, which cannot be fully communicated in this merely textual analysis.

Preference for Paradox and the Prophetic Inheritance

In the current shape of these observances, Jews and Judaism appear overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, with a negative stigma as the people and practice that have rejected Christ. Nonetheless, to dismissively characterize this negative portrayal as merely the result of an anti-Jewish or antisemitic spin on dubious history overlooks its important theological roots and thrusts the question of contemporary emendation into a simplistic light. In order to highlight these theological roots, the exploration below argues that the literary characterizations of Jews, Judaism, and Israelite history—and really *all* features of the Holy Week and Pascha texts, including Christ himself, the disciples, the crucifixion, the resurrection, etc.—arise from two key influences that shape the way the hymns exegete the biblical texts of Pascha (that is, the Gospels *and* Exodus). The first is the Orthodox theological preference for paradox and stark juxtaposition, and the second is the scrip-

said that in some respects, it has determined the manner by which the divine services are celebrated and observed in many parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese” (*Great Week and Pascha*, 12). For ease of reference and given its widespread use, this is the text whose page numbers I supply below (abbreviated as *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*). The English translations below are generally based on those of Papadeas, though with modification where noted. For the services of Holy Week not found in Papadeas’s edition (especially Palm Sunday Vespers and Matins), I will refer to the most widespread English translation of the *Triodion*—namely, Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, trans., *The Lenten Triodion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978; repr., South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2002). Citations below refer to the St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press edition.

tural matrix for expressing rejection and redemption provided by the Psalms and Prophets in particular.

From the Gospel of Luke, with its crucifixion of the seemingly aloof Righteous *Sophos*,¹² to Starets Zosima and his emphasis upon the true saint as the greatest sinner,¹³ Orthodox thought relishes the paradoxical, delights in the oxymoronic, and finds itself on the juxtaposition of the human and divine: the Virgin who gives birth, the God who suffers, the incorruptible assuming the corruptible, the Author of Life becoming subject to death, the sinful woman who anoints Jesus's feet while the disciple betrays. One finds this love of dissonant juxtaposition forcefully expressed in the Holy Week and Pascha texts, as the hymns often and unabashedly mold the biblical passages in order to highlight the divine-human paradox. In other words, these hymns do not record the mundane details of Jesus's judgment before Caiaphas and Pilate. Rather, they liberally marvel that *God* specifically stood before a *priest*; they marvel that *the Judge of All* stood before a *temporal judge*,¹⁴ that the "Lawgiver" was crucified "as lawless."¹⁵ The hymns do not tell the congregants merely that the man who suffered was innocent, but that the man who suffered was God. As the well-known hymn sung during the dramatic procession of the cross on Holy Thursday proclaims,

Today is suspended upon the tree, he who suspended
the earth amid the waters;

¹² See, for example, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 354–55.

¹³ Starets Zosima, for example, teaches, "There is but one salvation for you. Take yourself in hand, and be answerable for the sins of all men. My friend, this is actually true: you need only make yourself sincerely answerable for everything and everyone, and you will see immediately that it really is so, and that it is you who are actually guilty of the sins committed by each and every man" (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Karamazov Brothers*, trans. Ignat Avsey [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 401 [VI.3]).

¹⁴ Kathisma before the Fifth Gospel, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 233).

¹⁵ Sixth sticheron after Lord I Have Cried, Holy Friday Vespers (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 342).

A crown of thorns crowns him, who is the King of the
angels;
He is wrapped in the purple of mockery, who wraps
the heavens in clouds;
He receives buffetings, who freed Adam in the Jordan;
He is transfixed with nails, who is the Son of the
Virgin.
We worship your passion, O Christ.
Show us also your glorious resurrection.¹⁶

Or again, from Vespers on Holy Friday afternoon,

A fearsome and marvelous mystery is today coming to
pass:
The incorporeal one is being held;
The one freeing Adam from the curse is bound;
He who tries the inner hearts and thoughts of man is
unjustly tried;
He who sealed the abyss is shut up in prison.
He before whom the powers of heaven stand with
trembling stands before Pilate;
The Fashioner is struck by the hand of the fashioned;
The Judge of the living and the dead is condemned to
the cross;
The Despoiler of Hades is closed up within a tomb:
O forbearing Lord, compassionately enduring all
things and saving all from the curse,
glory to you.¹⁷

Furthermore, beyond simply marveling at the divine-human paradox, these hymns stand in awe more specifically of Christ's great *sun-katabasis*. Often translated as "condescension" or "considerateness," this word is central to patristic thought and exegesis as a literary means through which to express the work of salvation enacted by God, from creation

¹⁶ Fifteenth Antiphon, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 238 [modified]).

¹⁷ Seventh sticheron after Lord I Have Cried, Holy Friday Vespers (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 342-43 [modified]).

onward.¹⁸ God led his people to salvation by “condescending” to their state. One finds the refrain, “Glory to your *sunkatabasis*,” repeated on Holy Friday as a summarizing praise of Christ’s passion.¹⁹ In sum, when the hymns of Holy Week consider the gospel accounts and marvel at what is done to Christ, they do so in a manner that highlights the absurdity of his *sunkatabasis*, well beyond what the Gospels themselves do.

