

Christian-Jewish Polemics in the 2nd–3rd centuries and Necromancy (Mart. Pionii 13–14)

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[Panteleev A. D.](#) *Christian-Jewish Polemics in the II-III centuries and Necromancy (Mart. Pionii 13-14), Religiya. Tserkov'. Obshchestvo. Issledovaniya i publikatsii po teologii i religii [Religion. Church. Society: Research and publications in the field of theology and religious studies], Saint-Petersburg, 2015, vol. 4, pp. 158-197.*

doi: 10.24411/2308-0698-2015-00009

Language: Russian

The article deals with the passage of the “Martyrdom of Pionios the Presbyter and his companions” (BHG 1546), where the martyr called Christians who came to him in prison to remain faithful to Christ and not to succumb to the Jews seeking to convert them to their religion. He paid special attention to claim of the Jews that they were able to raise Christ by means of necromancy, and He appeared before them like a common criminal or self-murderer (biothanes). This is compared with a story about raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor for king Saul (1 Sam. 28). The belief in necromancy in the Ancient East and in the Ancient World provided the basis for the credibility of the story both for the Jews and the Christians, but it could be interpreted in different ways. This story attracted attention of Justin, Tertullian, Origenes, Zeno of Verona, st. Ambrose, Augustin, Eustathius of Antioch, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius Ponticus and others. Some authors thought, that it was true and it was Samuel himself, the second group decided that it was Samuel, but he raised by the will of the God, and the third group claimed that it was daemon of hell. Pionios linked these two stories for controversy with the Jewish propaganda and preventing apostasy from Christianity. It was necessary both for those who resisted in the time of persecution and for apostates. Pionios said that forced apostasy was the venial sin, but voluntary avoidance of true faith is deadly sin.



Key words: [Early Christianity](#), [persecutions](#), [martyrdom](#), [necromancy](#), [Martyrdom of Pionios](#)

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