

Figural Reading in the Epistle to the Hebrews:
A Dialogue with Augustine and Calvin

by

Gregory Woodae Lee

Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Geoffrey Wainwright, Supervisor

Paul Griffiths

Stanley Hauerwas

Richard Hays

Reinhard Hütter

C. Kavin Rowe

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
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2010

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This exercise in constructive Christian theology presents the relation between the testaments as a critical problematic for the figural reading of the Old Testament. The project consists of two parts, the first focusing on Augustine and Calvin, and the second primarily on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The first part provides a typological comparison between Augustine and Calvin on the continuity and discontinuity of the testaments (chapters 1-2), the people of God across the testaments (chapter 3), and the purpose of Scripture in redemptive history (chapter 4). Augustine defines the unity of the testaments according to a sign-referent framework whereby the Old Testament signifies the New. Calvin, on the other hand, locates this unity in the one covenant, grounded in Christ across the testaments. Since Augustine thinks the grace of the New Testament was veiled before the time of Christ, he asserts the necessity of interpreting the Old Testament according to two levels of meaning: the literal and the spiritual. Since Calvin thinks the Old and New Testaments, substantially identical, both reveal the knowledge of God, he restricts interpretation to the literal sense, though this sense can have multiple referents: Israel, Christ, the church, and the eschaton. Each figure struggles to account for Israel and the Old Testament saints. For Augustine, the saints belonged to the New Testament as they mediated the Old. Calvin alternately identifies Israel as the church during Old Testament times, and the Old Testament saints as redemptive-historical aberrations.

The second part draws upon this typological comparison to consider the Epistle to the Hebrews with reference to its depiction of redemptive history (chapter 5), its

appropriation of the Psalms (chapter 6), and its overarching vision of Scripture (chapter 7). Hebrews locates the discontinuity between the testaments in the establishment of Christ as high priest, and the continuity in a common people and a common hope for an eternal inheritance. The author interprets the Psalms neither according to two levels of meaning, nor within an expansive literal sense, but as a living word of address whereby God speaks directly to his people. Old Testament locutions retain their illocutionary force, but adopt new valence in light of Christ. The authority of Scripture, then, rests not in some historically reconstructed sense, but in God's self-communicative act in the redemptive-historical present.

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Abbreviations

ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325, ed. A. Coxe, J. Donaldson, A. Menzies, and A. Roberts, 10 vols. (New York, 1885-96)
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout, 1953-)
CO	<i>Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia</i> , ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, <i>Corpus Reformatorum</i> , vols. 29-87 (Brunswick and Berlin, 1863-1900)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866-)
CTS	Calvin Translation Society (Edinburgh, 1844-56; reprinted in 22 vols., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003)
NPNF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. P. Schaff and Henry Wace, 2 series of 14 vols. each (New York, 1886-1900)
OE	<i>Ioannis Calvini opera omnia, Series 2: Opera exegetica veteris et novi testamenti</i> (Geneva, 1992-)
OS	<i>Johannis Calvini opera selecta</i> , ed. P. Barth, W. Niesel, and D. Scheuner, 5 vols. (Munich, 1926-62)
WSA	The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21 st Century, ed. J. Rotelle (New York, 1990-)
PL	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844-65)
PLS	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Supplementum</i> , ed. A. Hamman, 3 vols. (Paris, 1958-63)
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>

Acknowledgements

Six years is a non-trivial block of time for the third decade of life, and my doctoral studies have coincided with a significant phase of intellectual and personal transition and growth. My debts are therefore many. I am particularly appreciative of my advisor, Geoffrey Wainwright, for his sage and even-handed guidance; he will doubtless perceive his influence throughout this work. I am also thankful to my dissertation committee for constructive feedback during the writing process: Paul Griffiths, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Hays, Reinhard Hütter, and Kavin Rowe. Other faculty members who have taught me much include Elizabeth Clark, Hans Hillerbrand, Joel Marcus, Ed Sanders, Warren Smith, and David Steinmetz. Lawrence Richardson and Reginald Foster not only walked me through the Latin language, but also helped me with various translation issues. I will always be grateful to David Aers for introducing me to *City of God*.

The Duke Graduate Program in Religion boasts an unusually supportive student community. The following have both enlivened and enriched my studies: in theology, Natalie Carnes and Matthew Whelan, Ben Dillon, Keith Johnson, Sean Larsen, and Sheryl Overmyer; in New Testament, Hans Arneson, T. J. Lang, and Matthew Thiessen; in early Christianity, Maria Doerfler and Tom McGlothlin; in Reformation, David Fink. Much of what I know about Hebrews may be attributed to David Moffitt, who saved me from numerous errors in my fifth and sixth chapters. One of my students, Janet Xiao, provided enthusiastic and invaluable assistance on bibliographic matters. In general, the undergraduates I have taught are a joyful reminder of why I began this path in the first place.

A particularly fortuitous rooming arrangement awaited me when I first arrived in Durham, and I remain appreciative of Derrick and Sarah Chou, Sue Kim, and Daniel Li for patiently facilitating my transition. In more recent years, Blacknall Presbyterian Church has brought weekly stability and peace.

My greatest debts are to my two “families.” The first is the community of Manna Christian Fellowship, which has taught me very concretely the meaning of grace. My staff worker, David H. Kim, led the senior small group on Hebrews that initiated my interest in this project, and has continued to provide much encouragement and warmth. Risa Toha, with whom I began the doctoral journey, has proven herself a singularly stubborn friend. The second is my biological kin. My status as an unfunded student has presented a number of emotional and financial challenges, for which I am all the more appreciative of the support of my parents, Yoon Joo and Sook Ja Lee, and my 누나 and her husband, Christine and Ryan Buchholz. My 조카들, WonGi and EunHae, have been the highlight of my life since I began this program, and I look forward now to spending more time with them than I have been able.

Introduction

The proper interpretation of the Old Testament was the central question of early Christian self-definition. This issue first arises in the New Testament, where Paul's ministry to the Gentiles prompts a series of difficulties about the nature and purpose of the Mosaic law, the calling of the Gentiles, and God's faithfulness to the Jewish people. Paul addresses these issues most directly in his letters to the Romans and Galatians, but such matters figure prominently also in Acts: the first recorded council in Christian history preeminently concerns the proper understanding of Israel's Scripture in light of the new reality that God has extended his mercy to the Gentiles. Later writers continue this debate over the Old Testament. In the second century, Justin Martyr constructs a dialogue with a Jewish interlocutor to explain how Christians can retain Israel's Scripture without observing the practices prescribed therein.¹ Writing against the Gnostics, Irenaeus insists on the narrative unity of the Old and New Testaments, appealing prominently to the principle of recapitulation.² Tertullian inherits the task of defending against Marcion the identity of God across the testaments and explaining how the one God of both justice and love could nevertheless enact two different covenants.³ In the next century, Origen discovers the unity of the testaments in the spiritual reading of the Old,⁴ while defending the Old Testament against an educated "pagan" critic.⁵ In the fourth and fifth centuries, Augustine, too, issues a

¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*.

² *Adversus Haereses*.

³ *Adversus Marcionem*.

⁴ *De Principiis*.

⁵ *Contra Celsum*.

series of rebuttals against opponents of the Old Testament, this time the Manicheans.⁶

Finally, the Trinitarian formulations of Nicaea arise at least in part from the concern to preserve the Old Testament emphasis on the oneness of God with the New Testament practice of directing to Jesus the honor and worship due that one God alone.⁷

Broadly speaking, the church has consistently affirmed some sort of unity between the testaments and the role of the Old Testament in foreshadowing Christ. There has, however, been far less consensus on the precise shape of that unity or the preparatory character of the Old Testament.⁸ Paul's key concern in Romans and Galatians is whether

⁶ Most prominently in *Contra Faustum*.

⁷ For readings of Nicaea along these lines, see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992); David Yeago, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1997; original essay, since revised, published in 1993), 87-100; C. Kevin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 295-312.

⁸ For studies and proposals on this matter, see Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, trans. A. B. Crabtree (1936; London: Lutterworth, 1949); Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (1939; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002); Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in his *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim, *Theory and History of European Literature* 9 (Minneapolis: Univ. Minnesota Press, 1984; essay originally published in 1944), 11-76, and *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, 50th-anniv. ed., trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003); Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Don Wulstan Hibberd (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960); R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and the Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (1959; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1964); James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1969); Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1974); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 3-51, and "Old Testament in Germany 1920-1940: The Search for a New Paradigm," in *Altes Testament: Forschung und Wirkung: Festschrift für Henning Graf Reventlow* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), 233-46; John David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1992), and *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2002); Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); Geoffrey Wainwright, "Psalm 33 Interpreted of the Triune God," *Ex Auditu* 16 (2000): 101-20; Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 2002); The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002); John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005); Peter W.

circumcision is necessary for justification: whether, to put it crudely, Gentiles had to become Jews to become Christians. Yet on one reading, at least, he also insists on God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel, setting forth God's promises in the Old Testament as assurance that the Jews will eventually be restored to Christ. For Justin, by contrast, circumcision was a mark of opprobrium by which the Jews could more easily be identified for destruction in the Bar Kochba revolt as divine punishment for having killed Christ. The prophets, in turn, predicted a new covenant intended for (primarily Gentile) Christians, announcing the abrogation of the old covenant for the Jews. Even in the one century separating Paul and Justin, the Christian tradition has witnessed a remarkable transformation on the value of the Jewish people and her law. It is the contention of this present work that such differences on the contours of redemptive history correspond essentially to divergent reading strategies for the Old Testament. How one assesses the legitimacy of various interpretive practices hinges crucially on how one defines the relation between the testaments. I also argue that the critical test for any such construal is the question of Israel. In what follows, I explore this dynamic through three important expositors: Aurelius Augustine, John Calvin, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁹

Calvin considers Augustine his chief theological influence, and those in the Reformed tradition trace a strong line of continuity between the two on issues such as

Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 283-317, based on "Origen: The Reading of Scripture" (PhD diss., Univ. Notre Dame, 2004); David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010).

⁹ See later chapters for relevant studies.

predestination, grace, and free will. Given this doctrinal convergence, however, their differences on biblical interpretation are particularly striking. While Augustine engages in the kind of spiritual interpretation that characterizes much of the early and medieval church, Calvin decries allegory and insists on the primacy and sufficiency of the literal sense. Consider, for instance, one of Augustine's most daring (yet not atypical) displays of exegetical creativity. In *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, his most developed treatise on the interpretation of the Old Testament, Augustine directs his attention to the story of David and Bathsheba.¹⁰ "David," he writes, means "strong-handed" or "desirable," which corresponds to passages that depict Jesus as the (strong) lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5) or the desire of the nations (Hg. 2:7). "Bathsheba" means "well of satiety" or "seventh well." She must therefore represent the church, which is elsewhere called a well (Sg. 4:15), especially since the Holy Spirit corresponds to the number seven – for seven times seven plus one (for unity) equals fifty, the day of Pentecost. Moreover, Jesus describes the Spirit as a well of living water that provides ultimate satisfaction through eternal salvation (Jn. 4:13-14). "Uriah" means "my light of God," while "Hittite" means "cut off." He, then, symbolizes the devil, who was cut off for taking pride in the light he received from God, yet continues to disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Yes, Augustine says, David committed a grave crime with Bathsheba. But "that one desired by all the nations, nonetheless, loved the Church, who was bathing on the rooftop, that is, cleansing herself from the filth of the world and rising above and trampling upon its house of clay by spiritual contemplation. And, after having come to know her through his first encounter with her, he afterward completely

¹⁰ Augustine *c. Faust.* 22.87.

removed the devil from her, killed him, and united her to himself in perpetual marriage. Let us hate the sin but not destroy the prophecy.”

Calvin could not countenance such a reading. In his commentary on Galatians, the Swiss Reformer seizes upon Paul’s discussion of Sarah and Hagar as an opportunity to castigate the practice of medieval allegory.¹¹ While Paul’s particular illustration is, in Calvin’s view, entirely consistent with the literal sense, Origen and his followers exploited the apostle’s use of the term “allegory” as an occasion for “torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense.” Since the world will always prefer speculation to solid doctrine, Calvin laments,

the licentious system gradually attained such a height, that he who handled Scripture for his own amusement not only was suffered to pass unpunished, but even obtained the highest applause. For many centuries no man was considered ingenious, who had not the skill and daring necessary for changing into a variety of curious shapes the sacred word of God. This was undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage. God visited this profanation by a just judgment, when he suffered the pure meaning of the Scripture to be buried under false interpretations.

Indeed, Calvin’s respect for Augustine does not prevent him from repeatedly dismissing the Bishop of Hippo’s exegetical suggestions. In the Genesis commentary alone, Calvin presents the following judgments on Augustine’s proposals: the Trinitarian treatment of the image of God is an “excessive refinement” that rests upon “subtleties”;¹² one finds “scarcely anything solid” in the allegorical application of Noah’s ark to the body of Christ;¹³ the relation

¹¹ Calvin *Comm. Gal.* 4.22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.14.

between the eighth day of circumcision and the resurrection rests on nothing “certain and solid”;¹⁴ the suggestion that “Jacob” refers to the patriarch’s present life and “Israel” to his future life is “specious rather than solid.”¹⁵ Calvin does not reject all speculation and allegory: he is, for instance, “not dissatisfied” with Augustine’s suggestion that the tree of life is a figure of Christ,¹⁶ and he does acknowledge “something in man which refers to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷ It is, nevertheless, remarkable how freely Calvin dismisses a thinker he clearly holds in the highest regard.

In the first four chapters, I establish a typological comparison between Augustine and Calvin that locates their divergence on allegory in their differences on the unity of the testaments. The first and second chapters treat the continuity and discontinuity between the testaments, respectively. I argue that Augustine defines the unity of the testaments according to a sign-referent framework whereby the Old Testament signifies the New. For Calvin, on the other hand, unity means identity, whereby the one covenant of grace mediates Christ across both testaments. These chapters expose difficulties for both figures concerning the Old Testament saints. Augustine says these figures belonged to the New Testament as they mediated the Old, while Calvin alternately depicts Israel as the Old Testament analogue to the New Testament church and individual saints as redemptive-historical aberrations who received New Testament blessings by way of transfer. In the third chapter, then, I consider more fully Augustine and Calvin’s broader visions concerning the people of God across the

¹⁴ Ibid., 17.12.

¹⁵ Ibid., 35.10.

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.9.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1.26.

testaments. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I treat each figure's understanding of the nature and purpose of Scripture, and how their contrasting construals of redemptive history give rise to their divergent positions on the allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. In this first part of the dissertation, my concern is not to trace out Augustine's historical influence on Calvin, nor to explain their differences according to their sociocultural contexts, but to position them as interlocutors in a theological conversation.¹⁸

Having set forth this rubric for conceiving the relation between the testaments and the reading of the Old, I turn in the second part of this project to the Epistle to the Hebrews. A neglected text, Hebrews has for much of its history been categorized with the writings of Paul; in recent years, it has been dismissed as a paradigmatic example of supersessionism.¹⁹ Indeed, Hebrews does declare the abrogation of the old covenant, and repeatedly stresses the futility of the Old Testament sacrifices. Nevertheless, this Epistle

¹⁸ For historical studies on Calvin's engagement with Augustine and other early Christian thinkers, see Luchsius Smits, *Saint Augustin dans l'œuvre de Jean Calvin*, 2 vols. (Assen: van Gorcum, 1957-58); J. Marius J. Lange van Ravenswaay, *Augustinus totus noster: Das Augustinverständnis bei Johannes Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990); David Steinmetz, "Calvin and Patristic Exegesis," in *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 122-40; Johannes van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 661-700; Anthony N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999); R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹⁹ For a history of the interpretation of Hebrews, see Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 19-63; for early Christian interpretations of the text, see Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation: A Study of the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 15 (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1973); David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973); Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976); Erik M. Heen and Philip D. Krey, eds., *Hebrews*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005). Much of the latter volume is organized around Chrysostom's commentary, whom Calvin engages often throughout his own commentary. See Chrysostom, *Homilies on The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NPNF 14. See also Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7, 1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 19 (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1976).

provides a far more fruitful source of reflection on the relation between the testaments than has often been appreciated. Of all the New Testament witnesses, Hebrews contains the fullest discussion of the Levitical priesthood, provides the most sustained narrative of the Old Testament (except perhaps Acts 7), and displays the richest examples of Scripture being used as a word of direct address (Paul may be a competitor). Hebrews not only inspires the long-standing Christian distinction between shadow and reality, but also advances such a developed high priestly Christology that the author certainly deserves a place alongside the Johannine material and the Pauline correspondences as one of the most mature theological voices in the New Testament.

The last several decades of scholarship have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the complexities of early Jewish-Christian relations.²⁰ This movement has prompted a concern to read the New Testament documents according to their Second Temple Jewish context, and to reconstrue the “parting of the ways” according to a far more variegated series of developments than has formerly been recognized. While Paul has especially received significant attention on these issues,²¹ recent work reveals a burgeoning curiosity in Hebrews

²⁰ Recent studies include Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000); Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion* (Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007).

²¹ Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1977), *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1983), and *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991); James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* and *Romans 9-16*, 2 vols., Word Biblical Commentary 38a-b (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), *Jesus, Paul, and the Law* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), and *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press,

for a fresh and alternative perspective on the same concerns.²² In particular, there is a growing awareness that Hebrews presents a thoroughly Jewish vision of Israel's history and the high priestly ministry of Christ free from Pauline concerns about Gentile Christianity, the redefinition of "Israel," or God's ongoing faithfulness to the Israelites. There is in Hebrews no reference to the Gentile mission, no polemic against Jewish practices (besides the sacrificial system), and no suggestion of an effacement of Jewish distinctiveness. Hebrews thus provides a particularly promising locus for theological reflection upon the relation between the testaments and the interpretation of the Old.

I treat this Epistle in three steps. The fifth chapter of this present work explores the author's vision of redemptive history according to the dynamics of continuity and discontinuity. I argue that the primary point of discontinuity concerns the establishment of Christ as high priest, while the primary grounds for continuity rest in God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel and a common hope for an eternal inheritance. In the sixth chapter, I

1994); D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001-4); Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Douglas Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2003); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. and exp. ed. (1986; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). Also worth mentioning are E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1985), and *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993); Fabian E. Udoh, ed., with Susannah Heschel, Mark Chancey, and Gregory Tatum, *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 16 (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 2008); and an earlier article that helped animate Sanders' work, George Foot Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197-254.

²² Note this theme in three recent collections of essays: Gabriella Gelardini, ed., *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Richard Bauckham and others, eds., *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, Library of New Testament Studies 387 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), and *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009). For more bibliography on Hebrews, see chapters 5-6.

detail three defining instances of Hebrews' scriptural interpretation, focusing on the author's appropriation of Ps. 95, Ps. 110, and Ps. 8. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I provide a theological description for Hebrews' use of the Old Testament and the author's operating vision of the nature and purpose of Scripture. While these chapters rely heavily upon New Testament scholarship, I also continue the dialogue with Augustine and Calvin, drawing for my account of Hebrews upon the themes and categories set forth in the first part of the project. The last chapter in particular engages contemporary proposals on the doctrine of Scripture, especially in the work of Henri de Lubac, Kevin Vanhoozer, and John Webster.

While I argue that on significant points Hebrews presents a more fruitful and coherent position on the relation between the testaments than Augustine or Calvin, the purpose of this second part is not simplistically to use the Epistle to critique these two figures. Hebrews is but one voice in the New Testament, and many of the points of difference between the Epistle and Augustine or Calvin arise from Paul's influence upon the latter. A more holistic study would ask whether Hebrews advances a better understanding of these matters than Paul, whether Augustine and Calvin read Paul rightly, how to synthesize the diverse witnesses of the New Testament, and so forth. Since this is not my task, I simply acknowledge here that the criticisms of Augustine and Calvin I adduce from Hebrews may to some extent be deflected with the reminder that these two figures never intended to propose a theology of just Hebrews in the first place. Indeed, I do not provide in this project a meta-theory on the normativity of Hebrews' theological vision vis-à-vis other potential options. I treat Augustine and Calvin as theological dialogue partners, and I introduce Hebrews more as a privileged contributor to the discussion than as final arbiter. While I do confess Hebrews as Scripture and therefore authoritative over the other two expositors, the

complexities of adjudicating between different canonical voices preclude me from generalizing my proposals as if they represented some kind of unified Christian view. Again, my task is to display Hebrews' particular theological vision, and not that of the New Testament at large, still less the whole canon.

I present this project chiefly as an instance of Christian theology. While I do attempt to provide thorough and faithful readings of the primary interlocutors, I do not offer as comprehensive an examination of Augustine, Calvin, or Hebrews as would characterize historical or biblical studies. My concern is simply to highlight the theological issues at work in each expositor concerning the relation between redemptive history and the interpretation of Scripture. In that vein, I do not engage with Hebrews according to the methodological assumptions that generally govern biblical studies. One of the characteristics of New Testament scholarship is a salutary desire to adhere to the data of the text, to understand and appreciate the particular vision of one individual author or writing without imposing upon it later theological categories that distort the historical meaning. In practice, though, this concern can result in a weakened theological imagination, even the rejection of any effort to explore the doctrinal implications of the texts at hand.²³ Discussion of the New Testament must be confined to what an author could have meant in the original setting, without considering how the text fits into wider streams of theological reflection. My study proceeds from the opposite direction: I do not hesitate, for instance, to read Hebrews in light of Nicene Trinitarian theology, and in the fifth chapter draw upon Augustine's *De Trinitate* to

²³ For frustrations expressed along these lines, see Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), especially "The Troubled Fortunes of New Testament Scholarship," 13-26.

describe the redemptive-historical dynamics operating in the Epistle. In short, I seek not to reconstruct what the author of Hebrews might have thought or meant, but to draw upon the Epistle to reflect theologically on the relation between the testaments and the interpretation of Scripture. This admittedly experimental methodology will succeed if it suggests the value of reading Scripture in dialogue with the history of biblical interpretation.

My project interfaces with several related areas of study. The first concerns the doctrine of Scripture. While recent years have witnessed a number of fine proposals in this area,²⁴ none to my knowledge has engaged extensively and exegetically with a single biblical corpus. Indeed, many of these volumes apologize for the lacuna. Hans Frei presents *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* as a contribution to the “almost legendary category of analysis of analyses of the Bible in which not a single text is examined, not a single exegesis undertaken.”²⁵ So, too, John Webster introduces his dogmatic account of Scripture with the qualification that his volume can have “only a modest role, ancillary to the primary theological task, which is exegesis ... What [such an account] may not do is replace or eclipse the work of exegesis.”²⁶ Although Kevin Vanhoozer’s *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* and

²⁴ David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), originally published *The Uses of Scripture of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, *Current Issues in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Kenton L. Sparks, *God’s Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). See chapter 7 for further bibliography.

²⁵ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1974), vii.

²⁶ Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 3.

especially Telford Work's *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* draw more intentionally upon the biblical text, neither focuses directly on one particular canonical voice in significant dialogue with the latest developments in biblical studies. My project not only engages formally in scriptural interpretation, but also advances materially a vision of Scripture drawn from an actual biblical text.

Accordingly, my project also presents a methodological proposal for bridging the gap between theology and biblical studies. In a seminal lecture entitled "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today,"²⁷ then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger said of the divide between historical and theological study: "Hardly anyone today would assert that a truly pervasive understanding of this whole problem has yet been found which takes into account both the undeniable insights uncovered by the historical method, while at the same time overcoming its limitations and disclosing them in a thoroughly relevant hermeneutic. At least the work of a whole generation is necessary to achieve such a thing."²⁸ The recent publication of *Jesus of Nazareth* suggests that Pope Benedict XVI would continue to affirm this judgment,²⁹ as the foreword of this volume largely reiterates the same themes as the lecture nearly twenty years before.³⁰ Two intervening studies by the Pontifical Biblical Commission also reflect interest in this

²⁷ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus, Encounter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 1-23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xi-xxiv.

matter from the Catholic side: *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*³¹ and *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*.³² These topics have attracted interest outside Catholic circles as well, and the last several years have witnessed an almost dizzying multiplication of studies on the theological interpretation of Scripture, defined generally according to the desire to move past the strictures of historical criticism toward ecclesially oriented interpretation. The Brazos Theological Commentaries on the Bible, the Two Horizons Commentary series, the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, and the new *Journal of Theological Interpretation* (begun in 2007) constitute just some of the major initiatives.³³ While my project is not primarily concerned with prolegomena, I do conduct my study in conscious (if sometimes implicit) awareness of these questions as I present my own approach for integrating the disciplines.

³¹ The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), for which Ratzinger writes the preface.

³² Cited above. Ratzinger contributes the preface for this document as well. See also José Granados, Carlos Grandos, and Luis Sánchez-Navarro, eds., *Opening Up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation*, Retrieval and Renewal: Ressourcement in Catholic Thought (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), which reprints Ratzinger's earlier lecture.

³³ See Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (London: T&T Clark, 1994), and *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Stephen E. Fowl, *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, cited above, and *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); Christopher R. Seitz, *Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), and *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight, eds., *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, eds., *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, gen. ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006); Markus Bockmuehl and Alan J. Torrance, eds., *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

Third, this project welcomes and responds to New Testament gestures toward constructive theology. In particular, I meet halfway those studies of the use of the Old Testament in the New that stimulate synthetic reflection on the legitimacy of such reading practices.³⁴ In this vein, Richard Hays' *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* occupies a privileged place, having animated the questions that undergird this study even if my focus is not Paul but the author of Hebrews. While Hays' work is primarily an exercise in biblical studies, I take his final remarks on the normativity of Paul's reading practices as an invitation for theologians to enter the discussion. From this perspective, it seems appropriate to engage the results of biblical studies in as much detail as can be expected of a non-specialist.

Fourth, this project may be considered a contribution to the history of biblical interpretation, particularly with regard to allegory, typology, and figural interpretation.³⁵

³⁴ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Fontana, 1952); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed., Biblical Resource Series (1983; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1989), and *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000); John M. Court, ed., *New Testament Writers and the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 2002); Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb, *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

³⁵ On allegory, typology, and figural interpretation, see studies cited above. For other works on the history of biblical interpretation, see Robert M. Grant, with David Tracy, *A Short History of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (1963; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1984); P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to Jerome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970); G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969); S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1963); Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, eds., *Reading Job with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. America Press, 2005); Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum, eds., *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Charles Kannengiesser, with special contributions by various scholars, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient*

Again, the purpose here is not to provide a comprehensive guide to Augustine or Calvin's exegesis, but to highlight the theological concerns that structure their thought. Nevertheless, this study draws from a wide range of their writings on topics central to their body of work. Each figure was deeply concerned with the interpretation of the Old Testament; the dynamics of sin, law, and grace; the relation between church and Israel; the purpose of Scripture in redemption. A more systematic approach may illuminate, rather than obscure the contours of their thought, even if individual nuances of historical detail will not receive as much attention. Readers interested in only Augustine or Calvin may restrict their attention to the sections dedicated to either in the first four chapters.

A few technical notes before I begin. First, as this project is an exercise in Christian theology, I do make ample use of the term "Old Testament." While I appreciate the potential offense of this claim upon Israel's Scripture, the study simply makes no sense apart from the basic conviction that the Christian tradition was right to affirm the unity of the canon and the preparatory character of the Old Testament. One of the chief arguments of this work is that Hebrews is not simplistically supersessionist, and that new covenant language signals the renewal, and not the rejection of Israel. Nevertheless, the claim that

Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Donald K. McKim, ed., *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007); John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis That You Can't Learn from Exegesis Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003-9). Note also the seminal David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980): 27-38. For evidence of recent interest in Augustine and Calvin's interpretive practices, see Pamela Bright, ed. and trans., *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1999), based on *Bible de tous les temps*, vol. 3, *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. Anne-Marie La Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986); Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt, eds., *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, *Collectanea Augustiniana* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Donald K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006). See chapter 4 for further bibliography.

Jesus Christ is the mediator of this new covenant seems to me a fundamental and inescapable Christian confession. In general, I use the term “Old Testament” somewhat flexibly to refer both to the covenant that primarily characterized the time before Christ and the body of literature to which that covenant corresponds. Later chapters will address this distinction in greater depth, considering, for instance, the possibility that the “New Testament” was operative during “Old Testament” times.

Second, I use the Revised Standard Version for English translations of biblical passages. Despite the commendable impulse toward gender-neutral translation, the New Revised Standard Version often obscures linguistic features that bear importantly upon issues central to this project. In particular, the translation of Heb. 2:5-9 according to the plural “human beings” and “mortals,” and not the singular “man” and “son of man,” forecloses the possibility of Christological readings that figure prominently in the sixth chapter.

Third, I have exercised some editorial discretion with regard to the Latin text for passages cited from Augustine and Calvin. For every quotation, I provide the page reference to the appropriate Latin edition. For more important quotations, I also provide the Latin itself, sometimes including for the sake of clarity and context more text from the original language than reflected in the English translation. In general, I follow the orthography of the editions used: the reader will, for instance, notice both “u”s and “v”s, and both “i”s and “j”s. “Deus” will sometimes be capitalized, sometimes not. I have, however, consistently capitalized the first letter of each sentence.

PART I: RELATING THE TESTAMENTS

1. The continuity between the testaments

Et nouum in uetere est figuratum et uetus in nouo est reuelatum.
Augustine, *Contra aduersariarum legis et prophetarum*

Patrum omnium foedus adeo substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro
differt, ut unum prorsus atque idem sit ...
Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*

This chapter initiates a typological comparison between Augustine and Calvin's construals of the relation between the testaments that will continue through the fourth chapter. Here the focus is the basic conceptual framework through which each figure defines the unity of the testaments. The divergence between Augustine and Calvin on this issue is fundamental, and as I will argue in subsequent chapters, corresponds directly to their differences concerning the relation between Israel and the church, the nature of Scripture, and ultimately the interpretation of the Old Testament.

It may go without saying that this chapter will be selective: my choice of issues and texts is driven in part by the concerns that will arise in the Epistle to the Hebrews, though I also try to provide a broad enough exposition of each figure such that the main contours of their thought may be discerned. The purpose of this comparison is not to provide a comprehensive survey of either, but more modestly to establish a theological framework that will help us consider questions surrounding the relation between the testaments and the interpretation of the Old.

1.1 Augustine

For Augustine's position on the unity between the testaments, I take a somewhat narrativel approach, beginning with *Confessions* (written 397-401)¹ for key themes that will characterize his reflections on the Old Testament throughout his career. I then consider three related works where Augustine directly defends the legitimacy of the Old Testament: *Answer to Adimantus* (394),² *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* (late 390s-410),³ and *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets* (418-23).⁴ The patterns of argument in these works share much common ground, and Augustine himself seems to have considered these texts something of a unit.⁵ Of these three works, *Answer to Faustus* is the lengthiest and most important.⁶ While I do not present my exposition of these texts as a complete historical account of Augustine's thoughts on the Old Testament, these representative soundings do seem to suggest an increasing level of comfort with the literal sense of the text throughout the course of his bishopric.⁷

¹ On date of composition, see Frederick Van Fleteren, "Confessiones," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 227.

² On date of composition, see J. Kevin Coyle, "Adimantum, Contra," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 7.

³ Teske suggests that this text was written in 408-10 (*Answer to Faustus*, 9), while J. Kevin Coyle suggests a date of 398-400 CE ("Faustum Manicheum, Contra," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 356).

⁴ On date of composition, see J. Kevin Coyle, "Adversarium legis et prophetarum, Contra," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 11.

⁵ *C. adv. leg.* 2.12.41, CCL 49:130. "If you review what we wrote against Faustus the Manichee and against Adimantus ... you will find many points that are equally valid against this fellow. And perhaps, if those writings were read, it would not have been very necessary or necessary at all to write this response" (*Si autem recenseatis, quae contra Faustum Manichaeum scripsimus et contra Adimantum ... multa reperietis quae adversus istum pariter valeant*).

⁶ Augustine refers to *c. Faust.* several times in *civ. Dei* for further discussion on the interpretation of the Old Testament. *Civ. Dei* 15.7, 15.26, 16.19, 16.41.

⁷ For studies on Augustine's treatment of the issues discussed here and in the next chapter, see Maurice Pontet, *L'exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); A. D. R. Polman, *The Word of God according to St. Augustine*, trans. A. J. Pomerans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961); James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1969); Gerald Bonner,

1.1.1 The Manichean backdrop

Augustine's struggles to understand the Old Testament grew from his forays into Manicheism, functioning as a lens into the overall conversion narrative of *Confessions*. In an oft-cited passage from Book 3, Augustine writes that he had once found Scripture distasteful, for it compared unfavorably to the elegance of Cicero's prose.⁸ After acknowledging that the real problem had been his pride and failure to penetrate to Scripture's inner meaning (*interiora eius*),⁹ Augustine transitions into a lengthy section on his induction into Manicheism.¹⁰ Here he discusses and disparages a number of the sect's theological concerns, especially concerning the Old Testament.

Augustine first laments his ignorance: "I was subtly maneuvered into accepting the views of those stupid deceivers by the questions they constantly asked me about the origin of evil, and whether God was confined to a material form with hair and nails, and whether

"Augustine as Biblical Scholar," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 541-63; Bertrand de Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse*, vol. 3, *Saint Augustin* (Paris: Cerf, 1983); Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds., *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1995); Elizabeth A. Clark, "Contesting Abraham: The Ascetic Reader and the Politics of Intertextuality," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 353-365, and "Interpretive Fate amid the Church Fathers," in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 127-47; Michael Cameron, "Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis against the Donatists in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*" (PhD diss., Univ. Chicago, 1996); Pamela Bright, ed. and trans., *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1999), based on *Bible de tous les temps*, vol. 3, *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. Anne-Marie La Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986); Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

⁸ *Conf.* 3.5.9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, CCL 27:31. "My swollen pride recoiled from its style and my intelligence failed to penetrate to its inner meaning" (*Tumor enim meus refugiebat modum eius et acies mea non penetrabat interiora eius*).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.6.10-3.10.18.

people who practiced polygamy, killed human beings and offered animal sacrifices could be considered righteous.”¹¹ He then devotes several paragraphs to the question of God’s law and its consistency across different times and places. “I did not know either that true inward righteousness (*iustitiam ueram interiorem*) takes as its criterion not custom but the most righteous law of almighty God (*lege rectissima dei omnipotentis*), by which the morality of countries and times was formed as appropriate to those countries and times, while God’s law itself had remained unchanged everywhere and always, not one thing in one place and something different elsewhere.”¹² Despite this consistency in divine law, Augustine says, God does set forth different rules for different contexts, a principle that explains variations across the testaments. “Equally foolish are people who grow indignant on hearing that some practice was allowed to the righteous people in earlier ages which is forbidden to the righteous in our own day, and that God laid down one rule for the former and a different one for the latter, as the difference between the time demands (*pro temporalibus causis*); whereas in fact both sets of people have been subject to the same norm of righteousness (*eidem iustitiae*).”¹³ In his blindness, Augustine did not realize that justice is “unvaryingly self-consistent”¹⁴ even if it manifests itself in different ways for different purposes. He even “censured the holy patriarchs, who not only made use of the opportunities available to them

¹¹ Ibid., 3.7.12, CCL 27:33.

¹² Ibid., 3.7.13, CCL 27:33. “Et non noueram iustitiam ueram interiorem non ex consuetudine iudicantem, sed ex lege rectissima dei omnipotentis, qua formarentur mores regionum et dierum pro regionibus et diebus, cum ipsa ubique ac semper esset, non alibi alia nec alias aliter.”

¹³ Ibid., 3.7.13, CCL 27:34. “Sic sunt isti qui indignantur, cum audierint illo saeculo licuisse iustis aliquid, quod isto non licet iustis, et quia illis aliud praecepit deus, istis aliud pro temporalibus causis, cum eidem iustitiae utrique seruierint.”

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.7.14, CCL 27:34. “... nulla ex parte uariari.”

(*utentes praesentibus*) in the way ordained and inspired by God, but also prefigured what was to come (*futura praenuntiantes*), as God revealed it through them.”¹⁵

Book 5 marks a turning point in Augustine’s perspective on Scripture, narrated through his experiences with two contrasting figures. Augustine begins the book with Faustus, a Manichean bishop, who others had promised would be able to address Augustine’s growing doubts about the sect. Though Augustine finds Faustus’ rhetorical skills impressive, he is disappointed by the bishop’s inability to defend Manichean doctrine and resolves to remain a Manichean only by default. “Since I had found nothing better than this sect into which I had more or less blundered, I resolved to be content with it for the time being, unless some preferable option presented itself (*eluceret*).”¹⁶ At the end of Book 5, Augustine introduces Faustus’ counterpart: Ambrose of Milan. Though Ambrose is less rhetorically gifted than Faustus, Augustine is far more impressed with the content of Ambrose’s words. Under the Bishop of Milan’s teaching, Augustine is gradually persuaded that the Catholic faith is “intellectually respectable.”¹⁷

The key to this shift lies in the interpretation of the Old Testament. “This realization was particularly keen when once, and again, and indeed frequently, I heard some difficult passage of the Old Testament explained figuratively (*aenigmate soluto*); such passages had been death to me because I was taking them literally (*ad litteram*). As I listened to many such

¹⁵ Ibid. “Et reprehendebam caecus pios patres non solum, sicut deus iuberet atque inspiraret, utentes praesentibus, uerum quoque, sicut deus reuelaret, futura praenuntiantes.” See *ibid.*, 3.9.17-3.10.18, CCL 27:37. “Everything that is done by your servants is done either to make plain what needs to be revealed at present, or to foreshadow the future. I knew nothing of all this, and so I derided your holy servants and prophets” (*Fiunt enim omnia a seruiantibus tibi uel ad exhibendum, quod ad praesens opus est, uel ad futura praenuntianda. Haec ego nesciens inridebam illos sanctos seruos et prophetas tuos*).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.7.13, CCL 27:63-64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.14.24, CCL 27:71. “... non impudenter adseri.”

scriptural texts being interpreted in a spiritual sense (*spiritaliter*) I confronted my own attitude, or at least that despair which had led me to believe that no resistance whatever could be offered to people who loathed and derided the law and the prophets.”¹⁸ The Catholic Church now appeared “unconquered (*non ... uicta*), yet not so clearly as to appear the conqueror (*uictrix*)”¹⁹ – a reversal of Augustine’s earlier perspective. Whereas Augustine had previously chosen to stay with the Manicheans for lack of better options, Catholicism has now become his new default. “I resolved therefore to live as a catechumen in the Catholic Church, which was what my parents had wished for me, until some kind of certainty dawned (*eluceret*) by which I might direct my steps aright.”²⁰ The spiritual reading of the Old Testament enables Augustine to turn from Faustus to Ambrose, from the Manicheans to the Catholic Church.

The experiences recounted in *Confessions* shape Augustine’s approach to the unity of Scripture throughout the rest of his career. During the ensuing decades, Augustine will adamantly defend the continuity between the testaments against Manichean opponents and others who reject the Old Testament. In particular, he will affirm the consistency of the New Testament with the Mosaic law and the behavior of the Old Testament saints, often by appeal to spiritual reading. At this point, it is not clear how much value Augustine assigns to the Old Testament in its literal sense. On the one hand, Augustine’s argument regarding

¹⁸ Ibid. “... maxime audito uno atque altero et saepius aenigmate soluto de scriptis ueteribus ubi, cum ad litteram acciperem, occidebar. Spiritualiter itaque plerisque illorum librorum locis expositis iam reprehendebam desperationem meam illam duntaxat, qua credideram legem et prophetas detestantibus atque inindentibus resisti omnino non posse.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 5.14.25, CCL: 27:72.

God's right to set forth different precepts in different contexts does not require appeal to allegory. On the other hand, it seems that there are at this juncture parts of the Old Testament Augustine cannot accept at the literal level.

1.1.2 Figures for our sake

I turn now to three “anti-heretical” works to see how Augustine develops these themes, focusing in this section primarily on the figural character of the Old Testament as treated in *Answer to Faustus*.²¹ *Answer to Faustus* is by far the longest of Augustine's anti-Manichean works, somewhat surprising given Augustine's negative depiction of Faustus in *Confessions* and the fact that Faustus was already dead when Augustine wrote his reply. Yet a closer look at *Confessions* reveals that Augustine had a personal relationship with Faustus,²² indicating that Augustine was more disappointed with Faustus' ability to defend Manichean doctrine – which was simply indefensible – than with his intellectual abilities or person.²³ Indeed, Augustine seems to have taken Faustus' objections against the Old Testament quite seriously precisely because they were the issues that had vexed Augustine before.²⁴ *Answer to Faustus* works through a series of objections Faustus raised in a now-lost book called *The*

²¹ For a recent study that lays great weight on *c. Faust.*, see Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, cited above. I will consider this text in greater depth in chapter 3.

²² *Conf.* 5.7.13.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.7.12, CCL 27:63. “I must say, however, that when I raised these points for consideration and discussion he refused courteously enough, reluctant to risk taking on that burden; for he knew that he did not know about these matters, and was not ashamed to admit it. He was not one of the talkative kind, of whom I had suffered many, who tried to teach me but said nothing. His heart was, if not right with you, yet not without discretion. He was not altogether unaware of his own lack of awareness and was unwilling to enter rashly into argument that might leave him cornered. This attitude endeared him to me all the more, for the restraint of a mind that admits its limitations is more beautiful than the beautiful things about which I desired to learn. I found him consistent in this approach to all the more difficult and subtle questions.” Augustine also introduces his nemesis in *c. Faust.* as “charming in his speech, clever of mind,” albeit “perverse by reason of his wicked error” (*eloquio suavis, ingenio callidus, secta Manichaeus ac per hoc nefando errore perversus*; 1.1, CSEL 25.1:251).

²⁴ *C. Faust.* 15.3, 15.7.

Chapters (Capitula), written between 386 and 390.²⁵ Augustine's response is divided into 33 books, each beginning with a quotation from Faustus' text before providing a Catholic response. The books do not follow any logical order, though they may reflect the sequence of Faustus' text.

One of Faustus' most persistent attacks against the Catholics was that of hypocrisy. The Catholics claimed to accept the authority of the Old Testament, but they did not observe its laws about circumcision, sacrifices, food laws, Sabbaths, and feasts.²⁶ The Catholics were "semi-Christians" (*semichristiani*)²⁷ who failed to recognize the basic incompatibility between the two testaments, and were thus like vessels filled with different substances – vinegar and honey, or water and wine – that produced nothing but mutual adulteration.²⁸ The Manicheans, on the other hand, were consistent and honest in their rejection of the Old Testament: "Both of us reject the Old Testament. If, then, you should ask what the difference is between your faith and mine, it is that you choose to lie and to act like a slave by praising in words what you hate in your mind. I have not learned to lie; I say what I think; I admit that I hate those who command such shameful things as much as the

²⁵ For a helpful summary of the Manichean position expounded in Answer to Faustus, see Michel Tardieu, "Principes de l'exégèse manichéenne du Nouveau Testament," in *Les règles de l'interprétation*, ed. Michel Tardieu (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 123-146. In sum, the Manicheans rejected the Old Testament as an authoritative text, believing Jesus had abolished it and the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New Testament. The New Testament was treated as authoritative, but it constituted something of an interpretive problem, since it was not written by Jesus himself but by his disciples, who relied upon oral traditions. By contrast, Mani, the Paraclete, had himself written the Manichean Scriptures and provided the proper interpretation of the New Testament. The writings of Mani were to the New Testament for the Manicheans as the New Testament was to the Old Testament for Catholics. Faustus thus had legitimate grounds to engage in a sort of proto-historical criticism to filter the New Testament of its various anomalies and inconsistencies.

²⁶ *C. Faust.* 4.1, 6.1, 10.1, amongst other places.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.1., CSEL 25.1:251.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.1. See 8.1, 9.1, amongst other places.

commandments themselves.”²⁹ Augustine’s challenge is to defend the authority of the Old Testament while also explaining why Catholics do not obey its laws. To do so, he devotes much of *Answer to Faustus* to establishing a Christian hermeneutic for the Old Testament.

Throughout the treatise, Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 10 act as a refrain: “All these were symbols of us (*figurae nostrae*)” (1 Cor. 10:6),³⁰ and, “all these things happened to them as symbols (*in figura*), but they were written down on account of us (*propter nos*), upon whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11).³¹ The first use of these texts comes in response to Faustus’ objection regarding the Old Testament’s temporal promises. Augustine writes, “We therefore accept the Old Testament not in order to attain those promises but in order to understand in them the promises of the New Testament. Indeed, the testimony of the Old Testament wins faith for the New.”³² That is, the Christian is not concerned with the promises of the Old Testament per se, but with the way they point toward the realities of the New Testament. The Manicheans are confused, Augustine charges, for they “suppose that, because the signs and sacraments have changed, the realities themselves are also different which the prophetic religion foretold as promised and which the gospel religion has announced as fulfilled.”³³ They “think that, since the realities are the same, they ought not to

²⁹ Ibid., 6.1, CSEL 25.1:285. “Uterque enim nostrum uetus respuit testamentum. Ergo si quid intersit inter meam fidem quaeris et tuam, hoc, quia tibi mentiri libet et inliberaliter agere, ut quod mente oderis, uerbo conlaudes, ego fallere non didici; quod sentio, loquor, tam turpium odisse me fateor praepceptores quam ipsa praecepta.”

³⁰ Ibid., 4.2., CSEL 25.1:269. “Haec omnia figurae nostrae fuerunt.”

³¹ Ibid. “Haec omnia in figura contingebant illis; scripta sunt autem propter nos, in quos finis saeculorum obuenit.”

³² Ibid. “Non ergo uetus testamentum ad consequendas illas promissiones, sed ad intelligendas in eis noui testamenti praeunntiationes accipimus; ueteris quippe testificatio fidem nouo conciliat.”

³³ Ibid., 19.16, CSEL 25.1:512. “... putant signis sacramentisque mutatis etiam res ipsas esse diuersas, quas ritus propheticus praeunntiauit promissas, et quas ritus euangelicus adunntiauit inpletas.”

have been announced as fulfilled by other sacraments than those by which they were foretold when they were still to be fulfilled.”³⁴

This framework for understanding the Old Testament promises corresponds to Augustine’s treatment of the Old Testament commandments. The Manicheans do not understand that “whatever God commanded the earlier people to celebrate was a foreshadowing of what was to come (*umbram futurorum*). And, noticing that those rites are not observed now, they criticize on the basis of the practice of the present time actions that were certainly suited to the time at which they signified, as still to come, things that have now been revealed.”³⁵ Augustine distinguishes between “commandments that regulate life” (*praecepta uitae agendae*) and “commandments that symbolize life” (*praecepta uitae significandae*),³⁶ again appealing to 1 Cor. 10. Since these rites were written “for our sake,” Christians should recognize “the great care with which we need to read and understand them and the great authority in which we should hold them.”³⁷ But since they were also “symbols of us,” and we now experience the realities to which they pointed, “it is no longer necessary to observe the celebration of the symbols that foretold them.”³⁸

³⁴ Ibid. “... censent, cum res eadem sint, non eas aliis sacramentis adnuntiari debuisse completas quam iis, quibus adhuc complendae praenuntiabantur.”

³⁵ Ibid., 6.2, CSEL 25:285. “... quicquid deus mandauit priori populo ad celebrandam umbram futurorum non intellegentes et ea modo non obseruari animaduertentes ex more praesentis temporis illa reprehendunt, quae utique illi temporis congruebant, quo ista, quae nunc manifestata sunt, uentura significarentur.”

³⁶ Ibid. See 10.2-3.

³⁷ Ibid., 6.2, CSEL 25.1:286. “... quanta nobis cura legenda et intellegenda et quanta auctoritate habenda sint.”

³⁸ Ibid. “... iam non opus esse, ut, cum res ipsas manifestatas agimus, figurarum praenuntiantium celebrationi seruiamus.”

Augustine unfolds this hermeneutic through a host of examples.³⁹ Circumcision has to do with the heart: “for in what member is the stripping away of fleshly and mortal concupiscence more aptly prefigured than in that member from which a fleshly and mortal child comes to be?”⁴⁰ The Sabbath rest is “useless to observe after the hope of our eternal rest has been revealed, but not useless to read about or understand.”⁴¹ The sacrifices were “symbols of us, and all such sacrifices signified in many different ways the one sacrifice, whose memory we now celebrate.”⁴² Concerning food laws, certain animals are unclean “not because of their nature but because of what they signify.”⁴³ Pigs, for instance, symbolize human beings who do not ruminate. Even the command against mixing linen with purple or wool retains some significance: one ought not live in a disordered way or confuse distinct vocations in life.⁴⁴ The Old Testament saints would have been “guilty” (*reus*) had they not obeyed these laws during their time, but those of the New Testament would be “foolish” (*desipientes*) to follow these observances now, after the realities they prefigured have been revealed.⁴⁵ Christians, Augustine says, should rather “understand them and practice them in a

³⁹ In Book 6, Augustine addresses each of the laws mentioned in Faustus’ quoted text: circumcision (6.3); Sabbath rest (6.4); sacrifices (6.5); eating meat (6.6-8); eating unleavened bread (6.9); the feast of tabernacles (6.9); not mixing linen with purple or wool (6.9); not yoking together an ox and an ass (6.9); not allowing a bald man or a man with unruly hair to be a priest (6.9). For similar versions of the same argument with much the same list of laws, see 19.9-10, 32.11-13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6.3, CSEL 25.1:286. “In quo enim membro congruentius expoliatio carnalis et mortalis concupiscentiae figuratur, quam unde carnalis et mortalis fetus exoritur?”

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.4, CSEL 25.1:288. “Cessationem uero sabbatorum iam quidem superuacuum ducimus ad obseruandum, ex quo spes reuelata est nostrae quietis aeternae, non tamen ad legendum et intellegendum.”

⁴² Ibid., 6.5, CSEL 25.1:290-91: “... ipsa figurae nostrae fuerunt et omnia talia multis et uariis modis unum sacrificium, cuius nunc memoriam celebramus, significauerunt.”

⁴³ Ibid., 6.7, CSEL 25.1:294. “... non natura, sed significatione inmunda.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.9, CSEL 25.1:300.

spiritual manner (*spiritaliter*).⁴⁶ In sum, “that Scripture then served as a commandment (*praeceptum*) but is now a testimony (*testimonium*).”⁴⁷

The same interpretive strategy can be seen in Augustine’s other works. In *Answer to Adimantus*, Augustine also uses 1 Cor. 10 to highlight the way Old Testament signs refer to New Testament realities. Since the apostles explained only a few of these signs,⁴⁸ takes it upon himself to explain the spiritual interpretation of temporal gifts,⁴⁹ victory over enemies,⁵⁰ Sabbath,⁵¹ unclean food,⁵² and circumcision.⁵³ So also in *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets*, Augustine says programmatically, “The New is prefigured in the Old and the Old is revealed in the New,”⁵⁴ encouraging Christians “not to be content with the

⁴⁶ Ibid. “Quia ea, quae ibi scripta sunt, non iam obseruare corporaliter, sed intellegere et facere spiritualiter nos dominus iubet.”

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6.9, CSEL 25.1:301. “Unde scriptura ipsa tunc erat praeceptum, nunc testimonium.”

⁴⁸ *C. Adim.* 12.5, CSEL 25.1:144. “Sufficit autem, ut nouerint illi, qui de his calumniantur, non ea nos ita intellegere, ut illi adsolent inridere, sed quemadmodum apostoli omnia intellegentes pauca exposuerunt, ut ad easdem regulas cetera posteris intellegenda relinquerent.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.2, CSEL 25.1:179. “Temporal gifts ... are symbols of eternal gifts” (*Omnia dona temporalia figurae sunt donorum aeternorum*).

⁵⁰ Ibid. “Victory over enemies prefigures victory over the devil and his angels” (*Illa de inimicis uictoria praesignat uictoriam de diabolo et angelis eius*).

⁵¹ Ibid., 2.2, CSEL 25.1:118. “But just as we are told of that rest of God’s after the making of the world, so on the seventh day, that is, at the end of this age, we shall attain the rest that is promised to us after the works that we have in this life, if they are righteous works” (*Sed quemadmodum illa requies dei post fabricatum mundum insinuatur, sic requiem, quae nobis promittitur, post opera, quae in hoc mundo habemus, si iusta fuerint, consequemur, septima scilicet eademque ultima parte saeculi ...*). See 16.3.

⁵² Augustine entertains at least two options: 1) the fact that the Jews were commanded against unclean food could “signify unclean human beings” (*ad significationem ualeat hominum immundorum*; *ibid.*, 14.3, CSEL 25.1:153.); or 2) these commands represent “human conduct that the Church, which is the body of the Lord, cannot accept into the solid and everlasting bond of its unity. For she rejects them like unclean food and does not absorb them into her inmost parts” (*ad significationem posita sint humanorum morum, quos ecclesia, quae corpus est domini, in suae unitatis uinculum stabile et sempiternum recipere non potest immundas escas respuens et in sua uiscera non conuertens*; *ibid.*, 15.1, CSEL 25.1:155).

⁵³ Ibid., 16.2, CSEL 25.1:162. “... the shadow was no longer to be a symbol in the flesh, but the reality itself was to be borne in the heart” (... *iam non esset umbra in corpore figuranda, sed res ipsa in corde gestanda*).

⁵⁴ *C. adv. leg.* 1.17.35, CCL 49:64. “Et nouum in uetere est figuratum et uetus in nouo est reuelatum.”

surface of the letter, but to come to an understanding of the letter.”⁵⁵ He also provides examples and discussions of the same sort of spiritual reading we have already seen.⁵⁶

It is important to note how much weight Augustine attaches to the phrase “for our sake.” On Augustine’s account, the Old Testament symbols were given primarily for the benefit of those living in New Testament times. “It is indeed wrong for us not to read what was written for our sake. For it was written more for the sake of us (*magis enim propter nos*) for whom it has been revealed than for the sake of those for whom it was hidden in symbols.”⁵⁷ The fulfillment of these signs, Augustine says, strengthens our faith. “[The books of Scripture] were written for our sake so that we might know and faithfully and firmly hold that those realities, which have now been revealed to us and proclaimed in full clarity, were foretold by those symbols so long before.”⁵⁸

This principle undergirds the stark dichotomy Augustine sets forth between the hidden character of the Old Testament symbols and the revelation of New Testament realities. Before, the realities were understood only “by certain holy men and women,” but now “what has been revealed in full clarity in the time of the New Testament is being preached to whole peoples.”⁵⁹ Those in the Old Testament who recognized the realities

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.5.19, CCL 49:106. “... non esse contentum superficie litterae, sed ad interiora intellegentiae peruenire.”

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.8.11, 1.13.17, 1.16.30, 1.16.31, 1.18.37, 1.19.38, 1.20.39, 1.20.42, 1.21.45, 2.3.12, 2.6.21, 2.6.23, 2.7.26, 2.7.27, 2.7.29, 2.8.31, 2.9.32, 2.9.34, 2.10.35, 2.11.37, 2.12.38.

⁵⁷ *C. Faust.* 6.9, CSEL 25.1:301-2. “Et utique inpium est, ut non legamus nos, quod scriptum est propter nos; magis enim propter nos, quibus manifestatur, quam propter illos, in quibus figurabatur.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.9, CSEL 25.1:300. “... propter nos scripta sunt, ut ea, quae iam nobis reuelata et in manifestatione adnuntiata sunt, tanto ante illis figuris praenuntiata cognoscentes fideliter et firmiter teneremus.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 6.9, CSEL 25.1:300-301. “Sed hoc ueteris testamenti temporibus in figura occultatum a quibusdam sanctis intellegebatur, tempore autem noui testamenti in manifestatione reuelatum populis praedicatur.”

foretold were able to do so only by special insight – and they did not always share their secret. “For, just as all those lofty commandments are not lacking to those old books, so the goal toward which they are directed is truly hidden in them, although the saints who saw its future revelation lived according to that goal, and in accord with the character of those times (*pro temporum proprietate*) they either concealed it in prophecies (*propheticæ tegebant*) or wisely understood what was concealed in those prophecies (*propheticæ tectum sapienter intellegebant*).”⁶⁰ This unique insight was a special gift of the Spirit by which the patriarchs and prophets stood apart from an overall carnal people.

We believe that even the holy and spiritual men of that time, the patriarchs and the prophets, were not caught up in earthly things (*nec ... his terrenis rebus fuisse deditos*). For, since the Spirit of God revealed it to them, they understood what was appropriate to that time and in what ways God decreed that things to come should be symbolized and foretold through all those things that were said and done. And their desire was more focused upon the New Testament (*magisque desiderium eorum de nouo testamento erat*), though their bodily activity at that time had the function of signifying by the old promises the new things to come. In that way not only the tongues of those men but also their lives were prophetic. But a fleshly people clung to the promises of the present life. Yet that people also signified what was to come.⁶¹

Augustine even transfers such figures to the New Testament dispensation, again at the expense of Israel at large.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.30, CSEL 25:1.533-34. “Quia reuera, sicut omnia ista praecepta sublimia nec in illis libris ueteribus desunt, ita illic finis, quo referantur, occultus est, quamuis secundum eum uiuerent sancti, qui futuram eius reuelationem uidebant et pro temporum proprietate uel propheticæ tegebant uel propheticæ tectum sapienter intellegebant.”

⁶¹ Ibid., 4.2, CSEL 25.1:269-70. “Nec ipsos illius temporis sanctos et spiritales uiros, patriarchas et prophetas, his terrenis rebus fuisse deditos credimus; intellegebant enim revelante sibi spiritu dei, quid tempori illi congrueret et quibus modis deus per illas omnes res gestas et dictas futura figuranda et praenuntianda decerneret, magisque desiderium eorum de nouo testamento erat; sed praesens functio corporalis ad significanda noua uentura pollicitationibus ueteribus praebebatur. Ita illorum hominum non tantum lingua, sed et uita prophetica fuit. Carnalis autem populus promissis uitae praesentis inhaerebat. De quo tamen etiam populo nihilominus significabantur futura.”

And so the holy patriarchs and prophets in that first people, who understood what they were doing or what was being done through them, had this hope of eternal salvation in the New Testament. For they belonged to that Testament (*ad illud enim pertinebant*), which they understood and loved. For, even if it was not yet revealed, it was already prefigured. But those people, who desired in it no more than the temporal promises that they had in mind, belonged to the Old Testament (*ad uetus autem illi pertinebant*) and did not understand in those promises the eternal promises that were prefigured and foretold.⁶²

Augustine's position on this issue is consistent throughout his career: one final quotation will suffice. In *Answer to the Enemy of the Law and the Prophets*, Augustine writes of Moses and the prophets:

But even if all those men worshipped in figures by reason of the temporal dispensation of the Old Testament, they still pertained to the New Testament, to which Abraham belonged, even though it was not yet revealed by the grace of God. Hence, if they read the Old Testament with the veil removed, they would understand that the New Testament is not opposed to the law that was given through Moses, just as Abraham and Moses are not opposed to each other.⁶³

1.1.3 The God of both testaments

The second issue raised in *Confessions* concerns the consistency of the law across the testaments, without appeal to the spiritual sense. In this section, I consider this topic primarily in the earlier and later works: *Answer to Adimantus* and *Answer to an Enemy of the Law*

⁶² Ibid., 15.2, CSEL 25.1:419. "Itaque et in illo primo populo sancti patriarchae et prophetae, qui intellegebant, quod agebant uel quod per eos agebatur, in nouo testamento habebant istam spem salutis aeternae; ad illud enim pertinebant, quod intellegebant et diligebant, quia etsi nondum reuelabatur, iam tamen figurabatur; ad uetus autem illi pertinebant, qui non illic amplius quam promissa temporalia cogitata concupiscebant, in quibus aeterna figurata et prophetata non intellegebant."

⁶³ *C. adv. leg.* 2.8.31, CCL 49:116. "Sed illi omnes, etsi pro temporis dispensatione ueteris testamenti ministrabant figuras, ad nouum tamen testamentum quamuis nondum reuelatum per dei gratiam pertinebant, ad quod pertinebat Abraham. Hinc quippe isti, si remoto uelamine legerent, intellegerent ita non esse inimicum euangelium legi, quae data est per Moysen, sicut inter se non sunt inimici Abraham et ipse Moyses." See 2.7.27, where Augustine indicates that it was only people like Moses and the prophets, and not Israel at large, who recognized the things being foretold.

and the Prophets. Allegedly one of the greatest disciples of Mani himself,⁶⁴ Adimantus wrote a work (like Faustus', also now lost) exposing the alleged incompatibilities between the Old and New Testaments, probably in the form of a series of quotations from the Old Testament set forth against New Testament passages. Evidently, Augustine took this work rather seriously, for he responded to it not just once, but twice, as the first response was temporarily lost.⁶⁵ Augustine addresses each of 28 different objections in turn, arguing that the Old and New Testaments do not fundamentally differ in the way that Adimantus alleges. Much of the discussion here does not rely upon appeal to the spiritual sense.

In many cases, Augustine accuses Adimantus of distorted, selective readings that fail to see how apparently contradictory texts might be harmonized, or how opposing themes supposedly associated with either of the testaments can actually be found in both. In Ex. 20, for instance, God commands honoring one's parents, while in Lk. 9, Jesus rebukes a potential follower who would like to bury his father.⁶⁶ Augustine sees no contradiction here: we are indeed to honor our parents, but we should also consider them unimportant in comparison to the kingdom of God. Moreover, both Paul and Jesus reiterate the command to honor one's parents, and the Old Testament commends those who dishonored their parents in order to honor God's covenant. "The two Testaments agree with each other on both matters."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ According to Faustus (as Augustine quotes him), Adimantus was the teacher most to be studied after Mani (*solo nobis post beatum patrem nostrum Manichaeum studendo Adimanto*; *c. Faust.* 1.2, CSEL 25.1:252). For other references in *c. Faust.* to Adimantus, see 6.6, 16.30, 16.31.