This interpretive tendency toward accentuating paradox and *sunkatabasis* is chiefly what produces the overwhelmingly, but not entirely, negative picture of Jews and Judaism. In the same way that he who fashioned the heavens is struck by the hand that he fashioned, and he who is suspended on a tree is he who suspended the land upon the waters, so also he who gave the law is condemned as lawless by those to whom he gave the law and turned over to those who have no law. Not coincidentally, two of the most frequent descriptors marshaled against the antagonists are *anomos* and *paranomos* (both meaning “lawless”), sometimes with direct reference to Jews or the synagogue, but most often as substantive adjectives. The two words grammatically express not mere betrayal, but the mystery of the *law-recipients*’ turning over the *Law-Giver*. Those who had the law, who witnessed deliverance in the wilderness, have become “lawless.”²⁰ This stark and accusatory

¹⁸ See, for example, David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) as well as Rylaarsdam’s dissertation out of which the book grew: “The Adaptability of Divine Pedagogy: *Sunkatabasis* in the Theology and Rhetoric of John Chrysostom” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Notre Dame, 1999). On the issue of translation specifically (and a key reason why I transliterate above), see R. C. Hill, “On Looking Again at *sunkatabasis*,” *Prudentia* 13 (1981): 3–11.

¹⁹ See, for example, the Aposticha of Holy Friday Vespers (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 358–60). Easily the climax of the service, this is chanted while the *epitaphios* is processed around the church, enacting the burial of Christ. (Literally meaning “tomb,” the *epitaphios* is a cloth embroidered with an icon of Christ’s being removed from the cross and prepared for burial.)

²⁰ Undoubtedly, the frequent occurrence of these two words in the liturgical texts is inspired in part by the Psalms and Prophets, both of which repeat-

juxtaposition fits smoothly, if undesirably, into the liturgical observances, given their dual emphases on *both* the exodus and the passion as the moments of salvation.

This leads to the second key influence upon the Holy Week and Pascha presentation of Jews and Judaism. As a means to fashion the distinctly Jewish elements of the story in such a manner that they serve to accentuate the paradox of the God-Man's *sunkatabasis*, the hymns employ the motifs of rejection and redemption found time and again in the Psalms and especially the Prophets.²¹ In other words, the Holy Week and Pascha texts—through their lament of rejection, recognition of destruction, pleas for repentance, and so forth—intentionally and directly find their inspiration in the Prophets, including the sometimes hyperbolic accusation that *all* of God's people had rejected him and his prophet. As the Prophets provide images by which Christ is later understood (most famously, the suffering servant of Isaiah), so also they provide images by which the reaction to Christ is comprehended.²²

The Holy Week texts with near ubiquity fuse these two influences—the preference for paradox and the prophetic or psalmic precedent—to create an image in which God himself (that is, Jesus) is rejected not just by those who did not know him, but by his own people. This point, moreover, is a chief reason why Pilate's culpability is notoriously diminished

edly use the same words, particularly *anomos*, to describe God's opponents or the speaker's persecutors. This is the case especially with Isa 53:12, whose line, "He was numbered with the lawless," is repeated both in Luke's Passion Narrative (Luke 22:37) as well as the hymns of Holy Week.

²¹ On the prophetic and psalmic influence, see especially Theokritoff, "The Orthodox services of Holy Week."

²² Take for example the liturgical words of Christ himself, which interweave Isaiah and the gospel events: "I gave my back to scourging, and turned not my face from spitting [cf. Isa 50:6]; I stood before the judgment-seat of Pilate [cf. Matt 27:19; John 19:13], and endured the cross, for the salvation of the world [cf. John 4:42]" (final sticheron of The Praises, Holy Friday Matins [*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 258 (modified)]).

and that of the Jews increased: God's rejection by a pagan is nothing remarkable; God's rejection by *his own people* accentuates the paradox of the God-Man's *sunkatabasis*. While Pilate is by no means exonerated—he is clearly and repeatedly the one to whom Christ is handed over—his treachery is not the focus because a Gentile breaking the law is not as surprising as the law-bearers' becoming lawless.²³ As much of the week progresses, this emphasis arises unambiguously as the hymns marvel not at the fact that Gentiles misunderstood Christ, but at the paradox that it was his own people who did so.²⁴

Further Evidence from Palm Sunday, Holy Friday, and Pascha

In many ways, Palm Sunday and Pascha Sunday appear as two peaks on either side of a valley. While the texts of Holy Week generally foreground the division between the congregants on the one hand and the culpability of Jews and foolishness of Gentiles on the other, Palm Sunday and Pascha Sunday show less concern for this sort of accusatory self-distancing. Rather, these two Sundays are characterized by a universal, inclusive focus, reminiscent of (and assuredly influenced by) some of Paul's letters: All are subject to death, and all are redeemed through the death of Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile; all are one in Christ.²⁵

²³ Note, for example, the first verse of the Eighth Antiphon of Holy Friday Matins, where Pilate's role is not denied, but neither is it the focus: "Say, you lawless men; what have you heard from our Savior? Did he not set forth the teaching of the Law and the Prophets? How then, could you take counsel to hand over to Pilate the Word, God from God, the Redeemer of our souls?" (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 227 [modified]).

