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# Hagar

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# Hagar

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“Hagar.” In *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, edited by Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn, 174. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

## HAGAR

*Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell*

Following Philo of Alexandria (*Legum Allegoria* III, 244), Jerome translated Hagar as *paroichia* ("alongside the house" i.e. alien) or pilgrim. Egyptian maid of Sarah, who gave her to Abraham so that God's promise of a son could be fulfilled (Genesis 16:1-16). Hagar and her son Ishmael were driven into the wilderness after Sarah became displeased because "he **played** with her son Isaac" (Gen 21:9). The rabbis and Paul interpret this to be mockery and persecution of the younger child (Galatians 4:29). In the effort to offset Galatian Christians' attraction to the Law of Moses, Paul contrasted the two wives of Abraham and their respective sons (Gal 4:21-31). By use of "allegory" (or rather typology), Paul linked Hagar and Mount Sinai with contemporary Jerusalem, "in slavery along with her children" (4:25). Implicitly the free-born Sarah is linked with "the Jerusalem above," the mother of Christianity, children of the promise like Isaac (4:26, 28). This interpretation was the basis for Church Fathers to explore the relationship between Jews and Christians (Ambrose, *Abraham*, P.L. XIV c. 454; Augustine, *City of God* XV ch 2; Jerome, *Galatians* P.L. XXVI c. 417). Isidore of Seville developed the identification of Hagar with the Old Testament and Synagogue, of Sarah with New Testament and Church. From Gen 21:14 he linked Ishmael with "the sinful and foolish people" clinging to the Synagogue, "expelled from her lands to wander the entire world and not to know well the way, which is Christ" (P.L. LXXXI c. 248). After the rise of Islam, John of Damascus linked the Saracens with the descendants of Ishmael; his derivation of the term Saracen (*Sarra - kenoï*) is that "Sarah sent [Hagar] away empty" (PG XCIV c. 764).

LAWRENCE E. FRIZZELL