⁶⁵ *Retr.* 1.22[21].1.

⁶⁶ *C. Adim.* 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, CSEL 25.1:127. "Ex utroque capite duo sibi testamenta consentiunt."

God's character is also the same in both testaments. Augustine emphatically rejects the idea that the God of the Old Testament is defined by jealousy and justice, while the New Testament God brings only mercy and love. Against such a view, Paul speaks of the "jealousy of God,"⁶⁸ while Ezekiel promises that God does not want any to perish.⁶⁹ Augustine insists, "Both Testaments preach the mercy and justice of God in goodness and severity."⁷⁰ Indeed, it must fundamentally be the case that "both testaments agree and are in harmony," because "they were both written by one God,"⁷¹ and they both share in "the great unity and peace of the Holy Spirit."⁷²

This does not mean there are no differences between the Old and New Testaments. Yet even when Augustine concedes this point, his accent remains on sameness. Augustine acknowledges, for instance, differences between the Old and New Testaments with regard to the *lex talionis*.⁷³ The Old Testament commands an eye for an eye, but Jesus says to turn the other cheek. Still, Augustine argues, the Old Testament command naturally leads to the New Testament command. The Old Testament commanded limited vengeance; Jesus "built another step upon this one,"⁷⁴ encouraging those who had already practiced justice to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.4, CSEL 25.1:129, citing 2 Cor. 11:2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 7.5, citing Ez. 18:23; 33:11.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 7.3, CSEL 25.1:129. "... et in bonitate et in seueritate misericordiam et iustitiam dei testamentum utrumque praedicare."

⁷¹ Ibid., 7.5, CSEL 25.1:130 "...utrumque testamentum sibi conuenire atque congruere tamquam ab uno deo utrumque conscriptum."

⁷² Ibid., 11, CSEL 25.1:138. "... magna sancti spiritus unitate et pace." See 4, 7.1, 9.2, 10, 13.4, 17.5, 19.2, 19.27.

⁷³ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 8, CSEL 25.1:130-31. "... huic gradui superaedificat alterum."

embrace forgiveness as well. Moreover, Jesus' command was not without Old Testament precedent: the prophets also commended endurance in suffering.⁷⁵

Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets follows a similar structure to *Answer to Adimantus* but takes Augustine's argument to another level. In this final text, Augustine responds to a book delivered to him by some Christians in Carthage, who discovered it being read and offered for sale in a street near the harbor.⁷⁶ Augustine does not know who the author is, but this person does not seem to be a Manichean, and he has at least some Marcionite tendencies.⁷⁷ In any case, this mysterious figure levies many of the same objections against the Old Testament as Faustus and Adimantus did, and Augustine is forced, as before, to respond to a series of quotations from the author. Augustine's response falls into two books: the first addresses alleged absurdities in the Old Testament itself, and the latter deals with New Testament passages that apparently disparage the Old Testament. For our purposes, there are three points of particular interest.

First, Augustine affirms more strongly than we have seen before the severity of God in both the Old and New Testaments. "A person who correctly worships God finds that the

⁷⁵ Augustine cites Ps. 7:3-4 and Lam. 3:30. In *retr.*, Augustine admits that he had spoken too strongly when he claimed that "no commandment and promise is found in the teaching of the gospel and of the apostle, however difficult and godly, that is not present in those old books" (*nulla in euangelio atque apostolica disciplina reperiantur quamvis ardua et diuina praecepta et promissa, quae illis etiam libris ueteribus desint*; c. *Adim.* 3.4, CSEL 25.1:122). In retrospect, he says he should have added the word "almost" (*pene*): i.e., almost no commandment and promise can be found in the New Testament that is not also in the Old (*retr.* 1.22[21].2, CCL 57:64). For Jesus added new teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, and there are some commandments and promises in the Old Testament that are presented only by means of figures. Still, Augustine says, the commandments to love God and neighbor are found in both testaments, so the statement was nearly true, even if not completely so.

⁷⁶ *C. adv. leg.* 1.1.1; *retr.* 2.58[84].

⁷⁷ *C. adv. leg.* 2.12.40. See the introduction to the English translation for a list of the places where Augustine quotes the unnamed author (*Arianism and Other Heresies*, 345-50). Teske bases this summary off the work of Harnack, Ciccarese, and especially Daur.

God of both Testaments is one and loves the goodness of one and the same God in each Testament; he fears the severity in each Testament, finding that Christ was promised in the former, acknowledging that he has come in the latter.”⁷⁸ No only do both testaments affirm both God’s goodness and severity, but the New Testament approves some of the most salient examples of God’s justice in the Old Testament: the flood, the hardening of hearts, the deceitful spirit who tricks the wicked, the judgment of evil people.⁷⁹ The unknown author points to the punishments of David and the sons of Eli as evidence that the God of the Old Testament was cruel, jealous, or self-seeking. Yet Augustine responds that temporal death was not so severe a punishment given the seriousness of the sins, especially since all are destined to die anyway.⁸⁰ Moreover, Augustine says, the New Testament threats of hell are far more fearsome than the threats of temporal punishment in the Old Testament.⁸¹ “Heaven forbid that anyone should say that the God of the gospel is more cruel than the God of the law, since he knows that it is one and the same God for both of them, who strikes terror in the law with carnal punishments, but in the gospel with spiritual ones, in one and the other faithful and never cruel.”⁸²

⁷⁸ *C. adv. leg.* 1.17.34, CCL 49:63. “Qui autem recte colit deum, et profecto utriusque testamenti inuenit unum deum et eiusdem unius dei in utroque diligit bonitatem, in utroque metuit seueritatem, in illo intellegens promissum Christum, in isto accipiens redditum Christum.” See 1.16.27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.16.28.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.16.30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1.16.29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1.16.31, CCL 49:59. See 1.16.33, 1.17.34, 1.17.35. Perhaps the most graphic passage is *ibid.*, 1.16.32, CCL 49:60: “This fellow is [a liar] with regard to the bodily punishments of all those punished or chastised in the Old Testament, for those punishments were far more gentle than the ones we read of in the gospel. After all, what flood can be compared with eternal fire? What slaughters, what wounds, or what deaths of the body can be compared with eternal tortures? This madman bombastically shouts about twenty-four thousand dying, as if countless thousands do not die each day in the whole world. Still, this death of the body is passing, but

Second, Augustine engages in a curious discussion on the goodness of the law with regard to 1 Cor. 9, where Paul says he becomes all things to all people. The unknown author thinks Paul speaks in five different characters (*in quinque personis*) for five different audiences: the Jews (*Iudaei*), those under the law (*qui sub lege sunt*), those without the law (*qui sine lege sunt*), the weak (*infirmi*), and the perfect (*perfecti*).⁸³ According to the author, Paul speaks positively about the law only for the sake of the imperfect, who are not yet ready for more difficult matters. Concerning Paul's affirmation of the Jews in Rom. 9:1-5, the author writes, "What the apostle says here is not true; he deceives the weak, because they cannot grasp the truth; he nurses the little ones with foolishness and pours out the venom of devilish lies in order to nourish the hungry children."⁸⁴ Augustine is not amused: this author is a "monster" (*portentum*) who ought to be "driven out from the borders of the Christian world!"⁸⁵ It is one thing, Augustine argues, to nourish the weak, but quite another to lie to them.⁸⁶ Paul seeks simply to minister to the various diseases of souls. Further, if the author were right, there would be no reason for Paul to mention the law to Gentile churches, as he does with the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Thessalonians.⁸⁷ One would also have to explain why Paul deceives Timothy by calling Christ the offspring of

who can estimate how many thousands from all the nations will stand to the left and will be condemned to everlasting fires?"

⁸³ Ibid., 2.2.3, CCL 49:89-90.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.2.7, CCL 49:96.

⁸⁵ Ibid. "O portentum non solum a Christianorum auribus, uerum etiam a finibus christiani orbis arcendum!" I have added the exclamation point in the translation.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 2.2.5, CCL 49:94. "... aliud sit nutrire paruulos, aliud decipere credulos."

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.2.4.

David.⁸⁸ Against this anonymous author, Augustine argues, Eph. 2:11-20 demonstrates quite clearly that Paul proclaims “the same God, the same law, the same prophets, and the same covenants”⁸⁹ to the Gentiles as he does to the Israelites.

Third, in the climactic final section of this work, Augustine not only insists on the identity between the God of the prophets and Jesus Christ, but also, with great rhetorical flourish, associates Jesus with the most objectionable passages in the Old Testament. Augustine begins with a confession of Christ as the God of the Old Testament: “Let us look to Christ, the true and sovereign God, the only Son of the true and sovereign God, who is not the evil prince of this age, but the maker of the world, that is, of heaven and earth.”⁹⁰ Augustine then directs his attention to a score of Old Testament images and events he surveys with the relentless refrain, “For it is he, not some other god” (*ipse est enim, non alius*).

It is Christ, Augustine says, and not some other god, who gave us an earthly body and a soul, who warned us against discerning good and evil, who removed us from eternal life and punished us with earthly labor, who sentenced us to death, who commanded the plunder of enemies, who punishes to the third and fourth generations, who avenges offences with bodily deaths, who confirms statements with an oath, who does not change his will. Christ is the “God of the prophets (*deus prophetarum*)” – another refrain – who never deceives with false promises, who never blames himself, who never repents, who expresses wrath and indignation, who warns against desire, who forbade sexual lewdness, who joins men and

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2.2.6, citing 2 Tim. 2:8.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 2.2.5, CCL 49:93. See 2.2.7.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.11.37, CCL 49:122. “Intendamus Christum uerum et summum deum, ueri et summi dei unicum filium, non huius saeculi malignum principem, sed tamen mundi, hoc est caeli terraeque factorem.”

women in marriage, who sent serpents to punish the unfaithful, who commands the firstborn to be consecrated, who willed sacrifices, who did not condemn earthly wealth, who did condemn child sacrifice, who commanded the killing of whole peoples, who set as a limit on punishment an eye for an eye, who spoke to the earliest fathers, who forbade bribes, who commanded stoning for violations of the Sabbath, who hardens those he will, who gives good commands, who brings about physical defects, who made the dry wood in Aaron's staff.⁹¹

This survey gives rise to two observations. First, Augustine has come a long way from his earlier nervousness about the Old Testament, as witnessed in *Confessions*. During his induction into the Catholic Church, Augustine fretted about the barbaric stories and practices of the Old Testament, appealing heavily (though not exclusively) to the spiritual sense to justify the text. At the end of his career, Augustine is quite at ease with the Old Testament's most terrifying stories and even asserts that it was Jesus Christ himself who commanded and performed whatever might be found in those books. Increasingly, it seems, Augustine considers the Old Testament acceptable at the level of the letter, without appeal to the spiritual sense.⁹² There is thus a curious sense in which the "Christological"

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Another way to discern Augustine's move toward the literal interpretation of the Old Testament is through the Genesis commentaries. For a rich treatment of this issue, see Michael Cameron, "The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis," in Bright, *Augustine and the Bible*, 74-103. This work is based on his "Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis against the Donatists in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*," cited above.

interpretation of the Old Testament – in this case, the move to identify Jesus Christ with the God revealed in the Old Testament – helps Augustine to read the text literally.⁹³

Second, the texts considered share many similar themes because their opponents share a strong family resemblance. While Augustine does not think the mysterious heretic is a Manichean,⁹⁴ he notes significant material parallels in their teachings. For both the unknown author and the Manicheans, rejecting the Old Testament goes hand in hand with a denial of the goodness of creation. Indeed, Augustine’s copy of the author’s text even included an appendix with the very work of Adimantus Augustine wrote against so long ago. This puts the author, no less than the Manicheans, right in line with a venerable series of heretics, whose basic error stretches from Simon Magus through Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerdon, Marcion, Appelles, and Patricius. “All of these were openly opposed to the God of the law and the prophets, that is, the true God by whom the world was made.”⁹⁵

In his final remarks in *Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets*, Augustine provides something of a summary of his argument. “We should not remove the flesh from the works of God, because the nature of the spirit is better. Nor are these temporal things evil, because eternal things are rightly preferred to them, and earthly things should not be

⁹³ I am grateful to C. Kavin Rowe for this point.

⁹⁴ This author rejects the God who made the world, while the Manicheans at least affirm that the good God made the world, even if from evil material (*c. adv. leg.* 1.1.1).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.12.40, CCL 49:130. “Hi omnes apertissime contra deum sentiunt legis et prophetarum, hoc est, deum uerum, a quo factus est mundus.” In *retr.*, Augustine says this heretic was “either of the Marcionite sect or of some one or other of those sects whose error consists in the belief that God did not make this world and that the God of the Law which was given to Moses and of the Prophets who hold to the same Law is not the true God, but a most wicked demon” (... *sive Marcionistae sive cuiuslibet eorum quorum error opinatur, quod istum mundum non deus fecerit, nec deus legis quae data est per Moysen et prophetarum ad eandem legem pertinentium uerus sit deus sed pessimus daemon*; 2.84[58], CCL 57:136). On the differences between this author and Marcion, see Teske’s introduction in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, 339-345. Contra Marcion, the unknown author held that Jesus and Paul knowingly lied to protect the weak and that the human soul bears some kinship with the divine (and thus to Christ).

despised, because the heavenly ones are better. For God, who is great in the great goods and not small in the small ones, has created all good things.”⁹⁶ In this provocative statement, Augustine connects a defense of the Old Testament with an affirmation of the fleshly, the temporal, and the earthly. The superiority of the spirit, the eternal, and heavenly things does not mean that the former should therefore be disparaged. By this logic, one might infer, neither does the claim that the New Testament is greater than the Old mean that the Old is bad. An affirmation of the Old Testament is an affirmation of creation and history. It is therefore no coincidence that the heretics not only deny the goodness of creation and the unity of the testaments, but also advance a docetic Christology.

1.2 Calvin

Calvin’s construal of the unity of the testaments differs significantly from Augustine’s. For the Reformer’s treatment of this issue, I begin with the 1559 edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 2, Ch. 10, “The similarity of the Old and New Testaments (*De similitudine Veteris et Novi testamenti*),” and then consider other sections of the *Institutes* and Calvin’s *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses, Arranged in the Form of a Harmony* (hereafter *Mosaic Harmony*; written from about 1559-63).⁹⁷ In a moment, I will present the areas of common ground Calvin discerns between the testaments. First, though, some introductory remarks on Book 2, Ch. 10 are in order.

⁹⁶ *C. adv. leg.* 2.12.42, CCL 49:131. “... non ideo subtrahendam carnem operibus dei, quod spiritus natura sit potior, nec ideo mala esse ista temporalia, quia merito eis praeponuntur aeterna, nec ideo bona terrestria detestanda, quia sunt caelestia meliora, cum deus creauerit omnia bona, magnus in magnis, sed non paruus in paruis.”

⁹⁷ On date of composition, see T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 31-32.

Calvin structures the entirety of Book 2 according to a narrative portrayal of redemptive history.⁹⁸ He begins with the fallenness of humanity (Ch. 1-5), and then considers how increased recognition of sin pointed to the need for Christ as mediator (Ch. 6-8). This discussion leads into our key section on the relation between the testaments (Ch. 9-11). Finally, the last section of Book 2 addresses the work of Christ directly (Ch. 12-17). Calvin thus locates his treatment of the relation between the testaments within the context of God's overarching plan in redemptive history, foregrounding the continuity of the testaments with regard to God's salvific purposes.

The opening remarks of Book 2, Ch. 10 read as follows:

Now we can clearly see from what has already been said that all men adopted by God into the company of his people since the beginning of the world were covenanted to him by the same law (*eadem lege*) and by the bond of the same doctrine (*doctrinae eiusdem ... vinculo*) as obtains among us. It is very important to make this point. Accordingly I shall add, by way of appendix (*vice appendicis*), how far the condition of the patriarchs in this fellowship differed from ours (*quatenus in societate hac diversa fuerit eorum conditio*), though they participated in the same inheritance (*eiusdem nobiscum haereditatis fuerint consortes*) and hoped for a common salvation with us by the grace of the same Mediator (*eiusdem mediatoris gratia communem salutem speraverint*). The testimonies that we have gathered from the Law and the Prophets to prove this make plain that God's people have never had any other rule of reverence and piety (*non aliam ... religionis pietatisque regulam*). Nevertheless, because writers often argue at length about the difference between the Old and New Testament, thus arousing some misgiving in the simple reader's mind, we shall rightly devote a special section to a fuller and more precise discussion of this matter.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ For a fuller discussion of this narrative, see Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 44-48; Parker, *Old Testament Commentaries*, 42-55.

⁹⁹ *Inst.* 2.10.1, OS 3:403. "Ex superioribus liquere iam potest, quosunque ab initio mundi homines Deus in populi sui sortem cooptavit, eadem lege atque doctrinae eiusdem quae inter nos viget vinculo fuisse ei foederatos; sed quia non parum interest caput hoc stabiliri, vice appendicis annectam, quum Patres eiusdem nobiscum haereditatis fuerint consortes, et eiusdem Mediatoris gratia communem salutem speraverint, quatenus

The following points bear emphasis. First, God's covenant with his people extends from the beginning of the world; there is one people across the testaments. Second, all God's people participate in a common covenant by the same law and by the bond of the same doctrine, sharing the same rule of reverence and piety. Third, however, there is a difference between the condition of the patriarchs and our own. Calvin will treat this issue in the next chapter as a kind of appendix, after he has established his main point on the fundamental similarity between the testaments. Finally, Calvin is particularly concerned about establishing the unity of the testaments because of the errors of certain writers. Specifically, Calvin opposes Servetus and certain Anabaptists "who regard the Israelites as nothing but a herd of swine," "fattened by the Lord on earth without any hope of heavenly immortality."¹⁰⁰

Since Calvin recognizes only one people across the testaments, he naturally relegates the differences of condition between those who lived before and after the time of Christ as of secondary and supplementary importance. Thus, in the single most quoted summary statement of his position on the relation between the testaments, Calvin says: "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality (*substantia et re ipsa*) that the two are actually one and the same (*unum prorsus atque idem*). Yet they differ in the

in societate hac diversa fuerit eorum conditio. Quanquam autem quae ex Lege ac Prophetis ad eius probationem collegimus testimonia, palam faciunt non aliam unquam fuisse in Dei populo religionis pietatisque regulam: quia tamen apud scriptores multa saepe de discrimine Veteris ac novi Testamenti disputantur, quae scrupulum parum acuto lectori iniicere possint, huic rei melius atque exactius discutiendae peculiarem locum iure destinabimus."

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. "... qui non aliter de Israelitico populo sentiunt quam de aliquo porcorum grege, utpote quem nugantur a Domino in hac terra saginatum, citra spem ullam coelestis immortalitatis."

mode of dispensation (*administratio tamen variat*).¹⁰¹ Indeed, it is more accurate to speak of the unity (*unitas*) of the testaments rather than the similarity (*similitudo*).¹⁰²

Having established this basic framework, Calvin names three similarities between the testaments. The first concerns a common hope. “Carnal prosperity and happiness did not constitute the goal set before the Jews to which they were to aspire. Rather, they were adopted into the hope of immortality; and assurance of this adoption was certified to them by oracles, by the law and by the prophets.”¹⁰³ The second addresses the relation between grace and merit. “The covenant by which they were bound to the Lord was supported, not by their own merits, but solely by the mercy of the God who called them.”¹⁰⁴ Finally, the third raises a central theme throughout the *Institutes*: the knowledge of God. “They had and knew Christ as Mediator, through whom they were joined to God and were to share in his promises.”¹⁰⁵ Calvin dedicates almost the entirety of Book 2, Ch. 10 to the first point, treating the second and third points in other parts of the *Institutes*. In what follows, I consider Calvin’s position on the unity of the testaments with an eye toward these points, following their order roughly while also incorporating other issues pertinent to the topic. While this

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.10.2, CO 3:404. “Patrum omnium foedus adeo substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro differt, ut unum prorsus atque idem sit: administratio tamen variat.”

¹⁰² Ibid. “Now, in showing their similarity – or rather, unity – it would be superfluous to examine afresh the details that have already been reviewed” (*Caeterum in similitudine vel potius unitate ostendenda, singulas particulas, quae iam expeditae sunt, ex integro retractare supervacuum fuerit*).

¹⁰³ Ibid. “... non carnalem opulentiam ac foelicitatem, metam fuisse Iudaeis propositam ad quam demum aspirarent, sed in spem immortalitatis fuisse cooptatos, atque huius adoptionis fidem illis fuisse tum oraculis, tum Lege, tum Prophetis certo factam.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. “... foedus quo conciliati Domino fuerunt, nullis eorum meritis, sed sola Dei vocantis misericordia fuisse suffultum.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. “... et habuisse ipsos et cognovisse mediatorem Christum, per quem et Deo coniungerentur, et promissionum eius compotes forent.”

chapter does consider Calvin's third point, the knowledge of Christ in the Old Testament, I reserve a fuller treatment of this issue for chapter 4. I now turn to the following subjects: the promise of immortality, the moral law, good works, and the knowledge of God in Christ.¹⁰⁶

1.2.1 The promise of immortality

As mentioned, Calvin's discussion about the unity of the testaments reflects his polemical concerns. Servetus and certain Anabaptists "think that the ancient people did not transcend those benefits promised to the body,"¹⁰⁷ suggesting that the land of Canaan constituted "almost the sum total of the blessings and curses uttered by Moses."¹⁰⁸ Such a position, Calvin charges, instrumentalizes the Israelites. "They unhesitatingly conclude that

¹⁰⁶ For studies on Calvin's treatment of the issues discussed here and in the next chapter, see Hans Heinrich Wolf, *Die Einheit des Bundes: Das Verhältnis von Altem und Neuem Testament bei Calvin* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1958); I. John Hesselink, "Calvin and Heilsgeschichte," in *Oikonomia, Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie: Oscar Cullmann zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. Felix Christ (Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1967), 163-70, "Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law? Calvin's Understanding of the Relationship," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influences of John Calvin*, Robert V. Schnucker, ed., Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 10 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988), 13-32, and *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992); Wilhelm Vischer, "Calvin, exégète de l'Ancien Testament," *La Revue Réformée* 18 (1967): 1-20; Richard C. Gamble, ed., *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 6, *Calvin and Hermeneutics* (New York: Garland, 1992); Richard A. Muller, "The Hermeneutic of Promise and Fulfillment in Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament Prophecies of the Kingdom," in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David C. Steinmetz, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 11 (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990), 68-82; T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, cited above, and *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Israel in the Theology of Calvin – Towards a New Approach to the Old Testament and Judaism," *Christian Jewish Relations* 22 (1989): 75-86; David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995); David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995); Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin and Christology*, cited above, and "Christ and History: Hermeneutical Convergence in Calvin and Its Challenge to Biblical Theology," *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 1-35; Raymond A. Blacketer, *The School of God: Pedagogy and Rhetoric in Calvin's Interpretation of Deuteronomy*, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006); R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Donald K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ *Inst.* 2.11.1, OS 3:423. "... non putant veterem populum altius conscendisse quam ad illa quae corpori promittebantur bona."

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* "Vident in hanc fere summam recidere quaecunque vel benedictiones vel maledictiones a Mose denuntiantur."

the Jews were set apart from all other peoples not for their own benefit but for that of others, in order that the Christian church might have an outward image in which it might discern proofs of spiritual things.”¹⁰⁹ This view also advances a strict dichotomy between those who lived before and after the time of Christ: “the Israelites deemed the possession of the Land of Canaan their highest and ultimate blessedness,” but “after the revelation of Christ it typified for us the heavenly inheritance.”¹¹⁰ Calvin’s opinion is clear: “Away with this insane and dangerous opinion – that the Lord promised the Jews or that they sought for themselves, nothing but a full belly, delights of the flesh, flourishing wealth, outward power, fruitfulness of offspring, and whatever the natural man prizes!”¹¹¹

Against this opinion, Calvin argues from both New Testament grounds and Old Testament evidence that those living before Christ shared in the hope of immortality. The New Testament repeatedly says the gospel was promised beforehand in the Old Testament (Rom. 1:2-3; 3:21), and clearly links the gospel with immortality and spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:13-14; Col. 1:4-5; 2 Ths. 2:14; and elsewhere). It thus would make no sense if those to whom the gospel had been promised “neglected the care of the soul and sought after fleshly pleasures like stupid beasts.”¹¹² Nor ought one suggest the promises of the gospel were

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. “Minime dubitanter constituunt Iudaeos non sua causa, sed aliena fuisse a caeteris populis segregatos: nempe ut imaginem haberet Christiana Ecclesia, in cuius externa specie spiritualium rerum documenta cerneret.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2.11.1, OS 3:424. “... illi possessionem terrae Chanaan Israelitis pro summa atque ultima beatitudine habitam, nobis post revelatum Christum caelestem haereditatem figurare docent.”

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.10.23, OS 3:422. “Hanc vero insanam ac perniciosam opinionem procul summoveamus, aut Dominum nihil aliud proposuisse Iudaeis, aut illos nihil quaesivisse praeter ventris saturitatem, carnis delicias, florentes opes, externam potentiam, liberorum foecunditatem, et quicquid animalis homo in pretio habet.”

¹¹² Ibid., 2.10.3, OS 3:405.

“intended for the new people” (*novo populo esse destinatas*).¹¹³ Paul asserts that the law was intended for those under the law (Rom. 3:19). Given the apostle’s insistence that the gospel was promised by the law, Calvin argues, it follows that the hope of immortality was intended for the Jews. The Old Testament was “established upon the free mercy of God (*gratuita Dei misericordia constitisse*)” and “confirmed by Christ’s intercession (*Christi intercessione fuisse confirmatum*)”:¹¹⁴ “Who, then, dares to separate the Jews from Christ, since with them, we hear, was made the covenant of the gospel, the sole foundation of which is Christ? Who dares to estrange from the gift of free salvation those to whom we hear the doctrine of the righteousness of faith was imparted?”¹¹⁵

Indeed, Calvin argues, the Israelites lacked nothing in relation to New Testament believers with regard to the sacraments.¹¹⁶ This is the implication of 1 Cor. 10, where Paul warns the Corinthians against misdeeds by appeal to the judgment the Israelites suffered in the desert. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, Calvin explains, would no more protect the Corinthians than the spiritual food and drink of the desert did the Israelites – which food and drink was Christ.¹¹⁷ Calvin concludes: “The Lord not only communicated to the Jews the

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.10.4, OS 3:405.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.10.4, OS 3:405-6. “Quis igitur expertes Christi Iudaeos facere ausit, quibuscum audimus fuisse percussum Evangelii foedus, cuius unicum fundamentum Christus est? Quis alienos reddere a gratuita salutis beneficio, quibus administratam fuisse audimus iustitiae fidei doctrinam?”

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2.10.5, OS 3:406. “Indeed, the apostle makes the Israelites equal to us not only in the grace of the covenant but also in the signification of the sacraments” (*Quin Apostolus non foederis tantum gratia pares nobis facit Israelitas, sed etiam sacramentorum significatione*).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

same promises of eternal and heavenly life as he now deigns to give us, but also sealed them with truly spiritual sacraments (*sacramentis vere spiritualibus obsignatas*).¹¹⁸

The Old Testament, too, provides evidence for the promise of immortality. First, Old Testament believers participated in God's Word. "Now since the God of old bound the Jews to himself by this sacred bond, there is no doubt that he set them apart to the hope of eternal life."¹¹⁹ Calvin is quick to note that this "Word" does not refer to that general revelation by which all creation testifies to God, but rather to "that special mode which both illumines the souls of the pious into the knowledge of God and, in a sense, joins them to him."¹²⁰ Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs received such illumination, and therefore also received eternal life. Second, the very formula of the covenant, "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (Lev. 26:12), testifies to the hope of immortality. This holistic promise of blessing, life, and salvation would make no sense were it confined to earthly happiness. The Lord must therefore be Israel's God for eternity, not just for some temporal period.¹²¹

Third, the lives of the Old Testament saints reveal the ubiquity of the hope of immortality. On Calvin's account, the Israelites were taught by God "to perceive that they

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2.10.6, OS 3:407-8. "... non easdem modo quibus nos dignatur nunc Dominus, vitae aeternae ac caelestis promissiones communicatas fuisse Iudaeis, sed etiam sacramentis vere spiritualibus obsignatas." Calvin explicitly cites Augustine's *c. Faust.* for this point. While the footnote of the McNeill/Battles translation refers to *c. Faust.* 15.11 and 19.16 as the sources of Calvin's remark, it is not clear to me that either passage provides substantiation for the claim that Augustine held to either the promise of immortality in the Old Testament or the efficacy of the Old Testament sacraments.

¹¹⁹ *Inst.* 2.10.7, OS 3:408. "Iam quum hoc sacro vinculo Deus olim sibi devinxerit Iudaeos, non dubium est quin eos segregaverit in spem aeternae vitae."

¹²⁰ Ibid. "... istam specialem qua piorum animae et illuminantur in Dei notitiam, et illi quodammodo copulantur."

¹²¹ Ibid., 2.10.9.

had a better life elsewhere; and disregarding the earthly life, to meditate on the heavenly.”¹²²

The suffering of the earliest figures in the Bible – Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – testifies to this fact. Had they hoped only in this life, they would have been the most miserable of all people. Abraham is perhaps the clearest example of one whose life was characterized by suffering.¹²³ He left his country and family for a land of famine, risked the loss of his wife to foreign rulers, endured family squabbles and dishonest neighbors, and waited decades for a child, only for God to demand Isaac back – at Abraham’s own hand. Calvin says of Abraham’s immediate line what can be extended more broadly: “If these holy patriarchs looked for a blessed life, as they undoubtedly did, from God’s hand, they both conceived and saw it as a blessedness other than that of earthly life.”¹²⁴ This is precisely the point of Heb. 11, which teaches that the Old Testament figures did not receive on earth what they were promised, and thus hoped for a heavenly country. This life is rightly called a sojourn.

Thus far, Calvin’s argument has rested largely on the implied logic of the hope of the patriarchs: given the misery of their lives, it makes no sense that their ultimate hope would be for earthly blessing. When Calvin turns to the prophets, however, he can appeal to more explicit textual evidence. As one of the earliest prophets, David “represented the heavenly mysteries according to the order of divine dispensation more obscurely than the rest”; yet

¹²² Ibid., 2.10.10, OS 3:410. “... ut meliorem alibi vitam sibi esse sentirent, ac neglecta terrena illam meditarentur.”

¹²³ Ibid., 2.10.11.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 2.10.13, OS 3:414. “Si sancti isti Patres (quod utique indubitatum est) beatam vitam exspectarunt e manu Dei, aliam quam terrestris vitae beatitudinem et cogitarunt et viderunt.”

even he demonstrates with “great clearness and certainty” the heavenly nature of his hope.¹²⁵

Throughout the Psalms, David speaks of the fleeting and transitory nature of this life, suggesting that happiness is to be found elsewhere. Moreover, he testifies to the blessedness of righteous people, despite the persecution they endure from the wicked. If the righteous ought not put their hope in the present, Calvin reasons, their hope must be in eternity.¹²⁶

The Psalms show the Old Testament saints “lifted up their hearts to God’s sanctuary,” “cast their eyes toward ... eternity,”¹²⁷ “foresaw an eternal and neverending ruin of the wicked,” and knew well that “their final end was to be life and salvation.”¹²⁸

The hope of immortality becomes clearer with Job, and especially with the later prophets. “The Lord held to this orderly plan in administering the covenant of his mercy: as the day of full revelation approached with the passing of time, the more he increased each day the brightness of his manifestation.”¹²⁹ Though the promise to Adam “glowed like a feeble spark,”¹³⁰ Calvin says, the light of God’s salvation grew in fullness until the Son would finally arrive. By the time of Isaiah and Daniel, the hope for immortality is completely explicit and widely known.¹³¹ The Old Testament saints and prophets, Calvin says,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 2.10.15, OS 3:415. “Ac primum David, qui ut tempore aliis fuit superior, ita pro ordine divinae dispensationis caelestia mysteria obscurius quam illi adumbravit, quanta tamen perspicuitate ac certitudine ad eum scopum omnia sua dirigit?”

¹²⁶ Ibid., 2.10.16.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 2.10.17, OS 3:417.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 2.10.18, OS 3:417-18.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 2.10.20, OS 3:420. “Hanc enim oeconomiam et hunc ordinem in dispensando misericordiae suae foedere tenuit Dominus, ut quo propius temporis progressu ad plenam exhibitionem accedebatur, ita maioribus in dies revelationis incrementis illustraret.”

¹³⁰ Ibid. “Proinde initio, quum prima salutis promissio Aadae data fuit, quasi tenues scintillae emicarunt.”

¹³¹ Ibid., 2.10.22.

did not manifest in such statements any secret wisdom to which only excellent spirits might individually and privately be admitted. But, as they had been appointed the teachers of the common people by the Holy Spirit, they widely published (*palam promulgasse*) the mysteries of God that were appointed to be learned and that ought to be the principles of the religion of the people. Therefore, when we hear the public oracles of the Holy Spirit, in which he so clearly and plainly discussed spiritual life in the church of the Jews (*tam clare ac dilucide in Iudaeorum Ecclesia disseruit*), it would be intolerable stubbornness to relegate them solely to a carnal covenant, wherein mention is made only of the earth and of earthly riches.¹³²

1.2.2 The moral law

A second point of common ground between the testaments concerns the moral law, whose substance remains the same across the testaments. The importance of this issue for Calvin can be seen in the extended discussion of *Institutes* Book 2, Ch. 8, “Explanation of the moral law (*Legis moralis explicatio*),”¹³³ and the structure of his commentary on the *Mosaic Harmony*. These two texts form the basis for the subsequent discussion.

Calvin begins his treatment of the moral law in the *Institutes* with a discussion of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves.¹³⁴ The former teaches us that God is our Creator and that we have no right to disobey him; we also learn that God loves righteousness and hates wickedness. The latter shows us our failure to conform to God’s will and our utter inability to do so. To counteract our weakness, God provides promises of

¹³² Ibid., 2.10.19, OS 3:419. “... non prodidisse talibus sententiis arcanam aliquam sapientiam, ad quam seorsum ac privatim excellentia tantum ingenia admitterentur; sed, ut erant constituti a Spiritu sancto plebis doctores, quae communiter ediscenda essent Dei mysteria, et popularis religionis principia esse deberent, palam promulgasse. Quum ergo audiamus publica Spiritus sancti oracula, quibus de spiritali vita tam clare ac dilucide in Iudaeorum Ecclesia disseruit, intolerabilis pertinaciae fuerit eos ad carnale tantummodo foedus ablegare, ubi solius terrae ac terrestri opulentiae fiat mentio.”

¹³³ Book 2, Ch. 8 is one of the longest chapters in *Inst.*, totaling 56 pp. in the *Opera Selecta*. By comparison, all the chapters on election combined (Book 3, Ch. 21-24) total only 65 pp.

¹³⁴ *Inst.* 2.8.1-3.

reward and threats of punishment that form in us God's own love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness. "For because the eye of the mind is too blind to be moved solely by the beauty of the good, our most merciful Father out of his great kindness has willed to attract us by sweetness of rewards to love and seek after him."¹³⁵ While these promises and threats sometimes pertain to temporal rewards and punishments, Calvin says, the eternal consequences of our actions are always in view. "Whenever God's benevolence or wrath is mentioned, under the former is contained eternal life, under the latter eternal perdition."¹³⁶

The law contains "the rule of perfect righteousness,"¹³⁷ and we are therefore forbidden to add to it. Indeed, Calvin says, Moses explicitly warned the Israelites not to do so (Deut. 12:32), because he was aware of their tendency to bring forth new precepts. Therefore, we, too, are commanded to recognize the perpetual validity of the law and not to contrive new ways of trying to appease God. "The law has been divinely handed down to us to teach us perfect righteousness; there no other righteousness is taught than that which conforms to the requirements of God's will; in vain therefore do we attempt new forms of works to win the favor of God, whose lawful worship consists in obedience alone."¹³⁸

Calvin provides three principles for the proper interpretation of the law. First, the law primarily concerns the internal, not the external. "Through the law man's life is molded

¹³⁵ Ibid., 2.8.4, OS 3:345-46. "Quia enim magis caligat mentis nostrae oculus quam ut sola boni pulchritudine afficiatur, clementissimus Pater pro sua indulgentia nos ad ipsum amandum et expetendum illectare praemiorum dulcedine voluit."

¹³⁶ Ibid., OS 3:346. "Quaquam ubicunque commemoratur benevolentia aut ira Dei, sub illa aeternitas vitae, sub hac aeternum exitium continetur."

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2.8.5, OS 3:346. "... perfectae iustitiae regulam."

¹³⁸ Ibid., 2.8.5, OS 3:347. "... Legem nobis esse divinitus traditam, quae nos perfectam iustitiam edoceret; illic non aliam iustitiam doceri nisi quae ad praescriptum divinae voluntatis exigatur; frustra igitur novas operum formas ad demerendum Deum tentari, cuius legitimus cultus sola constat obedientia."

not only to outward honesty but to inward and spiritual righteousness.”¹³⁹ Christ, the law’s “best interpreter,”¹⁴⁰ taught that anger was tantamount to murder, and lust to adultery, not to establish a new law, but to restore what the Pharisees had defiled. There is, on Calvin’s account, no new law of the gospel that surpasses the old law.

Second, each command stands for a larger principle. “The commandments and prohibitions always contain more than is expressed in words.”¹⁴¹ Calvin seeks to balance two competing concerns. On the one hand, the law must not be twisted such that we can make it say whatever we please. On the other hand, the commands contain “manifest synecdoches (*manifestae . . . synecdochae*),”¹⁴² and it would be foolish to restrict oneself to the “narrowness of the words.”¹⁴³ We must therefore “inquire how far interpretation ought to overstep the limits (*fines*) of the words themselves so that it may be seen to be, not an appendix (*appendicem*) added to the divine law from men’s glosses, but the Lawgiver’s pure and authentic meaning (*purum germanumque Legislatoris sensum*) faithfully rendered.”¹⁴⁴

Calvin’s proposal is to consider the reason (*ratio*) or purpose (*finis*) of each commandment, the reason why it was given to us, and then to define the command’s substance (*summa*). Thus, the *finis* of the fifth commandment is to pay honor to those for

¹³⁹ Ibid., 2.8.6, OS 3:348. “... non ad externam honestatem modo, sed ad interiorem spiritualemque iustitiam, hominis vitam in Lege informari.”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.8.7, OS 3:349. “... optimum Legis interpretem.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2.8.8, OS 3:350. “... plus inesse semper in praeceptis ac interdictis quam verbis exprimitur.”

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid. “... verborum angustias.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. “Quaerendum, inquam, quatenus excedere verborum fines debeat interpretatio; ut appareat, non attextam esse Legi divinae ex humanis glossis appendicem, sed purum germanumque Legislatoris sensum fideliter redditum.”

whom God has assigned it. The *summa* is that it is right for us to honor those God has bestowed with some excellence. Understanding the purpose and substance of the commands reveals the positive duties associated with the negative commands.¹⁴⁵ The command not to kill, for instance, means more than not wronging another person; we are also required to help our neighbor as much as possible. In this regard, Calvin says, God has taught his will “by half commandments (*dimidiis praeceptis*),” “through synecdoche (*per synecdochas*).”¹⁴⁶ By setting forth in each commandment the worst example of a certain kind of transgression, God prompts us to detest all associated sins. We may not consider anger and hatred serious sins, for example, but the prohibition against murder, a far more obvious crime, persuades us to shun those iniquities we would otherwise have treated lightly.

Third, the Ten Commandments consist of two tables. The first has to do with the worship of God, the second with love for other people. The first is the foundation of the second, because there can be no righteousness without proper worship of God. Indeed, Calvin says, claiming to be righteous without religion is as unreasonable as setting forth “a mutilated, decapitated body as something very beautiful.”¹⁴⁷ Jesus confirms this principle for understanding the Decalogue when he “summarizes” the whole law under the two heads of love for God and love for neighbor.¹⁴⁸ Calvin considers the initial blessing of the Ten

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.8.9.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.8.10, OS 3:351.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.8.11, OS 3:352.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. “Qua ratione Dominus noster (ut Evangelistae referunt) Legem totam summatim in duo capita collegit ...”

Commandments a preface to the whole law, and then assigns the first four commandments to the first table and the remaining six commandments to the second table.¹⁴⁹

Having explained these three principles for interpreting the law, Calvin then considers each commandment according to its *finis* and *summa*.¹⁵⁰ The *finis* provides the reason for the command; the *summa* summarizes the command itself. The *finis* of the first commandment is for the Lord to be pre-eminent amongst his people. The *summa* is to put away all impiety and superstition. The *finis* of the second commandment is to avoid profaning the worship of God by superstitious rites. The *summa* is to withhold from petty, carnal observances. And so forth.

Calvin's treatment of the Sabbath commandment is particularly instructive. Calvin begins his exposition by defining the *finis*: that we meditate on the Kingdom of God. The *summa*, however, cannot yet be treated, for this commandment is unique amongst the ten as a foreshadowing. Calvin thus lays out three reasons for the Sabbath command: first, it

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.8.12.

¹⁵⁰ The *finis* and *summa* of each commandment are found in the following places. First: 2.8.16; second: 2.8.17; third: 2.8.22; fourth: 2.8.28 (*finis*), 2:8.34 (*summa*); fifth: 2.8.35; sixth: 2.8.39; seventh: 2.8.41; eighth: 2.8.45; ninth: 2.8.47; tenth: 2.8.49. For almost all the commandments, Calvin begins his treatment by explicitly using the words *finis* and *summa* in subsequent sentences. The two exceptions are the first and the fourth. In his description of the first commandment, he uses the term *finis* but uses the phrase *id ut fiat* instead of *summa*. This commandment is thus a formal exception to the basic pattern, but not a material one. Calvin probably uses *id ut fiat* instead of *summa* here simply because he is treating the first of the commandments and wishes to show more clearly the connection between purpose and substance. The fourth commandment is an exception because it is ceremonial. Calvin explains the *finis* at the beginning of his exposition of this commandment, but must then discuss at some length how Christians have appropriated the Sabbath before he can return to the *summa*, where lays out the specific behavior required. The *finis/summa* structure of each command is obvious – and obviously intentional – in light of Calvin's introductory remarks on *finis/summa* in 2.8.8 and his use of these terms for virtually every command. Unfortunately, the English translation obscures this structure. The term *summa* is first introduced by the word “substance” (2.8.8), but the other commandments feature the phrases “to sum up” (second, fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth) and “the sum” (fifth). Most incomprehensibly, the translator uses the phrase “in brief” to express the *summa* of the third commandment, even though the phraseology (*summa igitur erit*) is exactly identical to that found in the fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments.

foreshadowed spiritual rest to the Israelites; second, it established a stated day for worship; and third, it provided a day of rest to those under the authority of others.¹⁵¹

The first aspect is the most important, and it provides an explanation for the severity with which God punished those who broke the Sabbath. The Sabbath represents sanctification and the mortification of the will. “We must be wholly at rest that God may work in us; we must yield our will; we must resign our heart; we must give up all our fleshly desires. In short, we must rest from all activities of our own contriving so that, having God working in us [Heb. 13:21], we may repose in him [Heb. 4:9], as the apostle also teaches.”¹⁵² Concerning the symbolism of the number seven, Calvin acknowledges the possibility of a variety of interpretations but thinks the number must at least somehow signify perpetual repose from our labors. Regardless, the ceremonial function of the command has now been abolished with the coming of Christ. “For he himself is the truth, with whose presence all figures vanish; he is the body, at whose appearance the shadows are left behind. He is, I say, the true fulfillment of the Sabbath.”¹⁵³

The second two reasons for the Sabbath command also remain applicable: it is still important to assemble on stated days for worship and to provide rest for those who work.¹⁵⁴ Setting apart a regular day for these purposes is not, Calvin says, tantamount to Judaism.¹⁵⁵ The reason Paul railed against special days was that such observances seemed to imply that

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 2.8.28.

¹⁵² Ibid., 2.8.29, OS 3:372.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 2.8.31, OS 3:373. “Ipse enim veritas est, cuius praesentia figurae omnes evanescent: corpus, cuius aspectu umbrae relinquuntur. Ipse, inquam, verum sabbathi complementum.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.8.32.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.8.33.

the ceremonies still retained some predictive function, as if Christ had not already come. But Christians no longer view the Sabbath in this way, and Paul himself let churches practice it (1 Cor. 16:2). Calvin acknowledges that the early Christians set apart Sunday as the Lord's Day, but does not think this is normative. Another day – or even frequency – would be acceptable, and other solemn days could also be instituted.¹⁵⁶ Give all these considerations, the *summa* of the commandment can finally be explained: first, Christians are to meditate throughout life on the everlasting Sabbath rest; second, each is to meditate privately on God's works and also to participate in corporate worship; third, we should not oppress those under us.

At the end of his exposition of the individual commandments, Calvin reflects more broadly on the law as a whole. “Now it will not be difficult to decide the purpose of the whole law: the fulfillment of righteousness to form human life to the archetype of divine purity.”¹⁵⁷ Moses describes the “gist (*summam*)”¹⁵⁸ of the Law in Deut. 10:12-13: to fear God, to walk in his ways, to love him, to serve him, and to keep his commandments. This kind of obedience allows humans to be joined to God and to cleave to him. And since this is the purpose of the law, Calvin says, it is absurd to suggest “the law teaches nothing but some rudiments and preliminaries of righteousness by which men begin their apprenticeship, and

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.8.34.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.8.51, OS 3:390. “Quorsum vero spectet Lex universa, non erit nunc difficile iudicium, nempe in iustitiae complementum: ut hominis vitam ad divinae puritatis exemplar formet.”

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

does not also guide them to the true goal, good works.”¹⁵⁹ Quite the contrary, Calvin asserts, the perfect law of Moses includes all the duties of piety and love.

Calvin’s treatment of the moral law grounds his position on the unity of the testaments. Since the Decalogue focuses on internal disposition and not just external action, and each commandment can broadly be applied according to its *finis* and *summa*, there is no reason the moral law, encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, would be abrogated with the coming of Christ. Even the Sabbath commandment retains ongoing force. The question arises, though, how Calvin defines the distinction between moral and ceremonial laws. For this issue, I turn now to the *Mosaic Harmony*.

The *Mosaic Harmony* is a highly idiosyncratic work, as Calvin’s structures the entirety of his remarks on the law according to the Decalogue, literally categorizing every prescription from Exodus to Deuteronomy under one of the Ten Commandments.¹⁶⁰ Much of the preface to the commentary constitutes an apology for this decision. On the one hand, Calvin stresses the centrality of the Ten Commandments: “Whatever refers to the regulation of the conduct is comprehended in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.”¹⁶¹ On the other hand, he acknowledges the difficulty of discerning how the varied prescriptions of the Mosaic law actually pertain to the Decalogue: many lack the capacity “to reduce the different precepts to

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., OS 3:390-91. “Fallitur ergo si quis autumat rudimenta quaedam et primordia iustitiae duntaxat in Lege tradi, quibus homines ad tyrocinium inchoentur, non etiam dirigantur ad rectam bonorum operum metam.”

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of Calvin’s reasons for thus arranging the Mosaic Commentary, see Blacketer, *The School of God*, 127-170.

¹⁶¹ CTS *Mos. Harm.* 1:xv, CO 24:5-6. “... quidquid ad vitam firmandam spectat decem praeceptis comprehendi.” I use the English page numbers for references to the *Mosaic Harmony*: since Calvin does not follow the order of the biblical text, it would otherwise be difficult to locate where he treats individual passages. Because the *Praefatio* in the *Calvini Opera*, unlike the rest of the commentary, takes up only one column per page, the page references will here encompass two numbers.

their proper class.”¹⁶² Calvin will therefore try “to collect and arrange”¹⁶³ the text “to assist unpractised readers”¹⁶⁴ in understanding the law – without, of course, in any way disparaging the excellence of the text as dictated by the Holy Spirit.

Calvin distinguishes between two major categories of commands: 1) the Decalogue itself, and all laws that correspond closely to one of the Ten Commandments; and 2) the supplements (*appendices*), which include both “the Political Laws” (*leges politicas*) and laws concerning “the Ceremonies and the outward Exercises of Worship” (*caeremonias et externa pietatis exercitia*).¹⁶⁵ Structurally, Calvin introduces his treatment of the law with a section called “The preface to the law” (*Praefatio in legem*).¹⁶⁶ He then considers the law itself.¹⁶⁷ Next, he provides two short sections called “The sum of the law” (*Summa legis*)¹⁶⁸ and “The purpose and use of the law” (*Finis et usus legis*).¹⁶⁹ And finally, Calvin concludes with a section called, “The sanctions of the law contained in the promises and threats” (*Sanctiones a promissionibus et minis*).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² Ibid. “... singula referre in suam classem.”

¹⁶³ Ibid., 1:xiv, CO 24:5-6. “... et colligere et digerere.”

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. “... dirigere lectores nundum satis exercitatos.”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 1:xvii, CO 24:7-8. Calvin says the ceremonial supplements concern the first table and the political supplements concern the second table, but he does not actually follow this arrangement. Political supplements are found under the first four commandments, and ceremonial supplements are found under the second six commandments. See Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, 122-175 for an overview of the way Calvin structures the Ten Commandments.

¹⁶⁶ CTS *Mos. Harm.* 1:338-417, CO 24:209-60.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 1:417-3:189, CO 24:261-720.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 3:190-96, CO 24:721-24.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 3:196-201, CO 24:725-28. I have corrected the CTS translation of the title, “The Use of the Law.” Calvin’s reference here to the finis of the law makes obvious the correspondence between the *Mosaic Harmony* and the *Institutes*. More on this in a moment.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 3:201-89, CO 25:5-58.

Calvin carries through his vision for the commentary with characteristic meticulousness. The section where he considers the law, organized according to the Decalogue, takes up over 40% of this compendious exposition (460/1122 pages in the *Calvini Opera*), often with rather bizarre results. The first commandment alone encompasses requirements with regard to the celebration of Passover;¹⁷¹ the sanctification of the first-born;¹⁷² the payment of tribute;¹⁷³ the vow of the Nazirites;¹⁷⁴ the offering of first fruits;¹⁷⁵ the purification of women after confinement;¹⁷⁶ the shutting up¹⁷⁷ and purification¹⁷⁸ of lepers; pollution from semen and menstruation;¹⁷⁹ defects for exclusion from the tabernacle;¹⁸⁰ the general purification of the people;¹⁸¹ wet dreams and defecation;¹⁸² the mixing of seeds, or of wool and linen;¹⁸³ the distinction between clean and unclean animals;¹⁸⁴ touching things accidentally unclean;¹⁸⁵ marriage with unbelievers.¹⁸⁶ (Note that I have listed only the ceremonial, and not also the political supplements Calvin delineates.)

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 1:454ff., CO 24:283ff.

¹⁷² Ibid., 1:477ff., CO 24:298ff.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 1:481ff., CO 24:301ff.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 1:484ff., CO 24:302ff.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1:492ff., CO 24:307ff.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 1:498ff., CO 24:311ff.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 2:5ff., CO 24:314ff.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 2:19ff., CO 24:322ff.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 2:28ff., CO 24:327ff.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 2:33ff., CO 24:330ff.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 2:35ff., CO 24:331ff.

¹⁸² Ibid., 2:44ff., CO 24:337ff.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 2:47ff., CO 24:339ff.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 2:53ff., CO 24:342ff.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 2:68ff., CO 24:351ff.

The division between the commandments and supplements is theologically significant, for it enables Calvin to make a clean distinction between the substance and the appendages of the law. “We understand that the Ceremonies and the Judicial Ordinances neither change nor detract from the rule laid down in the Ten Commandments; but are only helps (*adminicula*), which, as it were, lead us by the hand to the due Worship of God, and to the promotion of justice towards men.”¹⁸⁷ Further, Calvin says, the sacrifices

are not, to speak correctly, of the substance (*substantia*) of the Law, nor avail of themselves in the Worship of God, nor are required by the Lawgiver himself as necessary, or even as useful, unless they sink into this inferior position (*nisi in gradu inferiore subsidant*). In fine, they are appendages (*accessiones*), which add not the smallest completeness to the Law, but whose object is to retain the pious in the Spiritual Worship of God ... As to all the Political Ordinances, nothing will obviously be found in them, which at all adds to the perfection of The Second Table: therefore it follows, that nothing can be wanted as the rule of a good and perfect life beyond the Ten Commandments.¹⁸⁸

This distinction here between *substantia* and “appendages” (*accessiones*) or “supplements” (*appendices*) corresponds to the language of the *Institutes*, where Calvin locates the unity of the covenant in a common *substantia* across the testaments, while addressing the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 2:70ff., CO 24:352ff.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 1:xvii, CO 24:7-8. “... nihil caeremonias vel iudicalem doctrinam mutare, vel detrahere de regula decem verbis tradita: sed tantummodo adminicula esse quae ad Deum rite colendum, et ad iustitiam cum hominibus colendam nos quasi manu ducant.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. “... non esse ex substantia legis, (ut loquuntur) nec per se ad Dei cultum valere, nec eas a legislatore ipso exigi quasi necessarias, vel etiam utiles, nisi in gradu inferiore subsidant. In summa, accessiones sunt, non quae legi vel unum apicem addant, sed quae pietatis cultores retineant in spiritali cultu ... In politicis omnibus praeceptis nihil plane reperietur quod aliquid secundae tabulae ad perfectionem addat. Sequitur itaque, ad regulam bene recteque vivendi, praeter decem verba, desiderari nihil posse.”

differences between the testaments by way of appendix (*vice appendicis*).¹⁸⁹ As with the law, so also with the covenant itself: the *substantia* remains the same, despite changes of form and administration in the *appendices*. Since the *substantia* of the law is the moral law, encapsulated in the Decalogue, the initially jarring structure of the *Mosaic Harmony* mirrors precisely Calvin's systematic remarks on the unity between the testaments. The distinction between *substantia* and form thus provides a basic framework for affirming the ongoing validity of the law in New Testament times.

1.2.3 Good works and rewards

These considerations lead us to Calvin's remarks on the rewards promised for good works in the Old Testament. For this issue, I turn to Book 3, Ch. 17, entitled, "The Agreement of the Promises of the Law and of the Gospel (*Promissionum Legis et Evangelii conciliatio*)." Calvin opens this chapter by wrestling with the problem of Old Testament passages that indicate blessing or curse contingent upon obedience to the law. Are these contrary to the promises of the gospel that justification is by faith and not by good works? To answer this question, Calvin unfolds his basic understanding of the law. "If we cleave (*haereamus*) to the law, we are bereft of all blessing and a curse hangs over us, one ordained for all transgressors."¹⁹⁰ The blessings promised would be available only for those who keep the law perfectly, and no such person exists. All humanity would therefore come under

¹⁸⁹ *Inst.* 2.10.1-2.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 3.17.1, OS 4:254. "Si in Lege haereamus, omni benedictione defectis sola nobis maledictio imminet, quae universis transgressoribus edicta est."

God's curse and wrath. Indeed, the very promises of the law would be "ineffectual and void (*inefficaces ... et irritae*)" – "had God's goodness not helped us through the gospel."¹⁹¹

This last phrase is a counterfactual, and this is a crucial point, for on Calvin's account, such a condition does not obtain precisely because Christ has fulfilled all righteousness. When one considers the promises only "so long as they have reference to the merit of works (*quandiu ad operum merita respiciunt*) ... they are in a sense abolished (*quodammodo aboleri*)."¹⁹² But "when the promises of the gospel are substituted (*dum promissiones Evangelicae substituuntur*) ... these not only make us acceptable to God (*ipsi Deo accepti simus*), but also render our works pleasing to him (*operibus quoque nostris sit sua gratia*)."¹⁹³

Calvin explains, in a striking remark that deserves to be quoted in full:

And not only does the Lord adjudge them pleasing; he also extends to them the blessings which under the covenant were owed to the observance of his law. I therefore admit that what the Lord has promised in his law to the keepers of righteousness and holiness is paid to the works of believers, but in this repayment we must always consider the reason that wins favor for these works.

Now we see that there are three reasons. The first is: God, having turned his gaze from his servants' works, which always deserve reproof rather than praise, embraces his servants in Christ (*ipsos in Christo complectitur*), and with faith alone intervening, reconciles them to himself without the help of works. The second is: of his own fatherly generosity and loving-kindness, and without considering their worth (*non aestimata eorum dignitate*), he raises works to this place of honor, so that he attributes some value to them (*huc honoris attollit ut alicuius pretii habeat*). The third is: He receives these very works with pardon (*ea ipsa cum venia suscipit*), not imputing the

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 3.17.2, OS 4:254. "Hac ratione, et quae in Lege nobis offerebantur promissiones, in efficaces forent omnes et irritae, nisi Dei bonitas per Evangelium succurreret."

¹⁹² Ibid., 3.17.3, OS 4:255. "Dico sane efficaciam suam ad nos non proferre quandiu ad operum merita respiciunt; quare si in se considerentur, quodammodo aboleri."

¹⁹³ Ibid. "Sed dum promissiones Evangelicae substituuntur, quae gratuitam peccatorum remissionem denuntiant, non efficiunt modo ut ipsi Deo accepti simus, sed ut operibus quoque nostris sit sua gratia."

imperfection (*non imputata imperfectione*) with which they are all so corrupted that they would otherwise be reckoned as sins rather than virtues.¹⁹⁴

With these words, Calvin sets forth two ways to understand the law and its promises of reward. When the promises are read with reference to the merit of works, they have no value for us, for no one can fulfill the law perfectly. But when treated with regard to the gospel, the promises do bring benefit. These two rubrics constitute entirely different modes of relation with God. While the former system demands absolute perfection, the latter legitimizes good works, as God receives us in Christ and judges our works more valuable and less imperfect than they actually are.

This does not mean that works are meritorious: Calvin insists that good works are only possible by the grace of God in Christ. “Because the godly, encompassed with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and their good works are as yet incomplete (*inchoata*) and redolent of the vices of the flesh, he can be propitious (*propitius*) neither to the former nor to the latter unless he embrace them in Christ rather than in themselves (*nisi in Christo magis quam in seipsis amplexetur*).”¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the promise of God’s favor remains: “God’s children are

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.17.3, OS 4:255-56. “Neque hoc tantum, ut ea Dominus grata habeat, sed benedictionibus etiam, quae ex pacto debebantur Legis suae observationi, prosequatur. Fateor ergo fidelium operibus rependi quae iustitiae et sanctitatis cultoribus in Lege sua Dominus promisit: verum in hac retributione, considerata semper est causa quae gratiam operibus conciliet. Eam porro triplicem esse cernimus. Prima est, quod Deus averso a servorum suorum operibus intuitu, quae probrum magis quam laudem perpetuo merentur, ipsos in Christo complectitur, ac sola fide intercedente, citra operum subsidium reconciliat sibi. Altera quod opera, non aestimata eorum dignitate, paterna benignitate atque indulgentia, huc honoris attollit ut alicuius pretii habeat. Tertia, quod ea ipsa cum venia suscipit, non imputata imperfectione, qua omnia inquinata, peccatis magis quam virtutibus accensenda alioqui forent.”

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.17.5, OS 4:257-58. “Sed quia pii mortali carne circumdati, adhuc sunt peccatores, et opera eorum bona, inchoata duntaxat, et carnis vitium redolentia: neque illis neque his propitius esse posset nisi in Christo magis quam in seipsis amplexetur.” See also 3.17.15 for Calvin’s discussion of the scholastic doctrine of “accepting grace” and his citation of Augustine on the perfection of the saints. “‘When we,’ he says, ‘call the virtue of the saints perfect, to this very perfection also belongs the recognition of imperfection, both in truth

pleasing and lovable to him, since he sees in them the marks and features of his own countenance. For we have elsewhere taught that regeneration is a renewal of the divine image in us. Since, therefore, wherever God contemplates his own face, he both rightly loves it and holds it in honor, it is said with good reason that the lives of believers, framed to holiness and righteousness, are pleasing to him.”¹⁹⁶

1.2.4 The knowledge of God in Christ

The final point of similarity concerns the knowledge of God in Christ. This issue is in some ways the most important, and Calvin’s position on it shapes the entire structure of the *Institutes*. As mentioned above, I reserve a fuller treatment of the matter for the fourth chapter. Here, though, I provide the basic outlines of Calvin’s position on the knowledge of Christ in the Old Testament, drawing primarily from *Institutes* Book 2, Ch. 9, entitled “Christ, although he was known to the Jews under the law, was at length clearly revealed only in the gospel (*Christum, quanvis sub Lege Iudaeis cognitus fuerit, tamen Evangelio demum exhibitum fuisse*).” I begin with three introductory remarks and then proceed to the contents of this chapter.