²⁴ A similar idea appears in Byzantine icons of the Nativity of Christ, where one finds the image of an ox and a donkey worshiping the newborn, a clear allusion to Isaiah: "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isa 1:3; NRSV).

²⁵ See, e.g., Romans 3; 1 Cor 15:22; Gal 3:28.

Yet along with this emphasis on universality and ideal unity, the Palm Sunday hymns mold Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in such a way so as to highlight a theological paradox—a paradox, moreover, employed by the Prophets (e.g., Isa 1:3), Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 1:18–31), and others. That paradox suggests that the foolish and simple understand God's ways, even while the learned and wise authorities do not. Thus, the Psalm Sunday hymns conflate, emend, and add to the gospel accounts in order to present the so-called “children of the Hebrews” (*paides Hebraiōn*) as the protagonists of the story (the phrase appears nowhere in the Gospels) and their leaders as the antagonists.²⁶ It is “the children of the Hebrews” who hold the palm branches and praise the entrance of Christ while the leaders look on with disdain.²⁷ There is a deliberate juxtaposition here between the ignorant and the ostensibly learned leaders, similar to what one finds in the juxtaposition of the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus in John 3–4 or Athanasius's portrayal of the “unlettered” Anthony and the philosophers.²⁸ The hymns encourage the congregants to imi-

²⁶ The Gospels mention the “crowd” or “multitude” as holding the branches and do not specify further (see Matt 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:37; John 12:13). However, in Matthew's account of the so-called temple cleansing immediately after the entrance into Jerusalem, the author narrates, “But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children [*tous paidas*] crying out in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they became angry and said to him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read, “Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?”’” (Matt 21:15–16; NRSV). The Palm Sunday hymns, in freely conflating multiple accounts into one, particularly with regard to the two “entrances” of Christ into both the temple (to “cleanse” it) and Jerusalem (on Palm Sunday), continue a long-standing Christian hermeneutical tendency (see, e.g., Origen, *Commentary on John* 10.119–306).

²⁷ E.g., second sticheron for Lord I Have Cried, Palm Sunday Vespers (*The Lenten Triodion*, 489), *et alibi*. Palm Sunday Vespers, served on Saturday night, is not included in Papadeas's edition, which begins, rather, with the first Bridegroom Matins on Palm Sunday night.

²⁸ See esp. Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 72. The juxtaposition of the seemingly ignorant, yet eventually enlightened, with the fully culpable and erudite leaders is a well-established theme in Christian literature (and one that relates closely to Jesus himself as well as the crowds that follow him; cf. Jn 7:15, 49). Such a theme, furthermore, shapes the way that one of the

tate the children, while berating the Jewish leaders for not grasping what their own children did.²⁹

As the week progresses through the Bridegroom Matins of Holy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday,³⁰ the ideal unity of Jews and Gentiles clearly breaks down in light of Christ's impending crucifixion: The hymns precariously, and sometimes inconsistently, distance the congregants from the culpability of Jews and foolishness of Gentiles, while also specifically condemning the leaders (rather than the people as a whole). By the Thursday night service of Holy Friday Matins (the Service of the Twelve Gospels³¹), however, events take a more drastic turn. At first, the hymns carry on a juxtaposition that had been building since Palm Sunday between the unnamed sinful woman who anoints Jesus and the disciple

most influential patristic exegetes, Cyril of Alexandria, presents the Passion according to the Fourth Gospel: It is the story of the wise teacher attempting to persuade the ignorant multitude away from the malevolent, but seemingly learned, leaders (see *Commentary on John* 11–12). Regarding Palm Sunday specifically, see also (Pseudo-)Epiphanius, *Homilia in festo palmarum* (PG 43.436.27).

²⁹ See, e.g., the Apolytikion of Palm Sunday (*The Lenten Triodion*, 492). An important exception to this broad summary of the Palm Sunday motifs is the third sticheron of Lord I Have Cried at Palm Sunday Vespers (*The Lenten Triodion*, 489). Here, the congregants are addressed as the “new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles/Nations” (*ho neos israēl, hē ex ethnōn ekklēsia*). This hymn is oddly dissonant with the more inclusive character of the rest (see Theokritoff, “The Orthodox Services of Holy Week,” 27–29). On the congregants as Gentiles, see also the final verse of the Ninth Antiphon of Holy Friday Matins, which alludes to Gal 3:10–14 (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 228).

³⁰ These services are so named due to their focus on Christ as the coming Bridegroom for whom one must be ready (cf. Matt 25:1–13). As with all of the services of Holy Week from Sunday evening onward, the Monday Matins is served the previous evening. Holy Thursday Matins, which is served Wednesday night in many jurisdictions, is not typically served in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

³¹ While the service on Holy Thursday night is indeed a matins service for the following day, its hallmark is the twelve gospel readings that detail the final hours and passion of Christ.

who betrays him.³² The focus is on the inward comparison of my own soul with these two routes, asking which direction *my* soul will take. When the hymns speak more historically of the actual events of the crucifixion, they do so at first by blaming the religious leaders. Their inspiration is an adapted form of Ps 2:2, a verse that occurs repeatedly in the course of the service: “The rulers of the people took council together against the Lord and against his anointed.”³³ But the turn comes with the Sixth Antiphon (after the second gospel reading):

Today, the Jews nailed to the cross
the Lord who divided the sea with a rod and
led them through the wilderness.
Today they pierced with a spear
the side of him who for their sake smote Egypt
with plagues;
They gave him gall to drink,
who rained down manna on them for good.³⁴

Shown here in parallel lines, the hymnographer’s preference to express the paradox of the God-Man and the wonder of his *sunkatabasis* is clearly evident. In light of the dual commemoration of the first Pascha with Moses and the Pascha of Christ’s passion, Exodus’s record of the people’s turning away from their deliverer time and again is not lost on these hymns. The same people whom Christ led through the Red Sea at the first Pascha now turn away at this Pascha of crucifixion.³⁵ “The Jews” are thus presented as the *very same* people whom *Christ* freed in the Red Sea and fed with manna, as the hymn is replete with imagery that highlights the paradox: The tangible

³² The hymns, which conflate multiple gospel accounts, do not name the woman juxtaposed with Judas, though John’s version identifies her as Mary, Martha’s sister (see John 12:1–8).

³³ The Holy Week texts add *laōn* (“of the people”) after “rulers,” whereas the LXX simply has “rulers” (see, e.g., *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 216).

³⁴ Second verse of the Sixth Antiphon, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 223 [modified]).

³⁵ See also the sixth sticheron of Lord I Have Cried, Holy Friday Vespers (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 342).

tools used (nails and a rod), the act of violence (piercing and smiting), and the offering of food (gall and manna).³⁶

In the Eleventh Antiphon (after the fourth gospel reading), the indictment strengthens, and the guilt of those who condemned Christ is underscored:

In return for the good things that you granted, Christ,
to the offspring of the Hebrews [*tōi genei tōn
hebraiōn*],
they condemned you to be crucified,
giving you vinegar and gall to drink.
But render unto them, Lord, according to their works,
for they have not understood your
sunkatabasis.³⁷

Amid this paradox of condemnation in return for good gifts, the “offspring of the Hebrews” are indicted because they have not understood Christ’s *sunkatabasis* specifically.³⁸ What is more, the hymn employs the prophetic matrix provided by Lamentations, where the author laments the destruction of Jerusalem by enumerating the sins of his own people. Yet, despite his recognition of the failings of his own people, the author wishes the Lord to “pay [the destroyers] back for their works” (Lam 3:64). The hymns of Holy Week bear a similarly dissonant tension between the recognizably sinful souls of the congregants singing and the sins of those who actually brought the destruction of Jesus. To say the least, Lamentations does not comprise the only instance in which a biblical author calls

³⁶ One hears a concise summary of this perspective the following night as well, in the Canon of Holy Saturday Matins: “The children of those who were saved bury under the ground the one who long ago buried the pursuing tyrant in the waves of the sea” (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 376).

³⁷ First verse of the Eleventh Antiphon, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 232 [modified]), sung after the reading of John 18:28-19:16.

³⁸ Writers such as Athanasius and John Chrysostom, among others, employ a similar accusation against Arians and Neo-Arians, as the term fittingly describes the reality of the incarnation vis-a-vis the claim that Christ was merely a created being (see, e.g., Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 2.62).

for the Lord to payback the destroyers of Jerusalem's temple despite the admitted sins of his own people (see, e.g., Psalm 79). And given that Jesus's Jewish and Gentile followers since at least the Fourth Gospel looked to Jesus as *the* Temple that was destroyed (see John 2:18-22), such prophetic and psalmic motifs find a conceptually fitting home in the poetic reflections on his passion.