First, this chapter precedes Book 2, Ch. 10 on the similarity between the testaments, which, as we have already seen, begins with an explicit link to what has come before it.

and in humility” (*Perfectam, inquit, sanctorum virtutem quum nominamus, ad ipsam perfectionem pertinet etiam imperfectionis tum in veritate tum in humilitate cognitio*; OS 4:269-70). This citation is from Augustine’s *c. ep. Pel.* 3.7.19.

¹⁹⁶ *Inst.* 3.17.5, OS 4:257. “... gratos esse Deo et amabiles suos filios in quibus notas et lineamenta vultus sui videt. Regenerationem enim alibi, imaginis divinae reparationem in nobis esse docuimus. Quoniam ergo ubicunque faciem suam Deus contemplatur, et merito amat, et in honore habet: non sine causa dicitur illi placere fidelium vita, ad sanctitatem et iustitiam composita.”

“Now we can clearly see from what has already been said ...”¹⁹⁷ Book 2, Ch. 9, then, should support Calvin’s position on the unity of the testaments. Second, the title of Book 2, Ch. 9 presupposes a basic continuity between the testaments. Christ was actually known to the Jews, even if he was more clearly revealed later. Third, the title also indicates the centrality of knowledge and revelation in Calvin’s theology. Indeed, as will be discussed later, these themes define the basic structure of Books 1 and 2, entitled respectively “The knowledge of God the Creator (*De cognitione Dei creatoris*)” and “The knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, first disclosed to the fathers under the law, and then to us in the gospel (*De cognitione Dei redemptoris in Christo, quae Patribus sub Lege primum, deinde et nobis in Evangelio patefacta est*).” The title of Book 2 is very similar to the title of Book 2, Ch. 9, but reveals even more strongly Calvin’s emphasis on the unity of the covenant. One verb (*patefacio*) governs two indirect objects (*patres* and *nos*). Christ was made manifest both to the fathers and to us, despite differences in clarity of manifestation.

The contents of Book 2, Ch. 9 advance these observations. Throughout the chapter, Calvin affirms on the one hand that Christ was revealed to Old Testament believers, though obscurely, and on the other that Christ was revealed more clearly to us. The fathers “had but a slight taste of [God’s gracious revelation]; we can more richly enjoy it.”¹⁹⁸ Calvin cites a series of New Testament passages to support this point. 1 Pet. 1:10-12 says the prophets knew something about the salvation to come, but also recognized that they were serving us more than themselves. Moses bore witness to Jesus (Jn. 5:46), though he did not see what we

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 2.10.1, OS 3:403.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.9.1, OS 3:398. “... et quum eam modice delibaverint, uberius nobis offertur eius fruitio.”

see (Mt. 13:16-17; Lk. 10:23-24). Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced (Jn. 8:56), even if his vision of Christ remained "rather indistinct (*obscurior*)."¹⁹⁹ Calvin struggles a bit with Jn. 1:18, which reads: "No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known." Calvin explains this passage by appeal to relative comparison. John "does not exclude the pious who died before Christ from the fellowship of the understanding and light that shine in the person of Christ. But, by comparing their lot with ours, he teaches that those mysteries which they but glimpsed in shadow outline (*sub umbris*) are manifest to us (*nobis manifesta esse*)."²⁰⁰ Heb. 1:1-4 confirms the same point, teaching that "that only-begotten Son, who today is for us 'the splendor of God the Father and the very stamp of his nature,' became known (*innotuerit*) of old to the Jews."²⁰¹ Finally, 2 Cor. 4:6 says God has shone in our hearts "to give the light of the knowledge (*notitiam*) of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."²⁰² Calvin interprets this passage thus: "For when he appeared in this, his image, he, as it were, made himself visible (*se fecit visibilem*); whereas his appearance had before been indistinct and shadowed (*obscura et umbratilis*)."²⁰³

Calvin's position on the newness of revelation in Christ can be discerned in his treatment of the word "gospel." Calvin acknowledges that this term can refer generally to all promises of the remission of sins, including those found in the Old Testament: "The word

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 2.9.1, OS 3:399.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. "Neque vox illa Iohannis Baptistae ... pios qui ante mortui fuerant excludit a societate intelligentiae et lucis quae refulgit in Christi persona: sed illorum sortem cum nostra comparans, mysteria quae sub umbris obscure tantum speculati sunt, docet nobis manifesta esse."

²⁰¹ Ibid. "... unigenitus ille, qui nobis hodie est splendor gloriae et character substantiae Dei Patris, olim Iudaeis innotuerit."

²⁰² Ibid. "... ad illustrandum notitiam gloriae Dei in facie Iesu Christi."

²⁰³ Ibid. "Quia ubi apparuit in hac sua imagine, quodammodo se fecit visibilem, praeut obscura et umbratilis ante fuerat eius species."

‘gospel,’ taken in the broad sense (*large sumendo*), includes those testimonies of his mercy and fatherly favor which God gave the patriarchs of old.”²⁰⁴ In a more technical sense, though, the gospel refers specifically to “the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ.”²⁰⁵ On the one hand, this does not mean “the patriarchs were shrouded in the shadows of death until the Son of God took flesh.”²⁰⁶ On the other, Calvin does affirm the gospel as a decisive new moment for the knowledge of Christ in redemptive history. “This living manifestation of realities has justly won a new and singular commendation.”²⁰⁷

Despite this new manifestation, Calvin says, those of the New Testament still live by hope under promises. Servetus failed to grasp this point, suggesting we experience the fulfillment of all the promises of the gospel by faith. Calvin acknowledges that Christ has completed the sum total of our salvation, but he denies that we possess the fullness of the benefits of Christ. “Although, therefore, Christ offers us in the gospel a present fullness of spiritual benefits, the enjoyment thereof ever lies hidden under the guardianship of hope, until, having put off the corruptible flesh, we be transfigured in the glory of him who goes before us.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, the New Testament is full of promises just like the Old Testament –

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 2.9.2, OS 3:399. “... vocem Evangelii large sumendo, sub ea comprehendi quae olim testimonia Deus misericordiae suae paternique favoris Patribus dedit.”

²⁰⁵ Ibid. “Porro Evangelium accipio pro clara mysterii Christi manifestatione.”

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.9.2, OS 3:400. “... demersos fuisse Patres in tenebris mortis, donec carnem indueret Filius Dei.”

²⁰⁷ Ibid. “Viva ipsa rerum exhibitio iure novum et singulare praeconium obtinuit.”

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.9.3, OS 3:400-1. “Quanvis ergo praesentem spiritualium bonorum plenitudinem nobis in Evangelio Christus offerat, fructio tamen sub custodia spei semper latet, donec corruptibili carne exuti, transfiguremur in eius qui nos praecedat gloriam.”

though, Calvin admits, there is a “difference in the nature or quality of the promises: the gospel points out with a finger what the law foreshadowed under types.”²⁰⁹

All these considerations support a basic congruence between the law and the gospel. Calvin writes, “The gospel did not so supplant the entire law as to bring forward a different way of salvation. Rather, it confirmed and gave substance to the shadows.”²¹⁰ The patriarchs should therefore be understood not according to slavery or a curse, but according to the elementary character of their dispensation in redemptive history. “When Christ says, ‘The Law and the Prophets were until John’ [Luke 16:16; cf. Matt. 11:13], he does not subject the patriarchs to the curse that the slaves of the law cannot escape. He means: they had been trained in rudiments only, thus remaining far beneath the height of the gospel teaching.”²¹¹ Calvin does acknowledge that Paul sometimes contrasts law and gospel in polemical contexts, advancing a particular definition of the law whereby God demands perfect obedience and threatens curses for even the smallest deviation. Calvin denies, however, that this is the most comprehensive way of understanding the law. “Where the whole law (*tota Lege*) is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation (*respectu dilucidae manifestationis*).”²¹²

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.9.3, OS 3:401. “Tantum in natura promissionum vel qualitate notandum est discrimen: quia Evangelium digito monstrat quod Lex sub typis adumbravit.”

²¹⁰ Ibid., 2.9.4, OS 3:401. “Non ita successit Evangelium toti Legi, ut diversam rationem salutis afferret: quin potius ut sanciret ratumque esse probaret quicquid illa promiserat, et corpus umbris adiungeret.”

²¹¹ Ibid., 2.9.4, OS 3:401-2 “Neque enim Christus, ubi dicit Legem et Prophetas fuisse usque ad Iohannem, Patres maledictioni addicit, quam effugere non possunt servi Legis: sed rudimentis tantum imbutos fuisse significant, ut longe subsisterent infra Evangelicae doctrinae altitudinem.”

²¹² Ibid., 2.9.4, OS 3:402. “... ubi de tota Lege agitur, Evangelium respectu dilucidae manifestationis tantummodo ab ea differre.”

The thesis of Book 2, Ch. 9, then, is that both Old and New Testament believers received some knowledge of Christ, even if the latter had more of it. This idea corresponds to the other issues we have treated above, all of which concern something God has revealed: the promise of immortality, the moral law, promises of reward. Knowledge, it seems, is Calvin's central category for grounding the unity of the testaments. Again, Calvin's opening remarks in Book 2, Ch. 10 are, again, programmatic: all God's people since the beginning of the world have shared in the same covenant "by the same law and by the bond of the same doctrine."²¹³

1.3 Discussion

The first step in this survey of Augustine and Calvin reveals many important areas of common ground, but also a point of fundamental difference. Most foundationally, both figures affirm some basic unity between the testaments grounded in the constancy of God across the testaments. This is not a trivial matter: the identity of the Creator in the Old Testament with the God of Jesus Christ was a central issue in Irenaeus' attacks against the Gnostics, and Tertullian's against Marcion. Augustine is not wrong to trace lines of similarity between these earlier figures, the Manicheans, and the anonymous heretic whose writings were discovered in Carthage. Against such opponents, both Augustine and Calvin defend the rectitude of God in the Old Testament, the goodness of creation, and the fleshly embodiment of the Son in Christ.

This basic set of affirmations funds each figure's position on the Old Testament law. Both Augustine and Calvin distinguish between ceremonies given to prefigure Christ and

²¹³ Ibid., 2.10.1, OS:403.

laws that retain authority across the testaments. The “moral law” reflects the character of God and therefore does not change with the coming of Christ. This perspective is perhaps defended more vigorously in Calvin, but at least by the end of Augustine’s career, he, too, is prepared to defend without appeal to allegory the ongoing validity of the moral law and the character of God in the Old Testament. Both figures perceive in the coming of Christ the culmination of redemptive history, the reality to which the Old Testament ceremonies referred. As such, they also affirm the abrogation of Old Testament practices, while denying this implies any change in the character of God or his moral demands.

Despite these important similarities, our initial exposition of these two figures already reveals a major difference between them that will run like a fault line through the rest of this study. As we have seen, Augustine’s reflections on the relation between the testaments reflect his struggle to overcome the apparent barbarities and absurdities of the Old Testament, one that played a role in his involvement with Manicheanism. As such, the writings we have explored are characterized by a defensive posture. By “defensive,” I do not mean that Augustine betrays hidden insecurities with regard to the Old Testament, but rather that his writings are formally structured as responses to objections against the Old Testament. (A major exception to this point is *City of God*, a text that will receive separate treatment in chapter 3.) This feature of his writings points to a key question: the extent to which Augustine explicitly preserves the integrity and value of the Old Testament beyond its role in prefiguring the New.

Augustine locates the unity of the testaments decisively in the New. When Faustus and the Manicheans ask why the Catholics do not concern themselves with the commandments or promises of the Old Testament, Augustine responds that the Catholics *do*

retain them – according to the realities they prefigured. The value of the symbolic laws thus lies primarily in their fulfillment in the New Testament. Similarly, Christians do not hope for earthly reward, but they appreciate the Old Testament promise of earthly hope as a figure for the eternal reward of the New Testament. It is in this vein that the phrase “for our sake” acquires for Augustine virtually the status of a refrain. Augustine’s position on the primacy of the New Testament is not intended to denigrate the Old: as with the heavenly and the earthly, the superiority of the New Testament does mean the Old Testament is bad, and the Jews were right to practice the ceremonies before the coming of Christ. Ultimately, though, Augustine defines the relation between the testaments in terms of sign and referent, a framework that can hardly avoid instrumentalizing the Old Testament and its people – as Augustine does.

Quite different is the picture we find in Calvin. For this Reformer, the unity between the testaments is the substance of the covenant, defined primarily according to knowledge and doctrine. Believers before and after Christ share a common hope, a common law, common promises of reward, and a common knowledge of the same mediator. While there are, of course, differences in God’s self-revelation to humanity across the testaments, there is no change in the fundamental matter of the covenant, which was not only founded on Christ from the beginning, but even recognized as such, though less distinctly during Old Testament times.

Two of the clearest manifestations of the disparity between Augustine and Calvin are the way each figure treats the Old Testament promises and the character of revelation during Old Testament times. Calvin dedicates almost the entirety of *Institutes* Book 2, Ch. 10 to establishing the hope of immortality in the Old Testament. Old Testament believers

participated in and were illuminated by God's Word: this must mean that their hope was eternal; the Old Testament covenant formula surely has eternity in view; the suffering of Old Testament believers, especially Abraham, makes sense only in light of a future reward; the latter prophets spoke quite explicitly about immortality; the New Testament testifies that the gospel – intimately linked to immortality – was promised in the Old Testament.

Augustine, by contrast, strongly stresses the temporality of the Old Testament promises. Indeed, the difference between earthly and heavenly reward is for him one of the central dividing lines between the testaments. Thus, his reply to Faustus' objections is not that the Old Testament actually did promise eternal reward and the Jews understood it, but rather that Catholics retain the earthly promises of the Old Testament for their signification of heavenly promises. That is, Faustus and Augustine agree that the Old Testament is earthly and temporal; they differ only on how to interpret it. For Augustine, the earthly promises are, in and of themselves, largely irrelevant. He can thus write, "The old things have now passed away in terms of our hope, because it is no longer the time of the Old Testament, when the people were waiting for a temporal and fleshly kingdom from God, and all things have been made new in terms of the same hope so that we may have as something promised the kingdom of heaven, where there will be no death and corruption."²¹⁴

Calvin could never affirm such a statement, and one wonders if he would direct his epithets for the heretic Servetus against the Bishop of Hippo as well. For Calvin, the Old Testament promises immortality directly, and not only in figures. This reveals a basic and

²¹⁴ *C. Faust.* 11.8, CSEL 25.1:326. "Itaque nunc uetera transierunt secundum spem, quia modo iam non est tempus ueteris testamenti quo temporale atque carnale regnum expectetur a deo; et facta sunt omnia noua secundum eandem spem, ut regnum caelorum, ubi nulla erit mors atque corruptio, promissum teneamus."

crucial difference between our two theologians. Augustine locates the unity of the testaments in the way the Old Testament figures the New, but Calvin defines the unity of the testaments according to the substance of the one covenant in both Old and New Testament times. While Augustine says the Old Testament figures function primarily to benefit us, Calvin explicitly rejects this position for depicting the Jews as a herd of swine. Augustine seeks to legitimize the Old Testament as Scripture against those who would denigrate it; Calvin goes much further, arguing that the teaching of the Old and New Testaments is essentially the same. As a somewhat simplistic analogy, the unity of the testaments is for Augustine like that between the word “ox” and the actual animal; for Calvin, it is like that between a young ox and the same ox when it grows older.

The second manifestation of major difference between Augustine and Calvin concerns revelation during Old Testament times. For Calvin, the identity of revelation across the testaments grounds their unity. Calvin acknowledges that the Old Testament patriarchs lived under rudiments, discerning Christ only through shadows and outlines, but he insists on New Testament grounds that they did nevertheless participate in some kind of preliminary knowledge of the mediator. While Calvin recognizes shifts in the clarity of revelation throughout the Old Testament – the promise of immortality, for instance, begins with faint sparks but explodes with illumination in the later prophets – he insists that even the earliest of the Old Testament saints shared this hope, and that it was widely distributed for all Israel to know. Augustine, on the other hand, depicts the Old Testament primarily as a time of darkness and opacity. There were some exceptional figures who recognized the meaning of the signs, but these mysteries were not broadly dispersed, and those patriarchs and prophets belonged more to the New Testament than the Old. It is in this vein that

Augustine regularly contrasts the particular knowledge of Abraham, Noah, Moses, and others with that of the nation of Israel at large.

Because both Augustine and Calvin nuance their treatments of this issue, there is some common ground between them: for Calvin, the Old Testament did reveal Christ – though under veils, as it were; for Augustine, the Old Testament was not completely devoid of the knowledge of Christ, even if it was largely confined to exceptional figures. Nevertheless, these points of similarity belie two basically different construals of the unity of the testaments, one of reference and the other of identity. The next three chapters will unfold these differences further.

2. The discontinuity between the testaments

Lex ergo data est, ut gratia quaereretur, gratia data est, ut lex inpleretur.

Augustine, *De spiritu et littera*

... administratio tamen variat.

Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*

This chapter continues our survey of Augustine and Calvin by considering the discontinuity between the testaments, an issue that will make even clearer the basic differences between these two thinkers. Despite important points of common ground, Augustine and Calvin diverge significantly in their understanding of the nature and purpose of Old Testament revelation. For Augustine, the grace of the New Testament was veiled in the Old, revealed in the New; for Calvin, this grace was made manifest during Old Testament times, though not as clearly. The implications of this matter can especially be discerned with reference to the question of the Old Testament saints, a conundrum that proves problematic for both Augustine and Calvin's respective frames of thought.

2.1 Augustine

Augustine's treatment of the discontinuity between the testaments develops further the sign-referent paradigm we witnessed in the previous chapter. To consider this matter more fully, I draw primarily upon his anti-Pelagian work, *The Spirit and the Letter* (412),¹ and then consider his remarks on the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" in his

¹ On date of composition, see Gerald Bonner, "Spirit and Letter, De," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 815-16.

Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians (418-22).² I argue that the contrast Augustine sets forth between the testaments largely bars Old Testament Israel from salvation, such that the Old Testament saints must be defined as redemptive-historical aberrations who kept the Israelites under bondage while they themselves participated in the New Testament.

2.1.1 The letter kills, the Spirit gives life

Augustine writes *The Spirit and the Letter* in response to a question posed by Marcellinus, who is confused about a remark Augustine made in an earlier treatise, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*. There, Augustine had asserted the theoretical possibility of human sinlessness with God's help, even if no such example (save Jesus) has been or ever will be found.³ Now, Augustine clarifies his point by engaging a discussion about whether humans can achieve righteousness, or even make progress toward it, without God's help. Against the Pelagians, Augustine strongly denies the possibility of good works on the basis of free will and knowledge of God's commands alone. Our ability to obey God, Augustine insists, depends upon the Holy Spirit.

Besides the fact that human beings are created with free choice of the will and besides the teaching by which they are commanded how they ought to live, they receive the Holy Spirit so that there arises in their minds a delight in and a love for that highest and immutable good that is God, even now while they walk by faith, not yet by vision. By this [love] given to them like the pledge of a gratuitous gift, they are set afire with the desire to cling to the creator and burn to come to a participation in that true light, so that they have their well-being from him from whom they have their being. For free choice is capable only of sinning, if the way of the truth remains hidden. And when what we should do and the goal we should strive for becomes clear,

² On date of composition, see Gerald Bonner, "Duae epistulas Pelagianorum, Contra," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 288. See previous chapter for relevant bibliography on the topics treated in this chapter.

³ *Spir. et litt.* 1.1. Augustine returns to this discussion in 35.62, 36.65-66.

unless we delight in it and love it, we do not act, do not begin, do not live good lives. But so that we may love it, *the love of God* is poured out *in our hearts* (*diffunditur in cordibus nostris*), not by free choice which comes from ourselves, but *by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom. 5:5).⁴

Note the importance of Rom 5:5, which functions throughout the treatise as a catchphrase for the Spirit's role in empowering obedience to God.⁵

The Spirit and the Letter is in large measure an exposition of Paul's words in 2 Cor. 3:6: "*The letter kills but the Spirit gives life.*" This text, Augustine argues, should not be understood according to the principles of figural reading, whereby an absurdity in the literal sense gives rise to spiritual interpretation.⁶ It should rather be understood in light of Rom. 7, where Paul speaks of the death brought upon him by the commandment not to covet. As Augustine explains, there is nothing absurd about this commandment that demands a spiritual reading. Rather, the commandment kills because, bereft of the Holy Spirit, we cannot obey it, and it even increases our desire for evil. So also, the proper interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6 is that "the letter of the law, which teaches that we should not sin, kills, if the life-giving Spirit is not

⁴ Ibid., 3.5, CSEL 60:157. "... ut praeter quod creatus est homo cum libero arbitrio praeterque doctrinam qua ei praecipitur quemadmodum uiuere debeat accipiat spiritum sanctum, quo fiat in animo eius delectatio dilectioque summi illius atque incommutabilis boni, quod deus est, etiam nunc cum per fidem ambulatur, nondum per speciem, ut hac sibi uelut arra data gratuiti muneris inardescat inhaerere creatori atque inflammetur accedere ad participationem illius ueri luminis, ut ex illo ei bene sit, a quo habet ut sit. Nam neque liberum arbitrium quicquam nisi ad peccandum ualet, si lateat ueritatis uia; et cum id quod agendum et quo nitendum est coeperit non latere, nisi etiam delectet et ametur, non agitur, non suscipitur, non bene uiuitur. Vt autem diligatur, caritas dei diffunditur in cordibus nostris non per arbitrium liberum, quod surgit ex nobis, sed per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis."

⁵ Augustine quotes or alludes to this verse on at least sixteen occasions: 3.5, 4.6, 5.7, 14.25, 16.28, 17.29 (2x), 21.36, 25.42, 26.46, 28.49, 29.51, 32.56 (2x), 33.57, 33.59.

⁶ Ibid., 4.6, CSEL 60:158. "Neque enim solo illo modo intellegendum est quod legimus: littera occidit, spiritus autem uiuificat, ut aliquid figurate scriptum, cuius est absurda proprietas, non accipiamus sicut littera sonat, sed aliud quod significat intuentes interiorem hominem spiritali intellegentia nutriamus."

present. After all, it leads us to know sin rather than to avoid it and increases sin rather than lessens it, because the transgression of the law is added to the evil desire.”⁷

Another related passage is Rom. 3, where Paul proclaims the revelation of the righteousness of God (*iustitia dei*). This righteousness, Augustine says, is “not that by which God is righteousness but that with which he clothes a human being when he justifies a sinner.”⁸ Paul asserts both that this righteousness has been made manifest apart from the law, and that the law and the prophets testify to it (3:21). On the latter point, Augustine writes, “The law bears witness, because by commanding and threatening and yet justifying no one it indicates clearly enough that human beings are justified by the gift of God through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The prophets bear witness, because the coming of Christ has fulfilled what they foretold.”⁹ The law, that is, reveals our sin; the prophets predict Christ. Concerning the former, Augustine explains, “The believer is not helped by the law, since God shows human beings their weakness through the law in order that they might take refuge in his mercy through faith and be healed ... The law shows that our will is weak so that grace may heal our will and so that a healthy will may fulfill the law, without being subject to the law or in need of the law (*non constituta sub lege nec indigens lege*).”¹⁰

⁷ Ibid., 5.8, CSEL 60:160. “... legis littera quae docet non esse peccandum, si spiritus uiuificans desit, occidit; sciri enim facit peccatum potius quam caueri et ideo magis augeri quam minui, quia malae concupiscentiae etiam praeuaricatio legis accedit.”

⁸ Ibid., 9.15, CSEL 60:167. “... non qua deus iustus est, sed qua induit hominem, cum iustificat impium.”

⁹ Ibid. “Lex quidem hoc ipso, quod iubendo et minando et neminem iustificando satis indicat dono dei iustificari hominem per adiutorium spiritus, prophetae autem, quia id quod praedixerunt Christi impleuit aduentus.”

¹⁰ Ibid. 9.15, CSEL 60:167-68. “Sed iustitia dei sine lege est, quam deus per spiritum gratiae credenti confert sine adiutorio legis, hoc est non adiutus a lege, quando quidem per legem ostendit homini infirmitatem suam, ut ad eius misericordiam per fidem confugiens sanaretur ... Voluntas nostra ostenditur infirma per legem, ut sanet gratia uoluntatem et sana uoluntas impleat legem non constituta sub lege nec indigens lege.”

Note the close connection Augustine presumes between what Protestants commonly call “justification” and “sanctification.” On this point, we may consider briefly Augustine’s remarks on Ps. 103.¹¹ Augustine introduces his exposition of this passage by arguing that good works are a sign of God’s grace through the Spirit, and that this grace necessarily leads to good works. He then delineates a pattern of salvation he discerns in the language of the psalm. First, God blesses us despite our sins, repaying evil with good. Second, he forgives our sins in baptism. Third, he heals our ills by helping us accomplish the good desires of our will. Fourth, he redeems us from corruption in the final resurrection. Finally, he crowns us with kindness and mercy in the last judgment. On Augustine’s account, salvation encompasses not only the forgiveness of sins but also the ability to obey the law; grace and good works do not cancel, but complement each other. “[God] crowns us, then, with gentleness and mercy, but he also does so according to our works.”¹² For Augustine, this salvation is a particular blessing of the New Testament. All the psalm’s promises, he writes, “belong to the new human being and to the New Testament.”¹³

Jer. 31:31-34 further underscores this connection between obedience and the New Testament. There God declares, “I will complete (*consummabo*) a New Testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”¹⁴ As Augustine explains, this passage has special importance as the only place in the Old Testament that explicitly refers to a “New

¹¹ Ibid., 33.57-59. See also 13.22, 17.30, 28.48, 29.51, 32.56.

¹² Ibid., 33.59, CSEL 60:218, alluding to Ps. 103:4. “Coronat ergo in miseratione et misericordia, sed etiam sic secundum opera.”

¹³ Ibid. “Haec, quae audisti, ad nouum hominem et ad nouum pertinent testamentum.”

¹⁴ Ibid., 19.33, CSEL 60:186. “Consummabo super domum Israhel et super domum Iuda testamentum nouum.”

Testament,”¹⁵ thus presenting an indisputable distinction between the old and new covenants. Nevertheless, Augustine says, Jeremiah denies any inherent defect in the law, locating the failure of the old covenant in the sinfulness of the people, not in the covenant itself. To support this point, Augustine first notes Jesus’ intent not to destroy, but to fulfill the law, and then appeals to Gal. 3:21-23. Paul teaches that the purpose of the law was to guard and enclose us until faith was revealed. Augustine explains, “The law, then, was given in order that we might seek after grace; grace was given so that we might fulfill the law.”¹⁶ Given these considerations, Augustine reasons, Jeremiah’s promise, “I will complete it (*consummabo*),” must mean, “I will fulfill it (*implebo*)”¹⁷: God completes the New Testament, that is, by writing the law on our hearts and minds, so that we may obey it. Paul also speaks to this issue in 2 Cor. 3:3, where he contrasts stone tablets with the tablets of our hearts, and the writing of ink with that of the Spirit. Augustine concludes, “The former is called the Old Testament on account of the human injury which is not healed by the command and threat of the letter; the latter is called the New Testament on account of the new condition of the Spirit which heals the new human being from the wound of the old condition.”¹⁸

As we saw in the previous chapter, Augustine contrasts the Old Testament with the New according to the distinction between the earthly/temporal, and the heavenly/spiritual.

¹⁵ Ibid. “Quid ad haec dicimus? Nempe in ueteribus libris aut nusquam aut difficile praeter hunc propheticum locum legitur facta commemoratio testamenti noui, ut omnino ipso nomine appellaretur. Nam multis locis hoc significatur et praenuntiatur futurum, sed non ita, ut etiam nomen legatur expressum.”

¹⁶ Ibid., 19.34, CSEL 60:187. “Lex ergo data est, ut gratia quaereretur, gratia data est, ut lex inpleretur.”

¹⁷ Ibid., 19.34, CSEL 60:188. “Quid est consummabo nisi ‘implebo’ non secundum testamentum, quod feci patribus eorum in die, qua adprehendi manum eorum, ut eicerem eos de terra Aegypti?”

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.35, CSEL 60:188. “Ergo propter ueteris hominis noxam, quae per litteram iubentem et minantem minime sanabatur, dicitur illud testamentum uetus, hoc autem nouum propter nouitatem spiritus, quae hominem nouum sanat a uitio uetustatis.”

In this text, Augustine develops this point not just for the ceremonial laws but also for those commandments Christians must still observe. On Augustine's account, the Old Testament promises earthly reward even for prescriptions like the Ten Commandments and the command to love. In the New Testament, by contrast, "we are promised the good of the heart, the good of the mind, the good of the Spirit, that is, the intelligible good,"¹⁹ and our ultimate blessing is that the Lord will be our God, and we God's people. This internalization of God's commands means the law no longer strikes us with fear. Augustine writes, "The difference, then, between the Old and New Testaments is seen to be this: in the former the law is written on tablets, in the latter upon hearts, so that what in the former struck fear from without might in the latter produce delight within. In the former one became a transgressor because of the letter that kills; in the latter one becomes a lover because of the Spirit that gives life."²⁰

This contrast between fear and love, or slavery and freedom, is for Augustine the central difference between the testaments. Augustine draws upon Paul's remarks in Rom. 8:15: "*You have not, after all, received the spirit of servitude so as to live in fear again; rather, you have received the Spirit of adoption as children. In it we cry out, Abba, Father.*"²¹ There is, Augustine writes, a fundamental distinction between those who obey from "fear of punishment (*timore poenae*)"

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.36, CSEL 60:190. "... nunc ipsius cordis bonum promittitur, mentis bonum, spiritus bonum, hoc est intellegibile bonum."

²⁰ Ibid., 25.42, CSEL 60:196. "Cum igitur haec appareat distantia ueteris et noui testamenti, quod lex ibi in tabulis, hic in cordibus scribitur, ut quod ibi forinsecus terret, hic delectet intrinsecus, ibique fiat praeuaricator per occidentem litteram, hic dilector per uiuificantem spiritum."

²¹ Ibid., 32.56, CSEL 60:213. "Non enim accepistis spiritum seruitutis iterum in timorem, sed accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus: abba pater."

and those who act from “the love of righteousness (*amore iustitiae*).”²² The former do not and cannot please God: “For those people who are under the law try to achieve their own righteousness out of fear of punishment and do not, for this reason, achieve the righteousness of God. Only love does that, love which only finds pleasing what is permitted, not fear which is forced to do what is permitted, while it has something else in its will by which it would prefer, if it were possible, that what is not permitted be permitted.”²³ Such people bear the mentality of slaves, not free people. By contrast, Augustine writes, true righteousness “begins to delight in the law of God in the interior human being”²⁴ by the freedom of the Holy Spirit. “*This Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor. 3:17). This is the Spirit of God by whose gift we are justified; by his gift there comes to be in us a delight in not sinning so that we have freedom. So too, without this Spirit we find delight in sinning so that we are enslaved.”²⁵

These two distinct modes of obedience correspond to two important moments in redemptive history: the establishment of the law at Sinai, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

In the former case the people were prevented from approaching the place where the law was given by terrifying fear, but in the latter case the Holy Spirit came over those who were gathered together in one place and were waiting for him. In the former case the finger of God

²² Ibid., 14.26, CSEL 60:180.

²³ Ibid., 32.56, CSEL 60:213. “Illi qui sub lege sunt et timore poenae iustitiam suam facere conantur et ideo non faciunt dei iustitiam, quia caritas eam facit, quam non libet nisi quod licet, non timor, qui cogitur in opere habere quod licet, cum aliud habeat in uoluntate qua mallet, si fieri posset, licere quod non licet.”

²⁴ Ibid., 14.26, CSEL 60:180. “... incipit condelectari legi dei secundum interiorem hominem.”

²⁵ Ibid., 16.28, CSEL 60:181. “Dominus autem spiritus est; ubi autem spiritus domini, ibi libertas. Hic autem spiritus dei, cuius dono iustificamur, quo fit in nobis ut non peccare delectet, ubi libertas est, sicut praeter hunc spiritum peccare delectat.” See 29.51.

wrote on stone tablets; in the latter upon human hearts. In the former case, then, the law by which the unrighteous were terrified was given outwardly; in the latter case the law by which they are justified was given inwardly.²⁶

Since love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10) and the Spirit pours out the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5), it follows for Augustine virtually by logical necessity that the giving of the Spirit accomplishes the fulfillment of the law. “When the works of law are written on tablets in order to strike fear in this wisdom of the flesh, it is the law of works and the letter that kills their transgressor. But when love itself is poured out in the hearts of those who believe, it is the law of faith and the Spirit who gives life to the lovers.”²⁷ Indeed, Augustine writes, the laws written on our hearts just are “the very presence of the Holy Spirit.”²⁸

By and large, Augustine says, the Jews failed to recognize this mode of obedience. Paul condemns them in Rom. 2 for boasting as if they deserved and fulfilled the law, when they were actually transgressors of the law driven by fear, not love. Augustine writes, “And for this reason God did not see in their will what human beings saw in their action; rather, they were held guilty as a result of what God knew that they preferred to do, if only they

²⁶ Ibid., 17.29, CSEL 60:182. “... ibi populus accedere ad locum, ubi lex dabatur, horrendo terrore prohibetur, hic autem in eos superuenit spiritus sanctus, qui eum promissum expectantes in unum fuerant congregati; ibi in tabulis lapideis digitus dei operatus est, hic in cordibus hominum. Ibi ergo lex extrinsecus posita est, qua iniusti terrentur, hic intrinsecus data est, qua iustificarentur.”

²⁷ Ibid., 17.29, CSEL 60:183. “Sed ad hanc prudentiam carnis terrendam cum in tabulis scribuntur opera caritatis, lex est operum et littera occidens praeuaricatorem: cum autem ipsa caritas diffunditur in corde credentium, lex est fidei et spiritus uiuificans dilectorem.”

²⁸ Ibid., 21.36, CSEL 60:189. “Quid sunt ergo leges dei ab ipso deo scriptae in cordibus nisi ipsa praesentia spiritus sancti, qui est digitus dei, quo praesente diffunditur caritas in cordibus nostris, quae plenitudo legis est et finis praecepti?”

could have done so with impunity.”²⁹ In that vein, Augustine asserts, the new covenant is not with Israel of the flesh but with spiritual Jews. Concerning Jer. 31:34, Augustine comments, “What do the words, *all from the littlest to the greatest of them*, mean but all who spiritually belong (*pertinentes spiritaliter*) to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, that is, to the children of Isaac, to the offspring of Abraham? ... It is the house of Israel or the house of Judah on account of Christ (*propter Christum*) who came from the house of Judah. It is the house of the children of the promise, that is, children not because of their own works, but because of God’s kindness.”³⁰ He continues:

The law of works written on stone tablets and its reward, that promised land which the carnal house of Israel received when it was set free from Egypt, pertains to the Old Testament. So too, the law of faith written in our hearts and its reward, the beauty of contemplation which the spiritual house of Israel will perceive once it has been set free from this world, pertains to the New Testament.³¹

The contrast Augustine sets forth between the testaments can be discerned more precisely by distinguishing it from two different rubrics. First, Augustine does not simplistically contrast the Old and New Testaments in terms of works versus faith.

It is worth the effort to consider how the law of actions, that is, of works, which does not exclude that boasting, and the law of faith, which does exclude it, differ from each other, if only we can grasp

²⁹ Ibid., 8.13, CSEL 60:165. “Ac per hoc coram deo non erat in uoluntate, quod coram hominibus apparebat in opere, potiusque ex illo rei tenebantur, quod eos nouerat deus malle, si fieri posset inpune, committere.” See 8.14.

³⁰ Ibid., 24.40, CSEL 60:192. “Quid ergo est ‘omnes a minores usque ad maiorem eorum’ nisi omnes pertinentes spiritaliter ad domum Israhel et ad domum Iuda, hoc est ad filios Isaac, ad semen Abrahæ? ... Haec est domus Israel uel domus Iuda propter Christum, qui uenit ex tribu Iuda, domus filiorum promissionis, hoc est non operum priorum, sed beneficii dei.”

³¹ See *ibid.*, 24.41, CSEL 60:194. “Sicut ergo lex factorum scripta in tabulis lapideis mercesque eius terra illa promissionis, quam carnalis domus Israhel, cum ex Aegypto liberato esset, accepit, pertinet ad testamentum uetus, ita lex fidei scripta in cordibus mercesque eius species contemplationis, quam spiritalis domus Israhel ab hoc mundo liberata percipiet, pertinet ad testamentum nouum.”

the distinction. After all, one might say right off that the law of works is found in Judaism and the law of faith in Christianity, because circumcision and other such works belong to the law and Christian practice does not observe them anymore. But we have for a long time been trying to show how mistaken that distinction is.³²

Augustine appeals to Rom. 7, where Paul defends the law by invoking the commandment not to covet. Since no one would suggest the law of faith allows coveting, Augustine reasons, the law of faith must include commands. “The fact that it does not have the works of the old sacraments, namely, circumcision and the rest, does not mean that there are no works which it has in its own sacraments that are appropriate to its own time.”³³ Why, then, is the law of faith not simply called the law of works? Augustine first answers: “What the law of works commands by its threats (*minando imperat*) the law of faith obtains by its faith (*credendo impetrat*).”³⁴ He then recalls the language of *Confessions*:

Accordingly, by the law of works God says: Do what I command! By the law of faith we say to God: Give what you command! After all, the law commands in order to remind us of what faith should do. It commands, that is, so that, if those to whom the command is given are not as yet able to observe it, they may know what to ask for.³⁵

The difference between the Old and New Testaments is therefore not that the former has commands and the latter does not, but that the latter gives us the ability to obey them.

³² Ibid., 13.21, CSEL 60:173. “Lex ergo factorum, id est operum, per quam non excluditur illa gloriatio, et lex fidei, per quam excluditur, quo inter se differant operae pretium est considerare, si tamen ualeamus aduertere atque discernere. Cito enim quisque dixerit legem operum esse in Iudaismo, legem autem fidei in Christianismo, propterea quia circumcisio ceteraque opera talia legis sunt, quae christiana iam disciplina non seruat. Sed quantum fallat ista discretio, iam diu quidem est ut molimur ostendere ...”

³³ Ibid., 13.21, CSEL 60:175. “Neque enim quia non habet opera ueterum sacramentorum, circumcisionis uidelicet atque ceterorum, ideo non sunt opera quae habet in sacramentis suis huic iam tempori congruis.”

³⁴ Ibid., 13.22, CSEL 60:175. “Quod operum lex minando imperat, hoc fidei lex credendo impetrat.”

³⁵ Ibid. “Ac per hoc lege operum dicit deus: ‘fac quod iubeo,’ lege fidei dicitur deo: ‘da quod iubes.’ Ideo enim iubet lex, ut admoneat quod faciat fides, id est ut cui iubetur, si nondum potest, sciat quid petat.” See *conf.* 10.29.40, CCL 27:176. “Da quod iubes et iube quod uis.” See also *spir. et litt.* 25.42.

Second, the contrast between the law and the Spirit does not correspond to a distinction between the ceremonies of the law and its more permanent commands.

The apostle seems to rebuke and correct those who were persuaded to receive circumcision in that by the term “law” he refers to circumcision and other such observances of the law. Christians do not now observe them, since they were foreshadowings of what was to come. And they now actually possess what was promised symbolically through those foreshadowings. The apostle, nonetheless, wanted us to understand that the law, by which he says that no one is justified, is found not only in those sacraments which they had as symbols of what was promised, but also in those works which amount to a righteous life for whoever does them.³⁶

Augustine considers the Ten Commandments. In 2 Cor. 3:7, Paul calls the law a “ministry of death,” indicating by his reference to letters carved in stone that he has in mind the Decalogue. Yet, Augustine observes, the Decalogue does not mention anything about circumcision or sacrifices, and it includes only one ceremonial commandment concerning the Sabbath. It makes little sense that this one prescription could have reduced the whole of the Ten Commandments into a ministry of death. Still less could it be that only the Sabbath pertains to the ministry of death, and not the other nine commandments. Rather, Augustine reasons, Paul must mean the whole of the law, whether ceremonial or not, brought death by increasing sin.³⁷ Jer. 31 confirms this point. The prophet “said nothing about changing the sacrifices or any sacred rites, although that change was undoubtedly to come, as we see that it has come. The same prophetic scripture bears witness to this in many other passages. But

³⁶ *Spir. et litt.* 14.23, CSEL 60:176. “Quamuis itaque illos, quibus circumcisio persuadebatur, ita corripere atque corrigere uideatur apostolus, ut legis nomine eandem circumcisionem appellet ceterasque eiusmodi legis obseruationes, quas tamquam umbras futuri iam nunc respuunt Christiani id tenentes quod per illas umbras figurate promittebatur, tamen legem, ex qua neminem dicit iustificari, non tantum in illis sacramentis, quae habuerunt promissiuas figuras, uerum etiam in illis operibus uult intellegi, quae quisquis fecerit iuste uiuit.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.24-25. See 29.50.

the prophet instructed us about only this difference, namely, that God would place his laws in the minds of those who belonged to this testament and would write it in their hearts.”³⁸

On Augustine’s account, Paul’s exposition of the veil of the Old Testament also reveals this perspective. Commenting on 2 Cor. 3, Augustine writes, “The letter of the law justifies no one, but a veil has been drawn in their reading of the Old Testament, until they pass over to Christ and the veil is removed, that is, until they pass over to grace and understand that our justification, by which we do what he commands, comes from him.”³⁹ The veil, that is, does not refer to the ceremonial law but to the law of works more generally. Likewise, the unveiling does not refer to the fulfillment of the ceremonies in Christ and the church, but to the grace of the New Testament in the love of the Spirit poured out in our hearts. “This grace remained veiled (*uelata*) in the Old Testament; it has been unveiled (*reuelata*) in the gospel of Christ in accord with the perfect temporal order of providence, for God knows how to arrange all things.”⁴⁰ Augustine suggests that the Sabbath law was intentionally placed in the Ten Commandments as to hint toward this dynamic. The Sabbath law prescribes rest from servile work, which is a symbol of sin, and not sinning is the same as sanctification, which the Spirit provides in the New Testament. “In the law written on the

³⁸ Ibid., 25.42, CSEL 60:195. “... nihil eum de sacrificiorum uel quorumque sacramentorum commutatione dixisse, quamuis et ipsa sine dubio fuerat secutura, sicut secutam uidemus, quod multis aliis locis eadem prophetica scriptura testatur, sed tantummodo istam commendasse distantiam, quod leges suas daturus esset deus in mentem eorum, qui pertinerent ad hoc testamentum, et eorum scripturus in cordibus.”

³⁹ Ibid., 17.30, CSEL 60:183. “... littera legis iustificat neminem, sed uelamen positum est in lectione ueteris testamenti, donec ad Christum transeat et auferatur uelamen, id est transeat ad gratiam et intellegatur ab ipso nobis esse iustificationem, qua faciamus quod iubet.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., 15.27, CSEL 25:181. “Haec gratia in testamento uetere uelata latitabat, quae in Christi euangelio reuelata est dispensatione temporum ordinatissima, sicut deus nouit cuncta disponere.” See *ibid.*, 11.18, CSEL 60:171. “This is the righteousness of God which, though veiled in the Old Testament, is revealed in the New. It is called the righteousness of God, because by bestowing it God makes us righteous” (*Haec est iustitia dei, quae in testamento uetere uelata in nouo reuelatur; quae ideo iustitia dei dicitur, quod in pertiando eam iustus facit*).

two tablets of stone this commandment alone among the others was expressed in the shadow of a symbol. The Jews observe the Sabbath in that shadow. This very fact signifies that it was then the time for concealing the grace (*occultandae gratiae*) which was to be unveiled in the New Testament through Christ's passion, as if by the tearing of the temple veil."⁴¹ Again, the distinction between the testaments is not restricted to the relation between figures and fulfillment, but encompasses the entirety of salvation, setting forth a fundamental divergence between two basic modes of relating to God, the law of faith as opposed to the law of works.

2.1.2 The “New Testament” during the “Old Testament”

Augustine's position that the Old Testament actually veiled the grace and righteousness of the New Testament raises questions with regard to the condition of the Old Testament saints. Augustine has largely consigned Israel to the fear and bondage of the law: could this apply also to Abraham? Or to Moses, David, and the later prophets? For Augustine's position on this issue, I turn now to *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians*. On Augustine's account, the Pelagians have repeatedly criticized him for the following position: “In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did not come to the help of virtue.”⁴² But Augustine rejects this opinion, unless one adopts a very particular understanding of the term “Old Testament.” If one means by Old Testament that particular covenant Paul associates with slavery and fear (Gal. 4:24), then yes, the Holy Spirit was unavailable to those under it. If,

⁴¹ Ibid., 15.27, CSEL 60:181. “... quod in lege, quae duabus lapideis tabulis conscripta est, solum inter cetera in umbra figurae posita est, in qua Iudaei sabbatum observant, ut hoc ipso significaretur tempus tunc fuisse occultandae gratiae, quae nouo testamento fuerat per Christi passionem tamquam scissione ueli reuelanda.”

⁴² *C. ep. Pel.* 3.4.6, CSEL 60:492. ““Spiritum sanctum adiutorem uirtutis in testamento uetere non fuisse.””

however, one means by “Old Testament” the time period before the coming of Christ, then it surely is the case that the Holy Spirit was available. “Because the Old Testament prefigured the new, the people of God in that previous era who understood it remained according to the division of the times dispensers and ministers of the Old Testament (*ueteris ... testamenti dispensatores et gestatores*), but are clearly seen to be heirs of the New Testament (*noui ... heredes*).”⁴³ Surely, Augustine writes, no one can deny that the authors of the glorious psalms belonged to the New Testament. So, too, Paul calls Abraham the father of those who believe (Gal. 3:15-18), thereby affirming the patriarch’s unity with those of the New Testament.

Indeed, Augustine argues, the promise given to Abraham was the New Testament, though it came chronologically before the Mosaic law. “Are we to take this testament, which he says was ratified by God and is not weakened by the law which came four hundred and thirty years later, as the new or the Old Testament? Who will hesitate to answer: the new. And yet it was hidden away in the veils of prophecy, until the time came when it was revealed in Christ.”⁴⁴ On the one hand, the law was given to humble those who could not obey it, such that they would seek refuge in God’s mercy. On the other hand, “what God gave to Abraham through the promise belongs to our faith, which certainly belongs to the New Testament.”⁴⁵ Adopting the language of Gal. 4, Augustine asserts that the righteous people from Abraham through Moses and the prophets until John the Baptist were all

⁴³ Ibid. “Quia in eo praefigurabatur nouum, qui hoc intellegebant tunc homines dei secundum distributionem temporum ueteris quidem testamenti dispensatores et gestatores, sed noui demonstrantur heredes.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.4.7, CSEL 60:492-93. “Hic certe si quaeramus, utrum hoc testamentum, quod dicit confirmatum a deo non infirmari a lege quae post quadringentos et triginta annos facta est, utrum nouum an uetus intellegendum sit, quis respondere dubitet ‘nouum,’ sed in propheticis latebris occultatum, donec ueniret tempus quo reuelaretur in Christo?”

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.4.7, CSEL 60:494. “... ad fidem nostram pertinere – quae noui est utique testamenti –, quod per promissionem donauit deus Abrahae.”

“children of the promise and of grace like Isaac, the son of the free woman, and heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of the promise.”⁴⁶ Even Noah and others who lived before Abraham pertained to the heavenly Jerusalem, though they preceded God’s covenant with Israel. Therefore, Augustine reasons, there can certainly be no question concerning those who lived after Abraham. “From Abraham onward we do not, after all, find that the line of righteous persons is more authentic, but that the prophecy is clearer.”⁴⁷

For Augustine, Old Testament people are those who think the letter can bring them life and do not seek God’s mercy.⁴⁸ Such people, Augustine says, seek earthly goods and obey God from fear and greed, not love. Amongst them are those who fell in the desert, those who worshipped idols in the promised land, those who crucified Jesus, and many amongst the Jews now, despite the fulfillment of their prophecies in Christ. (It appears, then, that there can be Old Testament people in the New, just like there were New Testament people in the Old.) By contrast, the people of the New Testament are those who live by grace, obey from love, seek spiritual goods, and above all, believe in the mediator for the forgiveness of sins and receive the Spirit for the obedience of God’s commands.⁴⁹ “Of this

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.4.8, CSEL 40:494. “... filii sunt promissionis et gratiae secundum Isaac filium liberae non ex lege, sed ex promissione heredes dei, coheredes autem Christi.”

⁴⁷ Ibid. “Non enim ex Abraham et deinceps iustorum generatio uerior, sed prophetia manifestior repperitur.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.4.9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3.4.11, CSEL 60:497. “But there is clearly this big difference. Those people under the law whom the letter kills observe these commandments either out of a desire of attaining earthly happiness or out of a fear of losing it. For this reason they do not really observe them, since the carnal desire by which they sin is changed or increased by another desire rather than healed. These people belong to the Old Testament which brings forth children into slavery, because carnal fear and desire make them slaves; the faith, hope, and love of the gospel does not make them free. But those under the grace to whom the Spirit gives life observe these commandments out of the faith *which works through love* (Gal. 5:6) with the hope not for carnal but for spiritual

sort were all the righteous of old and Moses himself, the minister of the Old Testament, but heir of the new, because they lived from the one and same faith from which we live. They believed that the incarnation, passion, and resurrection would come, just as we believe they have taken place.”⁵⁰ On Augustine’s account, John the Baptist represented “a sort of limit to the old dispensation,”⁵¹ marking a shift in redemptive history. “He did not signify the coming of the mediator by some foreshadowing of what was to be or by some allegorical meaning or prophetic prediction; rather, he pointed to him with his finger.”⁵² Since then, Augustine says, all that the righteous people before Christ hoped and longed for has, or has begun to be, fulfilled. “The same faith, then, is found in those people who were not yet Christians in name, but were so in reality (*nondum nomine, sed re ipsa fuerunt antea Christiani*) and in these people who not only are Christians, but are also called Christians.”⁵³

goods, not for earthly but for heavenly goods, not for temporal but for eternal goods. Above all, they believe in the mediator through whom they have no doubt that they receive the Spirit of grace to observe these commandments correctly and through whom they can be forgiven when they sin. These people belong to the New Testament; they are children of the promise, reborn of God the Father and of the free woman, their mother” (*Verum haec plane magna distantia est, quod faciunt ista sub lege positi, quos littera occidit, terrenam felicitatem uel cupiditate adipiscendi uel timore amittendi et ideo non uere faciunt, quoniam carnalis cupiditas qua peccatur mutatur potius uel augetur cupiditate alia, non sanatur. Hi ad uetus pertinent testamentum, quod in seruitutem generat, quia facit eos carnalis timor et cupiditas seruos, non euangelica fides et spes et caritas liberos. Sub gratia uero positi, quos uiuificat spiritus, ex fide ista faciunt, quae per dilectionem operatur, in spe bonorum non carnalium, sed spiritalium, non terrenorum, sed caelestium, non temporalium, sed aeternorum praecipue credentes in mediatorem, per quem sibi non dubitant et spiritum gratiae subministrari, ut bene ista faciant, et ignosci posse cum peccant. Hi pertinent ad testamentum nouum, filii promissionis, regenerati deo patre et libera matre).*

⁵⁰ Ibid. “Huius generis fuerunt antiqui omnes iusti et ipse Moyses testamenti minister ueteris, heres noui, quia ex fide qua nos uiuimus una eademque uixerunt incarnationem passionem resurrectionemque Christi credentes futuram, quam nos credimus factam.”

⁵¹ Ibid. “... praeteritae dispensationis limitem quendam.”

⁵² Ibid. “... qui mediatorem ipsum non aliqua umbra futuri uel allegorica significatione uel ulla prophetica praenuntiatione uenturum esse significans, sed digito demonstrans ...”

⁵³ Ibid., 3.4.11, CSEL 60:498. “Eadem igitur fides est et in illis, qui nondum nomine, sed re ipsa fuerunt antea Christiani, et in istis, qui non solum sunt, uerum etiam uocantur.”

Given these considerations, Augustine judges, the term “Old Testament” must be defined more precisely. “In one sense, then, as our long-standing manner of speaking has it, we use ‘Old Testament’ to speak of the law and all the prophets who prophesied up to John, though it is more precise to call these the old books (*uetus instrumentum*) than the Old Testament. In another sense the authority of the apostle speaks of the Old Testament, whether he expressly uses this name or merely suggests it.”⁵⁴ Though Paul uses the term “Old Testament” to distinguish the covenant of fear from the covenant of love (2 Cor. 3:14 and especially Gal. 4:21-26; cf. Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6), he does not mean everyone who lived before Christ was a child of Hagar.

One final question arises: why is the New Testament called “new,” when it was established with Abraham 430 years before the Mosaic law? Augustine answers, “If one testament is called old by reason of the earlier time and the other new by reason of the later time, these names indicate when they were revealed, not their date of institution.”⁵⁵ First, there was a time when the law was hidden, and nature itself proved people guilty of sin, since they did not treat others as they would be treated themselves. Then the law was revealed, which increased the knowledge of sin so that people would seek God’s mercy. Finally, Christ came and brought the righteousness of God. On this narrative of redemptive history, Augustine says, the New Testament is “newer” than the Old Testament. Yet there could also

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3.4.12, CSEL 60:498. “Aliter itaque dicitur iam obtinente loquendi consuetudine uetus testamentum lex et prophetae omnes, qui usque ad Iohannem prophetauerunt – quod distinctius uetus instrumentum quam uetus testamentum uocatur –, aliter autem sicut apostolica appellat auctoritas siue hoc nomen exprimens siue significans.”

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.4.13, CSEL 60:500. “... si ex anteriore tempore dicitur uetus, ex posteriore autem nouum, reuelationes eorum considerantur in his nominibus, non institutiones.”

be another explanation for the terms: Paul commands us to clothe ourselves with a new human being, while putting the old to death. Augustine concludes:

We maintain, then, that during the time of the Old Testament, in those who were at that time children of the promise according to Isaac, the Holy Spirit not only came to the help of virtue, but bestowed it. [The Pelagians] regard his coming to the help of virtue as sufficient for their teaching, but they deny that he bestows virtue, attributing it rather to their free choice, even though those patriarchs said just the opposite. Those patriarchs knew how to cry out to the Lord in genuine piety, *I shall love you, Lord, my virtue* (Ps. 18:2).⁵⁶

2.2 Calvin

For Calvin's treatment of the discontinuity between the testaments, I begin with *Institutes* Book 2, Ch. 11, "The difference between the two testaments (*De differentia unius Testamenti ab altero*)," and then consider again Calvin's treatment of the law in the *Institutes* and the *Mosaic Harmony*, this time focusing on the particular purpose of the law in redemptive history. These discussions raise questions concerning the salvific benefits of the Old Testament and the condition of those who lived before Christ. For a closer look at this issue, I turn to Calvin's exposition of Jer. 31 in his *Jeremiah* (1563) and *Hebrews* (1549) commentaries.⁵⁷ In general, Calvin agrees with Augustine on many points of disparity between the testaments, but insists these differences be located against the unity of the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.4.13, CSEL 60:501. "Tempore igitur ueteris testamenti spiritum sanctum in eis, qui etiam tunc secundum Isaac promissionis filii erant, non solum adiutorem, quod isti suo dogmati sufficere existimant, uerum etiam largitorem dicimus fuisse uirtutis, quod isti negant libero eam potius arbitrio tribuentes contradicentibus illis patribus, qui sciebant ad dominum ueraci pietate clamare: diligam te, domine uirtus mea!"

⁵⁷ English translations: *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiab*, CTS 9-11; *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, CTS 22. On dates of composition, see, respectively, T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 29, and *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 28.

covenant, such that even the law serves to mediate God's grace. Calvin's treatment of the Old Testament saints, though, reveals his own struggle consistently to affirm this position.

2.2.1 Five differences of administration

Calvin begins *Institutes* Book 2, Ch. 11 by reiterating his emphasis on the unity of the testaments. "I freely admit the differences in Scripture, to which attention is called, but in such a way as not to detract from its established unity."⁵⁸ He then appeals to the distinction set forth in the previous chapter. "I say that all these pertain to the manner of dispensation (*ad modum administrationis*) rather than to the substance (*substantiam*), and I undertake to show this. In this way there will be nothing to hinder the promises of the Old and New Testaments from remaining the same, nor from having the same foundation (*fundamentum*) of these very promises, Christ."⁵⁹ On Calvin's account, there are five differences in mode of administration, four primary, one supplementary.

First, while God intended the Israelites to hope for heavenly reward, "yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, to taste, under earthly benefits (*sub beneficiis terrenis*)."⁶⁰ The actual hope for future life remained the same; what changed was the clarity with which it was perceived. Calvin writes, "But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training (*omisso inferiori ...*

⁵⁸ *Inst.* 2.11.1, OS 3:423. "Ergo vero libenter recipio quae in scriptura commemorantur differentias: sed ita ut nihil constitutae iam unitati derogent."

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* "Eas omnes sic esse dico, et ostensurum me profiteor, ut ad modum administrationis potius quam ad substantiam pertineant. Hac ratione nihil impediunt quominus eadem maneat veteris ac novi Testamenti promissiones, atque idem ipsarum promissionum fundamentum, Christus."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* "Quo tamen in spe illius melius alerentur, contemplandam sub beneficiis terrenis ac quodammodo degustandam exhibebat."

exercitationis modo) that he used with the Israelites.”⁶¹ Indeed, Calvin says, the earthly benefits were intended to nourish heavenly hope. “In the earthly possessions they enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven.”⁶²

Calvin appeals to Gal. 4:1-2, where Paul describes Israel as a child heir under the charge of a guardian. While Paul is primarily concerned with the ceremonies, Calvin says, this comparison also applies to the earthly promises of the Old Testament. “Therefore the same inheritance was appointed for them and for us, but they were not yet old enough to be able to enter upon it and manage it. The same church existed among them, but as yet in its childhood. Therefore, keeping them under this tutelage, the Lord gave, not spiritual promises unadorned and open, but ones foreshadowed, in a measure, by earthly promises.”⁶³ The land of Canaan was never intended to be the Israelites’ final hope, Calvin writes, but was rather promised “to exercise and confirm them, as they contemplated it, in hope of their true inheritance not yet manifested to them.”⁶⁴ To keep the Israelites from placing too much value in earthly reward, God mixed in heavenly promises with earthly ones. Abraham, for instance, received both the promise of physical land and the promise that God would be his

⁶¹ Ibid. “Nunc clarius liquidiusque revelata per Evangelium futurae vitae gratia, recta ad eius meditationem, omisso inferiori, quem apud Israelitas adhibebat, exercitationis modo, mentes nostras dirigit.”

⁶² Ibid. “In terrena qua fruebantur possessione, velut in speculo, futuram, quam sibi in caelis praeeparatam crederent, haereditatem esse intuitos.”

⁶³ Ibid., 2.11.2, OS 3:424. “Eadem ergo illis haereditas quae nobis destinata fuit, sed cuius adeundae et tractandae nondum per aetatem capaces forent. Eadem inter illos Ecclesia, sed cuius aetas adhuc puerilis erat. Sub hac ergo paedagogia illos continuit Dominus, ut spirituales promissiones non ita nudas et apertas illis daret, sed terrenis quodammodo adumbratas.”

⁶⁴ Ibid. “... non in qua spes suas terminarent, sed cuius aspectu in spem verae illius, quae nondum apparebat, haereditatis se exercerent ac confirmarent.”

protector and ultimate reward (Gen. 15:1). On Calvin's account, Abraham put his hope primarily in the latter promise, judging the promise of land only "as a symbol (*symbolum*) of [God's] benevolence and as a type (*typus*) of the heavenly inheritance."⁶⁵ Because the prophets usually spoke of blessedness under types, the Old Testament saints were thus prone to hold earthly blessings in higher regard than is appropriate today. Nevertheless, Calvin argues, God's purpose was to foreshadow through promises of earthly rewards and warnings of earthly punishments, spiritual blessings and the judgment to come. "He willed that, for the time during which he gave his covenant to the people of Israel in a veiled (*involutum*) form, the grace of future and eternal happiness be signified (*significare*) and figured (*figurare*) under earthly benefits, the gravity of spiritual death under physical punishments."⁶⁶

The second difference between the testaments "consists in figures" (*statuitur in figuris*).⁶⁷ "In the absence of the reality, [the Old Testament] showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance (*illud, absente veritate, imaginem tantum et pro corpore umbram ostentabat*); the New Testament reveals the very substance of the truth as present (*hoc praesentem veritatem et corpus solidum exhibet*)."⁶⁸ For this point, Calvin turns to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, he says, combats "those who thought the observances of the Mosaic law

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2.11.2, OS 3:425. "... divinae benevolentiae symbolum, ac caelestis haereditatis typus."

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2.11.3, OS 3:426. "... tum futurae ac aeternae foelicitatis gratiam terrestribus beneficiis, tum spiritualis mortis gravitatem corporeis poenis significare et figurare pro eo tempore voluit, quo testamentum suum quodammodo adhuc involutum Israelitico populo tradebat."

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.11.4, OS 3:426.

⁶⁸ Ibid. "... illud, absente veritate, imaginem tantum et pro corpore umbram ostentabat; hoc praesentem veritatem et corpus solidum exhibet."

could not be abolished without ruining the whole religion along with them.”⁶⁹ Hebrews advances its argument on the basis of David’s promise about an eternal priesthood (Heb. 7:11, citing Ps. 110:4). Since the law could not lead to perfection (Heb. 7:19), it was necessary that a new priesthood be established, abolishing the old priesthood (*aboleri sacerdotium*) and changing the covenant (*verti etiam Testamenti mutationem*).⁷⁰ As Calvin explains, the law was weak because it required “outward physical acts of righteousness that could not make those who observed them perfect according to conscience.”⁷¹ Given the futility of the animal sacrifices, it follows that the “sole function [of the law] was to be an introduction to the better hope that is manifested in the gospel.”⁷²

Calvin acknowledges the potential significance of these remarks. “For if the comparison had reference to the substance of the promises (*promissionum substantiam*), then there would be great disagreement between the Testaments.”⁷³ But that is precisely the point: the substance of the promises is not at stake. Calvin explains, in a passage worth quoting at length:

Let us then set forth the covenant (*foedus*) that he once established as eternal and never-perishing. Its fulfillment (*illius complementum*), by which it is finally confirmed and ratified, is Christ. While such confirmation was awaited, the Lord appointed, through Moses,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.11.4, OS 3:426. “... qui Legis Mosaicae observationes aboleri posse non putabant nisi ut secum traherent religionis totius ruinam.”

⁷⁰ Ibid. “... nam quum aeternum illi deferatur sacerdotium, certum est aboleri sacerdotium illud ubi alii alii successores quotidie substituebantur. Praevalere autem novi istius sacerdotis institutionem probat, quod iuramento stabilitur. Subiungit postea, in ea sacerdotii translatione verti etiam Testamenti mutationem.”

⁷¹ Ibid. “... externas carnis iustitias habuerit quae cultores suos non possent secundum conscientiam perfectos reddere.”

⁷² Ibid. “... non aliud habuisse officii nisi ut introductio esset in spem meliorem quae in Evangelio exhibetur.”

⁷³ Ibid., 2.11.4, OS 3:427. “Nam si ad promissionum substantiam pertineret comparatio, magnum extaret inter duo Testamenta dissidium.”

ceremonies that were, so to speak, solemn symbols of that confirmation (*solemnia confirmationis symbola*). A controversy arose over whether or not the ceremonies that had been ordained in the law ought to give way to Christ (*cederene oporteret Christo*). Now these were only the accidental properties of the covenant (*accidentia*), or additions and appendages (*accessiones ac annexa*), and in common parlance, accessories (*accessoria*) of it. Yet because they were means of administering it (*instrumenta erant illius administrandi*), they bear the name “covenant” (*foederis nomen habent*), just as is customary in the case of other sacraments. To sum up, then, in this passage, “Old Testament” (*Vetus testamentum*) means the solemn manner of confirming the covenant (*solemnis confirmandi foederis ratio*), comprised in ceremonies and sacrifices (*ceremoniis et sacrificiis comprehensa*).

Because nothing substantial underlies this unless we go beyond it, the apostle contends that it ought to be terminated and abrogated (*antiquari et abrogari*), to give place to Christ, the Sponsor and Mediator of a better testament (*ut Christo potioris Testamenti sponsori ac mediatori locus daretur*) [cf. Heb. 7:22]; whereby he imparts eternal sanctifications once and for all to the elect, blotting out their transgressions, which remained under the law. Or, if you prefer, understand it thus: the Old Testament of the Lord was that covenant wrapped up in the shadowy and ineffectual observance of ceremonies and delivered to the Jews (*umbratili et inefficaci ceremoniarum observatione involutum tradebatur*); it was temporary because it remained, as it were, in suspense until it might rest upon a firm and substantial confirmation (*ideoque temporarium fuisse, quia veluti in suspensio erat, donec firma et substantiali confirmatione subniteretur*). It became new and eternal only after it was consecrated and established by the blood of Christ (*tum vero demum novum aeternumque factum fuisse, postquam Christi sanguine consecratum stabilitumque fuit*).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Ibid. “Foedus ergo quod aeternum et nunquam interituum semel sancivit, in medio statuamus. Illius complementum, unde tandem habet ut statum ratumque sit, Christus est. Talis confirmatio dum expectatur, ceremonias Dominus per Mosen praescribit, quae sunt velut solennia confirmationis symbola. Id in contentionem veniebat, cederene oporteret Christo quae in Lege ordinatae erant ceremoniae. Hae vero tametsi foederis duntaxat accidentia erant, vel certe accessiones ac annexa, et (ut vulgus loquitur) accessoria: quia tamen instrumenta erant illius administrandi foederis nomen habent; qualiter et aliis Sacramentis dari solet. Proinde, in summa, Vetus testamentum hoc loco appellatur sollemnis confirmandi foederis ratio, ceremoniis et sacrificiis comprehensa. In ea quoniam nihil solidum subest, nisi ulterius transeatur, oportuisse antiquari et abrogari contendit Apostolus, ut Christo potioris Testamenti sponsori ac mediatori locus daretur, per quem aeterna sanctificatio electis semel acquisita est, et transgressiones oblitteratae, quae sub Lege manebant. Quod si malis, ita accipe: vetus fuisse Domini Testamentum, quod umbratili et inefficaci ceremoniarum observatione involutum tradebatur; ideoque temporarium fuisse, quia veluti in suspensio erat, donec firma et substantiali confirmatione subniteretur. Tum vero demum novum aeternumque factum fuisse, postquam Christi sanguine consecratum stabilitumque fuit.”

The reason Calvin must engage Hebrews at such length is that the Epistle, quoting Jeremiah, declares the existence of a new covenant (8:8, 8:13), a point that would seem to contradict the Reformer's position on the unity of the covenant. Calvin's solution is to distinguish between different meanings of the term *foedus* (or *testamentum*). On his reading, Hebrews says nothing about a change in the substance of the promises; it declares only the end of the ceremonies. These ceremonies, Calvin argues, were but secondary matters of administration established for temporary purposes until the coming of Christ. They can be called *foedus* because they mediated the covenant during Old Testament times, but they do not constitute the substance of the covenant itself. When Christ came, he rendered the ceremonies unnecessary, abolishing this temporary, secondary mode of administration, but confirming and ratifying the eternal covenant. Since the ceremonies were only accessories to the covenant, Calvin says, their loss did not threaten its integrity. Thus, Hebrews confirms his basic position: the substance of the covenant remains the same across the testaments, despite differences in mode of administration.

As with Augustine, Calvin's reading of Paul plays an important role in this discussion. Galatians teaches that the Israelites were sons and heirs of God, though kept under the tutelage of the law. During their time, Calvin explains, there was "no great and shining revelation, no clear understanding. The Lord, therefore, so meted out the light of his Word to them that they still saw it afar off and darkly (*eam minus adhuc et obscure cernerent*)."⁷⁵ This "slenderness of understanding (*intelligentiae tenuitatem*)" is what Paul meant by the word

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.11.5, OS 3:428. "... nec tantum esse revelationis fulgorem, nec tantam intelligendi perspicaciam. Sic ergo verbi sui lucem illis Dominus dispensavit, ut eam minus adhuc et obscure cernerent."

“childhood.”⁷⁶ So, too, in the gospels, Jesus speaks of a distinction between the law and the prophets leading up to John, and the preaching of the kingdom now (Lk. 16:16). On Calvin’s reading, this means the Old Testament authors “gave a foretaste of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it twinkling afar off (*procul emicantem praemonstrabant*).”⁷⁷ John the Baptist, though, marked the first moment when “Christ could be pointed out with the finger,”⁷⁸ such that we can now receive in Christ “‘all the treasures of wisdom and understanding’ [Col. 2:3].”⁷⁹

This contrast between the obscurity of the Old Testament and the clarity of the New requires Calvin to discuss the Old Testament saints. On the one hand, Abraham excelled in faith and the writings of the prophets continue to illumine the world. On the other hand, Calvin says, these are exceptional cases. “Here we are not asking what grace the Lord has bestowed upon a few, but what ordinary dispensation (*ordinariam dispensationem*) he has followed in teaching his people.”⁸⁰ Even the prophets did not enjoy the full benefits of the New Testament. First, “their preaching is both obscure, like something far off, and is embodied in types.”⁸¹ Second, they, too, had to “submit to the common tutelage of the people” and “are to be classed as children.”⁸² Finally, “no one then possessed discernment so

⁷⁶ Ibid. “Ideo hanc intelligentiae tenuitatem pueritiae vocabulo Paulus notat.”

⁷⁷ Ibid. “Nempe gustum praebebant eius sapientiae, quae olim ad liquidum manifestanda erat, et procul emicantem praemonstrabant.”

⁷⁸ Ibid. “... digito potest ostendi Christus.”

⁷⁹ Ibid. “... thesauri omnes sapientiae et intelligentiae.”

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2.11.6, OS 3:428. “Non enim quid in paucos gratiae contulerit Dominus, hic quaeritur: sed quam in populo docendo ordinariam dispensationem sequutus sit.”

⁸¹ Ibid. “Nam et obscura, ceu de rebus longinquis, et typis inclusa est eorum praedicatio.”

⁸² Ibid. “... quum tamen ad communem populi paedagogiam submittere se necesse habuerint, in puerorum grege ipsi quoque censentur.”

clear as to be unaffected by the obscurity of the time.”⁸³ On Calvin’s account, then, certain Old Testament figures like Abraham and the prophets were redemptive-historical exceptions. Nevertheless, even such figures were not completely exempt from the conditions of the Old Testament.

The third difference between the testaments focuses on a familiar pair of passages: Jer. 31 and 2 Cor. 3. Calvin is quick to note two points. First, Paul’s particularly negative remarks about the law should be understood as a polemical response against false teachers whose zeal for the ceremonies obscured the gospel. Second, both Jeremiah and Paul depict the law only in its particularity, for the purpose of contrasting the testaments. Calvin writes,

[Jeremiah and Paul] consider nothing in the law except what properly belongs to it (*quod proprium eius est*). For example: the law contains here and there promises of mercy, but because they have been borrowed from elsewhere (*quia sunt aliunde ascitae*), they are not counted part of the law, when only the nature of the law is under discussion (*non veniunt in Legis rationem quum de pura eius natura sermo habetur*). They ascribe to it only this function: to enjoy what is right, to forbid what is wicked: to promise a reward to the keepers of righteousness, and threaten transgressors with punishment; but at the same time not to change or correct the depravity of heart that by nature inheres in all men.⁸⁴

These disclaimers notwithstanding, Calvin enumerates four ways Paul contrasts the law and the gospel. First, the Old Testament “is of the letter,” “published without the

⁸³ Ibid. “Nunquam tanta ullis tunc contigit perspicentia, quae non seculi obscuritatem aliqua ex parte resiperet.”

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.11.7, OS 3:429. “... nihil in Lege considerat nisi quod proprium eius est. Exempli gratia: Lex, misericordiae promissiones passim continet: sed quia sunt aliunde ascitae, non veniunt in Legis rationem quum de pura eius natura sermo habetur. Hoc illi tantum tribuunt ut praecipiat quae recta sunt, scelera prohibeat, praemium edicat cultoribus iustitiae, poenam transgressoribus minetur: cordis interim pravitatem, quae cunctis hominibus naturalis inest, non immutet aut emendet.”

working of the Spirit.”⁸⁵ The New Testament is engraved spiritually upon human hearts. Second, the Old brings death, enveloping all humanity in a curse. The New frees people from the curse, restoring them to God’s favor. Third, the Old brings condemnation, accusing all humanity of unrighteousness. The New brings righteousness, revealing God’s mercy. Finally, the ceremonies of the Old Testament were temporary while the gospel is eternal. “For because the Old bore the image of things absent, it had to die and vanish with time (*interire ac evanescere tempore oportuit*). The gospel, because it reveals the very substance (*ipsum corpus exhibet*), stands fast forever [II Cor. 3:10-11].”⁸⁶

Calvin acknowledges that Jeremiah “calls even the moral law a weak and fragile covenant.”⁸⁷ But this does not imply some kind of charge against the covenant itself; the Israelites are the ones to blame for their own disobedience, and the law did bring salvific benefits. For on Calvin’s account, the law actually prompted the Jews to turn to the gospel – not just with the coming of Christ, but even during Old Testament times.

[The law] was put forward by way of comparison to commend grace abounding, wherewith the same Lawgiver – assuming, as it were, a new character – honored the preaching of the gospel. For suppose we reckon the multitude of those whom he gathers into the communion of his church from all peoples, men regenerated by his Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. Then we will say that in ancient Israel there were very few – almost none – who embraced the Lord’s covenant with their whole hearts and minds. Yet, reckoned by themselves without comparison, there were many.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.11.8, OS 3:430. “Vetus testamentum literale est: quia sine Spiritus efficacia promulgatum.”

⁸⁶ Ibid. “Quia illud rerum absentium imaginem habebat, interire ac evanescere tempore oportuit. Evangelium, quia ipsum corpus exhibet, firmam perpetuamque retinet stabilitatem.”

⁸⁷ Ibid. “Vocat quidem Ieremias et leges morales, infirmum ac fragile foedus.”

⁸⁸ Ibid. “... per comparationem posita est, ad commendandam gratiae affluentiam, qua Evangelii praedicationem idem legislator, quasi novam personam induens, honoravit. Nam si eorum multitudinem recensemus quos ex populis omnibus per Evangelii praedicationem Spiritu suo regeneratos in Ecclesiae suae

The fourth difference develops the third: the Old Testament is associated with bondage and fear, and the New with freedom, trust, and assurance. Calvin appeals to Gal. 4, where Paul depicts Hagar as a type of Mt. Sinai and the law, and Sarah a figure of the heavenly Jerusalem of the gospel. Calvin writes, “The Old Testament struck consciences with fear and trembling, but by the benefit of the New they are released into joy. The Old held consciences bound by the yoke of bondage; the New by its spirit of liberality emancipates them into freedom.”⁸⁹

Yet this formulation immediately raises another question about the patriarchs: did they not enjoy the same Spirit of faith as we, and the same freedom and joy? Calvin’s response is twofold. First, the blessings they experienced were not a function of the Old Testament, but of the New. “When through the law the patriarchs felt themselves both oppressed by their enslaved condition, and wearied by anxiety of conscience, they fled for refuge to the gospel. It was therefore a particular fruit of the New Testament (*peculiarem novi Testamenti fructum fuisse*) that, apart from the common law of the Old Testament (*praeter communem Veteris testamenti legem*), they were exempted from those evils.”⁹⁰ Second, the patriarchs did indeed experience the conditions of the Old Testament.

communione colligit, paucissimos ac paene nullos dicemus qui olim in Israele cordis affectu atque ex animo foedus Domini amplexi sint: qui tamen multi fuerunt, si suo numero sine comparatione censeantur.”

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.11.9, OS 3:431. “... Vetus testamentum pavorem ac trepidationem incussisse conscientis: novi beneficio fieri ut in laetitia solvantur. Illud iugo servitutis conscientias astrictas tenuisse, huius liberalitate in libertatem manumitti.”

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2.11.9, OS 3:431-32. “... quum se per Legem et servili conditione premi, et conscientiae inquietudine fatigari sentirent, ad Evangelii subsidium confugisse: ideoque peculiarem novi Testamenti fructum fuisse, quod praeter communem Veteris testamenti legem illis malis exempti fuerunt.”

We shall deny that they were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously, symbols of a tutelage resembling bondage [cf. Gal. 4:2-3]; and the written bonds [cf. Col. 2:14], whereby they confessed themselves guilty of sin, did not free them from obligation. Hence, they are rightly said, in contrast to us, to have been under the testament of bondage and fear, when we consider that common dispensation (*communis illa dispensatio*) by which the Lord at that time dealt with the Israelites.⁹¹

As witnessed above, Calvin presents two counterbalancing arguments: on the one hand, the patriarchs were redemptive-historical exceptions who participated in the blessings of the New Testament before their time; on the other hand, they were not completely exempt from the Old Testament dispensation.

Calvin recognizes that this series of claims demands further explication, and pauses for clarification. Concerning the previous distinctions (figures v. realities; letter v. spirit; bondage v. freedom), he had used the term “Old Testament” with reference to the law, and the term “New Testament” with reference to the gospel. But, Calvin says, the Old Testament understood more broadly includes promises as well, including those given before the law. It is thus important to distinguish between different meanings of the term “Old Testament.” On this point, Calvin appeals to Augustine’s *Answer to the Two Letters of the*

⁹¹ Ibid., 2.11.9, OS 3:432. “Deinde negabimus ita libertatis et securitatis spiritu fuisse donatos, ut non experti sint aliqua ex parte et timorem a Lege et servitute. Utcunque enim illa quam per Evangelii gratiam assequuti erant, praerogativa fruerentur, erant tamen iisdem observationum vinculis et oneribus cum vulgo obnoxii. Quum ergo ad eas ceremonias sollicitè observandas adigerentur, quae paedagogiae servituti similis symbola erant, et chirographa quibus se peccati reos faterentur, ab obligatione non solverent: iure prae nobis sub servitutis ac timoris Testamento fuisse dicuntur, dum respicitur communis illa dispensatio, qua tunc cum Israelitico populo Dominus agebat.”

Pelagians (treated above). There, Augustine, following Jeremiah and Paul, defines the Old Testament in contradistinction from the gospel of grace and mercy. He also teaches that the children of the promise

have belonged to the New Covenant since the world began. This they did, not in hope of carnal, earthly, and temporal things, but in hope of spiritual, heavenly, and eternal benefits. For they believed especially in the Mediator; and they did not doubt that through him the Spirit was given to them that they might do good, and that they were pardoned whenever they sinned.⁹²

The key point for Calvin is this: “All the saints whom Scripture mentions as being peculiarly chosen of God from the beginning of the world have shared with us the same blessing unto eternal salvation.”⁹³ In that vein, the patriarchs fully recognized the limitations of their dispensation, but sought to transcend it. “They so lived under the Old Covenant as not to remain there but ever to aspire to the New, and thus embraced a real share in it.”⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid., 2.11.10, OS 3:432. “Istud quoque scitissime eodem loco subiungit, pertinere ab initio mundi ad Novum testamentum filios promissionis, regeneratos a Deo, qui fide per dilectionem operante obedierunt mandatis. Idque in spe non carnalium, terrenorum, temporalium, sed spiritualium, caelestium, aeternorum bonorum, praecipue credentes in Mediatorem: per quem non dubitarunt et Spiritum sibi administrari, ut beneficerent, et ignosci, quoties peccarent.”

⁹³ Ibid. “Eiusdem nobiscum benedictionis in aeternam salutem consortes fuisse omnes sanctos, quos ab exordio mundi peculiariter a Deo selectos Scriptura commemorat.”

⁹⁴ Ibid., 2.11.10, OS 3:432-33. “... ita sub veteri Testamento vixisse, ut non illic restiterint, sed aspirarint semper ad novum, adeoque certam eius communionem amplexi sint.” Despite Calvin’s appeal to Augustine, he notes one discrepancy in their construals of the relation between the testaments. “This, then, is the difference between our analysis and his: ours distinguishes between the clarity of the gospel and the obscurer dispensation of the Word that had preceded it, according to that statement of Christ, ‘The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the Kingdom of God is proclaimed’ [Luke 16:16, cf. Vg.]; Augustine’s division simply separates the weakness of the law from the firmness of the gospel” (*Inter nostram ergo et illius partitionem hoc interest, quod nostra (secundum illam Christi sententiam, Lex et Prophetiae usque ad Ioannem [Mat. 11. b. 13], ex eo regnum Dei evangelizatur) inter Evangelii claritatem, et obscuriorem quae praecesserat verbi dispensationem distinguit; altera simpliciter Legis debilitatem secernit ab Evangelii firmitudine*; ibid., 2.11.10, OS 3:432). As I will argue in the conclusion of this chapter, Calvin’s differences with Augustine are more significant than he seems here to recognize.

The fifth and final difference is somewhat supplemental, and Calvin waffles on whether the differences should simply number four.⁹⁵ In any case, the distinction here is that the covenant was restricted to Israel during Old Testament times, but has now been extended to the Gentiles. Until the coming of Christ, Calvin writes, God regarded Israel alone as a darling son, treating the other nations as strangers by withholding from them the preaching of his Word. With the coming of Christ, though, the wall between the Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, “a notable mark of the excellence of the New Testament over the Old.”⁹⁶

As Calvin explains, the prophets had spoken clearly about the calling of the Gentiles, but this event would not occur until the New Testament. Even Jesus made little progress toward it, and the apostles were initially shocked at the possibility. “However many testimonies of Scripture proclaimed the calling of the Gentiles, when the apostles were about to undertake it the call seemed so new and strange to them that they shrank back from it as a monstrous thing ... For it seemed completely unreasonable that the Lord, who for so many ages had singled out Israel from all other nations, should suddenly change his plan and abandon that choice.”⁹⁷ Yet God engrafted the Gentiles into Abraham’s family, making them

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.11.1, 2.11.13.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.11.12, OS 3:434. “Gentium igitur vocatio, insignis est tessera, qua supra Vetus testamentum Novi excellentia illustratur.”

⁹⁷ Ibid. “Utcunque autem tot testimoniis prodita foret, ubi tamen apostolis auspicanda fuit, sic nova et insolens illis visa est, ut tamquam prodigium aliquod exhorrerent ... Videbatur enim rationi minime consentaneum, ut Dominus, qui tot seculis Israelem a reliquis gentibus selegerat, quasi repente mutato consilio delectum illum tolleret.”

equal to the Jews. The apostles thus came to recognize that the Gentiles were, “so to speak, taking the place of dead Jews.”⁹⁸

Having set forth these four or five differences between the testaments, Calvin concludes with an affirmation of God’s constancy across time. “God ought not to be considered changeable merely because he accommodated (*accommodaverit*) diverse forms to different ages, as he knew would be expedient for each.”⁹⁹ Rather, God is like a farmer who assigns his household different tasks in the winter and the summer; or like a householder who raises his children one way during infancy, another during youth, and still another in young manhood; or like a physician who prescribes different treatments for young and old people. Calvin writes,

God’s constancy shines forth in the fact that he taught the same doctrine to all ages (*eandem omnibus seculis doctrinam tradidit*), and has continued to require the same worship of his name that he enjoined from the beginning. In the fact that he has changed the outward form and manner (*externam formam et modum*), he does not show himself subject to change. Rather, he has accommodated (*attemperavit*) himself to men’s capacity, which is varied and changeable.”¹⁰⁰

Those who wonder why God did not reveal his grace in a simpler and more direct fashion receive from Calvin the same response given those who question God’s choice of the elect. “But let us not doubt that God has done everything wisely and justly – as all godly persons ought to believe – even if we often do not know the reason why it should have been so

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.11.12, OS 434-35. “Ista vero publica vocatione non modo Iudaeis aequabantur Gentes, sed velut in demortuorum locum subire eas apparebat.”

⁹⁹ Ibid., 2.11.13, OS 3:435: “... non propterea mutabilem iudicari Deum debere quod diversis seculis diversas formas accommodaverit, prout cuique expedire noverat.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 2.11.13, OS 3:435-36. “Ergo in eo elucet Dei constantia quod eandem omnibus seculis doctrinam tradidit: quem ab initio praecepit nominis sui cultum, in eo requirendo perseverat. Quod externam formam et modum mutavit, in eo non se ostendit mutationi obnoxium: sed hominum captui, qui varius ac mutabilis est, eatenus se attemperavit.”

done. It would be claiming too much for ourselves not to concede to God that he may have reasons for his plan that are hidden from us.”¹⁰¹

2.2.2 The purpose of the law

In the previous chapter, I considered Calvin’s position on the consistency of the moral law across the testaments. Here I focus on his understanding of the purpose of the law in redemptive history, a topic that adds nuance to Calvin’s overarching vision of the relation between law and gospel. I look first at *Institutes*, Book 2, Ch. 7, “The law was given, not to restrain the folk of the old covenant under itself, but to foster hope of salvation in Christ until his coming (*Legem fuisse datam, non quae populum veterem in se retineret, sed quae foveret spem salutis in Christo usque ad eius adventum*),” before considering more briefly the *Mosaic Harmony*.

Institutes Book 2, Ch. 7 comes in the context of a narrative depiction of redemptive history that proceeds from the increase of human sin to a growing recognition of the need for a mediator. This chapter thus serves as an argument for how the law prompts our longing for Christ. In the preceding chapter, Calvin has taught that the Old Testament prophets testified to Christ as the sole source of salvation for sinners.¹⁰² Now he argues that the law, revealed 400 years after the death of Abraham, was not intended “to lead the chosen

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.11.14, OS 3:436. “Nos vero (quod sentire omnes pii debent) quicquid a Deo factum est, sapienter et iuste factum ne dubitemus; etiamsi causam saepe nesciamus cur ita fieri oportuerit. Hoc enim esset nimium nobis arrogare, non concedere Deo ut consilii sui rationes habeat quae nos lateant.”

¹⁰² That Calvin intentionally frames Ch. 7 as a continuation of Ch. 6 is seen more clearly in the Latin than in the English. The English translation begins, “The law was added about four hundred years after the death of Abraham [cf. Gal. 3:17].” It then continues, “From that continuing succession of witnesses which we have reviewed it may be gathered ...” The order of these two ideas are reversed in the Latin: “*Ex continua illa, quam retulimus, serie colligere licet, Legem non ideo post mortem Abrahae quadringentis circiter annis fuisse superadditam ...*” (ibid., 2.7.1, OS 3:326).

people away from Christ; but rather to hold their minds in readiness until his coming; even to kindle desire for him, and to strengthen their expectation, in order that they might not grow faint by too long delay.”¹⁰³

The heart of this chapter is a three-part discussion of “the function and use (*officium usumque*) of what is called the ‘moral law.’”¹⁰⁴ Calvin dedicates most attention to the first purpose of the law: to reveal sin. “While [the law] shows God’s righteousness, that is, the righteousness alone acceptable to God, it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness.”¹⁰⁵ Because humans are so blind with self-love, they require clear proofs of their inability to obey the law. The law is like a mirror that shows us the spots on our face,¹⁰⁶ curing us of pride, and the related sins of hypocrisy and counterfeit righteousness. Yet the law is not intended to discourage us, “to cause us to fall down in despair or, completely discouraged, to rush headlong over the brink.”¹⁰⁷ It rather serves to commend more clearly God’s beneficence such that we will flee to Christ for mercy. Calvin writes, “In the precepts of the law, God is but the rewarder of perfect righteousness, which all of us lack, and conversely, the severe judge of evil deeds. But in Christ his face shines, full

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2.7.1, OS 3:326. “... ut electum populum a Christ abduceret: imo ut suspensos teneret animos usque ad eius adventum, accenderet etiam eius desiderium, et in expectatione confirmaret ne longiore mora deficerent.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2.7.6, OS 3:332. “... officium usumque Legis, quam moralem vocant.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. “... dum iustitiam Dei ostendit, id est, quae sola Deo accepta est, suae unumquenque iniustitiae admoneat, certiores faciat, convincat denique ac condemnet.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.7.7, CO 3:332. “... quemadmodum oris nostri maculas speculum nobis repraesentat.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 2.7.8, CO 3:334. “... ut concidamus desperatione ac desponsis animis in praecipitium corruamus.”

of grace and gentleness, even upon us poor and unworthy sinners.”¹⁰⁸ On this point, Calvin appeals especially to Augustine, who confirms at a number of places (especially in *The Spirit and the Letter*) the role of the law in prompting us to seek grace.¹⁰⁹

The second function of the law is “at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law.”¹¹⁰ The law is of no salvific benefit to such people, since it concerns only their external actions and not their inner minds, and it can even make them burn more fiercely against God. Still, Calvin writes, this kind of forced righteousness is necessary for social peace, the tranquility of “the public community of men.”¹¹¹

The third function of the law is the most important¹¹² and pertains especially to Christians: to encourage obedience to God. This happens in two ways. First, the law gives us knowledge of God’s will. “Here is the the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord’s will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it.”¹¹³ We are like servants who observe the master’s ways to better learn how to accommodate him. Second, the law exhorts us to obedience. “The law is to the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. “Deus enim in Legis praeceptis non nisi perfectae iustitiae, qua nos omnes destituti sumus, remunerator: contra autem severus scelerum iudex apparet. In Christo autem facies eius gratiae ac lenitatis plena, erga miseros etiam ac indignos peccatores relucet.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.7.9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2.7.10, OS 3:335. “... qui nulla iusti rectique cura, nisi coacti, tanguntur, dum audiunt diras in ea sanctiones, coerceantur saltem poenarum formidine.”

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.7.10, OS 3:336. “... publicae hominum communitati.”

¹¹² Ibid., 2.7.12, OS 3:337. “Tertius usus, qui et praecipuus est, et in proprium Legis finem propius spectat ...”

¹¹³ Ibid. “Est enim illis optimum organum, quo melius in dies ac certius discant qualis sit Domini voluntas, ad quam aspirant, atque in eius intelligentia confirmantur.”

flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work.”¹¹⁴ Since the law contains “a perfect pattern of righteousness,”¹¹⁵ Calvin says, this third use of the law remains “applicable to every age, even to the end of the world.”¹¹⁶

There are two senses, however, in which the law has been abrogated in New Testament times. First, we are released from the bonds and curse of the law, those “harsh and dangerous requirements, which remit nothing of the extreme penalty of the law, and suffer no transgression to go unpunished.”¹¹⁷ Though we continue to revere the law, Calvin says, our consciences are no longer troubled by the fear of death. Second, the ceremonies are abrogated “not in effect but only in use (*non effectu sed usu solo*).”¹¹⁸ While the coming of Christ marked the end of the ceremonial practices, this development actually brought them honor. Unless they had ceased, Calvin says, the ceremonies would have been an “empty show”¹¹⁹ with no apparent purpose. Now, though, it is recognized that they prefigured Christ himself. “Let it be regarded as a fact that, although the rites of the law have ceased to be observed, by their termination one may better recognize how useful they were before the coming of Christ, who in abrogating their use has by his death sealed their force and effect.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.7.12, OS 3:338. “Huic carni Lex flagrum est, quo instar inertis tardique asini ad opus urgeatur.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.7.13, OS 3:339. “... absolutum in ea iustitiae exemplar eminere nemo inficietur.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid. “... id ne ad seculum unum referamus, quia singulis ad finem mundi aetatibus convenientissimum est.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.7.15, OS 3:340. “... illius austeræ et infestæ exactionis quæ ex summo iure nihil remittit, nec transgressionem ullam impunitam sinit.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2.7.16, OS 3:341.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. “... inane ... spectaculum.”

¹²⁰ Ibid. “Hoc quidem fixum maneat, quanvis servari desierint ritus legales, ipso tamen fine melius cognosci quanta fuerit eorum utilitas ante Christi adventum, qui usum tollendo, vim et effectum sua morte obsignavit.”

On Calvin's account, then, the law is compatible with the gospel according to God's purposes in redemptive history. The law exists to increase our recognition of sin, thus directing us toward salvation. The ceremonies and the curse of the law no longer pertain to Christians, but the third use of the law, to encourage good works, remains as important in New Testament times as in Old. The question remains, though, how the curse of the law in the Old Testament conforms to Calvin's position on the unity of the covenant. Did not Moses set forth a different mode of relation with God than that revealed with Christ? To consider this issue, I turn now to the *Mosaic Harmony*, and especially to Calvin's introductory comments on Ex. 19.

As Calvin explains, God had earlier revealed to the people the rule of a just life, but wrote the law on tables to ratify it and to encourage obedience in future times. This event constituted a renewal of God's covenant with Abraham. In the giving of the law, Calvin says,

God made known His testimonies to His redeemed, and bound the people, whom He had purchased to Himself by a new covenant (*novo foedere*). He had indeed made with Abraham an eternal and inviolable covenant (*foedus ... aeternum et inviolabile*); but because it had grown into disregard from the lapse of time, and the carelessness of mankind, it became needful that it should be again renewed (*iterum renovari necesse erat*). To this end, then, it was engraved upon the tablets of stone, and written in a book, that the marvellous grace, which God had conferred on the race of Abraham, should never sink into oblivion.¹²¹

Despite this line of continuity between Abraham and Moses, there is an important distinction between them:

¹²¹ CTS *Mos. Harm.* 1:313, CO 24:192. "...redemptis patefecit Deus sua testimonia, et populum quem adquisierat novo foedere sibi devinxit. Foedus quidem aeternum et inviolabile percusserat cum Abraham: sed quia longo tempore et incuria hominum obsoleverat, iterum renovari necesse erat. Atque in hunc finem insculptum fuit tabulis lapideis, et conscriptus liber, ne unquam obreperet oblivio singularis gratiae, quam Deus generi Abraham contulerat."

Although the Law is a testimony of God's gratuitous adoption (*testimonium sit gratuita adoptionis*), and teaches that salvation is based upon His mercy, and invites men to call upon God with sure confidence, yet it has this peculiar property (*hoc tamen habere proprium et peculiare*), that it covenants conditionally (*sub conditione paciscitur*). Therefore it is worth while to distinguish between the general doctrine, which was delivered by Moses (*generalem doctrinam quae tradita fuit a Mose*), and the special command which he received (*speciale quod accepit mandatum*).¹²²

Calvin thus contrasts the conditional character of the Mosaic law, or the law in its particularity, with the more general teaching of Moses, which testifies to God's grace.

This office was separately imposed upon [Moses], to demand perfect righteousness of the people, and to promise them a reward, as if by compact, upon no other condition than that they should fulfil whatever was enjoined them, but to threaten and to denounce vengeance against them if ever they wandered from the way.¹²³

Only the law in its particularity, and not the law as a whole, demands perfect righteousness, promising reward and threatening punishment according to obedience.

On Calvin's account, the law creates something of an antithesis in the way we perceive God. In the law, "God sustains no other character than that of a Judge, who, after having rigidly exacted what is due to Him, promises only a just reward, and threatens the transgressors with vengeance."¹²⁴ Calvin appeals to two New Testament passages on this point. First, Paul shows in Rom. 8:15 "how much better is our condition than that of the old

¹²² Ibid., 1:313, CO 24:192-93. "... quamvis lex testimonium sit gratuita adoptionis, et salutem fundatam esse doceat in Dei misericordia, hominesque invitet ad Deum certa fide invocandum, hoc tamen habere proprium et peculiare quod sub conditione paciscitur. Itaque distinguere operae pretium est inter generalem doctrinam quae tradita fuit a Mose, et inter speciale quod accepit mandatum."

¹²³ Ibid., 1:313-14, CO 24:193. "Interea hoc seorsum illi munus impositum fuit, perfectam iustitiam exigere a populo, et quasi ex compacto mercedem promittere, non aliter quam si impleant homines quidquid praecipitur: minari autem et vindictam denunciare si quando a via deflexerint."

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1:315, CO 24:193. "... nonnisi iudicis personam sustinet Deus: qui postquam severe exegit quod sibi debetur, nonnisi debitam mercedem promittit, vindictam autem transgressoribus minatur."

fathers, because the Law kept them enslaved in its bondage, whilst the Gospel delivers us from anxiety, and frees us from the stings of conscience.”¹²⁵ Second, Heb. 12:18-22, which contrasts Mt. Sinai with the heavenly Mt. Zion demonstrates that “what was entrusted to Moses is separate and distinct from the gospel; because God, who appeared as an avenger, now with fatherly kindness gently invites us unto salvation, and soothes our troubled minds by offering us the forgiveness of our sins.”¹²⁶

Calvin thus locates the law within God’s eternal, gracious covenant. “Paul shews us that there is no contradiction in this diversity, because the people were taught by the Law not to seek for salvation anywhere but in the grace of Christ, and being convinced of the horrible condemnation under which they lay, were driven by fear to implore God’s mercy.”¹²⁷ Indeed, Calvin says, Moses is first and foremost a minister of grace. “Moses everywhere exhorts men, by holding forth the hope of pardon, to reconcile themselves to God; and, whenever he prescribes expiatory rites, he doubtless encourages miserable sinners to have a good hope, and bears witness that God will be merciful to them.”¹²⁸ Though Moses’ particular function was to set forth the law and the demand for perfect righteousness, his ultimate purpose was to draw people to God’s mercy and the forgiveness

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1:315, CO 24:194. “... ostendit quanto potior sit nostra quam patrum conditio: quia lex eos servitute constrictos tenuit, nobis evangelium anxietatem eximit, et tormentis conscientias liberat.”

¹²⁶ Ibid. “... seorsum ab evangelio locari quod Mosi commissum fuit: quia Deus, qui vindex apparuit in lege, suaviter nos hodie pro paterna indulgentia ad salutem invitat, et trepidas animas tranquillat, oblata peccatorum venia.”

¹²⁷ Ibid. “Porro in hac diversitate nihil esse contrarium docet Paulus: quia populus ne aliunde salutem, quam ex Christi gratia peteret, lege edoctus fuit, ac convictus de horribili damnatione cui obstrictus erat, atque ita metu coactus ad implorandam Dei misericordiam.”

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1:313, CO 24:193. “Passim oblata spe veniae hortatur Moses, ut se reconcilient homines Deo: et quoties expiationum ritus praescribit, non dubium est quin miseros peccatores ad bene sperandum erigat, Deumque testetur illis propitium fore.”

of sins. It is in this sense that the Mosaic law serves the gospel and renews God's eternal covenant with Abraham.

2.2.3 Jer. 31 and the Old Testament saints

As considered thus far, Calvin's exposition of the differences between the testaments has left open significant questions concerning the availability of salvific benefits before the incarnation. Did the covenant during Old Testament times mediate the grace of Christ? To what extent did the Old Testament saints participate in this covenant? The four differences between the testaments Calvin sets forth in *Institutes*, Book 2, Ch. 11 can be divided into two categories. The first two concern relatively external matters: the Old Testament set forth heavenly promises under the guise of earthly promises, and it established ceremonies to mediate the covenant until the time of Christ. The second two differences, however, seem more fundamental. The Old Testament was a dispensation when the Spirit had not yet written the law on our hearts, and it was characterized by bondage and fear – even for the patriarchs.¹²⁹ It is not clear how these differences can be reconciled with Calvin's position that the substance of the covenant does not change across the testaments. To address this topic more fully, I turn to Calvin's exposition of Jer. 31:31-34 in the Jeremiah and Hebrews commentaries.

In the Jeremiah commentary, Calvin begins his remarks on the phrase “new covenant” by insisting on the continuity between the old and new covenants. “Now, as to

¹²⁹ I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992), 171, calls the second two differences a matter of “antithesis,” but the first two differences “evolutionary,” since they chart a development from grace to grace.

the *new* covenant, it is not so called, because it is contrary to the first covenant.”¹³⁰ God is consistent and faithful, and his purposes do not change. Since the first covenant God made with his people was “inviolable (*inviolabile*),” the law was but a “confirmation (*confirmatio*)” of the covenant with Abraham.¹³¹ “As then the Law depended (*pendeat*) on that covenant which God made with his servant Abraham, it follows that God could never have made a new, that is, a contrary or a different covenant.”¹³² It is important, then, to be clear about what exactly makes this new covenant new. Calvin writes:

It being new, no doubt, refers to what they call the form (*formam*); and the form, or manner, regards not words only, but first Christ, then the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the whole external way of teaching (*tota docendi ratione externa*). But the substance (*substantia*) remains the same. By substance I understand the doctrine (*doctrinam*); for God in the Gospel brings forward nothing but what the Law contains. We hence see that God has so spoken from the beginning, that he has not changed, no not a syllable, with regard to the substance of the doctrine (*doctrinae summam*). For he has included in the Law the rule of a perfect life, and has also shewn what is the way of salvation, and by types and figures led the people to Christ, so that the remission of sin is there clearly made manifest, and whatever is necessary to be known.¹³³

Having named three differences in form, Calvin proceeds to explicate each. First, Christ

¹³⁰ *Comm. Jer.* 31.31, CO 38:688. “Iam quod ad novum foedus spectat, non sic vocatur quia aliud sit a primo foedere.”

¹³¹ *Ibid.* “Sequitur ergo, primum foedus fuisse inviolabile: deinde iam ante percusserat foedus suum cum Abraham : et lex fuit confirmatio illius foederis.”

¹³² *Ibid.* “Quum ergo lex pendeat a foedere, quod Deus cum Abraham servo suo pepigit, sequitur fieri non posse ut Deus unquam potuerit pacisci foedus novum, hoc est, aliud vel diversum.”

¹³³ *Ibid.* “Non dubium est quin hoc referatur ad formam, sicuti loquuntur. Forma autem haec non tantum posita est in verbis, sed primum in Christo, deinde in gratia spiritus sancti, et tota docendi ratione externa: substantia autem eadem manet. Substantiam intelligo doctrinam, quia Deus in evangelio nihil profert, quod lex non contineat. Videmus ergo Deum ab initio sic loquutum esse, ne syllabam quidem postea mutaverit, quantum attinet ad doctrinae summam. Complexus est enim in lege regulam perfecte vivendi: deinde ostendit quanam esset salutis via, et sub figuris populum adducit ad Christum, ut remissio peccatorum illic clare monstretur, et quidquid cognitu necessarium est.” Note that the translator adds the phrase, “or manner,” to explain the meaning of *forma*.

accomplished what had been foreshadowed in the law. The sacrifices “could not of themselves pacify God,” but Christ “really fulfilled (*complevit re ipsa*) what God had exhibited under types so that the faithful might have some taste of salvation (*fideles gustum aliquem caperent suae salutis*).”¹³⁴ Second, the Holy Spirit brings regeneration. “It was, then, in some respects, a new thing (*fuit igitur haec quoque aliqua novitas*), that God regenerated the faithful by his Spirit, so that it became not only doctrine as to the letter, but also efficacious (*non esset literalis tantum doctrina, sed efficax*), which not only strikes the ear, but penetrates into the heart, and really forms us for the service of God.”¹³⁵ Finally, the outward mode of teaching (*ratio externa docendi*) has been altered, so that “God speaks to us now openly, as it were face to face, and not under a veil.”¹³⁶

This second point in particular reflection on the Old Testament patriarchs: if the grace of regeneration was a new blessing that accompanied the coming of Christ, did the fathers under the law experience it? In his comments on Jer. 31:33, Calvin writes:

The Fathers, who were formerly regenerated, obtained this favour through Christ (*id fuisse adeptos Christi gratia*), so that we may say, that it was as it were transferred to them from another source (*illud fuisse quasi translaticium*). The power then to penetrate the heart was not inherent in the Law (*non igitur residebat in lege haec virtus*), but it was a

¹³⁴ Ibid. “Nam victimae non poterant per se placare Deum, ut satis notum est, et quidquid lex tradiderat de expiationibus per se fuisset inutile et nullius momenti. Novum ergo foedus percussum est, ubi Christus in aqua et sanguine apparuit, et complevit re ipsa quod Deus sub figuris monstraverat, ut fideles gustum aliquem caperent suae salutis.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., 31.31, CO 38:688-89. “Fuit igitur haec quoque aliqua novitas, quod Deus regenuit fideles spiritu suo, ita ut non esset literalis tantum doctrina, sed efficax, quae non tantum verberaret aures, sed in animos penetraret, atque vere formaret in obsequium Dei.”

¹³⁶ Ibid., 31.31, CO 38:689. “...loquitur hodie nobiscum Deus familiariter tanquam facie ad faciem, non sub velo.”

benefit transferred to the Law from the Gospel (*fuit translaticium bonum ab evangelio ad ipsam legem*).¹³⁷

Calvin also acknowledges another explanation, that of relative comparison. “We know that this grace of God was rare and little known (*raram et obscuram*) under the Law; but that under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly (*effusa*) poured forth, and that God has dealt more bountifully (*multo liberalius*) with the Church.”¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Calvin says, this is not the most important consideration.

The main thing is, to consider what the Law of itself is (*quid lex per se afferat*), and what is peculiar to the Gospel (*quid proprium sit evangelii*), especially when a comparison is made between the Law and the Gospel. For when this comparison ceases, this cannot be properly applied to the Law; but with regard to the Gospel it is said, that the Law is that of the letter ... This is then the solution of the question: the Prophet speaks of the Law in itself, as apart from the Gospel (*legis natura, ubi separatur ab evangelio*), for the Law then is dead and destitute of the Spirit of regeneration.¹³⁹

In the Jeremiah commentary, then, Calvin defines the *substantia* of the covenant as its unchanging *doctrina*, while locating in the variable *forma* the expiation of sins and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Since Calvin believes the patriarchs experienced these blessings before the coming of Christ, he must therefore explain Jeremiah’s words by appeal first to the distinction between the law and the gospel in their particularities, and second to

¹³⁷ Ibid., 31.33, CO 38:691. “Respondeo, patres qui olim regeneriti fuerunt, id fuisse adeptos Christi gratia, ita possumus dicere illud fuisse quasi translaticium. Non igitur residebat in lege haec virtus, ut animos penetraret, sed fuit translaticium bonum ab evangelio ad ipsam legem.”

¹³⁸ Ibid. “Hoc unum est, deinde scimus raram et obscuram fuisse gratiam Dei sub lege: in evangelio autem effusa fuisse dona spiritus, et Deum multo liberalius egisse cum ecclesia sua.”

¹³⁹ “Sed tamen illud est praecipuum, nempe reputare quid lex per se afferat, et quid proprium sit evangelii: praesertim ubi fit comparatio evangelii et legis. Nam ubi cessat comparatio illa, hoc non posset proprie competere in legem, sed respectu evangelii hoc dicitur, quod lex sit literalis ... Haec igitur solutio est quaestionis, prophetam disserere de legis natura, ubi separatur ab evangelio, quia lex tunc mortua est, et caret regenerationis spiritu.”

relative comparison. Whether or not this position is coherent I will consider later in this chapter; for now, though, I proceed to the Hebrews commentary.

Heb. 8:8-13 quotes Jer. 31:31-34, and then declares the establishment of a new covenant and the end of the old. Calvin notes two major elements of the new covenant. The first is the gratuitous pardon of sins. “It is the peculiar privilege of the faithful who have once embraced the covenant offered them in Christ, that they feel assured that God is propitious to them; nor is the sin to which they are liable, an hinderance to them, for they have the promise of pardon.”¹⁴⁰ The second is the inward renovation of the heart by the Holy Spirit. “In short, we then only obediently embrace what God commands, when by his Spirit he changes and corrects the natural depravity of our hearts; otherwise he finds nothing in us but corrupt affections and a heart wholly given up to evil. The declaration indeed is clear, that a new covenant was to be made according to which God engraves his laws on our hearts, for otherwise it would be in vain and of no effect.”¹⁴¹

As in the Jeremiah commentary, Calvin immediately confronts the question of the fathers under the law: did they enjoy this gratuitous pardon or the gift of the Spirit? On the one hand, Calvin says, they certainly must have. “It is evident that they worshipped God with a sincere heart and a pure conscience, and that they walked in his commandments, and this could not have been the case except they had been inwardly taught by the Spirit; and it is also evident, that whenever they thought of their sins, they were raised up by the assurance

¹⁴⁰ *Comm. Heb.* 8.10, OE 19:130.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

of a gratuitous pardon.”¹⁴² On the other hand, “the Apostle, by referring the prophecy of Jeremiah to the coming of Christ, seems to rob them of these blessings (*videtur utroque bono illos privare*).”¹⁴³

Calvin then suggests two solutions: first, this passage should be interpreted in terms of relative blessing.

He does not expressly deny that God formerly wrote his Law on their hearts and pardoned their sins, but he makes a comparison between the lesser and the greater (*comparationem esse maioris et minoris*). As then the Father hath put forth more fully (*multo uberius*) the power of his Spirit under the kingdom of Christ, and has poured forth more abundantly his mercy on mankind, this exuberance renders insignificant the small portion of grace (*illa exigua gratiae portio ... in rationem non veniat*) which he had been pleased to bestow on the fathers.¹⁴⁴

Yet, Calvin acknowledges, this explanation does not fully suffice, for Abraham’s faith and obedience were as great as that of anyone’s today. Calvin thus sets forth this second explanation,

that the question here is not about persons, but that reference is made to the economical condition of the Church (*oeconomia regendae Ecclesiae*). Besides, whatever spiritual gifts the fathers obtained, they were accidental as it were to their age (*quasi accidentale fuisse eorum seculo*); for it was necessary for them to direct their eyes to Christ in order to become possessed of them. Hence it was not without reason that the Apostle, in comparing the Gospel with the Law, took away from the latter what is peculiar to the former (*huic adimit quod illius est proprium*). There is yet no reason why God should not have extended

¹⁴² Ibid., 8.10, OE 19:131.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. “... non simpliciter negari quin Deus olim suorum cordibus Legem inscripserit, et illis condonaverit peccata, sed comparisonem esse maioris et minoris. Quia ergo multo uberius sub Christi regno potentiam Spiritus sui exeruit Pater, suamque misericordiam in homines effudit, haec eminentia facit ut illa exigua gratiae portio, qua patres sub Lege dignatus est, in rationem non veniat.”

the grace of the new covenant to the fathers (*novi foederis gratiam Deus ad patres extenderit*). This is the true solution of the question.¹⁴⁵

As in the Jeremiah commentary, then, so also here with Hebrews, Calvin appeals primarily to the distinction between the law and the gospel in their particularities, but also to relative comparison. Moreover, he articulates even more clearly than in the Jeremiah commentary the position that the patriarchs were somehow accidental to their time, receiving New Testament blessings while they lived during Old Testament times.

2.3 Discussion

This chapter has both developed the basic difference between Augustine and Calvin on the unity of the testaments, and signaled major areas of tension within each figure's thought. There are, to be sure, some non-trivial points of common ground. Both affirm the general compatibility between law and gospel: the necessity of obedience is not correlative to an absence of grace, nor does the forgiveness of sins or the regeneration of the Spirit trivialize the importance of faithfulness. They also agree that God's moral commands direct humanity toward grace by revealing sin. And finally, Augustine especially and Calvin to a lesser degree both distinguish between the testaments according to the contrast between fear and love, or bondage and freedom. Each draws for this point upon the same set of (largely Pauline) texts: Jer. 31, 2 Cor. 3, Gal. 4, and so on.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.10, OE 19:131-32. "... hic non disputari de personis, sed de oeconomia regendae Ecclesiae. Praeterea quicquid spiritualium donorum consequuti sunt patres, quasi accidentale fuisse eorum seculo. Necessesse enim erat oculos in Christum coniiicere, ut eorum compotes fierent. Quare non absurde Apostolus, Euangelium cum Lege conferendo, huic adimit quod illius est proprium. Interea tamen nihil obstat quominus novi foederis gratiam Deus ad patres extenderit. Haec vera est solutio."

Nevertheless, these figures diverge crucially on a matter of fundamental importance: the availability of grace under the old covenant. Augustine and Calvin's positions on this issue arise organically from their differences on the unity of the testaments. For Augustine, the Old Testament was meant to veil grace and hide the righteousness of God. Obedience under the Old Testament grew from fear of punishment and not love for righteousness because the Holy Spirit was not widely available to humanity. Since, as Rom. 5:5 says, the Spirit was given to pour out the love of God in our hearts, the absence of the Spirit corresponds exactly to the absence of love, vitiating the possibility of genuine obedience. Calvin's position is considerably more complex. Since he insists on the unity of the covenant, he must define the law as a renewal of God's eternal promises to Abraham, and Moses as more fundamentally a mediator of grace than of exacting justice. In a narrow sense, Calvin acknowledges, the law bore the particular function of demanding perfect obedience and threatening punishment for the smallest defection from God's will. But in a broader and more fundamental sense, the law simply constituted the mode by which God administered the grace of the covenant before the coming of Christ.

These differences reflect a contrast of perspective on the character of Old Testament revelation. For Augustine, the Old Testament was primarily a time of darkness: God established various signs to prefigure the realities of the New Testament, but these signs functioned primarily to obscure what was to come. Only with the coming of Christ would the referents of those signs be widely recognized. Old Testament revelation thus operates for Augustine somewhat like a mystery novel, whereby the author plants clues of some narrative that will make sense of all that has come before, while intentionally keeping the end

a surprise.¹⁴⁶ For Calvin, on the other hand, the Old Testament was characterized by knowledge, even if the realities to come were not as distinctly manifest as with the revelation of the gospel. The earthly promises were meant to direct the Israelites toward a heavenly hope, not veil it. Indeed, Calvin even affirms that Christ was in some way displayed to the fathers. On this model, the transition from the Old Testament to the New is like the repeated presentation of a story, first, for instance, through radio, then on television, and finally by live performance. Such shifts do not unveil what was formerly hidden, but rather promulgate the same account through new and enhanced media. The substance, that is, remains the same, despite differences in mode of administration.

Within their individual frames of thought, Augustine and Calvin both struggle with the salvific status of the Old Testament saints. Neither, of course, can deny the faith of Abraham: given Paul's depiction of Abraham as the father of all who believe, circumcised and not, it is theologically impossible for either Augustine or Calvin to accept that Abraham was somehow excluded from the gracious covenant revealed in Christ. Augustine's proposal is that Abraham and others experienced the new covenant by way of redemptive-historical aberration. Israel may not have enjoyed the grace of the New Testament, but her leaders did; Moses and others mediated the old covenant as they belonged to the new. This view arises naturally from Augustine's broader position that the purpose of the old covenant was to hide the grace and righteousness of the new. Yet it is a troubling proposal, suggesting that select individuals bypassed the fear and bondage of the old covenant while deliberately keeping

¹⁴⁶ For reflections on such a model, see David C. Steinmetz, "Uncovering a Second Narrative: Detective Fiction and the Construction of the Historical Method," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 54-65.

their kinsfolk, the Israelites, in slavery. Ultimately, it seems, Augustine instrumentalizes Old Testament Israel for the sake of the (primarily Gentile) church.

Calvin's solution is more convoluted: first, the difference between law and gospel should be understood according to relative comparison; second, and similar to Augustine, Abraham and other saints constituted exceptions to their dispensation. In the narrow sense whereby the law is set against the gospel, the saints uniquely participated in the gospel instead of the law. This position is, I think, finally incoherent. On Calvin's account, the law was an instantiation and renewal of God's covenant with Abraham; despite its demands and threatenings, the law did not fundamentally undermine God's eternal covenant of grace. As such, all participants in the covenant before Christ received its redemptive blessings even if they also lived under the law in a secondary sense; all, that is, shared the hope of immortality, came to God by grace and not merit, and knew and had Christ as mediator, while also experiencing some measure of bondage and fear. It is hard to understand what, on this framework, it could mean that the Old Testament saints experienced the blessings of the New Testament by way of transfer or redemptive-historical aberration.

Consider, by way of example, a married couple separated by distance for an extended period of time. They cannot communicate as frequently or directly as otherwise, nor can they share as fully in the same experiences – except, perhaps, for a common sense of loneliness. But they are still fundamentally bound together in covenant and able to interact with each other as such, notwithstanding some measure of isolation and dissatisfaction. On this scenario, it would be most odd to explain the shared affection of a phone call by appeal to aberration or transfer. Neither spouse experiences only the love of marriage or the frustration of distance (understood in their particularities); they both experience both,

though marriage more essentially describes their relation than distance. In his most characteristic statements on the unity of the covenant, this is the image Calvin presents of the Old Testament saints: they fundamentally participated in God's covenant of grace, though they also lived under shadows and experienced some of the fear and bondage of the law. Yet when Calvin comes to passages that present a particularly stark contrast between the testaments – Jer. 31/Heb. 8, Gal. 4, 2 Cor. 3 – he resorts to language entirely discordant to the basic structures of his thought. Augustine can appeal to redemptive-historical aberration because he affirms the existence of two covenants; Abraham, Moses, and the others belonged to the covenant of love though they lived during the covenant of fear. But how is it possible to belong to the new covenant and not the old if the new covenant is essentially identical to the old? Calvin cites Augustine's *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians* to defend the existence of "New Testament" saints during Old Testament times; I suggest this superficial point of common ground belies their fundamental differences on the unity of the testaments. Only by importing Augustine's sign-referent paradigm for the unity of the testaments can Calvin also appropriate Augustine's position on the Old Testament saints. But this would mean instrumentalizing Old Testament Israel as Servetus did, and ultimately denying the identity of the covenant across time. That Calvin cannot finally account for the biblical passages cited above raises questions at the heart of his position on the relation between the testaments.

This chapter, then, problematizes both Augustine and Calvin's strategies for relating the testaments, while also setting forth the question of the Old Testament saints – and Israel more broadly – as a test case for the continuity and discontinuity of the testaments. The next

chapter addresses this issue in greater depth by considering how each figure narrates the story of Israel vis-à-vis the church.

3. The people of God across the testaments

Vmbra sane quaedam ciuitatis huius et imago prophetica ei significandae potius quam praesentandae seruiuit in terris, quo eam tempore demonstrari oportebat, et dicta est etiam ipsa ciuitas sancta merito significantis imaginis, non expressae, sicut futura est, ueritatis.

Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*

Quum ergo audiamus publica Spiritus sancti oracula, quibus de spirituali vita tam clare ac dilucide in Iudaeorum Ecclesia disseruit, intolerabilis pertinaciae fuerit eos ad carnale tantummodo foedus ablegare, ubi solius terrae ac terrestris opulentiae fiat mentio.

Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*

The first two chapters set forth a basic difference between Augustine and Calvin's construals of the unity of the testaments: sign-referent versus identity across time. In the previous chapter, I stressed the status of the Old Testament saints as a particular sticking point for each of these frameworks. This chapter develops this issue further by considering more broadly how Augustine and Calvin conceive the relation between Israel and the church. I argue that each figure's position on this issue corresponds directly to his construal of the unity of the testaments: Augustine considers Old Testament Israel a sign of the church, while Calvin substantially identifies the two. Both affirm Christ as the necessary means of participation in the covenant during New Testament times, and therefore advocate what might be considered a kind of supersessionism. Neither, however, fully abandons the idea of God's ongoing faithfulness to national Israel, reflecting genuine (if sometimes muted) concern for the literal sense of the Old Testament promises.

3.1 Augustine

For Augustine's treatment of Israel, I depend primarily on *City of God* (413-27),¹ while briefly returning to *Answer to Faustus* in dialogue with Paula Fredriksen's recent and important volume, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*.² I also draw upon *In Answer to the Jews* (428-29),³ though I generally agree with Fredriksen that this polemical sermon is not the best starting point for Augustine's overarching understanding of Judaism.⁴ My exposition of *City of God* begins with Augustine's broader vision of the earthly and heavenly cities, and then proceeds to his narrative depiction of Israel as that particular people who resides between the two cities.

3.1.1 The two cities

City of God is Augustine's greatest work, a tremendously wide-ranging treatise that advances both a sweeping polemic against Roman religion, politics, and culture, and a positive presentation of Christianity canvassing the entire biblical narrative from the fall of the angels to the hope of our eschatological vision of God.⁵ The most obvious structural

¹ On date of composition, see Ernest L. Fortin, "Civitate Dei, De," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 196.

² Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

³ On date of composition, see Michael Signer, "Adversus Iudaeos," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 12.

⁴ Paula Fredriksen, "Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei: Augustine on Jews and Judaism," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 299-324, especially p. 323.

⁵ For general treatments of *civ. Dei*, see R. H. Barrow, *Introduction to St. Augustine, The City of God* (London, Faber and Faber, 1950); A. Luras and H. Rondet, "Le thème des deux cités dans l'œuvre de saint Augustin," in *Études Augustiniennes*, ed. H. Rondet, M. Le Landais, A. Luras, and C. Couturier (Paris: Aubier, 1953), 97-160; John O'Meara, *Charter of Christendom: The Significance of City of God* (New York: MacMillan, 1961); Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Dorothy F. Donnelly, ed., *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Christoph Horn, ed., *Augustinus, De civitate dei*, *Klassiker Auslegen* 11 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997); Gerald O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), and 'Civitate dei (De -),' in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 1, ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basel, Switzerland: Schwabe, 1986), 969-1010. See

feature of this tome is the contrast set forth between the earthly city and the City of God. The two cities, Augustine argues, are distinguished by different loves: while the earthly city is characterized by pride, violence, lust for domination, and an overweening desire for temporal things, the heavenly city manifests humility, peace, and a hope for eternal reward. Contemporary discussion divides over the extent to which these two cities can be identified with actual sociopolitical entities, with many scholars suggesting that they function primarily as eschatological ideals. I adopt the opposite position, arguing on the basis of Augustine's extended narrative depiction of the earthly city that the two cities can be substantially, though not exactly identified with the Assyrian and Roman Empires, and the church.⁶ To

also Etienne Gilson's foreword to *Saint Augustine: The City of God: Books 1-7*, trans. Demetrius B. Zema and Gerald G. Walsh, Fathers of the Church 8 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950), xi-xcviii. For a survey of important studies, see Dorothy F. Donnelly and Mark A. Sherman, eds., *Augustine's De Civitate Dei: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1960-1990* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991). For decades, *La Cité de Dieu*, *Cœuvres de Saint Augustin: Bibliothèque Augustinienne 33-37* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959-60) has been the closest approximation to a modern commentary on the entirety of the text. The French translation has since been updated by Isabelle Bochet, Gustave Combès, and Goulven Madec in *La Cité de Dieu*, 3 vols., *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Augustinienne 3-4* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993-95), which includes a lengthy new introduction. At least two other efforts are under way. The first is P. G. Walsh, ed., *De Civitate Dei (The City of God)* (Oxford: Aris & Phillips Classical Texts). Two volumes have been published thus far, on Books 1-2 (2005) and Books 3-4 (2007). Another effort, currently funded by a five-year grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, will be published by Oxford University.