Of all the Holy Week texts in which the Jews appear negatively, the most striking are the *improperia* or "reproaches" (as they are commonly known in Western liturgy): the hymns within the Antiphons that comprise first-person addresses on behalf of Christ toward the people, especially those who crucify him. These hymns, which have an important place in the history of Christian-Jewish relations, have several scriptural precedents. First, there are the words of Christ himself: In John 10:32, Jesus says to "the Jews" who are about to stone him, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" (NRSV). Second, and perhaps more importantly, there are the numerous psalmic and especially prophetic first-person addresses of the Lord toward his people who have wronged him. Jeremiah's fifth lament serves as one example, in which, *not coincidentally*, Jeremiah asks why the people who are "plotting" and taking "counsel" against him are repaying him "evil" for "good" (18:20). Biblical scholars have often noted the Gospels' typological shaping of Christ in the image of a prophet like Jeremiah; the Holy Week hymns simply follow in that tradition.³⁹

The first of these first-person addresses arises in the Twelfth Antiphon of Friday Matins:

³⁹ With regard to Matthew, for example, where this motif is particularly evident, see Michael P. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993). See also Gary E. Yates, "Intertextuality and the Portrayal of Jeremiah the Prophet," *Bibliotheca sacra* 170 (2013), 286-303, esp. 295-302.

Thus says the Lord to the Jews:
 “My people, what have I done to you,
 or how have I wearied you?
 To your blind, I gave light;
 Your lepers, I cleansed
 Your paralytic, I raised up.
 My people, what have I done to you,
 and how have you recompensed me?
 Instead of manna, gall;
 instead of water, vinegar;
 Instead of loving me,
 you nailed me to the cross.
 No longer do I endure;
 I will call the nations [*ethnē*] to me,
 And they will glorify me with the Father and the Spirit;
 and I will grant them eternal life.”⁴⁰

Within this litany of prophet-like reminders of all the good “the Lord” has given “the Jews” is an allusion to Ps 69:21. In this verse, which one finds in the Gospels themselves, the psalmist records, “They gave me gall for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar” (NRSV). But here the Twelfth Antiphon makes an important change by explicitly recalling the exodus, in which the Lord provided manna and water. Thus, rather than repeating this verse more accurately, the hymn says, “*Instead of manna, gall; instead of water, vinegar.*” The change serves to accentuate the paradox and juxtaposition between the Pascha of the exodus and the Pascha of Christ’s passion.⁴¹

⁴⁰ First verse of the Twelfth Antiphon, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 232-33 [modified]).

⁴¹ The Third Hour (observed Friday morning) summarizes this perspective: “The Jews, O Lord, condemned you, the life of all, to death; the ones who, by the staff, crossed the Red Sea on dry land nailed you to a cross, and those whom you suckled with honey from the rock brought you gall. But willingly you endured to free us from the bondage of the enemy. Christ our God, glory to you” (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 293 [modified]).

The first sticheron of The Praises after the ninth gospel reading from the same night carries a similarly direct employment of the prophets:

Israel, my first-born son,
committed [*epoiēsen*] two evils:
He forsook me,
the source of living water,
and hewed out for himself a broken well;
He crucified me on the tree
and asked for the release of Barabbas;
The heavens were aghast at this,
and the sun hid its rays;
Yet, you, Israel, were not ashamed,
but delivered me to death.
Forgive them, Holy Father,
for they do not know what they have done
[*epoiēsan*].¹²

Presented as if spoken by the very same Lord who both freed Israel from Egypt and was later crucified, the first line is a direct quotation of the Lord's speaking through the prophet in Jer 2:13. With these words in Jeremiah, the Lord calls for Israel to repent by providing a stark juxtaposition between the God who freed from Egypt and the Israelites who repay with rebellion. Similarly to Jeremiah and others (see Ezek 43:10, *et alibi*), these words from Holy Week call for Israel to be ashamed. But even with such a call, the last line encapsulates perhaps the most prominent notions in all of these services: repentance and forgiveness (cf. Luke 23:34).

Carrying on a similar motif of first-person addresses and indictments, other hymns of Holy Friday Hours and Vespers (observed Holy Friday morning and afternoon, respectively) continue with paradoxical reminders of what the Lord (that is, Christ) had done for his people in *both* the exo-

¹² *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 257 (modified).

dus and the Gospels.⁴³ In one such hymn from the Sixth Hour (observed Friday morning), the congregants are exhorted to behold what the “lawless priests” have plotted with Judas, in order to—note the juxtaposition and *sunkatabasis*—“judge the immortal Word guilty of death” and deliver him to Pilate. Yet, the hymn again ends with a surprising request on Christ’s behalf:

Suffering these things, our Savior cried out saying,
“Father, forgive them this sin,
that the nations [*ethnē*] may know my resurrection
from the dead.”⁴⁴

Further reminiscent of the prophetic matrix, the speaker neither denies the erstwhile sins of the people nor fails to offer an intercessory plea for God’s compassion.⁴⁵

As the days of Holy Week pass from Friday to Saturday and Sunday, they return to where they left off on Palm Sunday: Departing, for the most part, from the human level of history and the events of Christ’s final days, they ascend to the divine and universal, marveling at the paradox of the divinity who lies in the tomb. The more universal—and less historicized—emphases come out especially strongly in the hymns of Holy Saturday night, namely, in the Paschal Matins and Liturgy. There is far less self-distancing of the congregants from

⁴³ See *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 294 (Third Hour), 305 (Sixth Hour, though repeated from Holy Friday Matins), 321 (Ninth Hour), 342 (sixth sticheron after Lord I Have Cried, Holy Friday Vespers).