⁶ The classic study on this issue is R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), originally published in 1970. His *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame: Univ. Notre Dame, 2006) presents an updated version of the same argument. See also John Neville Figgis, *The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God'* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1921); Norman H. Baynes, "The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*," in his *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London: Athlone, 1955), 288-306; H. I. Marrou, "Civitas Dei, civitas terrena: num tertium quid?" in *Studia Patristica: Papers presented to the Second International Conference in Patristic Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford*, vol. 2, ed. Kurt Aland and F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), 342-50; Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (New York: Columbia UP, 1963); Oliver O'Donovan, "The Political Thought of *City of God* 19," in Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 48-72, substantially revised from "Augustine's *City of God* XIX and Western Political Thought," *Dionysius* 11 (1987): 89-110; Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: A Reading of *City of God*," *Milltown Studies* 19/20 (1987): 55-72; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), originally published in 1990; Miikka Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in*

make this case, I consider first the history of the Roman Empire (Books 2-5), and then the history of the other major world empires since the time of Assyria (Book 18).

The narrative of the earthly city begins in Books 2-5,⁷ where Augustine responds to the charge that Christians are to blame for the sack of Rome. In Book 2, Augustine argues that Rome experienced much suffering before the coming of Christ, especially in the form of immorality, itself a form of suffering. The practices of the theater receive an extended attack,⁸ and Sallust's depiction of Rome's moral degeneration receives special attention.⁹ Sallust records the high standard of morality and the degree of concord which characterized Rome between the second and the final Punic Wars, but attributes this condition not to love of justice but to fear that there could be no peace while Carthage stood. Once Carthage was destroyed, Rome degenerated into discord, greed, ambition, and injustice. Thus, if Rome ever appeared to be moral, this was for the wrong reasons; and for the rest of her history, Rome sank into "a morass of moral degradation."¹⁰ It is in this context that Augustine famously cites Cicero's argument that the Roman republic had not just degenerated but ceased completely to exist.¹¹ A commonwealth (*res publica*) is "an association united by a

Augustine's De civitate Dei (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993); Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

⁷ The remainder of this subsection depends heavily upon an article I have recently submitted for publication, "Republics and Their Loves: Rereading *City of God* 19." For a slightly different spin on Books 1-5, but one compatible with my own, see Robert Dodaro, "Eloquent Lies, Just Wars and the Politics of Persuasion: Reading Augustine's *City of God* in a 'Postmodern' World," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 77-137.

⁸ *Civ. Dei* 2.4-14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.18, CCL 47:50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.21, CCL 47:52. "...iam tunc prorsus perisse et nullam omnino remansisse rem publicam."

common sense of right and a community of interest,”¹² but this requires a sound and just government – which Rome now lacks. Thus, Cicero concludes: “For we retain the name of a commonwealth, but we have lost the reality long ago: and this was not through any misfortune, but through our own misdemeanors.”¹³

In Book 3, Augustine turns to physical disasters, the form of suffering the Romans actually fear. Here he recounts the entire history of Rome through the lens of violence and idolatry, two interlocking themes that will play a central role throughout the rest of *City of God*. The Greeks destroyed Troy, the original home of the Romans;¹⁴ then Romulus, the founder of Rome, rose to power by killing his brother.¹⁵ The Romans enjoyed some measure of peace under Numa Pompilius, but not for long.¹⁶ They would soon be attacked by surrounding enemies, and then use those attacks as an excuse to indulge their “lust for gain (*amor ... habendi*).”¹⁷ Moreover, this time of peace actually prompted Numa Pompilius to create his own gods. Since “the idea that the true, omnipotent and supreme God was concerned for the affairs of earth perhaps never entered his head,”¹⁸ he decided to provide other gods to ensure the ongoing safety of his people. These gods, however, did not satisfy the Romans, who established others for even more protection. Augustine recounts the multiplication of the Roman gods: King Tarquin will establish a temple of Jupiter,

¹² Ibid., 2.21, CCL 47:53. “... coetum iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatum.”

¹³ Ibid., 2.21, CCL 47:55. “Nostris enim uitiis, non casu aliquo, rem publicam uerbo retinemus, re ipsa uero iam pridem amisimus.”

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.2.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.9.

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.10, CCL 47:71, quoting Virgil.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.11, CCL 47:73.

Aesculapius is imported as a god of healing, and the Mother of the Gods arrives from Pessinus.¹⁹ Soon Rome has an innumerable multitude of gods, “indigenous and foreign, celestial and terrestrial, gods of the underworld and gods of the sea, of the springs and of the rivers, gods, according to Varro, ‘certain and uncertain,’ and in all classes, gods distinguished, like animals, as male and female.”²⁰ Yet none of them protects her from destruction.

Augustine proceeds through the rape of the Sabines,²¹ the destruction of Alba Longa,²² the treachery and intrigue of the earliest kings²³ and consuls,²⁴ the disasters of the early republic,²⁵ and the Punic Wars,²⁶ before turning to internal disasters like the Social Wars, the Servile Wars, and the Civil Wars,²⁷ and finally to catastrophes in the period before Augustus Caesar.²⁸ Cities were razed, temples ravaged, whole countries destroyed, and the evils Romans inflicted upon their fellow citizens were worse than those that foreign nations inflicted upon them. Augustine uses this survey of events to craft the reader’s perceptions of the Roman people. Early in their history, the Romans began “to regard the lust for dominion (*libidem dominandi*) as an adequate cause for war, to think that the highest glory

¹⁹ Ibid., 3.12.

²⁰ Ibid., 3.12, CCL 47:73-74. “... quos numerare quis potest, indigenas et alienigenas, caelites terrestres, infernos marinos, fontanos fluuiales, et, ut Varro dicit, certos atque incertos, in omnibusque generibus deorum, sicut in animalibus, mares et feminas?”

²¹ Ibid., 3.13.

²² Ibid., 3.14.

²³ Ibid., 3.15.

²⁴ Ibid., 3.16.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.17.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.18-20.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.23-30.

²⁸ Ibid., 3.30.

(*maximam gloriam*) lay in the widest empire (*maximo imperio*).”²⁹ But in conquering others, they were themselves conquered by the lust for domination, such that they would even make violence an object of praise, if sought for the sake of “glory.”³⁰

Augustine’s treatment of Rome’s violence in Book 3 goes hand-in-hand with his diatribe in Book 4 against Rome’s obsession with idolatry. Augustine enumerates with fastidious scorn Rome’s bewildering array of gods, each assigned to some discrete, minute, and often contradictory task supposedly necessary for the extension and care of the empire.³¹ Watching over the land was too much a task for any one god, so Rusina took charge of the rural countryside, Jugatinus the mountain ranges, Collatina the hills, and Vallonia the valleys. Even something so simple as corn demanded three goddesses: one for seeds before they came above the ground, another for shoots as they turned into grain, and yet another for reaping and storing. Ultimately, Augustine deems this frenetic multiplication of gods an expression of the restless, acquisitive spirit of the Romans themselves,³² a point he develops with rich irony when he considers the goddess Felicity.³³ The Romans accorded Felicity a temple, an altar, and rites while also retaining their other divinities. But Felicity renders the other gods useless, since felicity just is that for the sake of which everything else is sought and all the gods were created. The very existence of the goddess Felicity betrays a lack of

²⁹ Ibid., 3.14, CCL 47:76-77. “« Postea uero, inquit, quam in Asia Cyrus, in Graecia Lacedaemonii et Athenienses coepere urbes atque nationes subigere, libidinem dominandi causam belli habere, maximam gloriam in maximo imperio putare. »” Augustine applies to the Romans the words of Sallust, who is actually describing the Greeks.

³⁰ Ibid. “Hac libidine Roma tunc uicta Albam se uicisse triumphabat et sui sceleris laudem gloriam nominabat.”

³¹ Ibid., 4.8, 4.10, 4.11, 4.16, 4.21.

³² Ibid., 4.16.

³³ Ibid., 4.18ff.

confidence that the other gods could bring happiness, which is no deity at all, but a gift of the one true God. On Augustine's account, then, violence and idolatry are both symptoms of the same impulse: an inordinate desire for earthly goods coupled with a refusal to seek them from God.³⁴ Indeed, this desire is precisely what makes the earthly city *earthly*.³⁵

These themes play a central role in Books 4-5 for Augustine's account of the rise of the Roman Empire. Augustine traces the beginning of world empires back to Ninus, the king of Assyria. The earliest kings of history, Augustine says, were characterized by moderation, seeking only to protect, not extend their borders; but Ninus was "the first to change these ancient and, as it were, hereditary customs, through a craving for empire, which was then a novelty (*noua imperii cupiditate*)."³⁶ By attacking neighboring peoples and occupying their territories, Ninus eventually extended Assyria's rule over almost all the nations of the East, creating an empire that would last 1,240 years, even longer than Rome's history thus far. The Roman Empire succeeded the Assyrian Empire, a development Augustine attributes to God's sovereign purposes³⁷ with regard to Rome's lust for glory. As Sallust himself wrote, lust for glory was the driving ambition of the Roman people, the force that prompted Rome

³⁴ Dodaro argues persuasively that this inordinate desire for earthly goods can itself be traced to fear of death. See especially *Christ and the Just Society*, 32-43. On his account, this fear explains a variety of vices that come under criticism in *City of God*: indulgence in luxury and illicit pleasures is a distraction from the inevitability of death (41); fear of annihilation drives the growth of a political and military apparatus to fend off foreign threats (42); athletic contests, local religious festivals, theater arts, and literature that obscure knowledge of God were originally instituted to mitigate the same fear (48).

³⁵ For insightful reflections in this regard, see Luigi Alici, "The Violence of Idolatry and Peaceful Coexistence: The Current Relevance of '*De civitate Dei*'" (presentation, Reconsiderations Conference III, Villanova Univ., Villanova, PA, Sept. 19, 2009). This piece should be published in an upcoming issue of *Augustinian Studies*.

³⁶ *Civ. Dei* 4.6, CCL 47:103, citing Justinus.

³⁷ In the second half of Book 4 and the first half of Book 5, Augustine engages in a series of polemics against alternative options for explaining historical events: the gods (4.7-32, considered above), astrology (5.1-7), and the Stoic doctrine of fate (which receives the lightest treatment of the three; 5.8-10). Each major section concludes with an assertion of God's sovereignty (4:33-34; 5.11).

in her earliest stages to pursue liberty from slavery, and then, having won her freedom, dominion over other nations.³⁸ Augustine acknowledges the virtue of a certain kind of lust for glory, in the sense that it is appropriate to receive praise from others for good actions,³⁹ but he considers excessive lust for glory a vice.⁴⁰ The Romans made glory an end in and of itself, rarely recognizing that glory should rather be the reward for virtue.⁴¹ Nevertheless, there is one curious benefit to lust for glory: it checks other vices, as prideful people desire to be honored for appearing virtuous though they are not. “At least it is good that the desire for human praise and glory makes them, not indeed saints, but less depraved men.”⁴²

This benefit, Augustine says, is the reason God allowed the Romans to rise in power:

The kingdoms of the East had enjoyed renown for a long time, when God decided that a Western empire should arise, later in time, but more renowned for the extent and grandeur of its dominion. And, to suppress the grievous evils of many nations, he entrusted this dominion to those men, in preference to all others, who served their country for the sake of honour, praise and glory, who looked to find that glory in their country’s sake above their own and who suppressed greed for money and many other faults in favour of that one fault of theirs, the love of praise.⁴³

³⁸ Ibid., 5.12.

³⁹ Ibid., 5.19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.13-14.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5.12.

⁴² Ibid., 5.13, CCL 47:147. “Verum tamen qui libidines turpiores fide pietatis impetrato Spiritu sancto et amore intellegibilis pulchritudinis non refrenant, melius saltem cupiditate humanae laudis et gloriae non quidem iam sancti, sed minus turpes sunt.”

⁴³ Ibid., 5.13, CCL 47:146. “Quam ob rem cum diu fuissent regna Orientis inlustria, uoluit Deus et Occidentali fieri, quod tempore esset posterius, sed imperii latitudine et magnitudine inlustrius, idque talibus potissimum concessit hominibus ad domanda grauius mala multarum gentium, qui causa honoris laudis et gloriae consuluerunt patriae, in qua ipsam gloriam requirebant, salutemque eius saluti suae praeponere non dubitauerunt, pro isto uno uitio, id est amore laudis, pecuniae cupiditatem et multa alia uitia comprimentes.” Augustine’s discussion of this explanation continues until 5:19, where he concludes, “Quam ob rem, quamuis ut potui satis exposuerim, qua causa Deus unus uerus et iustus Romanos secundum quandam formam terrena ciuitatis bonos adiuuerit ad tanti imperii gloriam consequendam: potest tamen et alia causa esse latentior propter diuersa merita generis humani, Deo magis nota quam nobis ...” (CCL 47:155).

On Augustine's account, the Romans were not themselves virtuous, but they were at least better than the Assyrians and Babylonians, and even served as an example for Christians.⁴⁴ In 5.18, perhaps the chapter in *City of God* that best reveals Augustine's genuine (if tortured) sense of Roman pride, Augustine recounts the deeds of Roman figures – Brutus, Torquatus, Furius Camillus, Mucius, Curtius, the Decii, and so forth – who displayed remarkable bravery and strength in situations far beyond anything Christians have had to face.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Augustine's ultimate appraisal of these figures is one of indictment: at the end of the day, their example only reinforces the connection between lust for glory and a lack of heavenly hope.

Those Roman heroes belonged to an earthly city, and the aim set before them, in all their acts of duty for her, was the safety of their country, and a kingdom not in heaven, but on earth; not in life eternal, but in the process where the dying pass away and are succeeded by those who will die in their turn. What else was there for them to love save glory? For, through glory, they desired to have a kind of life after death on the lips of those who praised them.⁴⁶

Since the Romans set their hope entirely on earthly reward, that is all they will get; God will not grant them eternal life with the angels in heaven. “When such men do anything good,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.16-18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.18. For recent treatments of Augustine's position on pagan virtues, see T. H. Irwin, “Splendid Vices? Augustine for and against Pagan Virtues” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 105-27; Robert Dodaro, “Augustine of Hippo between the Secular City and the City of God,” *Augustinus Afer: Saint Augustin: africanité et universalité; Actes du colloque international, Alger-Annaba, 1-7 avril 2001*, ed. Pierre-Yves Fux, Jean-Michel Roessli, and Otto Wermelinger (Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires, 2003), 287-305; and James Wetzel, “Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Milbank's Augustine,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32 (2004): 271-300.

⁴⁶ *Civ. Dei* 5.14, CCL 47:148. “Sed cum illi essent in ciuitate terrena, quibus propositus erat omnium pro illa officiorum finis incolumitas eius et regnum non in caelo, sed in terra; non in uita aeterna, sed in decessione morientium et successione moriturorum: quid aliud amarent quam gloriam, qua uolebant etiam post mortem tamquam uiuere in ore laudantium?”

their sole motive is the hope of receiving glory from their fellow-men; and the Lord refers to them when he says, 'I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.'⁴⁷

According to Books 2-5, the story of Rome just is the story of her earthly loves, made manifest in her concrete history of violence, idolatry, and lust for glory. Nevertheless, she was not wholly evil and she did at least provide some benefit to this temporal existence.

It is the conviction of all those who are truly religious, that no one can have true virtue without true piety, that is without the true worship of the true God; and that the virtue which is employed in the service of human glory is not true virtue; still, those who are not citizens of the Eternal City – which the holy Scriptures call the City of God – are of more service to the earthly city when they possess even that sort of virtue than if they are without it.⁴⁸

Book 18 develops these themes more explicitly (albeit briefly) with an even wider field of vision: all peoples before Rome. Augustine introduces this book with the sweeping pronouncement that the entirety of human history can be understood primarily as the story of two empires, Assyria and Rome, and that this history has always been characterized by violence.

Well then, the society of mortal men spread everywhere over the earth; and amid all the varieties of geographical situation it still was linked together by a kind of fellowship based on a common nature, although each group pursued its own advantages and sought the gratification of its own desires (*utilitates et cupiditates suas quibusque sectantibus*). In such pursuits not everyone, perhaps no one, achieves complete satisfaction, because men have conflicting aims. Hence

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5.15, CCL 47:149. "De talibus enim, qui propter hoc boni aliquid facere uidentur, ut glorificentur ab hominibus, etiam Dominus ait: Amen dico uobis, perceperunt mercedem suam."

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.19, CCL 47:155-56. "... illud constet inter omnes ueraciter pios, neminem sine uera pietate, id est ueri Deo uero cultu, ueram posse habere uirtutem, nec eam ueram esse, quando gloriae seruit humana; eos tamen, qui ciues non sint ciuitatis aeternae, quae in sacris litteris nostris dicitur ciuitas Dei, utiliores esse terrenae ciuitati, quando habent uirtutem uel ipsam, quam si nec ipsam."

human society is generally divided against itself, and one part of it oppresses another, when it finds itself the stronger.⁴⁹

To preserve its existence and some measure of peace, Augustine continues, the weaker party almost invariably chooses slavery over death.

The result has been – though under the providence of God, in whose power it rests to order conquest or subjugation in each case – that some nations have been entrusted with empire, while others have been subdued to alien domination. Now the society whose common aim is worldly advantage or the satisfaction of desire (*terrenae utilitatis uel cupiditatis*), the community which we call by the general name of ‘the city of this world’ has been divided into a great number of empires; and among these we observe that two empires have won a renown far exceeding that of all the rest. First comes the Assyrian Empire; later came that of the Romans. These two powers present a kind of pattern of contrast, both historically and geographically. For Assyria rose to power in earlier times; Rome’s emergence was later. Assyria rose in the East, Rome in the West. And, to complete the pattern, the beginning of the one followed hard on the end of the other. All the other kingdoms and kings I should describe as something like appendages (*adpendices*) of those empires.⁵⁰

Having addressed the violence of the earthly city, Augustine turns his attention to a familiar and related vice. Almost every chapter in 18.2-26 recounts the degeneration of the earthly city into idolatry, in language very similar to Augustine’s earlier polemic against Rome. Abraham is called away from Babylon during the reign of Telxion, king of Sicyon,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18.2, CCL 48:593. “Societas igitur usquequaque mortalium diffusa per terras et in locorum quantislibet diuersitatibus unius tamen eiusdemque naturae quadam communionem deuinctas utilitates et cupiditates suas quibusque sectantibus, dum id quod appetitur aut nemini aut non omnibus sufficit, quia non est id ipsum, aduersus se ipsam plerumque diuiditur et pars partem, quae praeualet, opprimit.”

⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.2, CCL 48:593. “Hinc factum est, ut non sine Dei prouidentia, in cuius potestate est, ut quisque bello <aut> subiugetur aut subiuget, quidam essent regnis praediti, quidam regnantibus subditi. Sed inter plurima regna terrarum, in quae terrenae utilitatis uel cupiditatis est diuisa societas (quam ciuitatem mundi huius uniuersali uocabulo nuncupamus), duo regna cernimus longe ceteris preuenisse clariora, Assyriorum primum, deinde Romanorum, ut temporibus, ita locis inter se ordinata atque distincta. Nam quo modo illud prius, hoc posterius: eo modo illud in Oriente, hoc in Occidente surrexit; denique in illius fine huius initium confestim fuit. Regna cetera ceterosque reges uelut adpendices istorum dixerim.”

who will be worshipped as a god after his death.⁵¹ Jacob receives the promises of Abraham around the time that Phegous of Argos receives the honor of sacrificial blood and a temple.⁵² Joseph rises to power in Egypt; meanwhile, Apis, the Argive king, sails to Egypt, dies there, and becomes Serapis, the greatest of the Egyptian gods.⁵³ Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt while the Greeks are busy making gods of dead people.⁵⁴ After Joshua's death, Greek idolatry snowballs into an avalanche of absurdity, with the rise of tales concerning Triptolemus, the Minotaur, Centaurs, Cerberus, and so on.⁵⁵ As in the first half of *City of God*, Augustine associates the rise of idolatry with the activity of demons who can trick people by creating realistic apparitions.⁵⁶ When Augustine finally gets to Rome, the argument has come full circle.⁵⁷ By the time Romulus was deified, the practice of creating gods had mostly waned, yet the demons incited the Romans to retain the worship of ancient gods and to spawn obscene theatrical shows dedicated to these demons. Soon enough, Numa Pompilius, already treated in Book 3, would try to shore up the city's defenses by increasing enrollment into the multitude of divinities.

Augustine's presentation in 18.2-26 depends heavily on Eusebius' *Chronikon*, translated and updated by Jerome.⁵⁸ This text traced in parallel columns the rise and fall of

⁵¹ Ibid., 18.2.

⁵² Ibid., 18.3.

⁵³ Ibid., 18.4-5.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.8.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.5, 18.9, 18.12, 18.13, 18.18, 18.24, 18.41, 18.51, 18.53, 18.54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.24.

⁵⁸ I use the edition found in Eusebius, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, ed. Rudolf Helm, 3rd ed., Eusebius Werke 7 (Berlin: Akademie, 1984). For a helpful recent introduction to this text, see Anthony Grafton and Megan

several world empires, providing names and synchronized dates for all the nations' rulers, as well as notes on important events and developments. Its history, too, began with Ninus and the four nations that existed at the time Abraham was born: Assyria, Sicyon, Egypt, and Israel.⁵⁹ Throughout the text, important events in biblical history were coordinated with the chronicle of the nations. The number of columns would multiply or shrink according to the development or demise of various peoples until the columns were slowly reduced to two: those of the Hebrews and the Romans. After the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian, Israel, too, disappeared, such that Rome stood alone. This visual representation of history thus brought all the world's kingdoms into the vortex of the Roman Empire, which represented the culmination of human history.

Virtually every king or god Augustine mentions is found in this source, in addition to the biblical events he highlights and the connections he draws between the histories of the earthly and heavenly cities. The rule of Ninus, the archetypal conqueror king, corresponds to the birth of Abraham in the territory of the Chaldeans, which is a part of Assyria.⁶⁰ Abraham receives the command to leave his father's land, Babylon, right when the first great world empire rises to power. Just as Rome is preparing to rule over the nations, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jonah, and Joel begin prophesying about the Gentile mission.⁶¹ Unlike

Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 2006), 133-77.

⁵⁹ See *civ. Dei* 16.17, where Augustine mentions Sicyon, Egypt and Assyria as the three major Gentile empires at the time of Abraham.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.6, 16.3, 16.10, 16.12, 16.17, 18.2, 18.22, 18.27. Cf. Eusebius *Chronikon* 20a.

⁶¹ *Civ. Dei* 18.27. Cf. Eusebius *Chronikon* 84a.

Eusebius, however, Augustine's purpose is not to provide a historical record of kings and events, or to demonstrate the fulfillment of God's purposes in Rome. Rather, Augustine's narrative of world history underscores his basic thesis that the two cities will always run side by side, interwoven and intermixed, throughout the course of the temporal world. Moreover, this history narrates the radical difference between the cities precisely according to their objects of worship. The final remarks of Book 18 make clear that this was Augustine's main purpose throughout the book.

But now at last we must bring this book to a close. In it we have brought our discussion to this point, and we have shown sufficiently, as it seemed to me, what is the development in the mortal condition of the two cities, the earthly and the Heavenly, which are mingled together from the beginning to the end of their history. One of them, the earthly city, has created for herself such false gods as she wanted, from any source she chose – even creating them out of men – in order to worship them with sacrifices. The other city, the Heavenly City on pilgrimage in this world, does not create false gods. She herself is the creation of the true God, and she herself is to be his true sacrifice. Nevertheless, both cities alike enjoy the good things, or are afflicted with the adversities of this temporal state, but with a different faith, a different hope, a different love (*diuersa fide, diuersa spe, diuerso amore*), until they are separated by the final judgment, and each receives her own end, of which there is no end.⁶²

These words bring to completion a narrative that literally encompasses the entire history of human society. Augustine can now assert on the basis of concrete examples and evidence that the earthly city has always been characterized by the twin vices of violence and

⁶² *Civ. Dei* 18.54, CCL 48:656. "Sed aliquando iam concludamus hunc librum, hoc usque disserentes et quantum satis uisum est demonstrantes, quisnam sit duarum ciuitatum, caelestis atque terrenae, ab initio usque in finem permixtarum mortalis excursus; quarum illa, quae terrena est, fecit sibi quos uoluit uel undecumque uel etiam ex hominibus falsos deos, quibus sacrificando seruiret; illa autem, quae caelestis peregrinatur in terra, falsos deos non facit, sed a uero Deo ipsa fit, cuius uerum sacrificium ipsa sit. Ambae tamen temporalibus uel bonis pariter utuntur uel malis pariter affliguntur, diuersa fide, diuersa spe, diuerso amore, donec ultimo iudicio separentur, et percipiat unaquaeque suum finem, cuius nullus est finis." Augustine also introduces Book 18 by stating his intention to compare the two cities (18.1-2). I have corrected Bettenson's translation, which inexplicably renders *diuersa spe* "different expectation." Augustine clearly intends here to invoke the Pauline triad.

idolatry, which are both tied to an overweening desire for temporal goods. In 14.28, Augustine declares: “The two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt of self.”⁶³ On my reading of *City of God*, Augustine takes this programmatic statement quite literally.⁶⁴ The earthly and heavenly cities do not function only as eschatological types; on the contrary, the earthly city corresponds very closely to the continuum of people from Cain to Assyria to Rome who have put their hope in earthly things, the quality of whose loves has been made manifest in actual, historical developments. Further, as I will argue, the heavenly city accords to the line of saints that began with Abel, Noah, and Abraham and comes to full expression in the church.⁶⁵ This does not mean the City of God simply is the church, nor that the earthly city is completely coextensive with Assyria and Rome. In the first place, the notion that the City of God includes angels, and the earthly city demons, logically obviates the possibility of complete identity. Moreover, Augustine repeatedly insists the two cities are interwoven and intermixed as they run their course in this temporal existence. There are Christian Romans, and there are false believers

⁶³ *Civ. Dei* 14.28, CCL 48:451. “Fecerunt itaque ciuitates duas amores duo, terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei, caelestem uero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui.”

⁶⁴ James J. O’Donnell judges rightly of this passage, “In this statement all the doctrine of *City of God* is summarized.” *Augustine* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), 51. One important precursor to *civ. Dei* 14.28 is *Gn. litt.* 11.15.20, CSEL 28.1: 347-48. “Hi duo amores ... distinxerunt conditas in genere humano ciuitates duas ...”

⁶⁵ Van Oort defends a basic, though not complete equivalence between *civitas Dei* and *ecclesia*, arguing that both are primarily eschatological terms that also designate empirical realities. See *Jerusalem and Babylon*, 123-29. For other discussions of this issue, see O’Meara, *Charter of Christendom*, 51-54; F. Edward Cranz, “*De Civitate Dei*, XV, 2, and Augustine’s Idea of the Christian Society,” originally published in *Speculum* 25 (1950): 215-25, but reprinted in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), 404-21; David Aers, *Salvation and Sin: Augustine, Langland, and Fourteenth-Century Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 2009), 1-24.

in the church.⁶⁶ Some people currently outside the church will one day become citizens of the heavenly city.⁶⁷ And, of course, the members of the two cities will not finally be revealed until God sifts the wheat from the tares. Nevertheless, these are points of qualification on the basic dualism of the cities. There are two different peoples, they can substantially be identified – enough, in any case, that Augustine can narrate their development throughout human history – and they differ as much as their objects of worship.⁶⁸

3.1.2 Israel and the heavenly city

Given this basic dualism, the question arises: where does Augustine locate Old Testament Israel, in the earthly city or the heavenly? On the one hand, Israel knows to worship the one true God, and generally avoids the radical idolatry of the Greeks and Romans. On the other hand, Augustine repeatedly characterizes Israel as an earthly people focused on temporal goods. For Augustine's position on this question, I turn to Books 15-17, beginning with his introductory remarks in 15.2:

There was certainly a kind of shadow (*umbra ... quaedam*) and prophetic image (*imago prophetica*) of this City which served rather to point towards it (*significandae*) than to reproduce (*praesentandae*) it on earth at the time when it was due to be displayed. This image was also called the holy city, in virtue of its pointing to that other City (*merito significantis imaginis*), not as being the express likeness of the reality which is yet to be (*non expressae, sicut futura est, ueritatis*). Concerning this image, in its status as a servant (*de hac imagine*

⁶⁶ On this point, see especially *en. Ps.* 61.8, treated in Luras and Rondet, "Le thème des deux cités," 129-37.

⁶⁷ *Civ. Dei* 1.35. See also *en. Ps.* 86.6, treated in Luras and Rondet, "Le thème des deux cités," 124-27.

⁶⁸ Baynes gets the balance right in "The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*," 291. "When Augustine is expounding the *theory* of his conception of history the *civitas terrena* – the society of earth – is not the State: the *civitas caelestis*, the heavenly society, is not the Church, but when he comes to consider the *representatives* of these two societies on earth – when he is treating the matter, not purely theoretically, but empirically – then the Roman State comes to be regarded as the earthly *civitas*, and the Church as the divine society."

seruiente), and that free City (*de libera ciuitate*) to which it points, the Apostle says, when writing to the Galatians ... [Augustine quotes Gal. 4:12-5:1].⁶⁹

Augustine continues:

This manner of interpretation, which comes down to us with apostolic authority, reveals to us how we are to understand the Scriptures of the two covenants, the old and the new. One part of the earthly city (*pars ... quaedam terrenae ciuitatis*) has been made into an image of the Heavenly City, by symbolizing something other than itself, namely that other City (*non se significando, sed alteram*); and for that reason it is a servant. For it was established not for its own sake but in order to symbolize another City (*non ... propter se ipsam, sed propter aliam significandam*).⁷⁰

This passage comes at a critical juncture in the structure of “City of God.” For four books (11-14), Augustine has focused on the entrance of sin into the created order, both in the heavenly realms (angels) and on earth (Adam and Eve). In Books 15-18, Augustine will treat the development of the City of God from Abel to the time of Jesus, which primarily occurs within the nation of Israel. Before he begins this sequence, though, Augustine seeks to foreground the way he will read this narrative. He thus introduces Book 15 with this methodological discussion on the allegory of Hagar and Sarah.

⁶⁹ *Civ. Dei* 15.2, CCL 48:454. “Vmbra sane quaedam ciuitatis huius et imago prophetica ei significandae potius quam praesentandae seruiuit in terris, quo eam tempore demonstrari oportebat, et dicta est etiam ipsa ciuitas sancta merito significantis imaginis, non expressae, sicut futura est, ueritatis. De hac imagine seruiente et de illa, quam significat, libera ciuitate sic apostolus ad Galatas loquitur ...”

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.2, CCL 48:455. “Haec forma intellegendi de apostolica auctoritate descendens locum nobis aperit, quem ad modum scripturas duorum testamentorum, ueteris et noui, accipere debeamus. Pars enim quaedam terrenae ciuitatis imago caelestis ciuitatis effecta est, non se significando, sed alteram, et ideo seruens. Non enim propter se ipsam, sed propter aliam significandam est instituta.”

A number of points about Augustine's remarks should be noted.⁷¹ First, the development of the City of God is found within the history of Israel but does not coincide with it. Israel was not in and of herself the City of God, but a subset of the earthly city. Second, however, Israel has the particular function of signifying the City of God as a shadow of the heavenly city – just as, for instance, Levitical sacrifices were shadows of Christ's sacrifice. On Augustine's account, Israel's value is primarily instrumental: she was not created for her own sake, but for the sake of the true City of God, and her function is not to constitute, but to signify the heavenly city. Israel is therefore a servant of the City of God and can only take the name "City of God" by virtue of her dependence on the real City of God. Finally, Augustine understands the basic relation between Israel and the City of God in the terms set forth in Gal. 4: the allegorical relation of sign and referent.

Books 15-18 develop this basic framework, highlighting the basic fault line that runs throughout humanity, first between the good and the wicked generally, then between Israel and the rest of the world, and finally within Israel itself. This division begins with Cain and Abel. An earthly man, Cain kills his brother – like all who hope only in temporal goods,

⁷¹ For recent treatments of Augustine's theology of Jews and Judaism, see Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, and "Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei: Augustine on Jews and Judaism," both cited above, in addition to several related articles listed in *Augustine and the Jews*, 443-44; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1999), "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation: Romans 11:25-26 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis," *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005): 247-81, and "'Slay Them Not': Augustine and the Jews in Modern Scholarship," *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998): 78-92. See also Lisa A. Unterseher: *The Mark of Cain and the Jews: Augustine's Theology of Jews and Judaism*, Gorgias Dissertations 39 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009), and "The Mark of Cain and the Jews: Augustine's Theology of Jews," *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002): 99-121; C. C. Pecknold, "Theo-Semiotics and Augustine's Hermeneutical Jew: Or, 'What's a Little Supersessionism between Friends?'" *Augustinian Studies* 37 (2006): 27-42; Franklin T. Harkins, "Nuancing Augustine's Hermeneutical Jew: Allegory and Actual Jews in the Bishop's Sermons," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36 (2005): 41-64; Michael Signer, "Jews and Judaism," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 470-74; Marcel Dubois, "Jews, Judaism and Israel in the Theology of Saint Augustine: How He Links the Jewish People and the Land of Zion," *Immanuel* 22/23 (1989): 162-214.

rejecting violence for peace – then founds an earthly city.⁷² In this regard, his story foreshadows the basic pattern that will characterize every earthly empire and especially Rome, which was also founded on fratricide.⁷³ Scripture records two primary genealogical lines that continue after the death of Abel: one that begins with Cain and another that begins with Seth.⁷⁴ Seth’s does not in and of itself constitute the City of God, for membership in the heavenly city is not a matter of physical descent: “The earthly city needs only generation (*generatione*), whereas the Heavenly City needs regeneration (*regeneratione*) also, to escape the guilt connected with generation.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there are in the lines of Cain and Seth increasing indications (*indicia*) of the existence of two cities within humanity.⁷⁶ Together, they signal a basic division in humanity,⁷⁷ though the good line will eventually become so corrupted that God will destroy all humanity except Noah and his family.⁷⁸

The intermixing of these formerly distinct cities brings about God’s judgment in the flood. According to the notoriously enigmatic opening verses of Gen. 6, the human race

⁷² *Civ. Dei*, 15.4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 15.5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.8, 15.15, 15.17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.16, CCL 48:478. “Sed terrena ciuitas generatione tantummodo, caelestis autem etiam regeneratione opus habet, ut noxam generationis euadat.” See 15.17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.17, CCL 48:479. “Adam was therefore the father of both lines of descent, that is, of the line whose successive members belong to the earthly city, and of the line whose members are attached to the City in heaven. But after the murder of Abel (with the wonderful hidden meaning his killing conveyed) there were two fathers appointed, one for each of those lines of descent. Those fathers were Cain and Seth; and in their sons, whose names had to be recorded, indications of these two cities began to appear with increasing clarity in the race of mortals” (*Cum ergo esset Adam utriusque generis pater, id est et cuius series ad terrenam, et cuius series ad caelestem pertinet ciuitatem, occiso Abel atque in eius interfectione commendato mirabili sacramento facti sunt duo patres singulorum generum, Cain et Seth, in quorum filiis, quos commemorari oportebat, duarum istarum ciuitatum in genere mortalium euidentius indicia clarere coeperunt*).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.15, CCL 48:475. “Cum itaque istae duae series generationum, una de Seth, altera de Cain, has duas, de quibus agimus, distinctis ordinibus insinuent ciuitates ...”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.8.

began to multiply in the earth and the “sons [or angels] of God” started to fancy “the daughters of men” and take them as wives. These sons of God, Augustine says, were not angels, but human men who belonged to the City of God. When they married women of the earthly city, “these cities became associated in wickedness and the result was a kind of amalgam of the two communities (*facta est permixtio et iniquitate participata quaedam utriusque confusio civitatis*).”⁷⁹ God responded by sending the great waters. Those rescued in the ark are an obvious symbol of the church, on pilgrimage in this world but saved through the wood of Christ.⁸⁰

The next major moment in the history of the City of God is that of Abraham. He was born in the land of the Chaldeans, which was part of the Assyrian Empire and infamous for impious superstitions. According to Augustine, the family of Abraham’s father, Terah, was unique in this land for worshiping the one true God. This family was also alone in preserving the Hebrew language. Thus it was that “only Terah’s family remained, to preserve a seedbed for the City of God (*in qua custodita est plantatio civitatis Dei*).”⁸¹

Augustine wrestles with the interpretation of the promises Abraham received. Some may be interpreted in terms of physical Israel, Augustine judges, but others must refer to Abraham’s spiritual descendents. For instance, the promise that Abraham’s descendents will be as numerous as the sands of the earth and forever fill the land is ambiguous (*non evidenter*

⁷⁹ Ibid., 15.22, CCL 48:487.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 15.26.

⁸¹ Ibid., 16.12, CCL 48:516.

apparet).⁸² This image works better with reference to Abraham’s spiritual descendents, since they are much more numerous than Israel alone. But since Israel has also grown to such an extent that her people fill almost the whole world, the precise referent cannot be decided. Nevertheless, the promise of land refers literally to Canaan, and is literally fulfilled by both contemporary Israelites and Christians. That these groups will inhabit the land “for ever (*usque in saeculum*)” does not mean “for eternity (*in aeternum*)” but rather until the end of the present era (*finis praesentis*). Jews will indeed inhabit Canaan during this time. “For even though the Israelites have been expelled from Jerusalem, they still remain in other cities of the land of Canaan, and they will remain there until the end. And the whole land, being inhabited by Christians, is itself the seed of Abraham.”⁸³

As Augustine proceeds with this history of Israel, he increasingly casts the division between the earthly and heavenly cities as one between Jews and Christians. The choices of Isaac over Ishmael, and Jacob over Esau, prefigure a division between the peoples of the old and new covenants.⁸⁴ Esau the elder’s servitude to the younger Jacob means “the older

⁸² Ibid., 16.21, CCL 48:523. This is the third promise. Augustine treats the first two in 16.16 and 16.18 respectively. Of the second, that Abraham’s “seed” will receive “this land,” Augustine explicitly denies the possibility of a reference to Gentile Christians. “Nihil hic de illo semine dictum est, in quo pater factus est omnium gentium, sed de illo solo, de quo pater est unius Israeliticae gentis; ad hoc enim semine terra illa possessa est” (ibid., 16.18, CCL 48:522). Concerning a later promise, however, that Abraham’s descendents will be like the stars in heaven, Augustine does accept a reference to Christians. Since there are far fewer stars than sand, he reasons, the accent in this promise must concern Abraham’s “posterity exalted in heavenly felicity” (*posteritas caelesti felicitate sublimis*; ibid., 16.23, CCL 48:525). The promise in 16.26 about the birth of Isaac refers to the calling of the Gentiles, since he will be born by grace and not by nature. The three men at Mamre in 16.29 explicitly present two different promises, one concerning national Israel, and the other concerning all nations according to faith. For a summary discussion of the interpretation of prophecies, see 17.2.

⁸³ Ibid., 16.21, CCL 48:524. “Quia, etsi expulsi sunt Israelitae de Hierosolymis, manent tamen in aliis ciuitatibus terrae Chanaan, et usque in finem manebunt; et uniuersa terra illa cum a Christianis inhabitatur, etiam ipsum semen est Abrahae.” A more complicated discussion of this issue is found in 16.26, where Abraham is indeed promised an *aeterna possessio*. Augustine argues that the choice of the word *aeterna* reflects an ambiguity in Greek, where the word translated can mean either eternity or until the end of this age.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.31-32, 16.35.

people of the Jews was destined to serve the younger people, the Christians.”⁸⁵ Isaac’s blessing Jacob is a prophecy of Christ amongst the nations. That he does so blindly appropriately reflects the contemporary condition of the Jews. “Isaac is the Law and the Prophets; and Christ is blessed by the Law and the Prophets, even by the lips of Jews, as by someone who does not know what he is doing, because the Law and the Prophets themselves are not understood.”⁸⁶ When Jacob wrestles with his God, he is both blessed and crippled – “blessed in those who among this same people of Israel have believed in Christ, and crippled in respect of those who do not believe.”⁸⁷ As with Isaac, Joseph’s two sons signify the elder Jews serving the younger Christians, the former Abraham’s descendents according to the flesh, and the latter those according to faith.⁸⁸

In 16.43, it seems, Augustine suddenly realizes how much time he has spent on the opening book of Bible. He then rushes through the rest of the history of Israel, from the deeds of Moses, through Joshua’s conquest and the period of the judges, until the age of the kings. These events cover what may be called the first three phases of human history.⁸⁹ The first spans Adam to Noah and resembles infancy (*infantia*): as our memory of those days falls into oblivion, so also was this first phase of humanity wiped out in the flood. The second phase is boyhood (*pueritia*), covering the time period from Noah to Abraham. This is when one learns to talk – e.g., in Hebrew. The third phase runs from Abraham to David, and is

⁸⁵ Ibid., 16.35, CCL 48:540.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 16.37, CCL 48:542.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 16.39, CCL 48:545.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 16.42.

⁸⁹ See also 16.24.

appropriately named adolescence (*adulescentia*), for the generations that begin with Abraham can be associated with procreation. During this phase – Augustine hurries – “the yoke of the Law was imposed, a multitude of sinners came on the scene, and the earthly kingdom entered its first stage. Yet at the same time there were not lacking spiritual men who were prophetically indicated by the symbol of the dove and the pigeon.”⁹⁰ The language here is very condensed, but Augustine seems to refer to the following incidents: Moses delivers the law; sins multiply; the Israelites enter Canaan.

The next major phase of Israel’s history is that of the prophets, treated in Book 17. This is the manhood (*iuventus*) of the people of God, and it begins properly speaking with Samuel. Augustine’s treatment of the prophets deepens the contrast between earthly Israel and the spiritual descendants of Abraham. On the one hand, the earthly promises were fulfilled in David and Solomon, since these kings ruled over the geographical area promised to Abraham, making other nations their tributaries. “Nothing further remained for the fulfilment of that promise which concerned worldly territory, except that the Hebrew people should continue in the same land in undisturbed stability, as far as temporal prosperity is concerned, through the successive ages of posterity right down to the end of this mortal age, provided that they obeyed the laws of the Lord their God.”⁹¹ On the other hand, the spiritual fulfilment of the prophecies still awaited the coming of Christ. Augustine sets forth a rule for interpretation that balances these concerns: “Now the divine oracles given to

⁹⁰ Ibid., 16.43, CCL 48:550. “... et impositum est legis iugum et apparuit abundantia peccatorum et regni terreni surrexit exordium, ubi non defuerunt spirituales, quorum in turture et columba figuratum est sacramentum.”

⁹¹ Ibid., 17.2, CCL 48:552. “... nihil deinde superesset, quo terrena illa Dei promissio compleretur, nisi ut in eadem terra, quantum ad prosperitatem adinet temporalem, per posteritatis successionem inconcusso statu usque ad mortalis huius saeculi terminum gens permaneret Hebraea, si Domini Dei sui legibus oboediret.”

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the other prophetic signs and words found in previous sacred writings, refer partly to the nation physically derived from Abraham, but partly to those descendents of his in whom all nations are blessed as co-heirs of Christ through the new covenant, so as to obtain possession of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven.”⁹² Some prophecies, however, refer to both: literally to earthly Jerusalem and figuratively to heavenly Jerusalem. The utterances of the prophets thus have a “threefold (*tripertita*) meaning.”⁹³

Augustine then adopts this interpretive rubric to narrate the development of Israel’s monarchy, focusing primarily on the transition from Saul to David, and from David to Solomon. Samuel’s legacy involves two major shifts: first, he himself replaces Eli as priest; and second, he anoints Saul as king, whom he then replaces with David. These two changes (priest and king) signify another one, when the Old Testament priesthood and monarchy would give way to the eternal priesthood and kingship of Christ.⁹⁴ In this regard, Hannah’s song proves deeply prophetic. She rejoices at the promised birth of Samuel, but her words extend far beyond the limits of her own thoughts. Indeed, Augustine says, she “there speaks, by the spirit of prophecy, the Christian religion itself, the City of God itself, whose king and

⁹² Ibid., 17.3, CCL 48:553. “Quocirca sicut oracula illa diuina ad Abraham Isaac et Iacob et quaecumque alia signa uel dicta prophetica in sacris litteris praecedentibus facta sunt, ita etiam ceterae ab isto regum tempore prophetiae partim pertinent ad gentem carnis Abrahae, partim uero ad illud semen eius, in quo benedicuntur omnes gentes coheredes Christi per testamentum nouum ad possidendam uitam aeternam regumque caelorum.”

⁹³ Ibid. “Tripertita itaque reperiuntur eloquia prophetarum, si quidem aliqua sunt ad terrenam Hierusalem spectantia, aliqua ad caelestem, nonnulla ad utramque.”

⁹⁴ The transition from Saul to David “was symbolic; it was an event which pointed prophetically to the future, and its significance must not be passed over in silence. It betokened the change which was to come in the future in respect of the two covenants, the old and the new, and the transformation of the priesthood and monarchy by the new and eternal priest-king, who was Christ Jesus” (... *dedit figuram, re gesta significans atque praenuntians, quod non est praetereundum silentio, de rerum mutatione futurarum, quod adinet ad duo testamenta, uetus et nouum, ubi sacerdotium regnumque mutatum est per sacerdotum eundemque regem nouum ac sempiternum, qui est Christus Iesus*; *ibid.*, 17.4, CCL 48:555).

founder is Christ; there speaks, in fact, the grace of God itself.”⁹⁵ Samuel’s appointment to the priesthood signifies the replacement of the old covenant, even if the short-term effect is only the replacement of one particular priest with another. “It is plain that the death of [Eli’s] sons did not signify the death of individuals, but the death of the priesthood itself in the line of Aaron.”⁹⁶ Indeed, Augustine says, subsequent history has only confirmed this prophecy. “No one who looks at these prophecies with the eye of faith could fail to see that they have been fulfilled. For now, to be sure, no tabernacle has been left to the Jews, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice and, it follows, no priesthood.”⁹⁷ This development, Augustine says, was part of God’s plan from the beginning.

The priesthood of Aaron’s line was itself set up as a kind of shadow (*umbram*) of the eternal priesthood that was to be. It follows that when eternity was promised to it, it was not promised for the shadow, the prefigurement (*non ipsi umbrae ac figurae*), but for what was foreshadowed and prefigured (*adumbrabatur figurabaturque*) by it. We were not intended to suppose that the shadow (*umbra*) itself was to continue and for that reason its supersession (*mutatio*) had to be foretold.⁹⁸

On Augustine’s account, Saul shares the same fate as Eli. This king was “rejected and cast aside (*reprobatus atque reiectus est*),” “a shadow (*umbra*) of the future kingdom which was to

⁹⁵ Ibid., 17.4, CCL 48:556. “... ipsam religionem Christianam, ipsam ciuitatem Dei, cuius rex est et conditor Christus, ipsam postremo Dei gratiam prophetico spiritu sic locutam ...”

⁹⁶ Ibid., 17.5, CCL 48:564. “Mors quippe filiorum huius significauit mortem non hominum, sed ipsius sacerdotii de filiis Aaron.”

⁹⁷ Ibid., 17.5, CCL 48:563. “Quis autem nunc fidei oculo haec intuens non uideat esse completa? Quando quidem nullum tabernaculum, nullum templum, nullum altare, nullum sacrificium et ideo nec ullus sacerdos remansit Iudaeis, quibus, ut de semine Aaron ordinaretur, in Dei fuerat lege mandatum.”

⁹⁸ Ibid., 17.6, CCL 48:566. “... ipsum secundum ordinem Aaron sacerdotium tamquam umbram futuri aeterni sacerdotii constitutum; ac per hoc, quando aeternitas ei promissa est, non ipsi umbrae ac figurae, sed ei, quod per ipsam adumbrabatur figurabaturque, promissum est. Sed ne putaretur ipsa umbra esse mansura, ideo etiam mutatio eius debuit prophetari.”

continue for ever.”⁹⁹ Samuel prophecies to Saul, “The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel, out of your hand.”¹⁰⁰ Augustine explains, “The man Saul figuratively personified Israel, the people which was to lose its kingdom when Christ Jesus our Lord should take the kingship under the new covenant, a spiritual instead of a physical kingship.”¹⁰¹

Augustine also draws attention to Samuel’s prophecy that “Israel will be divided into two.”¹⁰² These words, Augustine says, must mean that the nation will be divided into “Israel the enemy of Christ (*inimicum Christo*), and Israel which attaches itself to Christ (*adhaerentem Christo*) –Israel of the maidservant, and Israel of the free woman.”¹⁰³ In the short term, there would soon arise an earthly division within Israel between the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. But, Augustine says, a deeper significance is also intended, the immutability of which God underscores by his oath not to go back on his word or change his mind.

We see that by these words an utterly irrevocable sentence (*insolubilem ... sententiam*) was divinely proclaimed concerning this division of the people of Israel, a sentence absolutely perpetual (*omnino perpetuam*). For all those who have passed over (*transierunt*) from that people to Christ, or who are now passing over (*transeunt*), or who will pass over (*transibunt*), were not of that people according to God’s foreknowledge, nor by reason of the one common nature of the human race. Moreover, all those of the Israelites who attach

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 17.7, CCL 48:568. “Disrupit Dominus regnum ab Israel de manu tua.” Augustine prefers the Greek to the Latin on this verse. The Latin reads, “Disrupit Dominus regnum Israel de manu tua” (“The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel out of your hand”) while the Greek says, “The Lord has torn the kingdom from Israel, out of your hand.” On the Latin reading, Israel retains the kingdom, even if Saul will not be king. Augustine rather argues that God has taken the kingdom away from Israel herself.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 17.7, CCL 48:568. “Populi ergo Israel personam figurate gerebat homo iste, qui populus regnum fuerat amissurus, Christo Iesu Domino nostro per nouum testamentum non carnaliter, sed spiritaliter regnatura.”

¹⁰² This quotation would otherwise appear at 1 Sam. 15:28, but according to Bettenson, is found in neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint. Bettenson, *City of God*, 731n63.

¹⁰³ *Civ. Dei* 17.7, CCL 48:568. “... in Israel scilicet inimicum Christo et Israel adhaerentem Christo; in Israel ad ancillam et Israel ad liberam pertinentem.”

themselves to Christ and continue steadfastly in his fellowship will never be associated with those Israelites who persist in their hostility to him to the end of this life; in fact, they will continue for ever in that state of separation (*in diuisione ... perpetuo permanebunt*) which is prophesied here. For the old covenant from Mount Sinai which ‘has children destined for slavery’ is of no value (*nihil prodest*) except in so far as it bears witness to the new covenant.¹⁰⁴

Given this division, Augustine says, the prophecies to David ought not be understood in an earthly manner.¹⁰⁵ Yes, David’s son will build God a house and rule forever, but this refers ultimately to Christ’s establishing a church made of people, not to Solomon’s construction efforts. Given Solomon’s penchant for foreign women and subsequent degradation into idolatry, no other interpretive option is available. Solomon’s kingdom would end in physical disaster: the destruction of earthly Jerusalem and the temple he built.¹⁰⁶ Yet on Augustine account, these events do not contradict God’s promise. For God’s true anointed was not Solomon, but Jesus, and there did reign in Jerusalem “some sons of the free woman, holding that kingdom on a temporary lease (*in dispensatione temporaria*), while possessing, by true faith, the kingdom of the Heavenly Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 17.7, CCL 48:569. “Prorsus insolubilem uidemus per haec uerba prolatam diuinitus fuisse sententiam de ista diuisione populi Israel et omnino perpetuam. Quicumque enim ad Christum transierunt uel transeunt uel transibunt inde, non erant inde secundum Dei praescientiam, non secundum generis humani unam eandemque naturam. Prorsus quicumque ex Israelitis adhaerentes Christo perseuerant in illo, numquam erunt cum eis Israelitis, qui eius inimici usque in finem uitae huius esse persistunt; sed in diuisione, quae hic praenuntiata est, perpetuo permanebunt. Nihil enim prodest testamentum uetus de monte Sina in seruitutem generans, nisi quia testimonium perhibet testamento nouo.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 17.8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 17.10.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 17.10, CCL 48:574. “Haec omnia uenerunt super ancillam Hierusalem, in qua regnauerunt nonnulli etiam filii liberae, regnum illud tenentes in dispensatione temporaria, regnum autem caelestis Hierusalem.”

Augustine proceeds through the prophecies of David and Solomon,¹⁰⁸ where he finds many of the same themes reiterated, though with a bit more emphasis on the salvation of the Gentiles. “[The people of the Gentiles], I say, added to those who are true Israelites both by descent and by faith, constitute the City of God, the City which also gave birth to Christ himself in the flesh, when it consisted solely of those Israelites.”¹⁰⁹ Few kings prophesy after Solomon, and the remaining kings – Augustine rushes again – by and large preside over a nation in decline. The kingdom is divided into Israel and Judah, idolatry runs rampant, and the Assyrians and Chaldeans eventually destroy the nation. After seventy years of peaceful captivity, the Jews are allowed to return to their land and restore the temple. They subsist for some time as an undivided nation and enjoy a brief spurt of prophecy under Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah. But after the time of Ezra, there are no prophets until the time of Jesus, when Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, and John the Baptist announce the long-awaited Savior. Note that Augustine categorizes these figures, recorded in the gospels, together with the prophets of the Old Testament, consistent with his position that the old covenant extends to the time of John the Baptist. Though both groups set forth Christ, the Jews accept the earlier prophets and not those who immediately precede Christ. For by the time of Jesus, Augustine explains, “Israel was truly divided into two parts, by that division

¹⁰⁸ Augustine focuses on the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiasticus, and Wisdom of Solomon. In the latter half of Book 18, Augustine resumes his treatment of the prophets from the time of Isaiah.

¹⁰⁹ *Civ. Dei* 17.16, CCL 48:582. “Iste, inquam, populus additus ueris et carne et fide Israelitis ciuitas est Dei, quae ipsum quoque secundum carnem peperit Christum, quando in solis illis Israelitis fuit.”

which was fore-announced to King Saul through Samuel the prophet, as an unalterable division (*diuisio ... inmutabilis*).”¹¹⁰

Having run out of space in Book 17, Augustine completes his narrative of Israel’s history in the latter part of Book 18. Jesus is born during the time of Caesar Augustus, when Herod is on the throne of Judea. Though outwardly human, Jesus is in hidden reality God, and he performs many miracles, including his incarnation, resurrection, and ascension. The Jews, though, kill Jesus and refuse to believe that he must die and rise again. Then Jerusalem is destroyed and they are scattered.¹¹¹ Augustine writes, “They were dispersed all over the world – for indeed there is no part of the earth where they are not to be found – and thus by the evidence of their own Scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ.”¹¹² Some, in studying their own Scriptures, came to believe in Christ; most, however, did not.

This last quotation presents Augustine’s witness doctrine, an issue I consider in greater depth later this chapter: Jews today are like blind librarians, preserving books that bring credibility to the Christian message while failing to recognize the meaning of their own Scriptures. “For we recognize that it is in order to give this testimony, which, in spite of themselves, they supply for our benefit by their possession and preservation of those books, that they themselves are dispersed among all nations, in whatever direction the Christian

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 17.24, CCL 48:592. “Tunc enim uere Israel diuisus est in duo diuisione illa, quae per Samuelem prophetam Sauli regi est inmutabilis praenuntiata.”

¹¹¹ Ibid., 18.46. See 16.37.

¹¹² Ibid., 18.46, CCL 48:644. “... dispersique per terras (quando quidem ubique non desunt) per scripturas suas testimonio nobis sunt prophetias nos non finxisse de Christo.”

Church spreads.”¹¹³ It is for sake of the church that God continues to protect the nation of Israel, a point Augustine finds in Ps. 59:11: “Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law; scatter them by your might.”¹¹⁴

And this is the reason for his forbearing to slay them – that is for not putting an end to their existence as Jews, although they have been conquered and oppressed by the Romans; it is for fear that they should forget the Law of God and thus fail to bear convincing witness on the point I am now dealing with ... For if they lived with that testimony of the Scriptures only in their own land, and not everywhere, the obvious result would be that the Church, which is everywhere, would not have them available among all nations as witnesses to the prophecies which were given beforehand concerning Christ.¹¹⁵

Augustine concludes his narrative with the final salvation of Israel. It seems to me that Augustine clearly teaches that national Israel will experience some kind of significant conversion at the end of times and believe in Jesus. This is, however, a matter of some scholarly controversy,¹¹⁶ so it is worth quoting some neglected, but striking passages at length. The first comes in Book 18, where Augustine expositis Hosea:

Again, the same prophet testifies that the Israelites by physical descent (*istos autem carnaliter Israelitas*) who now refuse to believe in Christ will afterwards believe; that is, their sons will believe – for to be sure, those unbelievers will “go to their own place” [cf. Ac. 1:25] when they die. He proclaims this when he says, “Because the sons of Israel will dwell for many days without king, without leader, without

¹¹³ Ibid. “... quos agnoscimus propter hoc testimonium, quod nobis inuiti perhibent eosdem codices habendo atque seruando, per omnes gentes etiam ipsos esse dispersos, quaqua uersum Christi ecclesia dilatatur.”

¹¹⁴ “...ne occideris eos, ne quando obliuiscantur legem tuam; disperge eos in uirtute tua.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 18.46, CCL 48:644-45. “Et ideo non eos occidit, id est non in eis perdidit quod sunt Iudaei, quamuis a Romanis fuerint deuicti et oppressi, ne obliuiscantur legem Dei ad hoc, de quo agimus, testimonium nihil ualerent ... Quoniam si cum isto testimonio scripturarum in sua tantummodo terra, non ubique essent, profecto ecclesia, quae ubique est, eos prophetiarum, quae de Christo praemissae sunt, testes in omnibus gentibus habere non posset.”

¹¹⁶ See Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 328, 422-23n17; Cohen, “The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation,” 275-76.

sacrifice, without altar, without priest, without the outward ceremonies of their religion” [Hos. 3:4]. Who could fail to see that the Jews are now in this state? But let us listen to what he adds: “And later the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and they will be astonished before the Lord and his goodness in the last days” [Hos. 3:5]. Nothing could be plainer than this prophecy, since the name of King David is interpreted as signifying Christ for, as the Apostle says, “He came of the line of David by physical descent” [Rom. 1:3].¹¹⁷

Augustine provides even clearer remarks in Book 20, which treats the series of events that will constitute the end times. Here Augustine draws upon a different prophet:

Malachi thus admonishes his people to remember the Law of Moses, for he foresaw that for a long time yet they would not interpret it spiritually (*spiritaliter*), as they ought to have done; and he continues, “See, I shall send you Elijah the Tishbite, before the great and splendid Day of the Lord; and he will turn the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a man to his neighbour, so that in my coming I may not utterly shake the earth” [Mal. 4:5-6]. The belief that in the final period before the judgement this great and wonderful prophet Elijah will expound the Law to the Jews, and that through his activity the Jews are destined to believe in our Christ (*in Christum verum, id est in Christum nostrum, esse credituros*), this is a very frequent subject in the conversation of believers, and a frequent thought in their hearts.¹¹⁸

When [Elijah] comes, he will explain in a spiritual sense (*spiritaliter*) the Law which the Jews now take in a material sense (*carnaliter*), and by so doing he will “turn the heart of the father toward the son,” that

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 18.28, CCL 48:618-19. “Istos autem carnaliter Israelitas, qui nunc nolunt credere in Christum, postea credituros, id est filios eorum (nam utique isti in suum locum moriendo transibunt), idem propheta testatur dicens: Quoniam diebus multis sedebunt filii Israel sine rege, sine principe, sine sacrificio, sine altari, sine sacerdotio, sine manifestationibus. Quis non uideat nunc sic esse Iudaeos? Sed quid adiungat, audiamus. Et postea, inquit, reuertentur filii Israel et inquirent Dominum Deum suum et Dauid regem suum, et stupebunt in Domino et in bonis ipsius in nouissimis diebus. Nihil est ista prophetia manifestius, cum Dauid regis nomine significatus intellegitur Christus, quia factus est, sicut dicit apostolus, ex semine Dauid secundum carnem.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20.29, CCL 48:752. “Cum autem admonisset, ut meminissent legis Moysi (quoniam praeuidebat eos multo adhuc tempore non eam spiritualiter, sicut oportuerat, accepturos), continuo subiecit: <Et> ecce ego mittam uobis Helian Thesbiten, antequam ueniat dies Domini magnus et inlustris, qui conuertet cor patris ad filium et cor hominis ad proximum suum, ne forte ueniens percutiam terram penitus. Per hunc Heliam magnum mirabilemque prophetam exposita sibi lege ultimo tempore ante iudicium Iudaeos in Christum uerum, id est in Christum nostrum, esse credituros, celeberrimum est in sermonibus cordibusque fidelium.”

is, the hearts of the fathers towards the children – for the seventy translators have used the singular for the plural. The meaning, then, is that the sons, that is, the Jews, will interpret the Law as their fathers – that is, the prophets, including Moses himself – interpreted it. For it is thus that the heart of the fathers will be turned towards the children when the understanding of the fathers is brought to the understanding of the children. And “the hearts of the children will be turned to the fathers” when children share the views of their fathers
...¹¹⁹

However, another and a more attractive meaning can be found in the words of the seventy translators, who translated in the manner of prophets. The meaning is that Elijah is to turn the heart of God the Father towards the Son, not, of course, by causing the Father to love the Son, but by teaching men that the Father loves the Son, so that the Jews also, who first hated the Son, will love this same Son, who is our Christ. For now, in the thought of the Jews, God keeps his heart turned away from our Christ, for that is what they suppose. And so in their thought God’s heart will be turned towards the Son when they themselves have their hearts turned by conversion (*converso corde*), and have learnt of the love of the Father for the Son. The next words, “and the heart of a man to his neighbour” – that is, Elijah will also turn the heart of a man to his neighbour – are surely best understood as meaning the turning of a man’s heart to the man Christ. For though Christ is our God “in the form of God,” he condescended to take “the form of a servant” and so to become our neighbor. This then, is what Elijah will achieve “so that, in my coming, I may not utterly shake the earth.” For “the earth” stands for those whose wisdom is earthly (*qui terrena sapiunt*), as to this day is the wisdom of the Jews, who are Jews only in the racial sense (*sicut Iudaei carnales usque nunc*).¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 20.29, CCL 48:752-53. Cum uenerit ergo, exponendo legem spiritaliter; quam nunc Iudaei carnaliter sapiunt, conuertet cor patris ad filium, id est cor patrum ad filios; singularem quippe pro numero plurali interpretes septuaginta posuerunt; et est sensus, ut etiam filii sic intellegant legem, id est Iudaei, quem ad modum eam patres intellexerunt, id est prophetae, in quibus erat et ipse Moyses; sic enim cor patrum conuertetur ad filios, cum intellegentia patrum perducetur ad intellegentiam filiorum; et cor filiorum ad patres eorum, dum in id, quod senserunt illi, consentiunt et isti ...

¹²⁰ Ibid., 20.29, CCL 48:753. “Quamquam in uerbis septuaginta interpretum, qui propheticæ interpretati sunt, potest alius sensus idemque lectioni inueniri, ut intellegatur Helias cor Dei Patris conuersurus ad Filium; non utique agendo ut Pater diligat Filium, sed docendo quod Pater diligat Filium; ut et Iudaei, quem prius oderant, diligant eundem, qui noster est, Christum. Iudaeis enim nunc auersum cor habet Deus a Christo nostro, quia hoc putant. Eis ergo tunc cor eius conuertetur ad Filium, cum ipsi conuerso corde didicerint dilectionem Patris in Filium. Quod uero sequitur: Et cor hominis ad proximum suum, id est, conuertet Helias et cor hominis ad proximum suum: quid melius intellegitur quam cor hominis ad hominem Christum? Cum enim sit in forma Dei

Later, Augustine provides more detail on the nature of this conversion. Commenting on Zech. 12:9-10, Augustine writes:

For on that day even the Jews will certainly repent, even those Jews who are to receive “the spirit of grace and mercy.” They will repent that they gloated over Christ in his suffering, when they look at him as he comes in his majesty, and recognize him as the one who formerly came in humility, whom they mocked at in the persons of their parents; however, those parents themselves, who committed that great impiety, will rise again and see him, but now for their punishment, no longer for their correction. And so it is not the parents who are to be taken as meant in the passage ... [Augustine quotes Hos. 12:10]; it is, nevertheless, those who come from their stock that are meant, those who are to believe at that time through the work of Elijah. But just as we say to the Jews, “You put Christ to death,” although it was their parents who did this, so they will grieve for having in a sense done themselves what was actually done by those from whose stock they have descended. Thus, although they have received the spirit of grace and mercy and, being now members of the faith, will not be condemned along with their impious parents, they will nevertheless grieve as if they themselves have done what was done by their parents. They will grieve, therefore, not because they feel guilty of this crime, but because they feel the emotions of true religion.¹²¹

Deus noster, formam serui accipiens esse dignatus est etiam proximus noster. Hoc ergo faciet Helias. Ne forte, inquit, ueniam et percutiam terram penitus. Terra sunt enim, qui terrena sapiunt, sicut Iudaei carnales usque nunc.”

¹²¹ Ibid., 20.30, CCL 48:755-76. “Paenitebit quippe Iudaeos in die illa etiam eos, qui accepturi sunt spiritum gratiae et misericordiae, quod in eius passione insultauerint Christo, cum ad eum aspexerint in sua maiestate uenientem eumque esse cognouerint, quem prius humilem in suis parentibus inluserunt; quamuis et ipsi parentes eorum tantae illius impietatis auctores resurgentes uidebunt eum, sed puniendi iam, non adhuc corrigendi. Non itaque hoc loco ipsi intellegendi sunt, ubi dictum est: Et effundam super domum Dauid et super habitatores Hierusalem spiritum gratiae et misericordiae; et aspicient ad me pro eo quod insultauerunt; sed tamen de illorum stirpe uenientes, qui per Heliam illo tempore credituri sunt. Sed sicut dicimus Iudaeis: « Vos occidistis christum », quamuis hoc parentes eorum fecerint: sic et isti se dolebunt fecisse quodam modo, quod fecerunt illi, ex quorum stirpe descendunt. Quamuis ergo accepto spiritu gratiae et misericordiae iam fideles non damnabuntur cum impiis parentibus suis, dolebunt tamen tamquam ipsi fecerint, quod ab illis factum est. Non igitur dolebunt reatu criminis, sed pietatis affectu.”

One last example should suffice, this time from Augustine's concluding summary of Book 20.

In [the last judgement], or in connection with that judgement, we have learnt that those events are to come about: Elijah the Tishbite will come; Jews will accept the faith; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise again; the good and the evil will be separated; the earth will be destroyed in the flames and then will be renewed. All those events, we must believe, will come about; but in what way, and in what order they will come, actual experience will then teach us with a finality surpassing anything our human understanding is now capable of attaining. However, I consider that these events are destined to come about in the order I have given.¹²²

These lengthy quotations should leave little doubt that, at least in *City of God*, Augustine does reserve conceptual space for some final conversion of national Israel to faith in Christ. He does not teach that each and every individual Jew will be saved; quite the opposite, Augustine affirms a distinction between those Jews who killed Jesus and those who will be converted at the end of time. It should also be acknowledged that Augustine does at other places define the salvation of "all Israel" in terms of the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.¹²³ Nevertheless, Augustine does not finally eviscerate all distinctive, national Jewish identity by redefining "true Israel" as the church. His reading of the prophets animates his position that the end times will be characterized in part by a significant conversion of ethnic Jews to belief in Christ. While Augustine does not claim special knowledge of the manner and sequence of events by which this conversion will take place,

¹²² Ibid., 20.30, CCL 48:757-58. "In illo itaque iudicio uel circa illud iudicium has res didicimus esse uenturas, Helian Thesbitem, fidem Iudaeorum, Antichristum persecuturum, Christum iudicaturum, mortuorum resurrectionem, bonorum malorumque diremptionem, mundi conflagrationem eiusdemque renouationem. Quae omnia quidem uentura esse credendum est; sed quibus modis et quo ordine ueniant, magis tunc docebit rerum experientia, quam nunc ad perfectum hominum intellegentia ualet consequi. Existimo tamen eo quo a me commemorata sunt ordine esse uentura."

¹²³ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 328, citing Augustine's treatment of Rom. 11:25 in *ep.* 149.2.19.

he does define this occurrence as one of the central tenets that all Christians must believe about the last things. In that sense, Augustine's sign-referent framework for construing the relation between Israel and church is not completely supersessionist. Though he does distinguish within national Israel between those who are and are not members of the heavenly city, and he does assume that Jews will only receive salvation through belief in Christ, he nevertheless insists that God will remember national Israel at the end of times.¹²⁴

3.1.3 Excursus: Augustine, defender of the Jews?

Augustine's position on Jews and Judaism has become a topic of vibrant scholarly interest, especially in the recent contributions of Paula Fredriksen and Jeremy Cohen.¹²⁵ Despite certain points of difference, these two scholars present overlapping and complementary proposals that depict Augustine's theology of Judaism as significantly more positive than has often been recognized. Fredriksen argues that Augustine's writings on Judaism present a dramatic shift away from early Christian anti-Jewish polemic, while Cohen finds in Augustine's doctrine the basis for a medieval policy of Jewish toleration, most prominently exemplified in Bernard of Clairvaux's warning in the Second Crusade against the eradication of the Jews. Both scholars have called particular attention to the Jewish witness doctrine, mentioned above, whereby Augustine defends the ongoing existence of the Jews on the basis of Ps. 59:11: "Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law;

¹²⁴ Fredriksen's treatment of this issue fails to grasp some of these nuances (422-23n17). While she is right that Augustine does not assert the salvation of all Jews, this does not mean he denies some sort of significant conversion at the end of times for ethnic or national, and not just "spiritual" or "true" Israel. It seems indisputable to me that the passages I have cited from *civ. Dei* 18.28, 20.29, and 20.30 (2x; Fredriksen herself cites the first) indicate that God has reserved for national Israel a particular blessing (defined as conversion to Christ) in the final things.

¹²⁵ See references above.

scatter them by your might.” Given the interest this topic has generated especially with the 2008 publication of Fredriksen’s *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, it is appropriate to consider in greater depth the congruence of the positions advanced therein with Augustine’s theology of Israel as I have presented it.

Fredriksen locates Augustine’s treatment of Judaism against the backdrop of the early Christian *adversus Iudaeos* tradition, especially in the writings of Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and Tertullian. In his treatise against Marcion, for instance, Tertullian redirects Marcion’s arguments against Jewish texts and the Jewish God toward the Jewish people instead.¹²⁶ Marcion was right, Tertullian says, that the law given Israel was harsh and punitive, but it was a necessary means for chastening a recalcitrant people. The law has no intrinsic significance for Christians, as can be seen in Jesus’ explicit repudiation of Jewish practices like Sabbath. That the Jews have continued in their fleshly observances even after the resurrection of Christ, the punitive destruction of the temple, and their dispersion from Jerusalem is for Tertullian only further confirmation of the stubborn, incorrigible character of the Jewish people.

Centuries later, this stream of attack animates the arguments of Faustus, who criticizes the Catholics for inconsistently retaining the Old Testament instead of rejecting it altogether. On Fredriksen’s account, Augustine does not adopt Tertullian’s line of argument, responding rather that the law was good and that the Jews were right to practice it according to the flesh during Old Testament times. Circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws were not punishments for sin nor special measures designed for a particularly recalcitrant people, but

¹²⁶ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 223-31.

God-given signs that prefigured Christ and the church. Against, for instance, Justin's position that the sacrificial system was God's means of preserving the Jews from idolatry after the Golden Calf incident, Augustine argues that blood sacrifices served the more positive purpose of presenting typologically the flesh and blood sacrifice of the incarnate Son. According to Fredriksen, this kind of "simple assertion was revolutionary. It stood centuries of traditional anti-Jewish polemic, both orthodox and heterodox, on its head."¹²⁷ While the *adversus Iudaeos* writers considered the literal adherence of the Jews to ancestral practices a failure to understand the law spiritually, Augustine argued that the Jews "had just done what God had commanded them to do."¹²⁸

Fredriksen lays great stress on two particular interpretive moves that fund Augustine's witness doctrine: the mark of Cain as considered in *Against Faustus*,¹²⁹ and Augustine's subsequent treatments of Ps. 59. Concerning the former, Augustine presents Cain as an image of the current Jews, who bemoan the loss of their kingdom and fear they will also face death at the hands of the Christians. For both Cain and the Jews, Augustine says, this fixation on physical death reflects a carnal mind unconcerned with the far more serious concern of spiritual death. Yet when Cain complains that his punishment is too much to bear, God graciously puts a mark upon him, such that anyone who kills Cain will suffer seven punishments. "Thus, the Jewish people will never perish, for the whole length of the seven days of time."¹³⁰ On Augustine's reading, the mark of Cain signifies the ongoing

¹²⁷ Ibid., 244.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ *C. Faust.* 12.11-13.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 12.12. I quote Fredriksen's translation (271).

observation of the law wherever the Jews have been scattered. Augustine considers this fidelity to the ancestral practices a marvel, and observes that no emperor or king with Jews in his realm “kills them.” That is, no monarch “*forces them to cease being Jews*, marked by the sign of their own religious observances, and by those same observances set apart from the rest of the community of nations.”¹³¹ For Augustine, Fredriksen says,

the Jews’ abiding allegiance to their scriptures and customs ... is by heaven’s decree their divine safeguard. Their ancestral practices themselves constitute the mark of Cain whereby God signals to the rest of humanity his continuing connection to and protection of the Jewish religion and thus his continuing desire that the Jews always exist as a people. Any monarch who might try to force Jews to stop living as Jews, he asserts, in effect strives against God, who is doubly the source of their practices: the first time by giving them the Law through Moses at Sinai, the second time by “sealing” them in their ancient observance of the Law at the time of their exile in 70 C.E. In other words, according to Augustine, the Jews are in a completely different category from pagans (the source of whose religion is demons) and from heretics (the source of whose error is their own pride). Jewish law together with the *catholica* share the same source, namely, God himself ... Jews and catholics, he insists, stand together in one religious community, over and against all others.¹³²

The second interpretive move is that which we considered above in *City of God*, but which also appears at other points in Augustine’s corpus, including his two sermons on Ps. 59 and a letter to Paulinus. As Augustine reads it, this passage presents many of the same ideas as God’s interaction with Cain. In both cases, the Jews experience the punishment and protection of God as they are scattered through the world, but retain the law and its observances for the benefit of the church. In his first exposition on the psalm, Augustine mentions the mark of Cain and reiterates the same definition we have already seen for what

¹³¹ *C. Faust.* 12.13, italics Fredriksen’s (271-72).

¹³² Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 275.

it means for the Jews to be killed: not physical death, but forgetting the law.¹³³ Augustine's letter to Paulinus follows a similar pattern: after associating the "scatter" language with the defeat of the Jews in 70 C.E.,¹³⁴ Augustine interprets Ps. 59:11 again with reference to Cain as a prediction that the conquered Jews would nevertheless retain their law as a testimony for the church.¹³⁵ Two (presumably) later sermons, *Faith in Things Unseen*¹³⁶ and *Sermon against the Jews*,¹³⁷ also cite Ps. 59:11 to similar effect, though now, as with *City of God*, Cain receives no mention.

Fredriksen links Cain's absence in these later discussions with Augustine's developing thoughts on the Christian life as a pilgrimage. One of the most prominent images in *City of God* for the church's life on earth is that of the sojourn, and Augustine cannot cast Cain as an exile without muddying his metaphor. Cain also provides Augustine a poetic way for depicting the contrast between the earthly and heavenly cities: while the City of God is on pilgrimage on earth, awaiting her heavenly hope, carnal Cain is the first person to build a city, and his murderous jealousy furnishes a suggestive picture for the founding of Rome. As such, Ps. 59:11, and not Gen. 4:15, becomes the exegetical hook for Augustine's reflections on the ongoing existence of the Jews as Jews, and will subsequently provide the basis for medieval policies of toleration for the Jews.¹³⁸

¹³³ *En. Ps.* 58.1.21.

¹³⁴ *Ep.* 149.1.3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.1.9.

¹³⁶ *F. invis.* 6.9.

¹³⁷ *Adv. Jud.* 7.9.

¹³⁸ For a summary of Fredriksen's argument concerning Augustine's positive valuation of Judaism and the Jews, see *Augustine and the Jews*, 316-19.

Throughout her discussion, Fredriksen is keen to distinguish between actual Jews and rhetorical, or hermeneutical Jews.¹³⁹ There is little evidence concerning Augustine's interaction with the Jews living in Roman North Africa,¹⁴⁰ and Augustine's remarks on the Jews reflect more his interpretation of the Old Testament, or other theological concerns, than personal contact with Jewish human beings.¹⁴¹ Fredriksen does, however, highlight two actual incidents that suggest Augustine's positive posture toward the Jews. First, in the only letter that records Augustine's direct interaction with a Jew,¹⁴² Augustine sides with Licinius, a local landowner, over a Christian bishop in a legal dispute. Second, Augustine's non-advocacy of the forced coercion of Jews in Minorca differs significantly from his enthusiastic support for state action against pagan religion, and the use of force against the Donatists.¹⁴³ According to Fredriksen, these incidents indicate that Augustine considered the Jews "a theologically unique community vis-à-vis pagans and heretics" and that this "theological significance translated for Augustine into social significance as well."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ This is also a central theme in Cohen's work (see publications cited above). Harkins seeks to qualify this claim in his "Nuancing Augustine's Hermeneutical Jew: Allegory and Actual Jews in the Bishop's Sermons," cited above.

¹⁴⁰ For a survey of Augustine's remarks about actual Jews, see Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 307-14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 260-62. Cf. *ibid.*, 226-31.

¹⁴² *Ep.* 8*, treated in Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 312-24.

¹⁴³ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 357-63.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 363. While I have not yet been able to research this issue thoroughly, I must register here an initial complaint about Fredriksen's effort to draw upon Augustine's (non-)reaction to the incident at Minorca as a point of contrast with his position on the Donatists. A careful reading of these pages and the sources she cites suggests a rather troubling argument from silence. Fredriksen first details the bishop Severus' coercion of the Jews at Minorca, and then draws attention to a letter Consentius wrote Augustine about the incident. Given Augustine's support for the coercion of the Donatists, Fredriksen reasons, his non-advocacy of this policy for Jews is remarkable. "In contrast to what he *does* say in favor of repressing 'false religion' and of disciplining 'false' Christians, we have what he *does not* say to or about those Catholics who would coerce Jews. He never praises Consentius. He never praises Severus" (italics hers). True enough: but to my knowledge, we have no evidence that Augustine responded to Consentius' letter at all (Fredriksen does not mention any, and my search

Fredriksen's volume is attractively written, and she does helpfully highlight important structures in Augustine's thought whereby he distinguishes himself from earlier *adversus Iudaeos* traditions and provides a positive account for the ongoing existence of the Jews *qua* Jews. Indeed, the Jewish witness doctrine does appear repeatedly throughout his thought, with regular reference to the mark of Cain and Ps. 59:11. I agree that the Jews constitute for Augustine a distinct category from the pagans. Nevertheless, I depart from Fredriksen's basic depiction of Augustine's theology as "a Christian defense of Jews and Judaism" (the subtitle of her book). Many of the problems with this view can be found in evidence she herself cites. Fredriksen acknowledges, for instance, that in his homilies on John, Augustine "takes this gospel's hostile representation of the Jews and ... usually makes it worse. One scholar, analyzing this material in a recent close study, has noted that 60 of the 124 sermons contain 'appreciably anti-Jewish material, and between fifteen and seventeen are extensively or completely taken up with it.'"¹⁴⁵ Fredriksen also notes Augustine's appropriation of standard *adversus Iudaeos* invectives: the sacrifices were designed to keep a fleshly, stonehearted people from idolatry; the scattering of the Jews is punishment for their role in

thus far has come up empty). Indeed, Consentius does not even request Augustine's opinion about the incident – he mentions it only in passing (*ep.* 12*.13) in the sole citation Fredriksen provides for Augustine's knowledge about the incident (*Augustine and the Jews*, 427-28n9). Beyond these problems, it is far from clear that Augustine's position on the Jews can legitimately be set against his policies on the Donatists in the first place. The Donatist controversy was for decades the most pressing issue of Augustine's bishopric; we have only one letter proving Augustine ever interacted with an actual Jew, and it says next to nothing about his attitude toward this person's Judaism. Fredriksen has constructed an argument from thin air.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 305. The study Fredriksen cites is David P. Efroymson, "Whose Jews? Augustine's *Tractatus* on John," in *A Multifform Heritage: Studies On Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Robert A. Kraft*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright, Homage Series 24 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999): 197-211. The quotation is from p. 198.

Jesus' death.¹⁴⁶ Such attacks can even be found in *Against Faustus*, the very place where Fredriksen locates the crystallization of Augustine's mature (read: positive) position on the Jews.¹⁴⁷ Here, too, Augustine condemns the "rage and hostility" of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries, suggesting God required fleshly sacrifices because they were appropriate for a "fleshly," "perverse" people.¹⁴⁸ "It is as if," Fredriksen says, "when Augustine is not consciously developing his own argument, Faustus' stock questions and criticisms ... elicit from him stock *adversus Iudaeos* rejoinders."¹⁴⁹

Fredriksen's concession is, unfortunately, overly sanguine. Augustine's invective is not an afterthought, for instance, in his sermon against the Jews, but the whole point of its second half. On Augustine's account, the Jews arrogantly presume they are the ones addressed in the words of the prophets to "Israel," proving by their failure to distinguish between natural and spiritual Israel just how natural they are.¹⁵⁰ The suggestion that Ps. 59:11 refers to Jewish witness presupposes that the Jews are in fact God's "enemies (*ejus inimicos*)"¹⁵¹ – those who fail to recognize the point of their own law, whether because of

¹⁴⁶ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 305-6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 350.

¹⁴⁸ Quotations from *c. Faust.* 22.36, 22.21, and 18.6, respectively, as cited in Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 262.

¹⁴⁹ Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 262.

¹⁵⁰ *Adv. Jud.* 7.9, PL 42:57. "Sed hoc Judaei cum audiunt, erecta cervice respondent: Nos sumus; de nobis hoc dictum est, nobis hoc dictum est. Nos enim sumus Israel populus Dei: nos in verbis dicentis agnoscimus, Audi, populus meus, et loquar tibi, Israel, et testificabor tibi. Quid sumus ad ista dicturi? Novimus quidem Israel spiritualem, de quo dicit Apostolus: Et quicumque hanc regulam sequuntur, pax super illos et misericordia, et super Israel Dei (Galat. vi, 16); istum autem Israel scimus esse carnalem, de quo idem dicit: Videte Israel secundum carnem (1 Cor. x, 18). Sed ista isti non capiunt, et eo se ipsos carnales esse convincunt."

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* "Nonne vos ad ejus inimicos potius pertinetis, qui dicit in psalmo: Deus meus demonstravit mihi in inimicis meis, ne occideris eos, ne quando obliviscantur legis tuae: disperse illos in virtute tua (psal. lvi, 12)?"

blindness or impudence.¹⁵² “You are so blind,” Augustine charges, “that you say what you are not, and do not recognize yourselves for what you really are.”¹⁵³ Augustine repeatedly accuses the Jews of killing Christ,¹⁵⁴ attributing to this crime the loss of their temple and altar.¹⁵⁵ Isaiah’s remark that God has “cast off (*dimisit*) his people”¹⁵⁶ becomes for Augustine a refrain for the current condition of physical Israel, such that her only hope now to be restored to God is conversion. The sermon thus concludes with an invitation for the Jews not to be cast off,¹⁵⁷ but to turn to Christ, the light of the Gentiles, for enlightenment.¹⁵⁸ Augustine’s remarks are not pleasant, but they cannot be ignored.

The central plank of Fredriksen’s argument, Augustine’s treatment of the mark of Cain, in fact betrays her point. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how association with the world’s first murderer and fratricide could avoid a primarily negative valuation, and this is precisely the thrust of Augustine’s extended allegory. God prefers Abel’s offering over Cain’s, Augustine says, just like the innocence of grace in the New Testament is preferable to the earthly works of the Old. “For, even if the Jews were formerly right in doing those works, they are guilty of unbelief insofar as, when Christ came, they did not distinguish the time of

¹⁵² Ibid. “Et ea quae tanta auctoritate praedicta, tanta manifestatione completa sunt, aut majore caecitate non intuemini, aut mirabili impudentia non fatemini?”

¹⁵³ Ibid., 7.10, PL 42:59. “Sic caeci estis, ut esse vos dicatis ubi non estis, et non vos agnoscatis ubi estis.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.6, 7.10, 8.11.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 9.12, PL 42:61. “Locus enim unus est lege Domini constitutus, ubi manibus vestris sacrificia jussit offerri, praeter quem locum omnino prohibuit. Hunc ergo locum quoniam pro vestris meritis amisistis, etiam sacrificium quod ibi tantum licebat offerri, in locis offerre aliis non audetis.”

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.11, PL 42:59, citing Is. 2:6. “Dimisit enim plebem suam, domum Israel.” See 9.12, 9.14.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.14, PL 42:62. “Quicumque inde venire vultis, ad hanc pertinebitis, quam vocavit; illa carebitis, quam dimisit.”

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.14, PL 42:63. “Accedite ad eum qui in vestris auribus praedicatur, accedite ad eum qui ante oculos vestros glorificatur. Ambulando non laborabitis: ibi enim acceditis, ubi creditis.”

the New Testament from the time of the Old Testament.”¹⁵⁹ Augustine continues: “Abel, the younger, is killed by his elder brother. Christ, the head of the younger people, is killed by the older people of the Jews. Abel is killed in a field; Christ is killed on Calvary.”¹⁶⁰ Cain responds to God’s questions that he is not his brother’s keeper. Augustine discerns a similar pattern with the Jews: “Up to now what do the Jews answer us when we question them about Christ with the words of God, that is, with the words of the holy scriptures, but that they do not know the Christ of whom we speak? After all, Cain’s ignorance was a pretense; this denial of the Jews is false.”¹⁶¹ Cain is cursed by the earth, which will not give him its strength (Gen. 4:12). Augustine reasons, “The Church recognizes that the Jewish people is cursed and reveals that, after Christ was killed, that people still carries out the works of earthly circumcision, the earthly Sabbath, the earthly unleavened bread, and the earthly Pasch. All these earthly works keep hidden the strength derived from understanding the grace of Christ, which is not given to the Jews who continue in their impiety and unbelief.”¹⁶²

In this context, Augustine’s remarks on the mark of Cain can at best be taken as a qualification on a basically negative judgment of the Jews, and certainly not as an affirmation

¹⁵⁹ *C. Faust.* 12.9, CSEL 25.1:337. “Quia etsi ante Iudaei recte illa fecerunt, in eo tamen infidelitatis rei sunt, quia Christo ueniente iam tempus noui testamenti a tempore ueteris testamenti non distinxerunt.”

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.9, CSEL 25.1:338. “Itaque occiditur Abel minor natu a fratre maiore natu: occiditur Christus, caput populi minoris natu, a populo Iudaeorum maiore natu; ille in campo, iste in Caluariae loco.”

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.10, CSEL 25.1:338-39. “Usque adhuc quid nobis respondent Iudaei cum eos dei uoce hoc est sanctarum scripturarum uoce, interrogamus de Christo, nisi nescire se Christum quem dicimus? Fallax enim Cain ignoratio Iudaeorum est falsa negatio.”

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 12.11, CSEL 25.1:340. “Ideo populum Iudaeorum maledictum agnoscit et ostendit ecclesia, quoniam occiso Christo adhuc operatur terrenam circumcisionem, terrenum sabbatum, terrenum azymum, terrenum pascha. Quae omnis terrena operatio habet occultam uirtutem intellegendae gratiae Christi, quae non datur Iudaeis in impietate et infidelitate perseuerantibus.”

of their continued adherence to ancestral practices. Augustine's concern is descriptive, not prescriptive. He is not encouraging an imperial policy of Jewish toleration, but is simply explaining why God has seen fit to preserve the Jewish people, and what value this has for the church. Augustine takes as a given that the scattered Jews retain their ancestral practices – it is a datum for theological reflection – but he certainly does not prefer that Jews stay Jewish if this means not converting to Christianity. Thus, at the end of the section on which Fredriksen lays so much weight, Augustine expresses hope that “Cain” would cease to be Cain. The Jews are “set apart from the community of the other nations by a certain distinct and proper sign of their own observance,” but if any of them “crosses over to Christ,” “Cain may no longer be found and may not go away from the face of God nor dwell in the land of Nod, which is said to mean ‘commotion.’”¹⁶³

Methodologically, Fredriksen's problem arises, in part at least, from an overemphasis on *Against Faustus* and a misreading of this text as a defense of Judaism. Augustine's purpose is not to protect Judaism or Jews per se, but to respond to Manichean attacks against the Old Testament and to defend its ongoing authority despite the fact that Catholics no longer follow its practices. This requires him to make distinctions between different kinds of laws, and to affirm the value of the Old Testament ceremonies as prefigurements of Christ. But his concern is far less with Jews than with Catholics and the legitimacy of Christian non-observance of Jewish practices. *City of God*, I suggest, provides a more appropriate starting point for understanding Augustine's theology of Israel. It is in this text that Augustine sets

¹⁶³ Ibid., 12.13, CSEL 25.1:342. “Et omnis imperator uel rex, qui eos in regno suo inuenit, cum ipso signo eos inuenit nec occidit, id est non efficit, ut non sint Iudaei, certo quodam et proprio suae obseruationis signo a ceterarum gentium communione discreti, nisi quicumque eorum ad Christum transierit, ut iam non inueniatur Cain nec exeat a facie dei nec habitet in terra Naim, id quod dicitur interpretari ‘commotio.’”

forth a basic dualism in humanity. Against this bifurcation, Israel as a whole belongs to the earthly city: seeking temporal reward, she fails to recognize in her own Scriptures prophecies about Christ and the church. Still, Israel stands apart from other nations in her privileged status as a shadow or prophetic image of the City of God, that unique nation set apart by God to announce the coming of Christ and to nurture members of the heavenly city before his arrival. “It is in that people that the City of God has been on pilgrimage, as well as in the persons of the saints, besides having a shadowy representation, in a symbolical form, in all mankind.”¹⁶⁴ Despite the existence of exceptional people outside Israel who belonged to the heavenly city during Old Testament times (Job, an Edomite, furnishes an indisputable example),¹⁶⁵ Augustine nevertheless insists on Israel’s special identity as a community “in a manner consecrated for the purposes of prophecy and announcing the City of God which was to be assembled out of all the nations.”¹⁶⁶

By and large, Augustine does not characterize Israel according to the same vices that he says define the earthly city. Varro, he notes, admired the Jews for worshipping without idols.¹⁶⁷

Israel received from the one true God all the blessings for which the Romans thought it necessary to pray to all the host of false gods, and they received them in a far happier manner. And if they had not sinned against God by turning aside to the worship of strange gods and of idols, seduced by impious superstition as if by magic arts, if they had not finally sinned by putting Christ to death, they would

¹⁶⁴ *Cin. Dei* 16.3, CCL 48:503. “... in quo Dei ciuitas et in sanctis peregrinata est et in omnibus sacramento adumbrata.”

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.47.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.32, CCL 47:312. “... ipsa quodam modo sacrata res publica in prophetationem et praenuntiationem ciuitatis Dei ex omnibus gentibus congregandae.” See also 7.32, 15.8.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.31.

have continued in possession of the same realm, a realm exceeding others in happiness, if not in extent.¹⁶⁸

The Jews excelled even the philosophers. The Athenian thinkers, Augustine says, could not agree on anything, and their city deserved the moniker “Babylon” for her confusion. The Israelites, on the other hand,

that nation, that people, that city, that commonwealth ... to whom the utterances of God were entrusted, certainly did not lump together false and true prophets by giving them an equal sanction. Instead of this, those prophets who were in accord with each other and showed no kind of dissent were recognized as genuine authors of sacred writings. These were their philosophers, that is, lovers of wisdom, their theologians, their prophets, their teachers of integrity and piety.¹⁶⁹

Indeed, it was even appropriate for Israel to seek temporal rewards in the dispensation prior to the coming of Christ, since God teaches humanity in successive stages to lift its eyes from visible things to the invisible.¹⁷⁰ Israel’s great failure, however, was that she never moved past this fixation on earthly blessings, and therefore could not receive Christ.

The Jews put Christ to death, when the New Testament revealed what was veiled in the Old Testament, the knowledge that God, the one true God, is to be worshipped for the sake of eternal life and everlasting gifts and for participation in that City on high, and not for earthly and temporal blessings, which divine providence bestows on good and evil without discrimination. And for this the Jews were justly given over to the Romans, for the greater glory of Rome, so

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.34, CCL 47:127. “... pro quibus tantae falsorum deorum turbae Romani supplicandum putarunt, ab uno uero Deo multo felicius acceperunt. Et si non in eum peccassent, impia curiositate tamquam magicis artibus seducti ad alienos deos et ad idola defluendo, et postremo Christum occidendo: in eodem regno etsi non spatiosiore, tamen feliciore mansissent.”

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 18.41, CCL 48:637. “At uero gens illa, ille populus, illa ciuitas, illa res publica, illi Israelitae, quibus credita sunt eloquia Dei, nullo modo pseudoprophetas cum ueris prophetis parilitate licentiae confuderunt, sed concordēs inter se atque in nullo dissentientes sacrarum litterarum ueraces ab eis agnoscebantur et tenebantur auctores. Ipsi eis erant philosophi, hoc est amatores sapientiae, ipsi sapientes, ipsi theologi, ipsi prophetae, ipsi doctores probitatis atque pietatis.”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 10.14-15. Cf. 10.25, 18.11.

that those who had sought earthly glory and attained it by their virtue (of whatever kind), overcame those who in their perverse wickedness spurned and put to death the giver of true glory and of citizenship in the Eternal City.¹⁷¹

The perspective set forth in *City of God* can account both for Augustine's approbation of Israel's fidelity to the law during Old Testament times and his account of the positive value of Israel's ongoing existence as a people, and for his harsh remarks about Jews who continue to observe their ancestral practices after the coming of Christ. For Augustine, Old Testament Israel was a kind of third thing: part of the earthly city, yet not simply equated with it, possessing within herself both prophecies of Christ and the church, and individual members of the heavenly city. While she did put her hope in temporal, earthly things, such was appropriate for the times, and she was at least not wholly characterized by the idolatry that marked the history of the earthly city. Israel was not necessarily a uniquely fleshly or perverse people, but her value was primarily instrumental. She existed as a shadow and prophetic image of the holy city, and can thus in a derivative sense also bear that name.

3.2 Calvin

For Calvin's position on the people of God across the testaments, I draw upon a wider range of sources than considered for Augustine. Calvin never wrote a treatise on the relationship between Israel and the church, and there is no formal section dedicated to the issue in the *Institutes*. He did write a brief essay that engages Judaism called "Response to

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 5.18, CCL 47:154. "Vnde etiam Iudaei, qui Christum occiderunt, reuelante testamento nouo quod in uetere uelatum fuit, ut non pro terrenis et temporalibus beneficiis, quae diuina prouidentia permixte bonis malisque concedit, sed pro aeterna uita muneribusque perpetuis et ipsius supernae ciuitatis societate colatur Deus unus et uerus, rectissime istorum gloriae donati sunt, ut hi, qui qualibuscumque uirtutibus terrenam gloriam quaesierunt et adquisierunt, uincerent eos, qui magnis uitiis datorem uerae gloriae et ciuitatis aeternae occiderunt atque respuerunt."

questions and objections of a certain Jew (*Ad quaestiones et obiecta Iudaei cuiusdam*),¹⁷² but little can be discerned from these scattered remarks concerning Calvin's larger vision of Old Testament Israel. While I make some reference to this piece, I turn for the main lines of Calvin's position to three other discussions: his treatment of the covenant with Abraham in the Genesis commentary (1554), his treatment of God's faithfulness to Israel in the Romans commentary (1556 revision), and his treatment of the sacraments in the *Institutes*.¹⁷³ These texts reveal a strong identification between Old Testament Israel and the church.

3.2.1 The covenant with Abraham

Throughout the early chapters of the Genesis commentary, Calvin stresses the preservation of the church in the midst of great evil and irreligion. The birth of Seth marks the time when "the face of the Church (*ecclesiae facies*) began distinctly to appear, and that

¹⁷² For an English translation of this text, see Mary Sweetland Laver, "Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics" (PhD diss., Temple Univ., 1987), 229-61, who reproduces the work of Susan Frank. Calvin's essay was not published during his lifetime and cannot easily be dated, but is typically considered a late text. See discussion in Laver, "Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics," 220-25.

¹⁷³ English translations: *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, CTS 1; *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, CTS 19. On dates of composition, see, respectively, T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 25-26, and *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 36-37. For recent treatments of Calvin's theology of Jews and Judaism, see Salo W. Baron, "John Calvin and the Jews," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Saul Lieberman, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 141-63; Laver, "Calvin, Jews, and Intra-Christian Polemics," cited above; Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Israel in the Theology of Calvin – Towards a New Approach to the Old Testament and Judaism," *Christian Jewish Relations* 22 (1989): 75-86; Mary Potter Engel, "Calvin and the Jews: A Textual Puzzle," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Supp. 1 (1990): 106-23; Jack Hughes Robinson, *John Calvin and the Jews*, American Univ. Studies, Series 7: Theology and Religion 123 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Dan Shute, "And All Israel Shall Be Saved: Peter Martyr and John Calvin on the Jews according to Romans, Chapters 9, 10 and 11," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James III, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 159-76; Achim Detmers, "Calvin, the Jews, and Judaism," in *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, Studies in Central European Histories 37 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 197-217; John Hesselink, "Calvin's Understanding of the Relation of the Church and Israel Based Largely on His Interpretation of Romans 9-11," *Ex auditu* 4 (2006): 59-69.

worship of God was set up which might continue to prosperity.”¹⁷⁴ The purpose of the genealogy in Gen. 5 was to demonstrate that amongst a “prodigious multitude of men, there was always a number, though small, who worshipped God; and that this number was wonderfully preserved by celestial guardianship, lest the name of God should be entirely obliterated, and the seed of the Church (*ecclesiae semen*) should fail.”¹⁷⁵ The genealogy of Gen. 10 also reflects this idea: “But since [the genealogist] had determined to weave the history of the Church in one continuous narrative, he postpones the progeny of Shem, from which the Church flowed, to the last place.”¹⁷⁶

Abraham’s call constitutes the beginning of a major new moment for the people of God. Calvin emphasizes the importance of Abraham’s descent from the line of Shem. Shem was the chief locus in which God had preserved the church, but this line had by and large apostasized, and now deserved to be destroyed completely. Even Abraham’s father and grandfather worshipped idols. Yet, Calvin says, “[God] too highly esteems that election of his, by which he separated this family from all people, to suffer it to perish on account of the sins of men. And therefore from the many sons of Shem, he chooses Arphaxad alone; and from the sons of Arphaxad, Selah alone; and from him also, Eber alone; till he comes to Abram, the calling of whom ought to be accounted the renovation of the church (*ecclesiae*

¹⁷⁴ *Comm. Gen.*, 4.25, CO 23:103. “... exstare coepit distincta ecclesiae facies, erectusque est Dei cultus qui duraret ad posteros.”

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.1, CO 23:105. “Porro finis huius catalogi texendi fuit ut sciamus, in magna vel potius ingenti hominum turba, semper fuisse aliquem numerum, licet exiguum, qui Deum coleret: eumque coelesti praesidio mirabiliter servatum fuisse, ne prorsus aboleretur Dei nomen, et ecclesiae semen deficeret.”

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.1, CO 23:158. “Quia autem continuo tenore historiam ecclesiae texere instituerat, progeniem Sem, unde illa defluxit, in ultimum locum differt.”

renovatio).”¹⁷⁷ God preserves the church in hidden, unexpected ways, and for many years left Abraham childless and frustrated. Still, “God designed in his person, as in a mirror, to make it evident, whence and in what manner his Church should arise; for at that time it lay hid, as in a dry root under the earth.”¹⁷⁸

Calvin uses the word “church” with regard to Old Testament figures – Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, amongst others¹⁷⁹ – and his subsequent treatment of Abraham develops this pattern. Calvin repeatedly highlights connections between the original narrative and later New Testament developments. God’s initial promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), for instance, receives a Christological spin. The seed of Abraham is Christ, and it is only through Christ that humanity can be blessed. Thus, Calvin reasons, “the covenant of salvation which God made with Abram, is neither stable nor firm except in Christ.”¹⁸⁰ Concerning the altar Abraham builds to God (Gen. 12:7), Calvin explains that God is not pleased with the blood of beasts, and that Abraham actually “opened for himself a celestial sanctuary, by sacrifices, that he might rightly worship God ... The faith of Abram was directed to the blood of

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 11.10, CO 23:168. See 12.1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.30, CO 23:171. “... voluit tamen Deus in eius persona quasi in speculo palam facere unde et quomodo ecclesia emergat: nam tunc quasi in arido trunco sub terra delituit.”

¹⁷⁹ Besides the instances cited above, see *ibid.*, 16.5, CO 23:226, where Calvin comments on Sarah’s doubt about the promise of a child. “This evil reaches even to the Church of God; for we know that the family of Abram, which was disturbed with strifes, was the living representation of the Church” (... *hoc malum penetrare usque ad ecclesiam Dei: nam domum Abrae, quae litibus turbatur, scimus fuisse vivam ecclesiae effigiem*).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 12.3, CO 23:178. “Unde constituit, foedus salutis quod pepigit Deus cum Abram, non stabile nec firmum esse nisi in Christo.”

Christ.”¹⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, the strongest link Calvin draws between Abraham’s story and the New Testament is the imputation of righteousness received by faith.¹⁸²

One might think, on the basis of this Christological/ecclesial reading of Abraham, that Calvin would downplay the Jewish particularities of the promises to Abraham, suggesting that the promises had to do with Abraham’s spiritual, not biological descendants, or with spiritual, not earthly possession. But Calvin’s position is far more complex and developed. Commenting on “seed” in Gen. 17:7, Calvin declares,

Now they are deceived who think that his elect alone are here pointed out; and that all the faithful are indiscriminately comprehended, from whatever people, according to the flesh, they are descended. For, on the contrary, the Scripture declares that the race of Abraham, by lineal descent, had been peculiarly accepted by God. And it is the evident doctrine of Paul concerning the natural descendants of Abraham, that they are holy branches which have proceeded from a holy root (Rom. xi. 16). And lest anyone should restrict this assertion to the shadows of the law, or should evade it by allegory, he elsewhere expressly declares, that Christ came to be a minister of the circumcision (Rom. xv. 8). Wherefore, nothing is more certain, than that God made his covenant with those sons of Abraham who were naturally to be born of him.¹⁸³

Calvin rejects a purely spiritual interpretation of Abraham’s seed, and explicitly dismisses standard tropes for the interpretation of the Old Testament that obscure the genealogical

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 12.7, CO 23:181. “Ergo Abram ex generali pietatis doctrina sacrificiis coeleste sibi sanctuarium aperuit, ut Deum rite coleret. Atqui Deum scimus nunquam pecundum sanguine fuisse placatum. Quare sequitur Abrae fidem in Christi sanguinem directam fuisse.”

¹⁸² Ibid., 15.6.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 17.6, CO 23:237. “Falluntur autem qui putant solos hic electos notari, et sine discrimine comprehendi omnes fideles, ex quocunque secundum carnem populo descendant. Reclamat enim scriptura, peculiariter a Deo susceptum fuisse Abrahae genus ab eo progenitum. Et clara est Pauli doctrina de naturalibus Abrahae filiis, quod sint sancti rami, quia ex sancta radice prodierint (Rom. 11, 16). Ac ne quis ad umbras legis id restringat, vel allegoria eludat, alibi (Rom. 15:8) diserte tradit Christum venisse, ut circumcisionis esset minister. Quare nihil certius est quam Deum foedus suum pacisci cum fillis Abrahae, qui naturaliter ex eo gignendi erant.”

dimension of God's promise. He then sets forth an important hermeneutical principle for understanding the covenant across the testaments: there is a difference between "certain distinct degrees of adoption" (*certos ... ac distinctos adoptionis gradus*).¹⁸⁴ Calvin explains:

In the beginning, antecedently to this covenant, the condition of the whole world was one and the same. But as soon as it was said, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," the Church was separated from other nations (*a reliquis gentibus divisa est ecclesia*); just as in the creation of the world, the light emerged out of the darkness. Then the people of Israel was received, as the flock of God, into their own fold: the other nations wandered, like wild beasts, through mountains, woods, and deserts. Since this dignity, in which the sons of Abraham excelled other nations, depended on the word of God alone, the gratuitous adoption of God belongs to them all in common (*gratuita Dei adoptio ad omnes ipsos communiter pertinuit*).¹⁸⁵

Thus, God's promise to Abraham established a covenant with physical Israel grounded on the Word of God. Moreover, this covenant was not concerned primarily with physical inheritance.

This was a spiritual covenant, not confirmed in reference to the present life only; but one from which Abraham might conceive the hope of eternal salvation, so that being raised even to heaven, he might lay hold of solid and perfect bliss. For those whom God adopts to himself, from among a people – seeing that he makes them partakers of his righteousness and of all good things – he also constitutes heirs of eternal life.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 17.7, CO 23:237.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. "Initio ante foedus istud par et eadem erat totius mundi conditio. Simul vero ac dictum fuit: Ero Deus tuus et seminis tui post te, non secus a reliquis gentibus divisa est ecclesia atque in mundi creatione lux e tenebris emersit. Tunc populus Israel quasi grex Dei in proprium eius ovile receptus est: et reliquae gentes, tanquam ferae bestiae, per montes et sylvas aut deserta errarunt. Quum haec dignitas qua excelluerunt filii Abrahae prae gentibus, a solo Dei verbo penderet, gratuita Dei adoptio ad omnes ipsos communiter pertinuit."

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 17.7, CO 23:239. "... spirituale hoc fuisse foedus, non praesentis tantum vitae respectu sancitum, sed unde spem aeternae salutis conciperet Abraham, et in coelum usque euectus, solidam perfectamque beatitudinem apprehenderet. Nam quos sibi Deus in populum adoptat, quum suae iustitiae faciat bonorumque omnium participes, coelestis quoque vitae haeredes constituit." Consider, by way of contrast, Calvin's treatment of Ishmael, who receives temporal blessings but not the covenant of eternal life (16.11).

Indeed, Calvin says, since the chief blessing of the covenant was the promise that the Lord would be God to Abraham’s children, the promise of land should only be considered an “augmentation of the grant (*auctarii vice*).”¹⁸⁷ What, then, of the claim in Rom. 9 that not all from Abraham are legitimate children, and the contrast Paul draws between those of the promise and those of the flesh? Calvin responds, “There, the promise is not taken generally for that outward word, by which God conferred his favour as well upon the reprobate as upon the elect; but must be restricted to that efficacious calling, which he inwardly seals by his Spirit.”¹⁸⁸ There is, that is, a distinction within the church.

Here, then, a twofold class of sons (*duplex filiorum ordo*) presents itself to us, in the Church; for since the whole body of people is gathered together into the fold of God, by one and the same voice, all without exception, are, in this respect, accounted children; the name of the Church is applicable in common to them all: but in the innermost sanctuary of God (*arcano Dei sacrario*), none others are reckoned the sons of God, than they in whom the promise is ratified by faith.¹⁸⁹

Calvin’s key distinction is not between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church, but within the church itself, which encompasses both entities. Just as there is a distinction within the New Testament church between those who are only outwardly called and those who are also inwardly called, so too was there such a distinction within Old Testament Israel. Physical Israel simply was the church during Old Testament times.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. “Sequitur deinde quasi auctarii vice, quod terram se daturum pronunciat.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.7, CO 23:238. “Nam illic promissio non generaliter accipitur pro externo verbo, quo Deus suam gratiam tam reprobis quam electis conferebat, sed ad efficacem vocationem quam intus obsignat per spiritum suum restringi debet.”

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. “Hic iam nobis duplex filiorum ordo in ecclesia emergit: quia enim totum populi corpus una et eadem voce in ovile Dei colligitur, omnes sine exceptione hoc respectu habentur filii, in omnes communiter competit ecclesiae nomen: sed in arcano Dei sacrario non alii censentur Dei filii quam in quibus fide rata est promissio.”

Calvin acknowledges the change Christ brings to this situation, namely, that Gentiles are now included in the church.

This method and dispensation continued even to the promulgation of the gospel; but then the middle wall was broken down (Ephes. ii. 14), and God made the Gentiles equal to the natural descendants of Abraham. That was the renovation of the world, by which they, who had before been strangers, began to be called sons. Yet whenever a comparison is made between Jew and Gentiles, the inheritance of life is assigned to the former, as lawfully belonging to them; but to the latter, it is said to be adventitious.¹⁹⁰

Calvin also affirms a shift of sorts between Jews and Gentiles: by and large, the Jews did not respond positively to Christ, and the church came to adopt a more Gentile character.

For whereas previously, the natural sons of Abraham were succeeded by their descendants in continual succession, and the benediction, which began with him, flowed down to his children; the coming of Christ, by inverting the original order, introduced into his family those who before were separated from his seed: at length the Jews were cast out (except that a hidden seed of the election remained among them), in order that the rest might be saved.¹⁹¹

Nevertheless, Calvin denies this development undermines the eternality of the covenant.

In this way the covenant is called perpetual, as lasting until the renovation of the world; which took place at the advent of Christ. I grant, indeed, that the covenant was without end, and may with propriety be called eternal, as far as the whole Church is concerned; it must, however, always remain as a settled point that the regular succession of ages was partly broken (*partim abruptam fuisse*), and partly changed (*partim mutatam*), by the coming of Christ, because the middle wall being broken down, and the sons by nature being, at

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. "Haec ratio et oeconomia ad promulgationem usque evangelii duravit: tunc autem diruta maceria, gentes aequavit Deus naturalibus filiis Abrahae (Eph. 2, 14). Illa fuit saeculi renovatio, qua filii vocari coeperunt qui prius extranei fuerant. Quoties tamen comparatio fit inter Iudaeos et gentes, haereditas vitae illis tanquam legitima tribuitur: iis autem dicitur esse adventitia."

¹⁹¹ Ibid. "Quum enim prius continuo tempore naturalibus filiis Abrahae succederent nepotes, et benedictio ab eo exordium suum habens deflueret in nepotes: Christi adventus ordine retrogrado in eius familiam inseruit qui prius a semine eius divisi erant: tandem foras eieci sunt Iudaei, nisi quod penes eos manet occultum electionis semen, ut reliquiae salvae fiant."

length, disinherited (*exhaeredatis naturalibus filiis*), Abraham began to have a race associated with himself, from all the regions of the world.¹⁹²

This sounds like a hedge. On the one hand, Calvin says the covenant is eternal to physical Israel only in the sense that it will continue until the time of Christ. On the other hand, the covenant is eternal to the people of God more broadly (believing Gentiles and Jews) according to the sense that eternity is generally taken (without end). Similar remarks can be found in Calvin's comments on Gen. 13:14. Again, Calvin says "for ever" does not indicate perpetuity but only the time until the coming of Christ. Here, though, he adds, "The change which Christ introduced was not the *abolition* (*abolitio*) of the old promises, but rather their *confirmation* (*confirmatio*). Seeing, therefore, that God has not now one peculiar people in the land of Canaan, but a people diffused throughout all regions of the earth; this does not contradict the assertion, that the eternal possession of the land was rightly promised to the seed of Abraham, until the future renovation."¹⁹³

Let us review the discussion thus far. On the one hand, physical Israel is the church during Old Testament times: the covenant with Abraham is founded on the Word, it is ultimately grounded in Christ, and it sets forth eternal and not just temporal blessings. Calvin goes so far as to compare the distinction within Israel to that within the New Testament

¹⁹² Ibid., 17.7, CO 23:238-39. "Hoc modo foedus perpetuum vocatur eusque ad mundi renovationem, quae contigit adventu Christi. Fateor quidem carere fine, et proprie vocari posse aeternum, quatenus ad totam ecclesiam pertinet: sed illud semper fixum maneat oportet, seriem aetatum, Christi adventu partim abruptam fuisse, partim mutata: quia diruta maceria et tandem exhaeredatis naturalibus filiis, adscitium genus ex omnibus mundi plagis habere coepit Abraham."

¹⁹³ Ibid., 13.14, CO 23:193. Italics in the translation. "Atqui mutatio quam Christus attulit, non abolitio fuit veterum promissionum, sed potius confirmatio. Quod ergo nunc Deus non populum unum habet peculiarem in terra Chanaan, sed ubique diffusum per omnes mundi plagas, id non obstat quominus rite promissa fuerit aeterna terrae possessio semini Abrae usque ad futuram renovationem."

church whereby some are inwardly called while others are not. On the other hand, Calvin also says that the Israelites have been disinherited such that the Gentiles could be brought into the covenant, and that the covenant with physical Israel was only eternal in the sense that it would last until the advent of Christ. In other words, Calvin affirms the following: 1) the covenant with Abraham's seed was spiritual and grounded on Christ and the Word; 2) the promises to Abraham's seed cannot simply be interpreted in terms of the predominantly Gentile church of the New Testament, but apply also to physical Israel; and 3) Israel has in some sense been rejected. We have here a conundrum: what exactly is the ongoing status of God's covenant with physical Israel? To address this question, I turn now to Calvin's treatment of Rom. 9-11.

3.2.2 God's faithfulness to Israel

Calvin begins his treatment of Rom. 9 with some introductory remarks on Paul's quandary with regard to the Jews. Their wholesale rejection of Paul's message seems to present one of two possibilities: "either that there was no truth in the Divine promise, – or that Jesus, whom Paul preached, was not the Lord's anointed, who had been especially promised to the Jews."¹⁹⁴ Indeed, Calvin says, such options prompt for Paul questions about God's very faithfulness.

For God had by his covenant so highly exalted [the Jews], that by their fall, the faithfulness and truth of God himself seemed also to fail in the world: for that covenant would have thus become void, the stability of which was promised to be perpetual, as long as the sun and moon should shine in heaven (Ps. lxxii. 7). So that the abolition of this would have been more strange, than the sad and ruinous

¹⁹⁴ *Comm. Rom.* 9.1-5, OE 13:186. "Aut Divinae promissioni suam non constare veritatem, aut Iesum quem Paulus praedicabat, non esse Christum Domini, qui Iudaeis peculiariter promissus fuerat."

confusion of the whole world. It was not therefore a simple and exclusive regard for men: for though it is better that one member should perish than the whole body; yet it was for this reason that Paul had such a high regard for the Jews (*Iudaeos tanti aestimat Paulus*), because he viewed them as bearing the character (*persona*), and, as they commonly say, they quality (*qualitate*) of an elect people (*electi populi*).¹⁹⁵

Paul's task, then, is to address this concern without detracting from the gospel.¹⁹⁶ He thus advances the following position.

Though the Jews by their defection had produced an ungodly divorce between God and themselves (*impium cum Deo divortium fecerint*), yet the light of God's favour was not wholly extinguished, according to what he had also said in ch. iii.3. They had indeed become unbelievers and had broken his covenant; but still their perfidy had not rendered void the faithfulness of God; for he had not only reserved for himself some remnant seed from the whole multitude, but had yet as continued, according to their hereditary right, the name of a Church among them.¹⁹⁷

These themes are further developed in the rest of Rom. 9-11, a notoriously difficult section that Calvin himself labors to explain.¹⁹⁸ In general, we may discern two primary themes. On the one hand, Israel has broken the covenant according to God's own will and prerogative. On the other, God remains faithful to the Israelites.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 9.3, OE 13:188. "Nam foedere suo Deus ita ipsos in sublime extulerat, ut ipsis cadentibus, labasceret in mundo fides ipsius Dei et veritas. Fuisset enim irritum foedus cuius perpetua fore dicitur stabilitas, quamdiu sol et luna in caelo fulgebunt: ut magis absurdum esset illud aboleri, quam tristi foedaque confusione misceri totum mundum. Quare non simplex et nuda est hominum comparatio. Quanvis enim membrum unum perire quam totum corpus, ideo tamen Iudaeos tanti aestimat Paulus, quia electi populi persona, atque (ut vulgo loquuntur) qualitate ipsos induit."

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.1-5.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 9.4, OE 13:189-90. "... utcunque defectione sua Iudaei impium cum Deo divortium fecerint, non tamen prorsus extinctam in illis esse lucem gratiae Dei, sicuti et cap. 3.3, dixit, 'Quanvis illi increduli et foedifragi essent, non tamen eorum perfidia exinanitam esse Dei fidem. Non modo quia residuum sibi aliquod semen ex tota multitudine servavit, sed quia haereditario iure nomen Ecclesiae adhuc penes ipsos manebat.'" See 9.6.

¹⁹⁸ The difficulties of interpreting this section of Calvin's commentary have not gone unnoticed. See, for instance, Engel, "Calvin and the Jews," 106.

First, Calvin insists on the basis of Rom. 9 that not all Jews continue to participate in the covenant. As in the Genesis commentary, Calvin distinguishes between two kinds of election. There is a sense in which God promises salvation to the natural descendents of Abraham, but there is a stricter sense in which the children of the promise are those who have actually received salvation. “On this point Paul denies here that all the children of Abraham were the children of God, though a covenant had been made with them by the Lord, for few continued in the faith of the covenant; and yet God himself testifies, in the sixth chapter of Ezekiel, that they were all regarded by him as children.”¹⁹⁹ Paul argues both “that the hidden election of God overrules (*dominari*) the outward calling, and that it is yet by no means inconsistent with it (*et tamen cum ea minime pugnare*), but, on the contrary, that it tends toward its confirmation (*confirmationem*) and completion (*complementum*).”²⁰⁰ The choice of Isaac over Ishmael (Rom. 9:7) proves that there is a distinction between the children of Abraham. “It hence follows, that some men are by special privilege elected out of the chosen people, in whom the common adoption becomes efficacious and valid.”²⁰¹

This distinction within the natural children of Abraham is ultimately rooted in God’s own determination, a point particularly manifest in God’s choice of Jacob over Esau. Calvin draws three lessons from this story. First, God makes a distinction between the Israelites, predestining some to salvation and others to condemnation. Second, the only basis of this

¹⁹⁹ *Comm. Rom.* 9.6, OE 13:193.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.7, OE 13:193. “In eo versatur Paulus, ut ostendat electionem arcanam Dei supra externam vocationem *dominari*: et tamen cum ea minime pugnare, sed potius ad eius *confirmationem* ac *complementum* tendere.”

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 9.7, OE 13:194. “Unde sequitur, singulari privilegio certos homines ex electo populo eligi, in quibus *efficax* et *rata* sit *communis adoptio*.”

election is God's goodness, without any regard for human works. Third, God is "free and exempt from the necessity of imparting equally the same grace to all."²⁰² Two implications follow: "that the grace of God is not so confined to the Jewish people that it does not also flow to other nations, and diffuse itself through the whole world, – and then, that it is not even so tied to the Jews that it comes without exception to all the children of Abraham according to the flesh."²⁰³ In his sovereignty, God has chosen to call Gentiles and to reject Jews.

Paul applies words of Hosea (2:23), originally intended for the Israelites, to the Gentiles: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not my beloved."²⁰⁴ Calvin explains the logic for this shift. The prophets would quite frequently pronounce judgment on the Jews for their sins, before turning their attention to the kingdom of Christ. "Since the Jews so provoked God's wrath by their sins, that they deserved to be rejected by him, no hope of salvation remained, except they turned to Christ, through whom the covenant of grace was to be restored: and as it was based on him, so it was then renewed, when he interposed."²⁰⁵ The effect was to equalize the Jews and the Gentiles. "For when the Jews were banished from God's family (*e familia Dei exterminati essent*), they were thus reduced to a common class (*reducti erant in vulgarem ordinem*), and put on

²⁰² Ibid., 9.11, OE 13:195. "Dominus in gratuita sua electione liber est et solutus ea necessitate, ut eandem omnibus gratiam ex aequo impertiat."

²⁰³ Ibid., 9.24, OE 13:207. "... nempe Dei gratiam non ita inclusam esse in populo Iudaico, ut non ad alias quoque nationes emanare, et in orbem universum effundere se posset; deinde ne sic quidem alligatam esse Iudaeis, ut ad omnes Abrahae filios secundum carnem, sine exceptione perveniat."

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.25, OE 13:208.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. "Quando enim iram Dei ita Iudaei peccatis suis provocarunt, ut repudiari ab ipso mereantur, nulla salutis spes superest, nisi ad Christum se convertant; per quem foedus gratiae instauratur, et sicut in eo fundatum erat, sic nunc ubi intercidit, renovatur."

a level with the Gentiles (*Gentibus pares facti*). The difference being taken away, God's mercy is now indiscriminately extended to all the Gentiles."²⁰⁶ On these grounds, Calvin concludes, Paul appropriately applies Hosea's words to the Gentiles.

According to Calvin's exposition, the Jews were rejected because they sought to be justified by works. Calvin acknowledges the shocking nature of the claim that the Jews, who assiduously sought to follow the law, should be excluded from righteousness, while the Gentiles, who had no concern for righteousness, received it.²⁰⁷ He also recognizes that the Jews deserve compassion rather than hatred, since they fell more by ignorance than by malignancy of will. They were, at least, seeking God when persecuting the kingdom of Christ.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Calvin explains, "they are deservedly rejected (*iuste eos reiici*), who attempt to attain salvation by trusting in their own works; for they, as far as they can, abolish faith, without which no salvation can be expected. Hence, were they to gain their object, such a success would be the annihilation of true righteousness."²⁰⁹ Ultimately, such ambition is an affront to Christ, the true source of our righteousness. "When we claim for ourselves any righteousness, we in a manner contend with the power of Christ; for his office is no less

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 9.25, OE 13:209. "Nam quum Iudaei e familia Dei exterminati essent, eo modo redacti erant in vulgarem ordinem, et Gentibus pares facti. Post sublatum discrimen, iam Dei misericordia in omnibus Gentibus promiscue locum habet."