⁴⁴ *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 306 (modified).

⁴⁵ Fittingly, in the Ninth Hour reading from the Prophets (the final such reading of the morning, a compilation of Jer 11:18–23; 12:1–4, 9–11, 14–15), Jeremiah laments rejection while the Lord indicts his people for their sin. Nonetheless, the Lord ends with a note of compassion that he will again restore his people. Meanwhile, the epistle reading that immediately follows these selections from Jeremiah comes from Hebrews and, in quintessential Hebrews fashion, reminds the congregants that though God’s punishment with regard to the law of Moses seemed harsh, those who now have received the “knowledge of truth” but neglect it will be punished all the more (see Heb 10:19–31).

those who ostensibly rejected Christ, Jews on the one hand or Gentiles on the other, as they instead concentrate on the cosmic dimension of what has transpired.⁴⁶ The focus is on Adam and the renewal of all of creation, and as such, the hymns repeatedly employ the psalmic matrix in order to call for Zion, Jerusalem, and all of creation to rejoice.⁴⁷ Christ has united our flesh—Jew and Gentile—to his and redeemed us from death that held us captive. Interestingly, the first-person hymns of Christ are addressed now not to those who crucified him, but to his mother and all of creation.⁴⁸

Conclusion: Reflections on Amending or Removing Problematic Texts

The texts reviewed above are by no means the only texts of interest with regard to the negative image of Jews and Judaism presented during Holy Week and Pascha, nor perhaps are they among the most problematic with respect to contemporary concerns.⁴⁹ These texts have been chosen, rather, in order to foreground certain key influences that direct

⁴⁶ One important exception is the first sticheron of the Canon (sung both at Holy Saturday and the Paschal Matins [*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 376 and D, between pp. 447 and 448]). Here again one finds the juxtaposition between those who were freed in the exodus while Pharaoh was buried in the sea and those who bury Christ while “we” are exhorted to praise the Lord. (Bibliographic note: Papadeas added the hymns of the Paschal Matins to his compilation only in later printings; these pages are numbered with the letters A through L between pp. 447 and 448.)

⁴⁷ See *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 456, 459, *et alibi*.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., the Ninth Ode, sung at the Paschal Matins on Saturday night (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, K-L [between pp. 447 and 448]).

⁴⁹ In my opinion, some of the most problematic hymns that do occur (and which I have briefly mentioned above) are those very few that identify the congregants positively and seemingly exclusively as Gentiles. For a fuller account of the problematic texts and issues raised, see especially Thomas Kratzert, *Wir sind wie die Juden?: Der griechisch-orthodoxe Beitrag zu einem ökumenischen jüdisch-christlichen Dialog* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1994), esp. 161–182 and also the slew of related articles by Bert Groen, e.g., “Anti-Judaism in the Present-Day Byzantine Liturgy” and “Attitudes towards Judaism in Greek-Byzantine Liturgy: Anti-Judaism in Holy Week Texts and the Appreciation of Israel’s Righteous,” *Analecta Bruxellensia* 12 (2007): 81–93.

the manner in which Jews and Judaism are shaped. The image that the texts offer is by and large, but not entirely, negative, and that is due chiefly to two reasons: The first is the Orthodox preference for paradox, the stark juxtaposition between saint and sinner, the divine and human, that frequently finds its expression in the poetic marveling at the *sunatabasis* of the Creator and Fashioner becoming subject to death. The second is the motifs provided to the hymnographers by the Psalms and Prophets, in which time and again God laments, often hyperbolically, his people's rejection in spite of benevolence. To poetically and hyperbolically assert that God's people have rejected him despite the good things they have received is not new, so to speak. What is new is the reason for that rejection: And that frequently has to do with the people's refusal to accept the paradox, to accept the *sunatabasis* of the God of Exodus on the cross.

The question of amending the liturgical texts in order to remove the negative image warrants a few additional points. First, the Orthodox Church has frequently amended its liturgical texts and observances for a variety of reasons. With regard to the practices of Holy Week specifically, one could mention the addition of the procession of the cross during Holy Friday Matins (Holy Thursday night)—one of the most distinct and memorable moments of Orthodox Holy Week, but one that was not added until the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ With regard to the negative presentation of entire groups, one could mention the contemporary practice of no longer proclaiming the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*—a text that originates in the triumph against iconoclasm and is now proclaimed on the First Sunday of Lent (the “Sunday of Orthodoxy”)—with the more original censures against “the Greeks.”⁵¹ To choose to remove negative

⁵⁰ See Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha*, 68. As Taft notes more broadly, many of the “mimetic elements” in contemporary Byzantine Holy Week practice “are so late as to be almost modern” (“A Tale of Two Cities,” 34).

⁵¹ Greek patristic writers commonly used *Hellēn* to refer to those who assimilated beyond the acceptable borderlines of Christian practice (as Jews earlier did for similar reasons). Most literally, the word is translated as “Hellenic” or “Greek,” though “Gentile,” “pagan,” or “heathen” are often

references against Jews is not far from this, and to choose to amend liturgical texts is not, historically speaking, unorthodox.⁵²

Second, a few English translations used by the faithful within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese have already removed such references.⁵³ One popular translation inserts “Judean” whenever *Ioudaios* is mentioned—as some have suggested especially for the Gospel of John—and another generalizes the term, translating *Ioudaioi* or “sons of Israel” as “the Lord’s own people,” or “the lawless *Ioudaioi*” in the substantive as simply “the lawless.”⁵⁴ Far more than the first, the second option of generalizing the references has some merit (though it still does little with regard to the original Greek). After all, the original Holy Week texts themselves already frequently generalize. They more often than not simply speak of the “impious and lawless” or “unjust council,” when, histor-

used to express its usage among Christian and Jewish writers. Oddly enough, in much patristic usage, “Greek” and “Jew” have parallel histories, as both were rhetorical devices employed to delineate two different borders around acceptable Christian practice, depending on the nature of the heresy (see Douglas Boin, “Hellenistic ‘Judaism’ and the Social Origins of the ‘Pagan-Christian’ Debate,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22 [2014]: 167–96). More broadly, see Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵² Indeed, as many liturgical scholars have noted, a variety of elements in contemporary Holy Week and Pascha practice is in need of liturgical reform (see, e.g., Taft, “A Tale of Two Cities,” esp. 34–35, and Koumarianos, “Liturgical Problems of Holy Week”).

⁵³ Though not touched upon here, the same is the case with regard to English translations used by other jurisdictions as well, as evidenced, for example, by *Passion and Resurrection* (Cambridge, NY: New Skete, 1995), a translation of the Holy Week and Pascha texts by the monks of New Skete, a monastery within the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). Furthermore, many Orthodox parishes commonly use texts and translations as increasingly provided on diocesan websites, and these translations themselves are periodically adjusted and updated.

⁵⁴ The first is the Papadeas translation used here (and hence a reason for modifying many of the translations); the second is Leonidas C. Contos, trans., *The Services for Holy Week and Easter* (Northridge, CA: Narthex, 1999).

ically, it is clear that the people to whom they refer were Jews. Such generalization, moreover, still bears the ability to emphasize the intended juxtapositions while also allowing the congregants to identify themselves with those who turn against Christ.

Third, the potential removal of negative references to Jews raises a concern analogous to those of many historical-critics with regard to the Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John. To disregard, generalize, or abstract *all* references to Jews stands in danger of completely dehistoricizing and decontextualizing Jesus, his life and his passion. The *Ioudaioi*—as they were increasingly called, especially by outsiders, by the time of Jesus—were in fact his people, ethnically speaking and in terms of shared cultural heritage (but not necessarily, one should underscore, politically).⁵⁵ One cannot dehistoricize the contemporarily unattractive aspects of the Jewishness of Jesus or those with whom he interacted, whether to avoid the positive aspects of the Jewishness of the characters (e.g., that Jesus was a practicing Jew) or the negative (e.g., that some fellow Jews handed him over to Pilate). To *completely* dehistoricize the texts in such a way that Jews become entirely uninvolved in Christ’s ultimate demise would lose what is a tremendously essential element of the hymns: that the Creator and Redeemer from the Books of Moses is rejected by the same people whom he created and redeemed. To completely dehistoricize would lose the stark juxtaposition, the marvel of paradox, that so underscores the way Orthodoxy understands the mystery of the God-Man who was voluntarily crucified on a tree that he created.

That being said, however, there is much in the texts that reflects classic Greek *psogos* or “invective,” a rhetorical form of vilification that was unremarkably typical in earlier

⁵⁵ Sources on the use and referent of *Ioudaioi* in antiquity abound. See, for example, Sean Freyne, “Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Ioudaioi*,” in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. Eric Meyers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 39–55.

centuries. Though the rhetorical elements allowed and encouraged by the form of *psogos* are indeed troubling and shocking to modern ears, they were not necessarily tied to actual violence.⁵⁶ Such is evidenced by the varied treatment—ranging from violent opposition to stalwart defense—of Jews under the Byzantine Empire and within Orthodox Christian countries since.⁵⁷ But this is also a rhetorical form that is no longer accepted, at least in the West (the hyperbolic rhetoric of other cultures, particularly those where the Orthodox Church is more ancient, notwithstanding). One simply does not speak of one’s opponents as a “pack of dogs” or a “swarm

⁵⁶ Aphthonius, a late fourth-century rhetorician who authored one of the textbooks on rhetoric (*progymnasmata*) that was widely used in Byzantine education, describes *psogos* as discourse that expounds “evil attributes” but differs from *koinos topos* in that, rather than “propose punishment” (*epagesthai kolasin*), it “contains mere slander alone” (*psiēn monēn echeiēn diabolēi*; *Progymnasmata* 10.27, H. Rabe, ed., *Aphthonii progymnasmata* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1926]).