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 9.30.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 9.32, OE 13:212. "... iuste eos reiici ostendit Paulus qui salutem sibi tentant acquirere operum fiducia, quia fidem, quantum in se est, abolent; extra quam nulla sperenda est salus. Itaque si voti compotes forent, talis successus verae iustitiae exinanitio foret."

to beat down all the pride of the flesh, than to relieve and comfort those who labour and are wearied under their burden.”²¹⁰

In summary, Calvin’s treatment of the rejection of Israel is as follows: there is a distinction between God’s general election of the nation and the hidden election of those who would actually receive salvation. It is God’s sovereign right to choose some for salvation and others for condemnation; so also, God has called Gentiles and rejected Jews. In their pursuit of righteousness by works, the Jews rejected Christ and were thereby put on the same level as Gentiles with regard to salvation.²¹¹

The second key theme of Calvin’s exposition concerns God’s ongoing faithfulness to Israel. On this issue, Calvin’s remarks on Rom. 11 signal a marked shift in focus and tone.

What [Paul] has hitherto said of the blindness and obstinacy of the Jews, might seem to import that Christ at his coming had transferred elsewhere (*alio transtulisset*) the promises of God, and deprived the Jews of every hope of salvation (*ab omni salutis expectatione exterminatis*). This objection is what he anticipates in this passage, and he so modifies (*moderatur*) what he had previously said respecting the repudiation of the Jews that no one might think that the covenant formerly made with Abraham is now abrogated (*abrogatum*), or that God had so forgotten it that the Jews were now so entirely alienated from his kingdom (*alienati sint penitus ab eius regno*), as the Gentiles were before the coming of Christ. All this he denies, and he will presently show that it is altogether false.²¹²

²¹⁰ Ibid., 9.32, OE 13:213.

²¹¹ A similar view is presented in *Ad quaestiones et obiecta Iudaei cuiusdam*, where Calvin says the covenant was abrogated for many Jews, but not for all. See especially his response to the first question: “Imo quaere, quomodo foedus Dei quod singulare bonitatis testimonium fuit, et adoptio qua filios Abrahae sibi in peculium assumpsit, multis causa fuerit duplicis interitus: sicuti Ezechiel (16, 53) Israellem Sodoma et Gromorra peiorem esse pronunciat, hac sola de causa, quod salutem sibi oblatam contempserit. Hinc certe apparet, improbis istis canibus nihil aliud curae esse, nisi ut maledicant” (CO 9:657).

²¹² *Comm. Rom.* 11.1, OE 13:231. “Quae hactenus de Iudaeorum caecitate et obstinatione disseruit, eo spectare videri poterant, acsi Christus adventu suo Dei promissiones alio transtulisset, Iudaeis ab omni salutis expectatione exterminatis. Illam itaque obiectionem hoc loco praevenit, et quod de repudiatis Iudaeis prius tradiderat, ita moderatur ne foedus olim cum Abrahamo initum, nunc abrogatum quis putet; aut eius

With these remarks, Calvin remains true to the Genesis commentary. The covenant with Abraham's descendents is not spiritualized such that it refers only to Abraham's children by faith; rather, the covenant is quite explicitly intended for Abraham's children by the flesh – physical Israel.

One way God remains faithful to Israel is by preserving a remnant in the nation. Concerning Rom. 11:2, “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew,” Calvin comments:

Had the Apostle unreservedly denied that the people were rejected (*praecise negando reiectum esse populum*), he would have been inconsistent with himself; but by adding a modification (*correctione adhibita*), he shows it to be such a rejection, as that God's promise is not thereby made void ... Thus general rejection could not have caused that no seed should be saved; for the visible body of the people was in such a manner rejected (*sic abdicatum fuit*), that no member of the spiritual body of Christ was cut off (*nullum ex spirituali Christi corpore membrum exciderit*).²¹³

The rejection of Israel means that most Jews did not trust in Christ, but it does not mean that none did. “[Paul] shows, that in the midst of a miserable and confused desolation the faithfulness of God yet shone forth, for there was still some remnant: and in order more fully to confirm this, he expressly calls them a remnant that survived through the grace of

memoriam Deo sic intercidisse, ut Iudaei nunc alienati sint penitus ab eius regno, quemadmodum ante Christi adventum Gentes. Id vero negat, ut certe falsum fuisse mox ostendet.”

²¹³ Ibid., 11.2, OE 13:232. “Apostolus enim praecise negando reiectum esse populum, secum ipse pugnasset. Verum correctione adhibita, tale reiectionis genus esse docet, quo Dei promissio irrita non reddatur ... Ita generalis reiectio efficere non potuit, quin salvum maneret aliquod semen. Ipsum enim visibile populi corpus sic abdicatum fuit, ut nullum ex spirituali Christi corpore membrum exciderit.” See 9.27ff.

God: and thus he bore witness that God's election is unchangeable."²¹⁴ There is a distinction between Israel the collectively disobedient nation and the faithful individuals within her borders, point that must be noted to make sense of Paul's otherwise confusing remarks.

Commenting on Rom. 11:11, Calvin explains:

You will be greatly hindered in understanding this argument, except you take notice, that the Apostle speaks sometimes of the whole nation of the Jews, and sometimes of single individuals; for hence arises the diversity, that onewhile he speaks of the Jews as being banished from the kingdom of God, cut off from the tree and precipitated by God's judgment into destruction, and that at another he denies that they had fallen from grace (*excidisse a gratia negat*), but that on the contrary they continued in the possession of the covenant (*manere in possessione foederis*), and had a place in the Church of God (*locum habere in Dei Ecclesia*).²¹⁵

The preservation of a remnant invites comparison with Elijah's situation. Calvin writes, "As there were so few of the Jews who had believed in Christ, hardly another conclusion could have been drawn from this small number, but that the whole race of Abraham had been rejected; and creep in might this thought, – that in so vast a ruin no sign of God's favour appeared."²¹⁶ Elijah, too, assumed there were no faithful left in Israel, but God had actually preserved 7,000 people who did not bow before Baal. Of this time, Calvin

²¹⁴ Ibid., 11.5, OE 13:234. "... in tristi et confusa desolatione lucere adhuc Dei fidem ostendit, quia residuum aliquid maneat. Quo certius id confirmet, vocat diserte reliquias quae Dei gratia superstites, Dei electionem esse immobilem testantur." See 3.3.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 11.11, OE 13:238-39. "Vehementer te impediēs in hac disputatione, nisi observes, Apostolum nunc de tota Iudaeorum natione, nunc de singulis hominibus loqui. Inde enim est illa diversitas, quod nunc Iudaeos e regno Dei exterminatos fuisse tradit, excisos ab arbore, in exitium, Dei iudicio, praecipitatos. Nunc rursum excidisse a gratia negat, quin potius manere in possessione foederis, et locum habere in Dei Ecclesia." This is a distinction Calvin emphasizes throughout his remarks on this chapter. See, for instance, his comments on Rom. 11:16, where Paul refers to the Jews as a holy root, in favorable comparison with the Gentiles. Calvin notes that the comparison would not be legitimate if Paul had only individuals in mind, for not all Jewish individuals were holy. Paul must therefore mean God's granting holiness to the whole people descended from Abraham.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 11.2, OE 13:233. "Quum tam exiguus esset eorum numerus qui ex Iudaeis Christo crediderant, fieri vix potuit quin ex paucitate colligerent, reiectum esse totum Abrahae genus, atque obreperet cogitatio haec, in tam deformi ruina nullum extare gratiae Dei signum."

says, “When no vestige of God’s favour appeared, the Church of God was, as it were, hid in the grave, and was thus wonderfully preserved.”²¹⁷

God’s faithfulness to Israel, however, extends beyond the preservation of a remnant: on Calvin’s account, the nation at large will actually be restored. Given Israel’s widespread rejection of Christ, Paul wonders “whether the Jewish nation had so stumbled at Christ, that it was all over with them universally, and that no hope of repentance remained.”²¹⁸ For Calvin, Paul’s final conclusion is unambiguously negative. “Here he justly denies that the salvation of the Jews was to be despaired of, or that they were so rejected by God, that there was to be no future restoration, or that the covenant of grace, which he had once made with them, was entirely abolished, since there had ever remained in that nation the seed of blessing.”²¹⁹ “God will again reconcile to himself the first people whom he has divorced.”²²⁰ The Gentile reception of the gospel was intended to make Israel jealous, to prompt the Jews toward repentance. It follows that Israel has not fallen into eternal ruin. Indeed, Calvin explains, the restoration of the Jews will be a blessing for the Gentiles. This is the reason Paul warns the Gentiles not to be proud and contemptuous, lest they too be cut off.

Calvin advances this position further in his interpretation of Rom. 11:26, where Paul proclaims, “All Israel will be saved.” While Calvin interprets “Israel” to refer to the whole

²¹⁷ Ibid. “... tamen quum nullum extaret gratiae Dei vestigium, sic quasi in sepulchro latuisse Dei Ecclesiam ut mirabiliter servata fuerit.”

²¹⁸ Ibid., 11.11, OE 13:239. “... an ita impegerit in Christum gens Iudaica, ut de ipsa in universum actum sit, nec ulla spes supersit resipiscentiae.”

²¹⁹ Ibid. “Hic merito negat Iudaeorum salutem esse deploratam, aut sic abiectos a Deo, ut nulla restitutio futura sit, vel prorsus extinctum sit quod semel cum illis pepigit gratiae foedus. Quandoquidem in gente semper manebat semen benedictionis.”

²²⁰ Ibid., 11.21, OE 13:244. “Iterum sibi reconciliabit Deus priorem illum populum, cum quo divortium fecit.”

people of God, and not just the Jewish people, he does not thereby spiritualize Israel to avoid the question of God's specific faithfulness to the Jews. Calvin rather treats the restoration of physical Israel as a part of "all Israel" being saved.

I extend the word *Israel* to all the people of God, according to this meaning, – "When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place (*sic tamen ut priorem locum Iudaei obtineant*), being as it were the first-born in God's family (*ceu in familia Dei primogeniti*)."²²¹

As Calvin reads it, the reference in Rom. 11:26 to Is. 59:20, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away turn away ungodliness from Jacob," suggests a certain priority of the Jews over the Gentiles. Though the spiritual people of God encompasses both Jews and Gentiles, Calvin says, the Jews are nevertheless the first-born, and Isaiah's words must be fulfilled especially in them. "That Scripture calls all the people of God Israelites, is to be ascribed to the pre-eminence of that nation, whom God had preferred to all other nations."²²²

In summary, Calvin writes:

Paul teaches us, that [the Jews] were thus blinded for a time by God's providence, that a way to the gospel might be made for the Gentiles; and that still they were not for ever excluded from the favour of God. He then admits, that they were for the present alienated from God on account of the gospel, that thus the salvation, which at first was deposited with them, might come to the Gentiles; and yet that God was not unmindful of the covenant which he had made with

²²¹ Ibid., 11.26, OE 13:247. "Sed ego Israelis nomen ad totum Dei populum extendo, hoc sensu, 'Quum Gentes ingressae fuerint, simul et Iudaei ex defectione se ad fidei obedientiam recipient; atque ita complebitur salus totius Israelis Dei, quem ex utrisque colligi oportet. Sic tamen ut priorem locum Iudaei obtineant, ceu in familia Dei primogeniti.'"

²²² Ibid., 11.26, OE 13:248. "Nam et quod universum Dei populum Scriptura Israelitas nominat, id tribuitur eius gentis excellentiae quam Deus aliis omnibus praetulit."

their fathers, and by which he testified that according to his eternal purpose he loved that nation.²²³

Paul maintains that the purpose of God stands firm and immovable, by which he had once deigned to choose them for himself as a peculiar nation. Since then it cannot possibly be, that the Lord will depart from that covenant which he made with Abraham, “I will be the God of thy seed,” (Gen. xvii. 7) it is evident that he has not wholly turned his kindness from the Jewish nation.²²⁴

3.2.3 The Old Testament sacraments

One final but important point on Calvin’s theology of Israel remains: the sacraments across the testaments. This discussion will be based primarily on *Institutes*, Book 4, Ch. 14.

Briefly, Calvin defines a sacrament as

an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men. Here is another briefer definition: one may call it a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him.²²⁵

A sacrament is “never without a preceding promise as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in a

²²³ Ibid., 11.28, OE 13:249. “Paulus autem docet ita fuisse ad tempus, Dei providentia excaecatos, ut via Euangelio ad Gentes sterneretur; caeterum non esse in perpetuum a Dei gratia exclusos. Fatetur ergo in praesentia esse alienatos a Deo, Euangelii occasione, ut hac ratione ad Gentes perveniret quae prius apud ipsos deposita fuerat salus. Deum tamen non esse immemorem foederis quod cum Patribus eorum pepigit, et quo testatus est se aeterno consilio gentem illam dilectione complexum esse.”

²²⁴ Ibid., 11.28, OE 13:250. “... contendit Paulus firmum et immutabile stare Dei consilium quo semel sibi illos in gentem peculiarem eligere dignatus est. Si ergo fieri non potest ullo modo ut Dominus a pacto illo discedat quod cum Abrahamo sancivit, ‘Ero seminis tui Deus,’ benevolentiam suam a gente Iudaica non prorsus avertit.” CTS locates this passage in *Comm. Rom.* 11.29.

²²⁵ *Inst.* 4.14.1, OS 5:259. “... externum esse symbolum, quo benevolentiae erga nos suae promissiones conscientiae nostris Dominus obsignat, ad sustinendam fidei nostrae imbecillitatem: et nos vicissim pietatem erga eum nostram tam coram eo et Angelis quam apud homines testamur. Licet etiam maiore compendio aliter definire: ut vocetur divinae in nos gratiae testimonium externo signo confirmatum, cum mutua nostrae erga ipsum pietatis testificatione.”

sense ratifying it.”²²⁶ Technically, nothing is needed to confirm God’s Word, as there is no higher authority than the Word itself. Yet God condescends to our fleshly, ignorant state to lead us by means of earthly elements to spiritual blessings. As Calvin explains, sacraments are ultimately designed to deal with human frailty. They are not bare signs but should be accompanied by preaching that explains their meaning. Indeed, Calvin says, Augustine rightly called a sacrament a “visible word (*verbum visibile*) for the reason that it represents God’s promises as painted in a picture and sets them before our sight, portrayed graphically and in the manner of images.”²²⁷

Calvin stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments. “The sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendor of the sun shining upon blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears.”²²⁸ In this regard, there is a parallel between sacraments and the outward Word. Just as the seed of the gospel has no effect if the Spirit does not cause the seed to become fruitful,²²⁹ so also are the sacraments simply means or instruments by which God increases

²²⁶ Ibid., 4.14.3, OS 5:260. “...nunquam sine praeunte promissione esse sacramentum, sed ei potius tanquam appendicem quandam adiungi, eo fine ut promissionem ipsam confirmet ac obsignet, nobisque testatorem, imo ratam quodammodo faciat.”

²²⁷ Ibid., 4.14.6, OS 5:263. “Hac ratione Augustinus sacramentum verbum visibile nuncupat: quod Dei promissiones velut in tabula depictas repraesentet, et sub aspectum graphice atque εἰκονικῶς expressas statuatur.”

²²⁸ Ibid., 4.14.9, OS 5:266. “Caeterum munere suo tum rite demum perfunguntur, ubi interior ille magister Spiritus accesserit: cuius unius virtute et corda penetrantur, et affectus permoventur, et sacramentis in animas nostras aditus patet. Si desit ille, nihil sacramenta plus praestare mentibus nostris possunt quam si vel solis splendor caecis oculis affulgeat, vel surdis auribus vox insonet.”

²²⁹ Ibid., 4.14.11.

faith. If God feeds our body through food and illumines the world the sun, he nourishes our faith through the sacraments. The sacraments have no power in themselves, but they perform their duty inasmuch as God blesses us through them.²³⁰

When the sacraments are not received in faith, they have no effect. Calvin approves of Augustine's teaching that "there can be invisible sanctification without a visible sign, and on the other hand a visible sign without true sanctification."²³¹ Judas Iscariot, for instance, took of the bread but received no benefit because he was evil.²³² The ultimate reason faith is essential for the proper reception of the sacraments is that "Christ is the matter (*materiam*) or (if you prefer) the substance (*substantiam*) of all the sacraments; for in him they have all their firmness (*totam ... suam soliditatem*), and they do not promise anything apart from him."²³³ Sacraments are intended to promote true knowledge of Christ, and this can only occur through faith. In this regard, too, the sacraments resemble the Word of God. "Let it be regarded as a settled principle that the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace."²³⁴

For our purposes, the central point is this: Old Testament Israel participated in the sacraments in a genuine sense, just as the New Testament church does now. In a broad sense, Calvin includes under the definition of sacrament a wide range of examples: the tree of life, Noah's rainbow, Abraham's smoking fire pot, Gideon's fleece, and the changing

²³⁰ Ibid., 4.14.12.

²³¹ Ibid., 4.14.14, OS 5:272. "Invisibilem sanctificationem sine visibili signo esse posse, et visibile rursum signum sine vera sanctificatione." The original citation is from Augustine *qu. Lev.* 84.

²³² *Inst.* 4.14.15.

²³³ Ibid., 4.14.16, OS 5:273. "Christum Sacramentorum omnium materiam, vel (si mavis) substantiam esse dico: quando in ipso totam habent suam soliditatem, nec quicquam extra ipsum promittunt."

²³⁴ Ibid., 4.14.17, OS 5:274.

shadow intended to comfort Hezekiah.²³⁵ More precisely, though, Calvin defines the “ordinary sacraments (*ordinaria sacramenta*)” of the Old Testament as the ceremonies (circumcision, purifications, sacrifices, and other rites), and he insists that these practices served the same end as baptism and the Lord’s Supper do now. “Those ancient sacraments looked to the same purpose to which ours now tend: to direct and almost lead men by the hand to Christ, or rather, as images, to represent him and show him forth to be known.”²³⁶ The only difference between the sacraments of the Old Testament and New Testament is that “the former foreshadowed Christ promised while he was as yet awaited; the latter attest him as already given and revealed.”²³⁷

Calvin explains this point through specific examples. Circumcision was a symbol that the product of human seed is corrupt and requires pruning. It thus functioned as a reminder of the promise regarding Abraham’s seed, Christ, and a sign of the righteousness by faith. Baptisms and purifications revealed humanity’s pollution and the need for cleansing through Christ. Sacrifices revealed human unrighteousness and the need for the satisfaction of God’s justice. They also pointed to the need for a mediator between God and humans, which high priest was Christ. Despite their anticipatory role, these sacraments mediated the grace of Christ. “Whatever is shown us today in these sacraments, the Jews of old received in their own – that is, Christ with his spiritual riches. They felt the same power in their sacraments as

²³⁵ Ibid., 4.14.18.

²³⁶ Ibid., 4.14.20, OS 5:278. “Quamquam in eundem, in quem nunc nostra intendunt, scopum, et vetera illa spectarunt, nempe ut ad Christum dirigerent, et pene manu ducerent: aut ipsum potius, ceu imagines repraesentarent, ac cognoscendum proferrent.”

²³⁷ Ibid. “Unum duntaxat discrimen est, quod illa Christum promissum, quum adhuc expectaretur, adumbrarunt, haec iam praestitum et exhibitum testantur.”

do we in ours; these were seals of divine good will toward them, looking to eternal salvation.”²³⁸ On this point, Calvin specifically addresses the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he argues should not be read as denigrating the Old Testament sacrifices. The apostle’s purpose was but to show that the efficacy of the Old Testament sacrifices depended on Christ, who was yet to come, and that it was foolish to trust in ceremonies without regard for Christ.²³⁹ Again, Augustine judges rightly: “The sacraments of the Jews were different in their signs, but equal in the thing signified; different in visible appearance, but equal in spiritual power.”²⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Calvin does not admit complete parity between the Old and New Testament sacraments. “For both attest that God’s fatherly kindness and the graces of the Holy Spirit are offered us in Christ, but ours is clearer and brighter. In both Christ is shown forth, but in ours more richly and fully, that is, in accordance with that difference between the Old and the New Testament, which we have discussed above.”²⁴¹ As Augustine says, the New Testament sacraments are “fewer in number, more majestic in signification, more excellent in power.”²⁴² Calvin’s treatment of the sacraments thus reflects his basic construal of the relation between the testaments. There is a unity of function and referent between the

²³⁸ Ibid., 4.14.23, OS 5:281. “Quicquid ergo nobis hodie in Sacramentis exhibetur, id in suis olim recipiebant Iudaei, Christum scilicet cum spiritualibus suis divitiis. Quam habent nostra virtutem, eam quoque in suis sentiebant: ut scilicet essent illis divinae erga se benevolentiae sigilla in spem aeternae salutis.”

²³⁹ Ibid., 4.14.25.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.14.26, OS 5:284. “. . . sacramenta Iudaeorum in signis fuisse diversa: in re quae significatur, paria; diversa specie visibili, paria virtute spirituali.” The original reference is from Augustine *Jo. ev. tr.* 26.12.

²⁴¹ *Inst.* 4.14.26, OS 5:284. “Utraque enim paternam Dei in Christo benevolentiam ac Spiritus sancti gratias nobis offerri testantur: sed nostra illustrius ac luculentius. In utrisque Christi exhibitio: sed in his uberius ac plenior, nempe prout fert illud de quo supra disseruimus Veteris et Novi testamenti discrimen.”

²⁴² Ibid., 4.14.26, OS 5:285. “. . . numero pauciora, significatione augustiora, virtute praestantiora.” The original reference is from Augustine *c. Faust.* 19.13.

Old and New Testament sacraments, despite some differences of administration and clarity of revelation.

This point is especially clear in Calvin's treatment of the relation between circumcision and baptism, an issue he takes up to defend the practice of infant baptism.²⁴³ The institution of circumcision, Calvin says, included the promise of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins, much like the cleansing of baptism. So too, God's command that Abraham walk in uprightness of heart corresponds to the mortification and regeneration included in baptism. Finally, Moses' call to the Israelites to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts provides perhaps the clearest evidence that carnal circumcision was intended for mortification. "We have, therefore, a spiritual promise given to the patriarchs in circumcision such as is given us in baptism, since it represented for them forgiveness of sins and mortification of flesh. Moreover, as we have taught that Christ is the foundation (*fundamentum*) of baptism, in whom both of these reside, so it is also evident that he is the foundation of circumcision."²⁴⁴ Since both circumcision and baptism concern God's fatherly favor, the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and eternal life, and both are founded on Christ, there can be between them "no difference in the inner mystery."²⁴⁵ The dissimilarity between them

²⁴³ *Inst.* 4.16.3-6.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.16.3, CO 2:307. "Habemus ergo spiritualement promissionem in Circuncisione Patribus editam, qualis in Baptismo nobis datur: quandoquidem peccatorum remissionem et carnis mortificationem illis figuravit. Praeterea, ut fundamentum Baptismi Christum esse docuimus, in quo utrunque istorum residet: ita et Circuncisionis esse constat."

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.16.4, OS 5:308. "... nihil in mysterio interiore est discriminis."

consists only “in the outward ceremony, which is a very slight factor, since the most weighty part depends upon the promise and the thing signified.”²⁴⁶

For Calvin, the key implication is that infant baptism is perfectly legitimate. “If the covenant still remains firm and steadfast, it applies no less today to the children of Christians than under the Old Testament it pertained to the infants of the Jews.”²⁴⁷ For our purposes, the important point is the assumption that the covenant with the Jews in the Old Testament is the same as the covenant with Christians in the New Testament. “The covenant is common, and the reason for confirming it is common. Only the manner of confirmation is different – what was circumcision for them was replaced for us by baptism.”²⁴⁸

Calvin defends this point with particular vigor in his arguments against the Anabaptists. When they rupture the connection between circumcision and baptism, he says, they depict the Jews as carnal beasts. “A covenant with them would not go beyond the temporal life, and the promises given them would rest in present and physical benefits. If this doctrine should obtain, what would remain save that the Jewish nation was satiated for a time with God’s benefits (as men fatten a herd of swine in a sty), only to perish in eternal destruction?”²⁴⁹ The Anabaptists claim that the children of Abraham in the Old Testament were his physical seed, but that his children now are those who imitate his faith. Calvin

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.16.4, OS 5:308. “Quae restat dissimilitudo, ea in ceremonia exteriore iacet, quae minima est portio: quum potissima pars a promissione et re signata pendeat.”

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.16.5, OS 5:309.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.16.6, OS 5:310. “Foedus commune est, communis eius confirmandi causa. Modus confirmandi tantum diversus est, quod erat illis Circuncisio, in cuius vicem Baptismus nobis successit.”

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.16.10, OS 5:314. “Quibuscum scilicet percussum foedus ultra temporariam vitam non procedat: quibus datae promissiones, in bonis praesentibus ac corporeis subsidant. Quod dogma si obtineat, quid restat nisi gentem Iudaicam fuisse ad tempus Dei beneficio saturatam (non secus ac porcorum gregem in hara saginant) ut aeterno demum exitio periret?”

acknowledges “a feeble spark of truth (*exiguam ... veritatis scintillam*)”²⁵⁰ in that position, but quickly qualifies the point. “If, as they plainly indicate, they mean that God’s spiritual blessing was never promised to Abraham’s physical offspring, they are gravely mistaken in this.”²⁵¹

The extension of God’s kingdom amongst the nations does not undermine the fact that “many centuries previously he had embraced the Jews with the same great mercy.”²⁵² Indeed, Calvin argues, God remains faithful to the nation of Israel. As Paul teaches in Rom. 11, “the covenant which God had made once for all with descendents of Abraham could in no way be made void.”²⁵³ God granted Israel the privilege of hearing the gospel first, and though their rejection resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, God’s blessing upon the Jews remains. “The Jews are the first and natural heirs of the gospel, except to the extent that by their ungratefulness they were forsaken as unworthy – yet forsaken in such a way that the heavenly blessing had not departed utterly from their nation.”²⁵⁴ The promises to the Jews may not be spiritualized away. Citing Paul again, Calvin insists, “The promise of the covenant is to be fulfilled, not only allegorically (*non allegorice tantum*), but literally (*ut verba sonant*), for Abraham’s physical offspring.”²⁵⁵

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.16.12, OS 5:315.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., 4.16.13.

²⁵³ Ibid., 4.16.14, OS 5:317. “... foedus quod semel cum Abrahae posteritate inicum fuerat a Deo, irritum nullo modo fieri posse.”

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.16.14, OS 5:317. “... cuius beneficio Iudaeos docet primos ac nativos esse Evangelii haeredes, nisi quatenus sua ingratitude, ceu indigni, abdicati fuerunt: sic tamen ut non penitus ab eorum gente caelestis benedictio demigrarit.”

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.16.15, OS 5:318. “Videsne ut post Christi resurrectionem quoque, promissionem foederis non allegorice tantum, sed ut verba sonant, carnali Abrahae semini implendam censeat?” In the same section, Calvin

3.3 Discussion

This chapter has revealed the complexities of understanding Old Testament Israel and the divergent strategies by which Augustine and Calvin define her theological significance. For Augustine, Israel is a sign of the church. She cannot simplistically be identified with the earthly city in its chief loci of Assyria/Babylon and Rome, but she does to some extent belong to their side of the divide within humanity. While Israel was specially chosen to preserve testimonies to Christ and the church, she does not as a whole participate in the new covenant, because she fails to discern spiritual matters and rejected her own messiah when he came. Augustine's depiction of Old Testament Israel is a necessary function of his basic position on the relation between the testaments. Since the purpose of the old covenant was to signify but obscure the grace of the new, it follows that Israel at large did not understand the things to come. Nevertheless, Augustine does distinguish Israel from the other peoples of the earthly city, most prominently by reserving a place for her restoration in the final times. Calvin, by contrast, substantially affirms the identity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. Seth marked the beginning of the church on earth, and the call of Abraham signaled a renovation of the same. Israel and the church share in the same sacraments, the same promises, the same law, the same doctrine,

also affirms a literal interpretation of the promise of the Second Commandment that God would bless the offspring of his servants to the thousandth generation. Ibid., 4.16.15, OS 5:319. "Shall we take refuge in allegories? That would be too frivolous an evasion! Shall we say that it is abolished? But thus the law would be destroyed, which Christ came rather to establish [Matt. 5:17], in so far as it benefits our life. Let us accept as incontrovertible that God is so good and generous to his own as to be pleased, for their sake, also to count among his people the children whom they have begotten" (*Hicine ad allegorias confugiemus? at nimium nugatoria fuerit tergiversatio. An id dicemus abolitum? Verum ita Lex dissiparetur, cui potius stabiliendae Christus venit, quatenus in bonum ad vitam nobis cedit. Sit itaque extra controversiam, Deum suis adeo bonum esse ac liberalem, ut in eorum gratiam liberos etiam quos procrearent, populo suo accenseri velit*).

and the same covenant, whose foundation is Christ. Israel even resembles the New Testament church by means of the distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful. For Calvin, Israel was not a sign of the church, but the very people of God during Old Testament times.

On the question of the Old Testament saints, *City of God* presents substantially the same perspective considered in the previous chapter. Israel contained within herself exceptional members who belonged to the heavenly city – Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, and so forth – but the nation at large did not share this identity. For Calvin, however, the picture provided in this chapter significantly contextualizes the problems we considered before. Calvin’s identification between church and Israel corresponds directly to his position on the unity of testaments – one covenant and one people, despite some secondary changes – rendering his comments about aberration and transfer even less comprehensible than judged in the previous chapter. In my judgment, those remarks should therefore not be considered representative of Calvin’s overarching theology of Old Testament Israel; they rather present a particular point of difficulty for his position on the unity of the testaments in the face of biblical passages that stress the newness of the gospel.

Both Augustine and Calvin wrestle with the character of God’s promises to Abraham. What does it mean that the covenant will be eternal? Does the covenant pertain to the church, as distinct from national Israel? Should the scope of “eternity” be restricted to the time before Christ? How much weight should be placed on the references to land? Does earthly blessing constitute the extent of God’s beneficence for Israel, or do temporal promises imply eternal reward? Neither Augustine nor Calvin will completely spiritualize the Old Testament promises, a point that particularly bears weight in their joint affirmation that

national Israel will somehow be restored in the end times. While both interpret Paul's "all Israel" as a reference to the church, ethnic Israel never completely drops from view.

Augustine considers the conversion of the Jews to Christ one of the incontrovertible events of the final things, and Calvin also resists the suggestion that God's covenant with Abraham has been made void.

Israel thus constitutes for our figures a vexed theological question. Both Augustine and Calvin advance what can fairly be called supersessionism, though with significant differences. Augustine presents a relatively standard form: Israel was an earthly people who did not understand the meaning of her Scriptures. This condition was brought to light when the Jews killed their own messiah, prompting God to "cast off" his people and destroy physical Jerusalem. Israel will be restored only after acknowledging this crime and turning to Jesus. For Calvin, by contrast, Christ was the foundation of the covenant from the beginning, such that Israel was united with him even before the incarnation. Since Christ has always mediated participation in the covenant, nothing changes in that regard with the New Testament. By defining Israel as the church during Old Testament times, Calvin sets forth a rather curious form of preemptive supersessionism.

It must be asked whether this position is coherent. From Calvin's perspective, Israel never had an identity independent of the church; Israel was coterminous with the visible church during Old Testament times by virtue of her participation in the Mosaic law as it mediated Christ. In the New Testament, however, the value of the ceremonies is nullified, such that those who do not participate in Christ according to the new realities have no share in the covenant. Since ethnic demarcation seems for Calvin accidental and not essential to participation in the covenant, it is not clear what grounds he can provide for affirming God's

ongoing commitment to national Israel, now primarily characterized by rejection of Christ. To be fair, Calvin's chief concern is biblical: his commitment to the literal sense animates his position that the Old Testament promises concern the fleshly descendents of Abraham, and not just the visible church however she may be constituted at different points in the economy of salvation (e.g., by Jews in the Old Testament, primarily by Gentiles in the New). Calvin also makes a valiant effort to make sense of Paul's perplexing remarks in Rom. 11 on the restoration of the Jews. Nevertheless, ethnic Israel, as a chosen people distinct from the church in New Testament times, seems for Calvin's framework to come from mid-air. Whence did this people arise if she simply was the church during Old Testament times?

At the very least, these considerations reveal that neither Augustine nor Calvin reduces Israel to the status of the "pagans." This is particularly obvious within the structure of *City of God*. Augustine very closely identifies Rome with the earthly city, harshly castigating her idolatry, violence, and lust for temporal goods, but does not subject Israel to the same attack. She is part of the earthly city in the sense that she seeks temporal goods and fails to recognize the true meaning of her Scriptures. Yet she shares with the heavenly city the worship of the one true God and possesses within herself testimonies to Christ and the church. Augustine does not hold out for non-Christian Romans the hope of future restoration, reserving this privilege uniquely for the Jews. That Augustine and Calvin both affirm this future event reveals that their categories for the world are not simplistically two, but in some manner three. There are Christians and pagans, but there is also Israel, a mystery.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ I am particularly grateful to Paul Griffiths for helping me to think through this matter.

This chapter, then, develops but nuances the basic contrast we have traced between our two figures. In general, the two covenants correspond for Augustine to two peoples. As the Old Testament was a sign for the New, so also was Israel for the church. For Calvin, there is one covenant and one people, despite differences of form and administration. Neither figure, however, completely instrumentalizes Israel for the sake of the church, precisely to respect the literal sense of God's Old Testament promises to Israel. Israel is not just some non-Christian nation, but remains God's chosen people. In the next chapter, I consider how these issues pertain to the interpretation of Scripture.

4. The purpose of Scripture in redemptive history

Omnium igitur, quae dicta sunt, ex quo de rebus tractamus, haec summa est, ut intellegatur legis et omnium diuinarum scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio rei, qua fruendum est, et rei, quae nobiscum ea re frui potest, quia, ut se quisque diligat, praecepto non opus est.

Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*

Christum, quanvis sub Lege Iudaeis cognitus fuerit, tamen Evangelio demum exhibitum fuisse.

Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*

This chapter marks a transition from the previous three chapters and completes the first part of this study. After an extended treatment of the dynamics of redemptive history in Augustine and Calvin, I now consider how their differences on those matters correspond to differences on the purpose and interpretation of Scripture, especially concerning the existence of an allegorical or spiritual sense. Since Augustine defines the relation between the testaments according to a unity of sign and reference, he posits two levels of meaning, the literal and the spiritual (of which the literal is a sign). Calvin, on the other hand, defines the unity between the testaments as one of identity, and thus acknowledges only the literal sense, though he draws from it a wide range of meanings. This chapter focuses on Augustine and Calvin's programmatic remarks on Scripture, as found in *De doctrina christiana* and the *Institutes*, respectively. I reserve for the sixth chapter direct consideration of their actual exegesis, in dialogue with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

4.1 Augustine

4.1.1 Using and enjoying

Augustine explicitly introduces *De doctrina christiana*¹ as a work about precepts for treating the Scriptures, but he devotes little attention to this topic in the opening book. After distinguishing between things (*res*) and signs (*signa*),² Augustine focuses in Book 1 on things, waiting until Books 2-3 for a discussion of signs, the central category in *De doctrina* for understanding Scripture. Though the connection between these two sections is not immediately obvious, the principles set forth in Book 1 play a central role in Augustine's later discussion of Scripture, and therefore merit preliminary attention here.

Augustine begins Book 1 by establishing two important distinctions between things and signs, and use and enjoyment. First, the category *res* encompasses any object in creation – and God, with the appropriate qualifications.³ Signs are “those things which are employed to signify (*significare*) something.”⁴ Technically, all signs are things, but not all things are signs. For the purposes of discussion, though, Augustine distinguishes between the two categories such that *res* refers narrowly to things apart from their capacity to signify other things. Second,

There are some things which are to be enjoyed (*fruendum*), some which are to be used (*utendum*), and some whose function is both to enjoy (*fruuntur*) and use (*utuntur*). Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy (*beatos*); those which are to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to

¹ On date of composition, see James J. O'Donnell, “*Doctrina Christiana, De*,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 278-79. Augustine began writing *doc. Chr.* in 395/396, but only completed the work when writing *retr.* some thirty years later. More on this delay below.

² *Doc. Chr.* 1.2.2.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.5.5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.2.2, CCL 32:7. “Ex quo intellegitur, quid appellem signa, res eas uidelicet, quae ad significandum aliquid adhibentur.”

speaking, as we press on towards our happiness, so that we may reach and hold fast to the things which make us happy.⁵

Love is associated primarily with enjoyment and not with use. “To enjoy something is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake (*propter se ipsam*). To use something is to apply (*referre*) whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love.”⁶

Augustine uses the metaphor of a journey to draw out this distinction. Travelers away from their homeland, the only place where they could find happiness, make use of various vehicles to return home. But if they were to delight in the very act of traveling, thereby confusing use and enjoyment, they would remain alienated from the homeland and happiness. This image is for Augustine a depiction of the Christian life. In this life of mortality, we really are travelers away from the Lord, our only source of happiness. If we wish to return to our true homeland, we must use and not enjoy this temporal, corporal world for the sake of enjoying eternal and spiritual things. Thus, the distinction between use and enjoyment suggests a basic posture toward the entirety of human life in its earthly condition.⁷ Humanity is not at home in this world but rather on pilgrimage; we are to use this world so that we may enjoy God, who is “a kind of single, supreme thing, shared by all who enjoy it (*una quaedam summa res communisque omnibus fruuntibus*).”⁸

⁵ Ibid., 1.3.3, CCL 32:8. “Res ergo aliae sunt, quibus fruendum est, aliae quibus utendum, aliae quae fruuntur et utuntur. Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt. Istis quibus utendum est, tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuuamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas, quae nos beatos faciunt, peruenire atque his inhaerere possimus.”

⁶ Ibid., 1.4.4, CCL 32:8.

⁷ Rowan Williams winsomely draws out this point in his “Language, Reality, and Desire in Augustine’s *De doctrina*” *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989): 138-50.

⁸ *Doc. Chr.* 1.5.5, CCL 32:9. “Res igitur, quibus fruendum est, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus eadem que trinitas, una quaedam summa res communisque omnibus fruuntibus ea, si tamen res et non rerum omnium causa, si tamen et causa.”

Ultimately, God is the only thing to be enjoyed because he is the greatest object in the hierarchy of being.⁹ According to this hierarchy, there is a distinction between non-living things (like rocks) and living things, with the latter better than the former. Then amongst living things, non-sentient things (like trees) are lower than sentient things. Finally, there is within this last category a distinction between non-intelligent things (like livestock) and intelligent things (like humans). But humans are changeable, sometimes wise and sometimes not, and are therefore inferior to that which is unchanging, Wisdom itself. Wisdom is that which all humans are to seek and enjoy.

The problem, though, is sin. Humans chose to reject the Creator of all things by enjoying the created order instead,¹⁰ and therefore need purification to perceive and cling to God. Purification, Augustine says, is the very purpose of our journey. “Let us consider this process of cleansing as a trek, or a voyage, to our homeland; though progress towards the one who is ever present is not made through space, but through integrity of purpose and character.”¹¹ This journey, in turn, has been made possible by the incarnation.

When we speak, the word which we hold in our mind becomes a sound in order that what we have in our mind may pass through ears of flesh into the listener’s mind: this is called speech. Our thought, however, is not converted into the same sound, but remains intact in its own home, suffering no diminution from its change as it takes on the form of a word in order to make its way into our ears. In the same way the word of God became flesh in order to live in us but was unchanged.¹²

⁹ Ibid., 1.8.8. Augustine does, however, hedge on whether it is even appropriate to call God a being in the first place.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1.12.12, CCL 32:13. “... cupiditate fruendi pro ipso creatore creatura.”

¹¹ Ibid., 1.10.10, CCL 32:12.

¹² Ibid., 1.12.13, CCL 32:13. “Sicuti cum loquimur, ut id, quod animo gerimus, in audientis animum per aures carneas inlabatur, fit sonus uerbum quod corde gestamus, et locutio uocatur, nec tamen in eundem sonum cogitatio nostra conuertitur, sed apud se manens integra, formam uocis qua se insinuet auribus, sine aliqua labe suae mutationis adsumit: ita uerbum dei non commutatum cor tamen factum est, ut habitaret in nobis.”

As Augustine describes the process, we communicate to others by forming words from our thoughts, a sort of externalization of the mind that then gets transferred to the soul of the listener. But just as our thoughts remain thoughts throughout this course of events, so also did Christ retain his divinity in the incarnation. This union of humanity and divinity is essential for our salvation. In his humanity, Christ is the road to God; in his divinity, Christ simply is God, co-equal to the Father.¹³ Christ is thus both the road and the goal – or *patria* – of our salvation.¹⁴

Augustine's assertion that only God is to be enjoyed raises a natural question: does this mean that humans are to be used?¹⁵ Humans constitute a particular test for the distinction between use and enjoyment for at least two reasons. First, we are to enjoy God, but humans are, by virtue of their reason, created in the image of God. We are therefore of a higher ontological status than the rest of creation and do not easily fall into the category of things appropriate for use. Second, Augustine has associated enjoyment with love, but Scripture commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Use seems contrary to love.

Augustine's solution is basically to expand the notion of use such that it can include love, so long as this love is oriented toward God. God is to be loved for God's own sake, for God

¹³ Ibid., 1.34.38.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.11, CCL 32:12. "Cum ergo ipsa sit patria, uiam se quoque nobis fecit ad patriam."

¹⁵ The scholarly literature on this question is enormous and cannot be canvassed here. I offer in this section but a general sketch of Augustine's discussion. Anthony Dupont, "Using or Enjoying Humans: *Uti* and *Frui* in Augustine," *Augustiniana* 54 (2004): 475-506 provides a survey that is "exhaustive to a large degree" (503). Important works on this issue include Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson, rev. ed. (1953; repr., New York: Harper and Rowe, 1969); John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Canterbury, 1938; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007); Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006) and "Usus and *Frui* in Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 361-97; Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven, Belgium: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993). See also William Riordan O'Connor, "The *Uti/Frui* Distinction in Augustine's Ethics," *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 45-62. A recent discussion of this issue is found in Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 2008), 319-50.

alone constitutes the basis of a happy life. Humans are also to be loved, but for God's sake, not their own. Thus, love for humans corresponds to use and not enjoyment. The twofold love commandment bears out this point: we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, but we are only called to love our neighbor as ourselves. "So a person who loves his neighbor properly should, in concert with him, aim to love God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind. In this way, loving him as he would himself, he relates his love of himself and his neighbor entirely to the love of God, which allows not the slightest trickle to flow away from it and thereby diminish it."¹⁶

Such orderly love corresponds to the order of being. As Augustine puts it, there are four categories of things to love: things above us, we ourselves, things close to us, and things beneath us. The twofold love commandment concerns the first and third categories (God and neighbor).¹⁷ The second and fourth categories (we ourselves and our bodies) require no commandment, since we cannot but love ourselves. On Augustine's terms, the heart of Christian ethics is recognizing these categories and ordering one's loves appropriately.

The person who lives a just and holy life is one who is a sound judge of these things. He is also a person who has ordered his love, so that he does not love what it is wrong to love, or love too much what should be loved less (or love too little what should be loved more), or love two things equally if one of them should be loved either less or more than the other, or love things either more or less if they should be loved equally. No sinner, *qua* sinner, should be loved; every human being, *qua* human being, should be loved on God's account; and God should be loved for himself.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Doc. Chr.* 1.22.21, CCL 32:18. "Quisquis ergo recte diligit proximum, hoc cum eo debet agere, ut etiam ipse toto corde, tota anima, tota mente diligat deum. Sic enim eum diligens tamquam se ipsum totam dilectionem sui et illius refert in illam dilectionem dei, quae nullum a se riuulum duci extra patitur, cuius deriuatione minuatur."

¹⁷ For simplicity, I pass over Augustine's discussion of angels, whom we are also to love. See *ibid.*, 1.30.31-33.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.27.28, CCL 32:22. "Ille autem iuste et sancte uiuit, qui rerum integer aestimator est; ipse est autem, qui ordinatam habet dilectionem, ne aut diligat, quod non est diligendum, aut non diligat, quod diligendum est, aut amplius diligat, quod minus diligendum est, aut aequae diligat, quod uel minus uel amplius diligendum est, aut minus

So long as this hierarchy is respected, Augustine can even say in a loose sense that we may enjoy other humans – so long as we enjoy them in God.¹⁹

At the end of Book 1, Augustine finally ties this discussion back to Scripture. “The chief purpose of all that we have been saying in our discussion of things is to make it understood that the fulfillment and end of the law [cf. Rom. 13:10; 1 Tim. 1:5] and all the divine Scriptures is to love the thing which must be enjoyed and the thing which together with us can enjoy that thing (since there is no need for a commandment to love oneself).”²⁰ In short, the purpose of Scripture is to promote love for God and neighbor. Therefore, any interpretation of Scripture that does not build up love for God and neighbor is a misreading. Conversely, anyone whose interpretation of Scripture supports the twofold love commandment “has not made a fatal error,”²¹ even if he misses the author’s intent. Such a person is “misled in the same way as a walker who leaves his path by mistake but reaches the destination to which the path leads by going through a field.”²²

uel amplius, quod aeque diligendum est. Omnis peccator, in quantum peccator est, non est diligendus, et omnis homo, in quantum homo est, diligendus est propter deum, deus uero propter se ipsum.”

¹⁹ Ibid., 1.33.37. See also *ibid.*, 3.10.16. These passages suggest a certain lack of commitment to the terminology of use with reference to humans. In “*Usus and Fructio in Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana I*,” O’Donovan suggests that Augustine has come to recognize that his earlier position “was quite simply a mistake” (390), and observes in this regard the complete absence of such terminology in Augustine’s corpus after *doc. Chr.* 1.

²⁰ *Doc. Chr.* 1.35.39, CCL 32:28-29. “Omnium igitur, quae dicta sunt, ex quo de rebus tractamus, haec summa est, ut intellegatur legis et omnium diuinarum scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio rei, qua fruendum est, et rei, quae nobiscum ea re frui potest, quia, ut se quisque diligit, praecepto non opus est.”

²¹ Ibid., 1.36.40, CCL 32:29. “... non perniciose fallitur.”

²² Ibid., 1.36.41, CCL 32:30. “Sed quisquis in scripturis aliud sentit quam ille, qui scripsit, illis non mentientibus fallitur, sed tamen, ut dicere coeperam, si ea sententia fallitur, qua aedificet caritatem, quae finis praecepti est, ita fallitur, ac si quisquam errore deserens uiam eo tamen per agrum pergat, quo etiam uia illa perducit. Corrigendus est tamen et, quam sit utilius uiam non deserere, demonstrandum est, ne consuetudine deuiandi etiam in transuersum aut peruersum ire cogatur.”

The danger of misinterpretation is its potential to threaten faith, hope and ultimately love. Someone may misread a passage such that it seems to contradict other things he knows to be true, and thereby start to question the authority of Scripture. But faith depends on the authority of Scripture, and love depends on faith, since we can only love what we believe to be true. Hope, in turn, depends on the demonstration of faith and love, which grounds our confidence for heavenly reward. Of these three virtues, love is the greatest and most important, for neither faith nor hope will be necessary in the eschaton. Nor, it seems, will Scripture, for Augustine holds that those who demonstrate faith, hope, and love do not need Scripture even now, except to teach others.²³ These considerations having been set forth, Augustine can now treat more directly the interpretation of Scripture under the rubric of signs.

4.1.2 Useful signs

Augustine begins Book 2 by setting forth a general theory of signs,²⁴ which then forms the basis for his prescriptions concerning the interpretation of Scripture.²⁵ Augustine first

²³ Ibid., 1.39.43, CCL 32:31. "Homo itaque fide et spe et caritate subnixus ea que inconcussa retinens non indiget scripturis nisi ad alios instruendos."

²⁴ Two standard studies on Augustine's theory of signs are R. A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," *Phronesis* 2 (1957): 60-83 and B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 15 (1969): 9-49. Both can be found in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972). Other studies on Augustine's hermeneutical theory in *De doctrina* include Belford Darrell Jackson, "Semantics and Hermeneutics in Saint Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*" (PhD diss., Yale Univ., 1967) (the source of Jackson's aforementioned article); Mark D. Jordan, "Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980): 177-96; Robert William Bernard, "In Figura: Terminology Pertaining to Figurative Exegesis in the Works of Augustine of Hippo" (PhD diss., Princeton Univ., 1984), and "The Rhetoric of God in the Figurative Exegesis of Augustine," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 88-99; Christopher Kirwan, "The Nature of Speech," in *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989), 35-59; Michael Cameron, "Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis against the Donatists in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*" (PhD diss., Univ. Chicago, 1996); Karla Pollmann, *Doctrina christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana* (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1996). See also the collected essays in Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds., *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1995).

²⁵ For other studies on Augustine's theology and interpretation of Scripture (several also cited in the first chapter), see Maurice Pontet, *L'exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1944); A. D. R. Polman, *The Word of God*

redefines sign in slightly different terms from Book 1. “A sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses.”²⁶ He then divides signs into two categories, natural (*naturalia*) and given (*data*). The difference concerns the presence or absence of intent. “Natural signs are those which without a wish or any urge to signify cause something else besides themselves to be known from them.”²⁷ Examples are smoke signifying fire, footprints signifying an animal, or facial expressions signifying human moods. “Given signs are those which living things give to each other, in order to show, to the best of their ability, the emotions of their minds, or anything that they have felt or learnt.”²⁸ Amongst given signs, signs relating to the ear (as distinct from visible, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile signs) are the most prominent, and amongst these, words are by far the most numerous. Yet spoken words arise and disappear instantaneously, so letters – *signa uerborum* – have been created

according to St. Augustine, trans. A. J. Pomerans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961); Belford Darrell Jackson, “Semantics and Hermeneutics in Saint Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*” (PhD diss., Yale Univ., 1967); James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1969); Gerald Bonner, “Augustine as Biblical Scholar,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 541-63; Bertrand de Margerie, *Introduction à l’histoire de l’exégèse*, vol. 3, *Saint Augustin* (Paris: Cerf, 1983); Pamela Bright, ed. and trans., *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1999), based on *Bible de tous les temps*, vol. 3, *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. Anne-Marie La Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986); Elizabeth A. Clark, “Contesting Abraham: The Ascetic Reader and the Politics of Intertextuality,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 353-365, and “Interpretive Fate amid the Church Fathers,” in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 127-47; K. E. Greene-McCreight, *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the “Plain Sense” of Genesis 1-3*, Issues in Systematic Theology 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt, eds., *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, Collectanea Augustiniana (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, with special contributions by various scholars (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1149-1233; Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

²⁶ *Doc. Chr.* 2.1.1, CCL 32:32. “Signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem uenire ...”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.1.2, CCL, 32:32. “Naturalia sunt, quae sine uoluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.2.3, CCL 32:33. “Data uero signa sunt, quae sibi quaeque uiuentia inuicem dant ad demonstrandos, quantum possunt, motus animi sui uel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet.”

to preserve them.²⁹ Scripture consists of such signs written by God through humans.³⁰ The purpose of reading Scripture is “to find out the thoughts and wishes of those by whom it was written down and, through them, the will of God, which we believe these men followed as they spoke.”³¹

The challenge is that Scripture contains many obscurities, at least in part because of human sin. Augustine traces the diversity of languages back to the expression of pride in the incident with the tower of Babel, “when wicked men justly received incompatible languages to match their incompatible minds.”³² In other texts, he also suggests that the very fact that we even need signs to receive divine communication is a result of the fall, reflecting our lack of direct access to God.³³ Nevertheless, Augustine asserts, the obscurities of Scripture also have a positive purpose according to God’s will. “I have no doubt that this is all divinely predetermined, so that pride may be subdued by hard work and intellects which tend to despise things that are easily discovered may be rescued from boredom and reinvigorated.”³⁴

²⁹ Ibid., 2.4.5, CCL 32:34.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.2.3, CCL 32:33. “Signa diuinitus data, quae scripturis sanctis continentur, per homines nobis indicata sunt, qui ea conscripserunt.”

³¹ Ibid., 2.5.6, CCL 32:35. “...quam legentes nihil aliud appetunt quam cogitationes uoluntatemque illorum, a quibus conscripta est, inuenire et per illas uoluntatem dei, secundum quam tales homines locutos credimus.” For a more nuanced position on this matter, cf. *conf.* 12.18.27, 12.25.35-26.36, 12.30.41-32.43, and the discussion in de Margerie, *Saint Augustin*, 61-107. For more in *doc. Chr.* on knowing the will of God, see 2.7.9, 2.9.14.

³² *Doc. Chr.* 2.4.5, CCL 32:34. “...ubi homines impii non solum animos, sed etiam uoces dissonas habere meruerunt.”

³³ See Ulrich Duchrow, “‘Signum’ und ‘Superbia’ beim jungen Augustin (386-390),” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 7 (1961): 369-372; Bernard, “The Rhetoric of God in the Figurative Exegesis of Augustine”; David Dawson, “Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading, and the Motions of the Soul in *De doctrina christiana*,” in Arnold and Bright, *De doctrina christiana*, 123-41.

³⁴ *Doc. Chr.* 2.6.7, CCL 32:35. “Quod totum prouisum esse diuinitus non dubito ad edomandam labore superbiam et intellectum a fastidio reuocandum, cui facile inuestigata plerumque uilescunt.” One recalls *Confessions*, written around the same time as this passage, where Augustine says he initially found Scripture distasteful because of his pride, but came to appreciate it by learning to read it spiritually (*conf.* 3.5.9; 5.14.24; 6.4.6-8).

These obscurities also exist to bring us pleasure. In what Rowan Williams calls “a rather awkward and inconclusive chapter,”³⁵ Augustine wrestles with the difference of experience derived from hearing a straightforward doctrinal statement as opposed to learning the same truth by means of figures. After quoting a passage from Song of Songs, he muses, “Exactly why this picture gives me greater pleasure than if no such imagery were presented by the divine books, since the topic is the same, and the lesson the same, it is difficult to say; this, however, is another question entirely. But no one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty.”³⁶ Scripture is intentionally structured to contain both plain and obscure passages. The former stave off a kind of spiritual hunger, and the latter keep us from boredom, but the content of both is the same. “Virtually nothing is unearthed from these obscurities which cannot be found quite plainly expressed somewhere else.”³⁷

Augustine recommends pursuing such obscurities only after attaining a basic familiarity with the plainer parts of Scripture.³⁸ The first step is simply to read the texts, even if they are not fully understood, and if possible to memorize them. The next step is to attend closely to the ethical or doctrinal content found therein.³⁹ These interpretive tasks are sufficient in and of themselves to fulfill the purpose of Scripture. “In clearly expressed passages of scripture one can find all the things that concern faith and the moral life (namely hope and love, treated in my

³⁵ Williams, “Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine’s *De doctrina*,” 142.

³⁶ *Doc. Chr.* 2.6.8, CCL 32:36. “Sed quare suavius uideam, quam si nulla de diuinis libris talis similitudo promeretur, cum res eadem sit eademque cognitio, difficile est dicere et alia quaestio est. Nunc tamen nemo ambigit et per similitudines libentius quaeque cognosci et cum aliqua difficultate quaesita multo gratius inueniri.”

³⁷ *Ibid.* “Nihil enim fere de illis obscuritatibus cruitur, quod non planissime dictum alibi reperiatur.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.9.14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.9.14, CCL 32:41. “... uel praecepta uiuendi uel regulae credendi ...”

previous book).”⁴⁰ Then one can proceed to the obscurities, using obvious and indisputable passages to illuminate obscure or ambiguous ones. Memory is a major tool at this step of the interpretive process.

Having set forth these basic principles for interpreting Scripture, Augustine turns his attention in the rest of Books 2-3 to more detailed advice concerning four categories of signs, delineated as follows. “There are two reasons why written texts fail to be understood: their meaning may be veiled either by unknown (*ignotis*) signs or by ambiguous (*ambiguis*) signs. Signs are either literal (*propria*) or metaphorical (*translata*). They are called literal when used to signify the things for which they were invented ... they are metaphorical when the actual things which we signify by the particular words are used to signify something else.”⁴¹ The word “ox” literally signifies the animal that goes by that name, but metaphorically signifies a worker in the gospel (1 Cor. 9:9) in that the animal is a signified thing that itself signifies something else.⁴² Book 2 focuses on unknown literal and metaphorical signs, and Book 3 on ambiguous literal and metaphorical signs. For our purposes, Augustine’s treatment of metaphorical signs is of most interest.

Augustine’s chief advice for unknown metaphorical signs is to gain more knowledge about both languages and things.⁴³ The former illuminates the meaning of symbolic words, like “Siloam” or “Adam” or “Jerusalem.” The latter embraces knowledge of nature, numbers, and

⁴⁰ Ibid. “In his enim, quae aperte in scripturis posita sunt, inveniuntur illa omnia, quae continent fidem moresque uiuendi, spem scilicet atque caritatem, de quibus libro superiore tractauimus.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.10.15, CCL 32:41.

⁴² Augustine does not define the terms *ignotus* or *ambiguus* in *De doctrina christiana*, and the distinction between the two is not particularly clear. He does, however, provide a fuller discussion of difference between *obscuritas* and *ambiguitas* in *dial.* 8. See Jackson, “Semantics and Hermeneutics in Saint Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*,” 160-61.

⁴³ *Doc. Chr.* 2.16.23, CCL 32:48.

music. The knowledge of nature, for instance, sheds light on Christ's command to be as wise as serpents (Mt. 10:16). A serpent typically presents its body to a potential assailant to avoid damage to the head. Since the church is the body of Christ, those under persecution should present themselves as martyrs instead of denying their head. It is also observed that serpents can squeeze through narrow passages and shed their old skins. These two observations correspond to other biblical injunctions, neither of which actually mention serpents: Christ's call to enter by the narrow gate (Mt. 7:13) and Paul's exhortation to put off the old self and put on the new (Eph. 4:22-24). By extending the serpent metaphor, Augustine sets off a series of intratextual resonances across a wide range of biblical passages that do not even depend on explicit verbal cues. We recall that Augustine's definition of a metaphorical sign included at least two steps: a sign points to a thing (the primary referent), which in turn points to another thing (the secondary referent). Augustine's examples suggest that what makes a metaphorical sign unknown could be lack of information concerning either the sign ("Siloam") or the primary referent (the animal serpent), though it is not clear that Augustine provides these examples in such an explicitly schematized manner.

Interpreting ambiguous metaphorical signs is a very different process, one that demands "no ordinary care and attention."⁴⁴ This category of sign is the culminating topic of Augustine's discussion in Books 2-3, and the one that most appropriately corresponds to Augustine's earlier reference to the Song of Songs on the pleasure of discovering truth through obscurities. It is also the one that best encompasses the general practice of figural exegesis.⁴⁵ There are two errors one

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.5.9, CCL 32:82.

⁴⁵ Pollmann, *Doctrina christiana*, 155. "Daß die nun folgende Behandlung der *verborum translatorum ambiguitates* über 80% des dritten Buches einnimmt, zeigt den großen methodischen Aufwand, den Augustin ihnen zugesteht; er subsumiert darunter die gesamte Figurelexegese."

must avoid with these signs. The first, and the one that vexes Augustine most, is to interpret figurative expressions literally.⁴⁶ The other, hardly addressed, is to interpret literal expressions figuratively.⁴⁷

Augustine condemns the first error harshly. Taking signs as things (*signa pro rebus accipere*) is “carnal,” “death to the soul,” “a miserable kind of spiritual slavery,” degradation to the level of beasts.⁴⁸ Paul’s words (2 Cor. 3:6) describe such a situation appropriately: “The letter kills but the spirit gives life.” The chief examples of this mistake concern the practices of the Old Testament. One must not think the word “Sabbath” pertains only to a literal day, nor that the word “sacrifice” refers only to a ritual act with animals and produce. This would be a failure to raise “the mind’s eye above the physical creation so as to absorb the eternal light.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Augustine judges the Jews better than the pagans. The Jews may not have understood the purpose of the ceremonies, but they at least knew to worship the one, true God. The Gentiles, on the other hand, indulged themselves in idolatry and worshipped images of the created order. Augustine sets the Jews and pagans against each other in an argument from the lesser to the greater. “If, then, it is a carnal form of slavery to follow a sign divinely instituted for a useful purpose instead of the thing that it was instituted to represent (*signum utiliter institutum pro ipsa re sequi*), is it not a far worse to accept as things the humanly instituted signs of useless things (*inutilium rerum signa instituta pro rebus accipere*)?”⁵⁰ The language here reflects the distinction

⁴⁶ *Doc. Chr.* 3.5.9, CCL 32:82. “Nam in principio cauendum est, ne figuratam locutionem ad litteram accipias.”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.10.14, CCL 32:86. “Huic autem obseruationi, qua cauemus figuratam locutionem, id est, translata[m] quasi propriam sequi, adiugenda etiam illa est, ne propriam quasi figuratam uelimus accipere.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.5.9, CCL 32:83.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.5.9, CCL 32:83.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.7.11, CCL 32:85. “Si ergo signum utiliter institutum pro ipsa re sequi, cui significandae institutum est, carnalis est seruitus, quanto magis inutilium rerum signa instituta pro rebus accipere?”

between use and enjoyment set forth in Book 1. Jewish signs were useful in the sense that they referred to the one true God, while pagan signs referred to nothing useful at all. Christ brought liberty to those under useful Jewish signs, since he was the very thing to which the signs referred. Pagan signs, on the other hand, were simply to be destroyed, as the Gentiles were called to turn not to “useful signs,” but to the realities those Jewish practices signified.⁵¹

The response of the Jews to Jesus revealed their posture toward their ceremonies. Since Jesus did not observe their practices, those who clung to these signs rejected him and refused to believe that he was God, or had come from God.⁵² But those who at least learned from the signs to worship the one true God received Christ and founded the first church, thereby demonstrating the usefulness (*utilitas*) of having been under the guardianship of a pedagogue. Prior to the coming of Christ, they were “very close to being spiritual (*proximi spiritalibus*)” even though they did not know how to interpret the signs spiritually (*quamuis quomodo spiritaliter essent intellegenda nescirent*).⁵³ Now, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they immediately sold their possessions to distribute them to the poor – something no Gentile church ever did, since the Gentiles had not received the benefits of spiritual preparation provided by useful, Jewish signs.