⁵⁷ Sources on Jews in the Byzantine Empire abound; for a recent and wide-ranging examination, see Robert Bonfil, et al., eds., *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). On more recent Orthodox Christian-Jewish relations and dialog, see George C. Papademetriou, *Essays on Orthodox Christian-Jewish Relations* (Bristol, IN.: Wyndham Hall, 1990); Malcolm Lowe, ed., *Orthodox Christians and Jews on Continuity and Renewal: The Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism (Immanuel 26/27)* (Jerusalem, 1994); Nicholas de Lange, “The Orthodox Churches in Dialogue with Judaism,” in *Challenges in Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. James K. Aitken and Edward Kessler (New York: Paulist, 2006), 51–62, and Irina Levinskaya, “Jewish-Russian Orthodox Christian Dialogue,” in *Challenges in Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. James K. Aitken and Edward Kessler (New York: Paulist, 2006), 63–68. Amid the most well known of violent oppositions (especially with regard to Holy Week) are the Russian pogroms of the 1880s (see John Doyle Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011]). Among the ardent defenses is the 1568 encyclical of Ecumenical Patriarch Metrophanes III that was issued after a localized outbreak of anti-Jewish violence and declared that “those Christians who commit these insolent acts against the Jews are excommunicated from God Almighty and are cursed and are unforgiven and remain bound even after death” (trans. Papademetriou, *Essays on Orthodox Christian-Jewish Relations*, 87–88).

of God-Slayers [*Theoktokōn*]"⁵⁸ anymore. Such appearances of *psogos* rhetoric one can do without, while nonetheless hopefully preserving the marvel of the paradox of Christ's divine *sunkatabasis*. In fact, when Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew acknowledged the need to amend these texts, it seems that he called for the removal of these specimens of *psogos* specifically.⁵⁹

Fourth, one ought not decontextualize the conversation related to possible emendation of these texts. To abstract any conversation related to Orthodox Christian-Jewish relations denies, for example, the considerably different contexts in which Orthodox Christians of Russia or the West and Orthodox Christians of Palestinian communities find themselves. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as one important example, has diverse, complicated, and often tense relationships with the State of Israel, other Orthodox Churches (which are independent of each other) and, most importantly, the Christian faithful in its care that each offers a unique dimension to the need for the betterment of Christian-Jewish relations. The call to amend these liturgical texts in countries where Christians experience little or no tension or hardship in the name of Judaism or a Jewish State is a call that must be articulated carefully and sensitively when transferred to those areas where Christians indeed experience such things.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Third sticheron of the Beatitudes after the Sixth Gospel, Holy Friday Matins (*Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 242). This otherwise harsh sticheron follows the verse, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt 5:7).

⁵⁹ See Groen, "Anti-Judaism," 382.

⁶⁰ Of the latter, take for example the recent defacement of an Orthodox church in Israel, with slogans such as "Jesus [is] garbage" and "Death to Arabs" sprawled on its walls (see Ilan Ben Zion, "Church Defaced in Jerusalem in Suspected 'Price Tag' Hate Attack," *The Times of Israel*, May 9, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/church-defaced-in-jerusalem-in-suspected-price-tag-attack/> [accessed March 2015]), or the torching of an Orthodox seminary in Jerusalem (see Judah Ari Gross, "Jerusalem Christian Seminary Targeted in Apparent Hate Crime," *The Times of Israel*, February 26, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-christian-seminary-targeted-in-alleged-hate-crime/> [accessed March 2015]).

A final point: There is always a risk when analyzing a set of texts according to a category that does not chiefly concern those texts. Whether or not one calls for the amending of these texts, one cannot and should not characterize them in such a way so as to make the anti-Jewish passages appear as the norm while relegating the non-antagonistic or even positive references to mere exceptions (the term “anti-Jewish” as a generalized descriptor often obscures more than it reveals). Such characterization inappropriately labels these services as something they are not, and inapt categorization rarely serves to benefit. One must not, in other words, categorize the Holy Week and Pascha texts as products of anti-Jewish fervor rather than products of theological encounters with the God-Man, the Author of Life who became subject to death, that repeatedly marvel at the redemption of all of humankind, Jews and Greeks, through the conquering of death. The unifying, universal, and inclusive nature of Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, comes out especially clearly in the final troparion of Matins before the midnight Paschal Liturgy—easily the climax of the week and a fitting place to conclude:

It is the day of resurrection;
Let us be made bright in the festival,
and let us embrace one another;
Let us say, “brothers,”
even to those who hate us;
Let us forgive all things in the resurrection,
and thus let us exclaim,
“Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling death by death,
and to those in the tombs, bestowing life.”⁶¹

⁶¹ *Hai Hierai Akolouthiai*, 460 (modified significantly). Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 1.1.