This treatment of ambiguous metaphorical signs brings Augustine full circle. In Book 1, he had argued that God is *summa res* and alone to be enjoyed. Yet the enjoyment of God was made possible by the incarnate Christ, depicted in Book 1 in the same terms used to define given

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.8.12.

⁵² Ibid., 3.6.10, CCL 32:83.

⁵³ Ibid., 3.6.10, CCL 32:84. “Namque illi quia proximi spiritalibus fuerunt (in ipsis enim temporalibus et carnalibus uotis atque signis, quamuis quomodo spiritaliter essent intellegenda nescirent, unum tamen didicerant uenerari aeternum deum) ...”

signs in Book 2: both present the external expression of an inner thought.⁵⁴ Christ is both goal and way of our pilgrimage on earth, fully God and thus *summa res*, but also pure *signum* – that which perfectly represents the reality to which it refers and whose sole function is so to refer. The Jewish ceremonies were useful signs in that they referred to Christ, but they were not to be preserved for their own sake. To cling to Sabbath or sacrifice is to enjoy what should be used and to miss the one who came as sign that we might participate in ultimate reality.⁵⁵

Augustine's subsequent discussion concerning how to distinguish between literal and figurative expressions further reveals the continuity of his thought with Book 1. There his treatment of use and enjoyment led to a discussion on love and the conclusion that the purpose of Scripture is to promote love of God and neighbor. Here love becomes the central hermeneutical principle for resolving ambiguous metaphorical signs.

Anything in the divine discourse that cannot be related either to good morals or to the true faith should be taken as figurative. Good morals have to do with our love of God and our neighbour, the true faith with our understanding of God and neighbour. The hope that each person has within his own conscience is directly related to the progress that he feels himself to be making towards the love and understanding of God and his neighbor. All this has been dealt with in Book 1.⁵⁶

As in Book 1,⁵⁷ Augustine invokes the Pauline triad. Scripture teaches us both love and faith; love and knowledge, in turn, strengthen hope. Love is the most important of these virtues, and it

⁵⁴ Compare 1.12.13 with 2.2.3.

⁵⁵ On these points, see Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's *De doctrina*." For another treatment on the analogy between language and incarnation, see Jordan, "Words and Word."

⁵⁶ *Doc. Chr.* 3.10.14, CCL 32:86. "Et iste omnino modus est, ut quicquid in sermone diuino neque ad morum honestatem neque ad fidei ueritatem proprie referri potest, figuratum esse cognoscas. Morum honestas ad diligendum deum et proximum, fidei ueritas ad cognoscendum deum et proximum pertinet. Spes autem sua cuique est in conscientia propria, quemadmodum se sentit ad dilectionem dei et proximi cognitionemque proficere. De quibus omnibus primo libro dictum est." For further discussion of this rule for figurative interpretation, see Roland J. Teske, "Criteria for Figurative Interpretation in St. Augustine," in Arnold and Bright, *De doctrina christiana*, 109-22.

⁵⁷ *Doc. Chr.* 1.37.41.

must be ordered according to the appropriate objects of use and enjoyment; otherwise, it would really be lust. “By love (*caritas*) I mean the impulse of one’s mind to enjoy God on his own account and to enjoy oneself and one’s neighbor on account of God; and by lust (*cupiditas*) I mean the impulse of one’s mind to enjoy oneself and one’s neighbour and any corporeal thing not on account of God.”⁵⁸ Since love and lust are opposite concepts, proper interpretation of Scripture will serve either the positive end of building up love or the negative end of destroying lust.

This rule is not without its difficulties, especially because what might seem inappropriate in one context may be appropriate in another. Augustine is particularly troubled by polygamy, which he prefers neither to condemn in the Old Testament saints nor to commend for present practice. In this case, his solution is not to treat accounts of polygamy figuratively but to justify the phenomenon at the literal sense – a procedure that leads to a rather lengthy and convoluted series of explanations.⁵⁹ In the end, though, Augustine is confident that the task of discerning figurative expressions can to some extent be accomplished, even if it requires great effort and careful attention.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.10.16, CCL 32:87. “Caritatem uoco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum.” Note the imprecision of language: Augustine is now comfortable with using *frui* with regard to humans, so long as it is *propter deum*. In the same paragraph, Augustine further subdivides love and lust. Lust that corrupts one’s own mind and body is called wickedness (*flagitium*). Lust that harms neighbor is wrongdoing (*facinus*). Love to benefit self is called self-interest (*utilitas*) while love to help others is kindness (*beneficientia*). Augustine uses these terms throughout the rest of Book 3 when he provides examples of his hermeneutic.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.12.20, 3.18.26-3.23.33. Augustine suggests, for instance, that the Old Testament saints did not act out of lust. They simply thought of the kingdom in earthly, not heavenly terms, and deemed the multiplication of wives conducive to perpetuating their line (3.12.20). These saints, Augustine says, demonstrated more chastity with many wives than people now with only one wife (3.18.27-3.19.28). If such arguments do not persuade, they at least reveal the creativity of Augustine’s mind.

4.1.3 Tyconius' rules

Discerning whether or not a given expression is figurative is but one task in the interpretive process. It still remains to determine the actual meaning of that expression, and this, too, has its challenges. Presumably there will be some similitude between the sign (or primary referent) and the ultimate object of reference, but there are many ways to draw analogies between different things. Thus, Augustine admonishes, "We should not imagine that there is a hard and fast rule that a word will always have the meaning that it has in a particular place."⁶⁰ Leaven, for instance, can have a positive sense (the kingdom of God is like a woman who hid her leaven in flour until it was all leavened) or a negative sense (we are to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees).

Given this concern, it would be helpful to have some more specific guidelines on how to recognize and interpret such signs. Yet just when Augustine is poised to discuss this issue further, he takes a thirty-year break. Augustine completed the first two books and the first part of Book 3 (up to 25.36) 396-97, but he did not finish the rest of Books 3 and 4 until 426 when he was preparing his *Retractationes*. The exact reason for the delay cannot be known, but as Charles Kannengiesser notes, the key section that would follow in Book 3 was a discussion of Tyconius, a former Donatist upon whose work Augustine draws heavily, and it may well be the case that Augustine's hesitations in dealing with Tyconius were the reason for the delay.⁶¹ Even

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.25.35, CCL 32:97-98. "Sed quoniam multis modis res similes rebus apparent, non putemus esse praescriptum, ut quod in aliquo loco res aliqua per similitudinem significauerit, hoc eam semper significare credamus."

⁶¹ Charles Kannengiesser, "Interrupted *De doctrina christiana*," in Arnold and Bright, *De doctrina christiana*, 3-13. Kannengiesser suggests that Augustine was not yet prepared intellectually to deal with Tyconius' work. In the introduction to his translation of *De doctrina christiana*, Hill suggests, somewhat differently, that Augustine was more concerned with the politics of invoking a Donatist (even if a rejected one) in the midst of the most significant controversy of his bishopric. Thirty years later, the Donatist controversy is basically over and Augustine's stature more established, so he can appeal to Tyconius with less hesitation. See *Teaching Christianity* (*De doctrina christiana*),

if this explanation is not right, it is nevertheless remarkable that Augustine, a North African bishop now in the twilight of his life, would dedicate the concluding section of his manual on biblical interpretation to an exegetical handbook associated with the very schismatics whose influence he spent decades trying to destroy.

Augustine introduces Tyconius thus:

A certain Tyconius, who although a Donatist himself wrote against the Donatists with irresistible power – and thereby stands convicted of having a split personality since he was unwilling to make a clean break with them – wrote a book which he called *The Book of Rules*, because in it he developed seven rules which could be used like keys to open up the secrets of the divine scriptures ... Consideration of these rules, as expounded by him, is quite helpful in penetrating the obscure parts of the divine writings.⁶²

Augustine's discussion of Tyconius is full of qualification.⁶³ Tyconius was a "Donatist heretic,"⁶⁴ he claimed too much for his rules,⁶⁵ and he often made mistakes, not just as any human would

trans. Edmund Hill, WSA 1.11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1996), 96-97. For an argument that the very section where Augustine pauses reflects his concern for Tyconius' rules, particularly with regard to the ambiguity of signs, see Pamela Bright, "Biblical Ambiguity in African Exegesis," in Arnold and Bright, *De doctrina christiana*, 25-32.

⁶² *Doc. Chr.* 3.30.42, CCL 32:102.

⁶³ On Tyconius' *Book of Rules* and Augustine's (mis)appropriation of this text, see Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1988), and a series of contributions in Pamela Bright, *Augustine and the Bible*. Pamela Bright, "'The Preponderating Influence of Augustine': A Study of the Epitomes of the *Book of Rules* of the Donatist Tyconius," 109-28; Robert A. Kugler, "Tyconius's *Mystic Rules* and the Rules of Augustine," 129-48; Charles Kannengiesser, "Augustine and Tyconius: A Conflict of Christian Hermeneutics in Roman Africa," 149-77. See also Pollmann, *Doctrina christiana*, cited above. For English translation and facing Latin edition, see Tyconius, *The Book of Rules*, trans. William S. Babcock (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989). For the purposes of this discussion, Augustine's depiction of Tyconius is more relevant than what Tyconius actually presented in his *Liber regularum*. I will thus follow the terminology Augustine uses, even if it is at variance with Tyconius himself.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.30.43, CCL 32:104.

⁶⁵ Kannengiesser and Bright argue that Augustine's criticism of Tyconius on this point is based on a misunderstanding of *regulae*, which are, on Tyconius' terms, the principles by which God wrote Scripture and not, as Augustine understood them, hermeneutical principles by which we are to interpret Scripture. See sources cited above.

but especially because of his questionable theology.⁶⁶ Tyconius rejected Donatist ecclesiology, especially in his positions that the church is universal and that it includes evil people, yet he was never willing to join the other side of the battle in North Africa – an inconsistency Augustine finds deeply perplexing. Nevertheless, Augustine does acknowledge the value of Tyconius' text and expresses his hope that others would read it, so long as they are aware of its deficiencies.

The topic Augustine interrupted in 397 and addressed anew in 426 was the manner in which various things could have multiple meanings, either contrary (*contraria*) or just different (*diuersa*). Leaven is but one example of a thing with contrary senses; lion, for instance, can signify Christ or the devil. Water produces diverse, but not necessarily contrary, associations: in one context, it can refer to people, in another, the Holy Spirit. Sometimes one word can signify two or more meanings at the same time, perhaps according to the intention of the human author and certainly according to the foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit. In such instances, Augustine says, a variety of interpretations may be acceptable so long as they fall within the bounds of Christian faith and other teachings of Scripture.⁶⁷

The chief feature Augustine appreciates about Tyconius' work is the way it recognizes and addresses this basic phenomenon. Tyconius divides his text according to specific patterns whereby one can discern in Scripture shifting or multiple referents. The sections are: 1) on the Lord and his body; 2) on the Lord's twofold body; 3) on the promise and the law; 4) on species and genus; 5) on measurements of time; 6) on recapitulation; 7) on the devil and his body.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For an illuminating treatment on the differences between Tyconius and Augustine on ecclesiology, see Joseph Ratzinger, "Beobachtungen zum Kirchenbegriff des Tyconius im « *Liber regularum* »,» *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956): 173-85.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.27.38-28.39.

⁶⁸ 1) De domine et eius corpore; 2) de domini corpore bipertito; 3) de promissis et lege; 4) de specie et genere; 5) de temporibus; 6) de recapitulatione; 7) de diabolo et eius corpore.

Augustine does not consider the third rule a hermeneutical principle so much as a basic framework for understanding faith and works, and dismisses it with reference to the Pelagian controversy. The other rules, though, all concern ways in which one thing is understood by another, which is precisely what it means for something to be a metaphorical expression.⁶⁹

Thus, the first rule concerns the manner in which Scripture switches between head (Christ) and body (church) without warning, and the necessity of discerning which statements refer to Christ and which to the church. One detects here the roots of *totus Christus*, the chief hermeneutical principle of Augustine's expositions on the Psalms.⁷⁰ The second rule explains why blessings and curses can be addressed to the same group at the same time. The church as it appears now is mixed, and includes both the people of God and those who are not genuinely united with Christ. Sometimes Scripture addresses one group, sometimes the other, again without obvious signals that a shift has occurred.⁷¹

The fourth rule receives the most extended discussion. Under this principle, one part (species) can represent a whole (genus). A city can represent a nation, a nation can represent the world, and a figure like Solomon can represent Christ and the church.⁷² As with the first two rules, Scripture can switch imperceptibly between species and genus. Ezekiel's warning of imminent judgment refers directly to physical Israel (36:17-19), but his subsequent words of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3.37.56.

⁷⁰ Two studies on this issue are Cameron, "Augustine's Construction of Figurative Exegesis against the Donatists in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*," and Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding*, both cited above.

⁷¹ Augustine is displeased with Tyconius' title for this section, *de domini corpore bipertito*, and would prefer something like *de domini corpore uero atque permixto* or *uero atque simulato*, or *de permixta ecclesia*. Augustine does not think the church is "bipartite," consisting of both good and evil. False Christians only appear to be part of the church, but are not actually, even now before the final judgment. This is different from Tyconius' claim that both true and false Christians really are part of the church. See Ratzinger, "Beobachtungen zum Kirchenbegriff des Tyconius im « *Liber regularum* »."

⁷² The logic concerning Solomon seems to be that he is a part of the church, which is the body of Christ. According to this extended series of connections, Solomon as species can therefore represent Christ or the church as genus.

promise refer to the church amongst all the nations (36:23-29). “‘Spiritual Israel’ becomes not a matter of a single race, but of all the races (*non unius gentis, sed omnium*) promised to the fathers in their seed, which is Christ [Gal. 3:16]. This spiritual Israel is distinguished from the fleshly Israel, consisting of a single people (*unius gentis*), by the novelty of grace, not by nobility of race (*novitate gratiae, non nobilitate patriae*), and by mentality, not nationality (*mente, non gente*).”⁷³ New Testament passages confirm this reading by drawing upon Ezekiel’s imagery (the conjunction of water and spirit, the contrast between stone and flesh) in their reflections upon the church. Moreover, even references to the church can be distinguished according to redemptive history. When Ezekiel mentions land (*terra*), for instance, two options present themselves. The land could refer to the New Testament church, since the church “is itself the land (*terra*) of the blessed, ‘the land (*terra*) of the living’ [Ps. 26:13 (27:13)].”⁷⁴ Or the prophecy could also refer to the “land (*terra*) of a future generation, since there will be ‘a new heaven and a new earth (*terra*)’ [Rev. 21:1], in which the unjust will not be able to live.”⁷⁵

Tyconius’ *Book of Rules*, then, furnishes Augustine with a basic recognition that there are in Scripture specific patterns of ambiguous metaphorical signification. Scripture is constituted such that it includes under the rubric of individual expressions multiple referents: the meaning of an Old Testament sign may simply be its primary referent; or this primary referent may function as a sign to a secondary referent; and there may be multiple options for how to understand the secondary referent itself. Thus, a sign may refer literally to Israel, or figuratively to Christ; but Christ and the church are one as head and body, so the sign could also refer to the church; and

⁷³ Ibid., 3.24.48-49, CCL 32:109. Green does well to capture the rhyme of Augustine’s Latin.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.24.49, CCL 32:109.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.24.49, CCL 32:110.

the church itself can be understood in multiple ways according to its place in redemptive history. Discerning the appropriate referents demands great care, especially since the text does not always flag when a shift of referent has occurred. Yet on Augustine's terms, it is precisely the difficulty of this challenge that exercises the mind, prompting humility and ultimately delight. For all the obscurities of Scripture ultimately lead us, in one way or another, back to Christ, the *patria* of our journey and the only appropriate object of enjoyment. Interpreting Scripture in light of Christ is therefore an exercise in sanctification, coextensive with the hermeneutic of love.

4.2 Calvin

Calvin discusses the purpose of Scripture according to the restoration of the knowledge of God. Knowledge of God, though, is a twofold concept, involving knowledge of God the Creator and knowledge of God the Redeemer, and Calvin's treatment of Scripture must be understood in terms of both of these dimensions. Calvin's first and most obvious discussion of Scripture comes in *Institutes* Book 1 on the knowledge of God the Creator, but a second and equally important section on this issue comes in Book 3, Ch. 1-2 on the relationship between faith, the Holy Spirit, and the knowledge of God the Redeemer. I will consider each of these sections in turn.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ For other studies on Calvin's theology and interpretation of Scripture (several also cited in the first chapter), see Paul L. Lehmann, "The Reformers' Use of the Bible," *Theology Today* 3 (1946): 328-44; Hans Heinrich Wolf, *Die Einheit des Bundes: Das Verhältnis von Altem und Neuem Testament bei Calvin* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1958); Wilhelm Vischer, "Calvin, exégète de l'Ancien Testament," *La Revue Réformée* 18 (1967): 1-20; Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Calvin's Exegetical Principles," *Interpretation* 31:1 (1977): 8-18; Richard C. Gamble, "Brevitas et Facilitas: Toward an Understanding of Calvin's Hermeneutic," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47 (1985): 1-17, "Exposition and Method in Calvin," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 153-65, "Calvin as Theologian and Exegete: Is There Anything New?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988): 178-93, "Calvin's Theological Method: Word and Spirit, A Case Study," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of John Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 10 (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1988), 63-75, as well as a volume of articles he edited, *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 6, *Calvin and Hermeneutics* (New York: Garland, 1992); Elsie Anne McKee, "Exegesis, Theology, and Development in Calvin's *Institutio*: A Methodological Suggestion," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong (Louisville, KY:

4.2.1 Scripture and the knowledge of God the Creator

The knowledge of God is the first topic Calvin addresses in the *Institutes* and it remains a central theme throughout the entire text.⁷⁷ Knowledge of God involves not only assent that God exists, but also a posture of religious devotion that looks to God as the fountain of all good things. “Now, the knowledge of God, as I understand it, is that by which we not only conceive that there is a God but also grasp what befits us and is proper to his glory, in fine, what is to our advantage to know him. Indeed, we shall not say that, properly speaking, God is known where

Westminster/John Knox, 1989): 154-72, and “Some Reflections on Relating Calvin’s Exegesis and Theology,” in Burrows and Rorem, *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective*, 215-26; Richard A. Muller, “The Hermeneutic of Promise and Fulfillment in Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament Prophecies of the Kingdom,” in *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. David C. Steinmetz, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 11 (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990), 68-82, and *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 2, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003); T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), and *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); John Lee Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors, and His Contemporaries* (Geneva: Droz, 1992); I. John Hesselink, *Calvin’s Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992); Peter De Klerk, ed., *Calvin as Exegete: Papers and Responses Presented at the Ninth Colloquium on Calvin and Calvin Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Studies Society, 1995); Susan Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin’s Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1994); David L. Puckett, *John Calvin’s Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995); David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995); K. E. Greene-McCreight, *Ad Litteram*, cited above, and “We Are Companions of the Patriarchs’ or Scripture Absorbs Calvin’s World,” *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 213-24; Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin and Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), “Christ and History: Hermeneutical Convergence in Calvin and Its Challenge to Biblical Theology,” *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 1-35; Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See: Calvin’s Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), and “John Calvin and the Interpretation of the Bible,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Medieval through the Reformation Periods*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 341-71; Raymond A. Blacketer, *The School of God: Pedagogy and Rhetoric in Calvin’s Interpretation of Deuteronomy*, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms 3 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006); R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin’s First Commentaries*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Donald K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

⁷⁷ The seminal text on this issue is Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology* (1952; exp. ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), to which I will make frequent recourse throughout this discussion. This edition includes a reprinting of his earlier article, “The Structure of Calvin’s Theological Thought As Influenced by the Two-Fold Knowledge of God,” originally published in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (New York: Peter Lang, 1984).

there is no religion (*religio*) or piety (*pietas*).”⁷⁸ This knowledge can be divided into two categories. Knowledge of God the Redeemer involves recognition of the reconciliation made possible through the mediation of Christ, while knowledge of God the Creator is “the primal and simple knowledge to which the very order of nature would have led us if Adam had remained upright,”⁷⁹ an awareness that God “supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and attends us with all sorts of blessings.”⁸⁰

Calvin insists that all humans have some awareness of God the Creator, both through internal and external means. On the one hand, “There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity (*divinitatis sensum*).”⁸¹ On the other hand, God’s wisdom can also be seen in the glories of the created order, “a sort of mirror (*speculi*) in which we can contemplate God,”⁸² and especially in the marvels that make up humans themselves.⁸³ Yet sinful humans suppress and reject this knowledge of God in ignorant, impious, and arrogant expressions of idolatry, superstition, and hypocrisy. The result of this condition is that “no real piety remains in the world,”⁸⁴ and that humans have no excuse for their failure to recognize

⁷⁸ *Inst.* 1.2.1, OS 3:34. On the importance of the metaphor of God as a fountain of good, see B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), especially pp. 21-49. Gerrish argues that piety, understood as thankfulness to God, is the central concept in Calvin’s understanding of true religion.

⁷⁹ *Inst.* 1.2.1, OS 3:34. “Atque hic nondum attingo eam notitiae speciem qua homines in se perdit ac maledicti Deum redemptorem in Christo mediatore apprehendunt: sed tantum de prima illa et simplici loquor, ad quam nos deduceret genuinus naturae ordo si integer stetisset Adam.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* “... Deum fictorem nostrum sua nos potentia fulcire, providentia regere, bonitate fovere, omnique benedictionum genere prosequi.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1.3.1, OS 3:37.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1.5.1, OS 3:45.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1.5.2-4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.4.1, OS 3:41.

God. Our consciences convict us of our ingratitude, such that we cannot appeal to ignorance for our impiety.

In Book 1, Ch. 6, Calvin turns to the role of Scripture in addressing this fallen condition. Creation is a dazzling theater of God's glory,⁸⁵ but those with bad vision cannot appreciate it. Scripture, then, is God's means of restoring our sight. "Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God."⁸⁶ Calvin traces the formation of Scripture back to God's self-revelations to the patriarchs – whether "by oracles and visions or by the work and ministry of men"⁸⁷ – which they then committed to posterity. Given human propensity toward error, false religion, and forgetfulness of God, it soon became necessary for these oracles to be preserved in written form.⁸⁸ Moses was the key figure in this process, and the prophets would later function as interpreters of the law he passed down.⁸⁹ Now, though, daily oracles have ceased, leaving Scripture the sole means by which God continues to rule humanity.

Calvin argues that the knowledge of God the Creator derived through Scripture is substantially the same as that derived through creation. Both Scripture and creation demonstrate

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1.5.8, 1.6.2.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1.6.1, OS 3:60. "Nempe sicuti senes, vel lippi, et quicumque oculis caligant, si vel pulcherrimum volumen illis obiicias, quanvis agnoscant esse aliquid scriptum, vix tamen duas voces contexere poterunt: specillis autem interpositis adiuti, distincte legere incipient: ita Scriptura confusam alioqui Dei notitiam in mentibus nostris colligens, discussa caligine liquido nobis verum Deum ostendit."

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.6.2, OS 3:62.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1.6.3.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.6.2.

that God is characterized by eternity, self-existence, kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, truth, power, and might. “Indeed, the knowledge of God set forth for us in Scripture is destined for the same goal as the knowledge whose imprint shines in his creatures, in that it invites us first to fear God, then to trust him.”⁹⁰ This is not to say that there is no unique knowledge of God the Creator derived from Scripture: Scripture reveals content about the Trinity, creation, and providence that could not have been known through creation alone.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Calvin primarily discusses the purpose of Scripture concerning the knowledge of God the Creator in terms of restoration. Scripture clarifies our vision such that we can now perceive what we could have seen were it not for the fall.

For Calvin, the authority of Scripture simply is the authority of God. “Hence the Scriptures attain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if the living words of God were heard.”⁹² Calvin holds both that Scripture is self-authenticating, and that the ultimate source of our confidence in Scripture is the secret testimony of the Spirit,⁹³ thus affirming both an external and internal dimension to the authority of Scripture.⁹⁴ On the one hand, Scripture has its own intrinsic authority, since it presents the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1.10.2, OS 3:87. “Porro non in alium scopum destinatur, quae in Scripturis nobis proponitur Dei notitia, quam quae in creaturis impressa nitet: nempe ad Dei timorem primum, deinde ad fiduciam nos invitat.”

⁹¹ On this point, see Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 124-47.

⁹² *Inst.* 1.7.1, OS 3:65. “Sed quoniam non quotidiana e caelis redduntur oracula, et Scripturae solae extant quibus visum est Domino suam perpetuae memoriae veritatem consecrare: non alio iure plenam apud fideles auctoritatem obtinent, quam ubi statuunt e caelo fluxisse, acsi vivae ipsae Dei voces illic exaudirentur.” See *ibid.*, 1.7.4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.7.4-5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.5.5. “God works in his elect in two ways: within, through his Spirit; without, through his Word.” For a fuller discussion on the external and internal dimensions of the authority of Scripture, see Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 89-124. Dowey stresses the priority in Calvin's thought on the internal confirmation of the authority of Scripture, though he also argues that Calvin's position on the external authority of Scripture depends in part on a literal dictation theory of inspiration.

very words of God. On the other hand, Scripture produces assent only when the Spirit provides internal confirmation.⁹⁵

This position on the authority of Scripture leads to two negative corollaries. First, Calvin rejects the idea that the authority of Scripture depends on the consent of the church. As Paul testifies, the church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles (Eph. 2:20). Thus, the church “receives and gives its seal of approval to the Scriptures,”⁹⁶ but it does not establish the authority of Scripture. “As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended upon the decision of men!”⁹⁷ Second, Calvin denies that the authority of Scripture depends on rational arguments. While he acknowledges a number of considerations that support the authority of Scripture – its antiquity,⁹⁸ miracles,⁹⁹ prophecies,¹⁰⁰ embarrassing details (that reveal the honesty of the biblical authors);¹⁰¹ the preservation of the Law and the Prophets,¹⁰² the heavenly majesty of its doctrines (despite the simplicity of its authors),¹⁰³ the unfailing testimony of the church,¹⁰⁴ and the witness of martyrs¹⁰⁵ – he ultimately considers them but “secondary aids to our

⁹⁵ This dynamic corresponds to what Brian G. Armstrong calls the “hypothetical” character of Calvin’s thought. See his “*Duplex cognitio Dei*, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form, and Purpose in Calvin’s Theology,” in McKee and Armstrong, eds., *Probing the Reformed Tradition*, 135-53, based on his earlier “The Nature and Structure of Calvin’s Thought according to the *Institutes*: Another Look,” in *John Calvin’s Institutes: His Opus Magnum* (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Potchefstroom Univ. for Christian Higher Education, 1986), 55-81.

⁹⁶ *Inst.* 1.7.2, OS 3:66. “... illam recipit, ac suffragio suo obsignat ...”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.7.1, OS 3:66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.8.3-4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.8.5-6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.8.8.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.8.4.

¹⁰² Calvin cites Augustine, who says the Jews, “Christ’s most violent enemies,” served as “‘bookmen’ of the Christian church” in this regard. *Ibid.*, 1.8.10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.8.11. Cf. *ibid.*, 1.8.1-2.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.8.12.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.8.13.

feebleness.”¹⁰⁶ “Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁷

These reflections reveal the close connection in Calvin’s thought between Word and Spirit.¹⁰⁸ The Spirit is the author of Scripture, and it is the task of the Spirit to confirm Scripture in the hearts of individual believers. Therefore, there is no question of a contradiction between Word and Spirit,¹⁰⁹ nor does the written character of Scripture stand in some way opposed to the dynamism of the Spirit.¹¹⁰ “For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God’s face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely, in the Word ... [God] sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word.”¹¹¹

4.2.2 The twofold knowledge of God

Though Calvin’s first discussion of Scripture focuses on knowledge of God the Creator, this knowledge is only available for those who also have knowledge of God the Redeemer, and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1.8.13, OS 3:81.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. “Quare tum vere demum ad salvificam Dei cognitionem Scriptura satisfaciet, ubi interiori Spiritus sancti persuasione fundata fuerit eius certitudo.”

¹⁰⁸ For further discussion of this issue, see Gamble, “Calvin’s Theological Method.”

¹⁰⁹ *Inst.* 1.9.2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.9.1.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 1.9.3. OS 3:84. “Mutuo enim quodam nexu Dominus verbi Spiritusque sui certitudinem inter se copulavit: ut, solida verbi religio animis nostris insidat, ubi affulget Spiritus qui nos illic Dei faciem contemplari faciat: ut vicissim nullo hallucinationis timore Spiritum amplexemur, ubi illum in sua imagine, hoc est in verbo, recognoscimus. Ita est sane. Non verbum hominibus subitae ostentationis causa in medium protulit Deus, quod Spiritus sui adventu extemplo aboleret, sed eundem Spiritum cuius virtute verbum administraverat, submitit, qui suum opus efficaci verbi confirmatione absolveret.”

the latter concept exercises more influence over Calvin's theology than the former. The distinction between knowledge of God the Creator and knowledge of God the Redeemer is a central feature of the structure of the *Institutes*, and deserves general consideration before a more direct treatment of Calvin's position on the relation between Scripture and knowledge of God the Redeemer.

If the very titles of Books 1 and 2 (on the knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer, respectively) did not already indicate the weight Calvin places on the twofold character of the knowledge of God, he also flags this distinction multiple times throughout his exposition of various theological topics. The first instance, in Book 1, Ch. 2, has already been noted. Later in Book 1, Calvin appeals to the same distinction with regard to the patriarchs: Adam, Noah, and Abraham recognized God "not only as Creator but also as Redeemer," and "they arrived at both from the Word. First in order came that kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp who that God is who founded and governs the universe. Then that other inner knowledge was added, which alone quickens dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the sole Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as the Redeemer."¹¹² This passage reveals that the distinction between God the Creator and God the Redeemer does not correspond to the distinction between the Old and New Testaments: it was not just New Testament figures but Adam, Noah, and Abraham who enjoyed knowledge of God as both Creator and Redeemer. Nor does the distinction between God the Creator and God the Redeemer arise from the distinction between the Father and the Son. This explains Calvin's

¹¹² Ibid., 1.6.1, OS 3:61. For other references, see Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 43-45.

otherwise curious choice to treat the doctrine of the Trinity in Book 1. One might have thought this topic should wait until Book 2, since the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed only after the coming of Christ. But Calvin treats the doctrine of the Trinity with an eye toward the divinity and relations of the persons of the Trinity, and not with regard to their work in redemption, so he discusses the doctrine in Book 1 instead. He explicitly limits his discussion of the second person of the Trinity to issues concerning the divinity of the eternal Son, postponing discussion of Christ as Mediator until Book 2.¹¹³

The clearest treatment of the distinction between God the Creator and God the Redeemer is found in Book 2, Ch. 6, which represents a turning point in the structure of the *Institutes*. Book 2, Ch. 1-5 consist of an extended exposition on the miserable condition of humanity after the Fall, with various discussions on providence, original sin, and the corruption of the mind and will. But this section simply prepares the way for the discussion that will occupy the rest of Book 2, the redemption of humanity in Christ. “The whole human race perished in the person of Adam. Consequently that original excellence and nobility which we recounted would be of no profit to us but would rather redound to our greater shame, until God, who does not recognize as his handiwork men defiled and corrupted by sin, appeared as Redeemer in the person of his only-begotten Son.”¹¹⁴ In our postlapsarian condition, Calvin asserts, the only means by which humanity may be restored to knowledge of God is through faith in Christ.

¹¹³ In Book 1, Ch. 13, see paragraphs 9, 11, 23, and 24.

¹¹⁴ *Inst.* 2.6.1, OS 3:320. “Quum in Adae persona perierit totum humanum genus, nobis adeo nihil prodesset illa quam memoravimus originis praestantia et nobilitas, ut magis cedat in maiorem ignominiam, donec in Filii sui unigeniti persona Redemptor appareat Deus, qui homines peccato foedatos et corruptos pro suo opere non agnoscit.”

Logically, this position entails either that there was no knowledge of God during Old Testament times, since Christ had not yet been revealed, or that God was somehow known in Christ even before the incarnation. Calvin opts for the latter position. “Accordingly, apart from the Mediator, God never showed favor toward that ancient people, nor ever gave hope of grace to them. I pass over the sacrifices of the law, which plainly and openly taught believers to seek salvation nowhere else than in the atonement that Christ alone carries out. I am only saying that the blessed and happy state of the church always had its foundation in the person of Christ.”¹¹⁵ On the one hand, God’s promise to Abraham would not be fully realized until Christ appeared; on the other hand, even the original adoption of Abraham’s descendents was grounded in Christ’s mediation. While Calvin acknowledges that the Old Testament authors did not always speak of Christ in the most explicit terms, he argues that the evidence of the prophets reveals widespread hope for a Mediator. After surveying this material in the prophecies of Hannah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, he concludes, “Since God cannot without the Mediator be propitious toward the human race, under the law Christ was always set before the holy fathers as the end to which they should direct their faith.”¹¹⁶

Again, it is clear that the distinction between God the Creator and God the Redeemer does not correspond to the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. Rather, the chronological fulcrum of the knowledge of God is the fall. Knowledge of God the Creator refers to the knowledge of God we would have had of God if we had not sinned; knowledge of God

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1.6.2, OS 3:321. “Ac proinde veteri populo nunquam se Deus ostendit propitium, nec spem gratiae unquam fecit absque Mediatore. Omitto sacrificia Legis, quibus palam et aperte edocti fuerunt fideles, non alibi quam in expiatione quae a solo Christo peracta est, quaerendam salutem esse. Hoc tantum dico, beatum et foelicem Ecclesiae statum semper in Christi persona fuisse fundatum.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1.6.2, OS 3:323. “Hinc iam satis liquet, quia non potest Deus propitius humano genere esse absque Mediatore, sanctis Patribus sub Lege Christum semper fuisse obiectum, ad quem fidem suam dirigerent.”

the Redeemer refers to the knowledge of God now revealed to us in response to our fallen condition. Scripture plays a central role in restoring us to knowledge of God, revealing to us knowledge of redemption that was not available through creation and enabling us to see in creation the fingerprints of God we would have perceived were it not for the fall. It is in this sense that Scripture acts as spectacles that allow us to enjoy the glorious theater of God's creation.¹¹⁷

The rest of Book 2 proceeds, as we have already seen, with discussions on the Law, the relation between the testaments, and especially the work of Christ as Mediator. This last topic addresses the external basis of redemption and naturally leads to Books 3-4, which treat the application of Christ's redemptive work, first with regard to the internal renewal of the Holy Spirit (Book 3) and then with regard to the external means God uses to promote the work of the Spirit (Book 4). In particular, Book 3, Ch. 2 provides an extensive discussion on the nature of faith that reveals Calvin's position on the role of Scripture in restoring humanity to knowledge of God the Redeemer. This chapter thus corresponds to the treatment we have considered in Book 1, Ch. 6-10 on the role of Scripture in restoring humanity to knowledge of God the Creator.

4.2.3 Scripture and the knowledge of God the Redeemer

Calvin begins Book 3 by invoking a distinction between the external and internal dimensions of salvation. The mediatorial work of Christ discussed in Book 2 establishes the objective basis for our redemption, but "as long as Christ remains outside of us (*extra nos*), and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race

¹¹⁷ On this point, in dialogue with the debate between Barth and Brunner over natural theology, see Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 131-46. See also Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 144-46.

remains useless and of no value to us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours (*nostrum fieret*) and to dwell with us (*in nobis habitare*).¹¹⁸ In the opening chapters of Book 3, then, Calvin first provides a brief introduction to the Holy Spirit, the agent who unites us with Christ (Ch. 1), before turning to faith, the means by which the Spirit so unites us (Ch. 2).

Calvin's interest in Ch. 2 is in saving faith, not just any manner of belief. He therefore begins this chapter by defining faith according to the basics of redemptive history. Faith is the means of receiving the deliverance of Christ from the eternal punishment we deserved for our failure to obey the law perfectly. Later, in his clearest and most programmatic statement on the matter, Calvin further defines faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁹

The first element of this definition involves the issue of knowledge. As above, this knowledge is not mere intellectual assent. Calvin rejects the scholastic distinction between formed and unformed faith whereby those who do not display the marks of regeneration can nevertheless be said to have faith. The assent of faith, Calvin argues, "is more of the heart (*cordis*) than of the brain (*cerebri*), and more of the disposition (*affectus*) than of understanding (*intelligentiae*)."¹²⁰ Faith transcends the kind of knowledge we have through normal sense

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 3.1.1, OS 4:1. "Ac primo habendum est, quoad extra nos est Christus, et ab eo sumus separati, quicquid in salutem humani generis passus est ac fecit, nobis esse inutile nulliusque momenti. Ergo ut nobiscum quae a Patre accepit communicet, nostrum fieri et in nobis habitare oportet."

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 3.2.7, OS 4:16. "Nunc iusta fidei definitio nobis constabit si dicamus esse divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuita in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur."

¹²⁰ Ibid., 3.2.8, OS 4:17. Dowey calls this kind of knowledge "supra-rational." It does not bypass rational processes, and it does include cognitive content. Nevertheless, this knowledge goes beyond comprehension to reach a kind of

perception. It is “so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels.”¹²¹ Such faith, however, is nevertheless certain and stable. “The knowledge of faith consists in assurance (*certitudine*) rather than in comprehension (*apprehensione*).”¹²² In this regard, Calvin’s understanding of the knowledge of God is not intellectualistic but deeply personal and existential.¹²³

Sinful humans, though, are prone to doubt, and Scripture plays a pivotal role in securing our faith. It is for this reason, Calvin claims, that “the Holy Spirit with such notable titles ascribes authority to the Word of God.”¹²⁴ In Ps. 119, for instance, virtually every line proclaims the faithfulness of God’s Word, and each such testimony is intended to prompt belief. “Surely, as often as God commends his Word to us, he indirectly rebukes us for our unbelief, for he has no other intention to uproot perverse doubts from our hearts.”¹²⁵ For Calvin, faith and the

supernatural certainty concerning God’s favor. Faith is therefore just one (albeit essential) element of a broader mystical union with Christ. For further discussion, see his *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 181-85, 197-211.

¹²¹ *Inst.* 3.2.14, OS 4:24-25.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 3.2.14, OS 4:25. See *ibid.*, 3.2.16-28 for a treatment on the relation between doubt and the certainty of faith. In short, Calvin does acknowledge that doubt will accompany faith, but he insists that saving faith eventually conquers doubt. His chief example for this kind of saving faith is David in the Psalms.

¹²³ For an argument against overly intellectualist depictions of Calvin’s understanding of faith, see Richard A. Muller, “*Fides* and *Cognitio* in Relation to the Problem of the Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin” *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (1990): 207-24. Muller argues that Calvin’s treatment of faith is of a piece with the “practical, anti-speculative character of Calvin’s theology as a whole” (223). See also Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 9-40. Referring to the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, Pitkin argues that Calvin embraces knowledge (*cognitio*) as a way of defining faith because it addresses humanity’s fundamental problem, false knowledge of God and self, while also including the notion of trust or confidence (*fiducia*). “Calvin refuses to reduce faith to trust because he would thereby forfeit the cognitive element. He understands knowledge to pertain to the entire human soul, which he claims is fallen in both parts (understanding and will). He therefore finds in knowledge a concept that is comprehensive enough to capture the whole character of faith” (31).

¹²⁴ *Inst.* 3.2.15, OS 4:25.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.2.15, OS 4:26.

Word are as inseparable as the sun and its rays:¹²⁶ “faith vanishes unless it is supported by the Word,”¹²⁷ and “faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree.”¹²⁸

Despite these general remarks on the trustworthiness of Scripture, Calvin’s definition of faith is not oriented toward Scripture at large, but concerns more narrowly its promises. This is a point Calvin feels particularly compelled to defend. “We make the freely given promise of God the foundation of faith because upon it faith properly rests. Faith is certain that God is true in all things whether he command or forbid, whether he promise or threaten; and it also obediently receives his commandments, observes his prohibitions, heeds his threats. Nevertheless, faith properly begins with the promise, rests in it, and ends in it.”¹²⁹ Calvin lists two particular reasons for this position, against the attacks of those (like Albert Pighius) who rejected the idea that faith could be circumscribed to only certain parts of Scripture. First, faith must be firm, and such certainty can only come from God’s promises of mercy. Second, faith is that which distinguishes those who are reconciled with God from those who are not. This faith does not consist merely in the belief that God makes commands or threatens punishment for sin. It is rather the particular character of faith to trust in God’s promises of mercy in Christ.

On Calvin’s account, all the promises in Scripture are ultimately promises of God’s love in Christ. For support on this point, Calvin turns to Paul: “‘However many are the promises of God, in him they find their yea and amen.’ [II Cor. 1:20 p.]”¹³⁰ Since every promise in Scripture

¹²⁶ Ibid., 3.2.6, OS 4:14.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 3.2.31, OS 4:42.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 3.2.31, OS 4:40.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3.2.29, OS 4:39. See also *ibid.*, 3.2.7, OS 4:15-16.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 3.2.32, OS 4:42.

is ultimately a testimony of God's love, and "no one is loved by God apart from Christ,"¹³¹ it therefore follows that all the promises in Scripture are inherently Christological. Calvin recognizes the difficulty of this point, given both Old and New Testament examples that indicate God's favorable disposition toward those who did not know Christ: Naaman the Syrian, Cornelius, and the Ethiopian eunuch. All received some kind of approval despite their ignorance of the Mediator. Yet Calvin argues that "their faith was in some part implicit (*implicitam*)" and that they were surely "instructed in principles such as might give them some taste, however small, of Christ."¹³² Naaman must have received some instruction about the Mediator from Elisha, Cornelius had embraced the Jewish religion before Peter found him, and the Ethiopian eunuch recognized the importance of Jerusalem before he met Philip. "Although the knowledge of Christ was obscure (*obscura*) among them, it is inconceivable to suppose that there was none at all; because they practiced the sacrifices of the law, which by their very end – that is, Christ – should be distinguished from the false sacrifices of the Gentiles."¹³³

A similar discussion arises in the context of Calvin's treatment of implicit faith.¹³⁴ On the one hand, Calvin rejects the scholastics who (as he describes them) hold that those who do not explicitly believe in God's goodness may nevertheless receive salvation by submitting to the judgments of the church. Against this view, Calvin asserts, "Faith rests not on ignorance, but on

¹³¹ Ibid., 3.2.32, OS 4:43.

¹³² Ibid. "Et quidem fateor aliqua ex parte implicitam fuisse eorum fidem, non modo quoad Christi personam, sed quoad virtutem et munus a Patre iniunctum. Interea certum est, principiis fuisse imbutos quae gustum aliquem Christi, licet tenuem, darent."

¹³³ Ibid., 3.2.32, OS 4:43-44. "Quavis ergo obscura inter ipsos esset Christi cognitio, nullam tamen fuisse consentaneum non est: quia Legis sacrificiis se exercebant, quae a fine ipso, hoc est Christo, discerni oportuit ab adulterinis Gentium sacrificiis."

¹³⁴ On this point, see Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 167-72. See also Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 134-36.

knowledge.”¹³⁵ On the other hand, Calvin acknowledges the legitimacy of a certain kind of implicit faith, since no one comprehends everything about God.¹³⁶ As an example, Calvin cites the disciples before they had seen the risen Christ: they ran to the tomb at the women’s report, yet were also confounded by the empty tomb. So also, in John 4, the court official believed Jesus to some extent before he saw his son healed, but with greater certainty after he arrived at home. Another example from John 4 is the Samaritans, who had some measure of faith on the basis of the woman’s testimony, but much more after hearing Jesus personally. The common thread in all these examples is the object of faith, Christ. Calvin’s concern to define Christ as the object of faith drives both his rejection of the scholastic notion of implicit faith and his willingness to distinguish the promises of Scripture from its other locutions.¹³⁷

Given humanity’s fallen condition, though, the promises of Scripture are not sufficient in and of themselves to engender faith. The Holy Spirit must therefore internalize them for the believer. This work occurs at two levels, that of the mind and the heart. First, the Spirit must penetrate the blindness of the mind to perceive the promises of God. For a striking example, Calvin points to the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Though Christ himself explained to them in very clear terms the mysteries of the Kingdom, they still did not understand until he opened their minds to comprehend the Scriptures. “Although the apostles were so taught by his divine mouth, the Spirit of truth must nevertheless be sent to pour into

¹³⁵ *Inst.* 3.2.2, OS 4:10. “Non in ignoracione sed in cognitione sita est fides.”

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.2.4-5.

¹³⁷ Dowey puts this well in *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, 155. “For Calvin the Scripture is the formal authority of special revelation, but Christ alone is the material of saving faith and the proper object of faith’s knowledge.” See pp. 158-63 for a discussion on the tension in Calvin’s thought between Calvin’s emphasis on the authority of all Scripture and the Christocentric orientation of his definition of faith.

their minds the same doctrine that they had received with their ears.”¹³⁸ Second, the heart must be strengthened with the firmness faith requires. “For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation.”¹³⁹ This second task is actually harder than the first, since “the heart’s distrust is greater than the mind’s blindness.”¹⁴⁰ The Spirit must therefore function as a seal on our hearts, impressing upon us the certainty of God’s promises and taking the place of a guarantee to confirm and establish our inheritance.

Calvin’s treatment of faith thus returns to the concerns of his initial remarks on the Spirit in Book 3, Ch. 1. It also draws upon themes already seen in Book 1, Ch. 6-10. In both sections, Calvin locates Scripture within the context of redemptive history as God’s chosen means to counter the effects of the fall. Both sections also teach that the primary purpose of Scripture is to promote knowledge of God. Calvin’s treatment of this issue reinforces the strong emphasis we have already witnessed in his thought on the unity of the testaments. The distinction between the knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer does not correspond to the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. Rather, both testaments help restore humanity to the twofold knowledge of God. The promises of the Old Testament, and not just those of the New, testify to God the Redeemer in Christ and thereby suffice as grounds for salvific faith. We can now consider how Calvin’s position on the purpose of Scripture corresponds to his interpretation of the Old Testament.

¹³⁸ *Inst.* 3.2.34, OS 4:45. “Sic edoctis divino eius ore Apostolis Spiritus tamen veritatis mittendus est, qui ipsorum mentibus eandem instillet doctrinam quam auribus usurpaverant.”

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.2.36, OS 4:46.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.2.36, OS 4:47.

4.2.4 Christ and the literal sense

In his seminal article, “Calvin’s Exegetical Principles,” Hans-Joachim Kraus lists eight basic characteristics of Calvin’s biblical interpretation, almost all of which stress Calvin’s emphasis on straightforward exposition according to the intent of the biblical author.¹⁴¹ Calvin is generally opposed to allegory and insists on the primacy of the literal sense. As a basic principle for interpretation, he says, “Allegories ought not to go beyond the limits set by the rule of Scripture, let alone suffice as the foundation for any doctrines.”¹⁴² In his comments on Paul’s allegory of Hagar and Sarah, Calvin also warns:

Scripture, [the allegorists] say, is fertile, and thus produces a variety of meanings. I acknowledge that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom; but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign. Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural (*germanus*) and obvious (*simplex*) meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning (*literali sensu*).¹⁴³

Nevertheless, we have just witnessed Calvin’s insistence that both the Old and New Testaments reveal God the Redeemer and that all the Old Testament promises were Christological and understood as such, at least to the extent that they referred to a Mediator who would be revealed

¹⁴¹ Cited above. The eight principles he lists are: 1) clarity and brevity; 2) seeking the intention of the author; 3) investigating the historical, geographical, and institutional circumstances which determined the author’s situation; 4) explaining the “real” (original, true, simple, or grammatical) meaning of a passage; 5) investigating the context of a passage; 6) establishing the extent to which exegesis could go beyond literal biblical wording; 7) dealing properly with metaphorical expressions; 8) discerning “the scope of Christ” as the aim of all Scripture. For more especially on the first principle, see Gamble, “*Brevitas et Facilitas*,” “Exposition and Method in Calvin,” and “Calvin as Theologian and Exegete: Is There Anything New?”

¹⁴² *Inst.* 2.5.19, OS 3:319. “Allegoriae ultra procedere non debent quam praeuntem habent Scripturae regulam: tantum abest ut fundandis ullis dogmatis per se sufficiant.”

¹⁴³ *Comm. Gal.* 4:22, OE 16:106-7. “Scriptura, inquit, foecunda est, ideoque multiplices sensus parit. Ego Scripturarum uberrimum et inexhaustum omnis sapientiae fontem esse fateor. Sed eius foecunditatem in variis sensibus nego consistere, quos quisque sua libidine affingat. Sciamus ergo eum esse verum Scripturae sensum, qui germanus est ac simplex, eumque amplectamur et mordicus teneamus. Fictitias expositiones, quae a literalis sensu abducunt, non modo negligamus tanquam dubias, sed fortiter repudiemus tanquam exitiales corruptelas.”

in Christ. Indeed, the final principle of Calvin's exegesis listed by Kraus concerns the manner in which all Scripture is oriented toward Christ, a point that seems a bit at odds with the first seven principles he lists.¹⁴⁴ David Puckett¹⁴⁵ argues that the tension in Calvin's thought in this regard should be understood in terms of a dual appreciation for the human and divine sides of Scripture. Calvin's concern for the former pushes him toward a modern, critical approach to Scripture that sometimes looks "Jewish," while his respect for the latter pushes him in a more "Christian" direction that heeds the sometimes troubling manner in which the New Testament appropriates the Old. Calvin, Puckett argues, seeks a kind of *via media* between historical exegesis that fails to recognize Christ in the Old Testament, and fanciful allegory that perceives him behind every nook and cranny of the text.

Puckett's study provides much valuable textual evidence for this apparent tension in Calvin's thought, but his synthesis of this material is less than satisfying, for it trades on the assumption that the literal/historical is opposed to the allegorical and that Calvin can be placed on a continuum between the two extremes. Two insightful studies provide a more promising way of understanding Calvin's interpretation of the Old Testament by arguing that Calvin actually located the Christological interpretation of the Old Testament within the literal sense, without appeal to allegory or some spiritual sense.

The first comes from Richard Muller, who explores Calvin's interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom and discovers a curious pattern.¹⁴⁶ Calvin can interpret these prophecies both with regard to Old Testament Israel and with regard to Christ's kingdom,

¹⁴⁴ Edmondson, "Christ and History," 16; Muller, "The Hermeneutic of Promise and Fulfillment," 76-77.

¹⁴⁵ Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, cited above.

¹⁴⁶ Cited above.

and the latter can encompass the first coming of Christ, the present context, and the eschaton. Two rhetorical concepts help Calvin interpret prophecies in such a way. The first is *complexus*, which refers to “a connection in discourse as important to the meaning of a text as the grammatical *sensus*.”¹⁴⁷ The *complexus* of Christ’s kingdom includes the whole course of the kingdom of Christ from its beginning and end. Second, Calvin appeals to synecdoche, which refers to “inclusive or extended implication and usually the signification of a larger whole by the naming of a part.”¹⁴⁸ Synecdoche can explain, for instance, how a prophecy about the Levites may also refer to the church as whole. By utilizing these two concepts, Calvin can employ a hermeneutic of multiple fulfillments that encompasses Christ and the church within the literal sense, without appeal to allegory. This hermeneutic reflects Calvin’s concern for history and explains his complaints against excessively Christological interpretations of the Old Testament that completely obscure original meaning. Calvin does affirm that the Old Testament should be read with reference to Christ, but he insists such reading be grounded in the literal sense, which is, in any case, rather expandable. Muller concludes, “Calvin’s explicit use of rhetorical categories like synecdoche or *complexus* may in this context be seen as a shifting of the mode of analysis out of an allegorical or literal-spiritual mode (which postulated more than one *sensus* of a given text) to a rhetorical mode in which one *sensus* could nevertheless point toward multiple referents.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Muller, “The Hermeneutic of Promise and Fulfillment,” 73.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81. This comment corresponds to Steinmetz’s observation that Calvin tended to lump into the “plain” or “natural” sense of the text what medieval theologians would have labeled allegory. Steinmetz suggests, “Perhaps it would therefore be more accurate to say that Calvin stood for a principled reduction of ‘spiritual’ readings of the text rather than a total and unconditional rejection of them.” See David C. Steinmetz, “Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible” in McKim, *Calvin and the Bible*, 282-91. Quotation on p. 285.

Stephen Edmondson's work moves one step beyond Muller's study by arguing that Calvin's conflation of the literal/historical and Christological interpretations of Scripture is rooted in his theology of the covenant.¹⁵⁰ Calvin holds that there is one covenant across both testaments and that this covenant is enacted by and fulfilled in Christ. This one covenant can take multiple instantiations, whether in the promise to Abraham or the Mosaic Law or the kingdom of David, but these moments are renewals of the same covenant, not new or separate covenants divorced from that founded on Christ. Since Scripture is first and foremost a narration of the covenant, biblical interpretation must attend to both history and Christ, between which there is no contradiction but rather interpenetration. Calvin does not seek to read Christ into the Bible; rather, he thinks Christ was written into the covenant itself. This position leads to surprising results. On the one hand, Calvin criticizes Jewish interpreters who fail to discern the Old Testament's witness to Christ. Neglecting the Christological referent of a prophetic statement is, for Calvin, quite literally to miss its natural meaning – the meaning the prophet actually intended. On the other hand, Calvin often rejects relatively established ways of discerning Christ in the Old Testament. In his treatment of the sacrifice of Isaac, for instance, Calvin strikingly ignores the possibility that Isaac or the ram prefigures Christ. He rather focuses his comments on broader covenantal issues, namely, how God could fulfill the promise of a mediator through Isaac and thereby accomplish the salvation of the world if Isaac were dead. Calvin's interpretation of this passage is indeed Christological, but without appeal to figures and allegory. The Christological interpretation of the Bible just is the literal.

¹⁵⁰ In addition to Edmondson, "Christ and History," see also his *Calvin and Christology*, 40-88.

4.3 Discussion

This chapter reveals a fundamental divergence between Augustine and Calvin on the interpretation of Scripture that corresponds directly to their differences on the relation between the testaments. On the one hand, there are a number of important similarities between Augustine and Calvin concerning the purpose of Scripture. Perhaps the most obvious point of contact is that both figures treat Scripture as a remedy for the fall in the context of redemptive history. For Augustine, Scripture is God's tool for reordering our loves such that we might enjoy God. The obscurities of Scripture are both a reflection of the fall and a means to restore us from its effects, as our struggle to understand these obscurities produces humility and ultimately directs us to Christ. For Calvin, Scripture is a necessary means of restoration to the knowledge of God. The Spirit unites us with Christ through our faith in the promises, all of which obtain only on the basis of Christ's work as mediator. In their treatments of Scripture, Augustine tends to focus on love while Calvin emphasizes knowledge, but these are not mutually contradictory concepts. For Augustine, knowledge naturally produces love, and for Calvin, knowledge presupposes a loving response to God's gracious initiative.

Augustine and Calvin also agree that Scripture plays a supplementary role to Christ in the process of redemption. This point comes out most clearly in Augustine, who argues that those who manifest faith, hope, and love do not need Scripture. Scripture is important, but instrumental; its value lies in its ability to prompt enjoyment of God in Christ. Calvin's strong position on the relationship between Word and Spirit precludes him from making such claims, but he, too, insists that Scripture is ultimately designed to direct us to Christ. This judgment underwrites Calvin's (somewhat hesitant) move to define faith according to the promises, as opposed to Scripture in general. Both figures treat Scripture primarily as it encourages

participation in Christ; neither would suggest that the purpose of knowing and loving God is to understand the Bible.

What separates these figures is the extent to which they think Scripture fulfilled this purpose during Old Testament times. For Augustine, the answer is basically that it did not. Under the “useful” signs it prescribed, Scripture did commend to the Jews the one true God, which was a major advantage over the pagans. The Old Testament also encouraged love, even if it allowed practices that would not be appropriate in different contexts. But Christ had not been revealed, and the signs of the Old Testament were not recognized as such, as things to be used for the sake of enjoying God in Christ. For Calvin, there is a much stronger sense that Scripture brought redemption before the coming of Christ. Knowledge of God the Redeemer was available during Old Testament times through the promises of the mediator. Though the full revelation of the gospel would await the incarnation, Scripture nevertheless provided Old Testament Israelites real knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ.

This basic difference corresponds directly to the issues considered in the previous chapters concerning redemptive history. For Augustine, the grace of the New Testament is veiled in the Old Testament, while for Calvin this grace is revealed, though not as clearly. Indeed, this chapter demonstrates to an even greater degree than the first three Calvin’s insistence on the unity of the testaments. Since the knowledge of God is for Calvin not merely cognitive but the sum of the Christian life, the availability of the twofold knowledge of God during Old Testament times secures a virtually univocal relationship between Israel and the church. It is precisely because both Augustine and Calvin define Scripture according to its role in redemption that they must differ on whether God intended Scripture to be understood during Old Testament times. For Augustine, the signs foreshadow but also hide New Testament

realities; for Calvin, these signs display Christ. While Augustine depicts the Israelites as blind to the meaning of their sacrifices, Calvin insists these same Israelites must have perceived Christ in such obvious figures. For Augustine, then, the Christological referent of the Old Testament signs can only be discerned through some kind of spiritual interpretation. For Calvin, there is no such necessity, since the signs already present Christ in a relatively straightforward manner.

Both figures acknowledge that the Old Testament, in one way or another, speaks of Christ and the church. They are also sensitive to the dynamics of redemptive history: Old Testament passages may be understood in terms of Israel, the time of Christ, the contemporary context, or the eschaton. Nevertheless, a basic structural difference separates Augustine and Calvin concerning the location of such meanings. Augustine construes figural interpretation according to multiple levels of reading. Literal expressions have only one level of signification, from sign to referent; in metaphorical expressions, a sign signifies a thing, which in turn signifies some other thing. This twofold structure naturally corresponds to the literal and spiritual senses: “ox” literally refers to the animal, spiritually to the evangelist. Calvin, by contrast, locates interpretations concerning Christ and the church within an expanded literal sense. A prophecy about Israel could literally refer to the church of the New Testament, or literally refer to the church now, or literally refer to the church at the end of time. Calvin shares with Augustine a keen sensitivity to Scripture’s penchant for switching referents, but he refuses to treat this phenomenon under the rubric of a spiritual sense.

Despite these differences, neither figure allows Christological readings to obviate the original sense. (We cannot use the term “literal” here, since for Calvin the literal encompasses the Christological.) Indeed, the very structure of Augustine’s theory of signs supports the reality of historical events. The primary referent of a sign is itself a *res*, even if it also acts as *signum* to

another *res*. Moreover, both figures demonstrate concern for controls on interpretation. For Calvin, Old Testament passages speak of Christ and the church in ways that bear close relationship to the original sense. For Augustine, the controlling hermeneutic is love, though one should also note common patterns in Scripture of shifting references.

Still, their divergence on the existence of a spiritual sense produces radically different postures toward the interpretation of the Old Testament. Calvin's chief concern is to present the clear and plain meaning of the text. While he does countenance some particularly illustrative allegories, he generally rejects such readings as fanciful and indulgent. There is for him no need for speculative games when the Christological meanings can be found in the literal sense. Augustine, on the other hand, embraces a wide range of textual play within the boundaries of love. Spiritual meanings are difficult to discern and cannot always be established with certainty. They must also be based in the literal sense, for they do not subvert, but display more winsomely already established matters of faith and morals. Yet the process of discovering such treasures should not be neglected, for it produces humility and delight, and ultimately directs us to the enjoyment of God in Christ.

In summary, the first part of this study has established the interconnection between redemptive history and the interpretation of Scripture. Despite their similarities on a number of theological grounds, Augustine and Calvin present fundamentally different visions for the relation between the testaments that give rise to radically divergent readings of the Old Testament. The most concrete point of contrast concerns the saints of the Old Testament, yet neither figure provides a satisfying account for God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel. There is, for Calvin, one covenant and one people, and so one sense of Scripture. For Augustine, there are two. In Hebrews, we will consider a different model that more adequately addresses the question

of Israel while also advancing a vision for Scripture unlike what we have seen before. This is the topic of the next part.

PART II: HEBREWS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

5. Christ and the new covenant

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Hebrews 1:1-2

This chapter begins the second part of this study. To this point, I have sought to establish a typological comparison between Augustine and Calvin, arguing that their differences concerning the figural reading of the Old Testament are ultimately rooted in different construals of the relation between the testaments, and derivatively the relation between Israel and the church. This comparison has left a number of important questions: are the old and new covenants fundamentally distinct, or is the new covenant a renewal and continuation of the old? What salvific benefits were available during Old Testament times? To what extent did Old Testament Israelites participate in the new covenant? This chapter addresses these issues by turning to the Epistle to the Hebrews, using the concepts and vocabulary Augustine and Calvin provide to reflect theologically upon the questions they have raised. I argue two primary points: first, Hebrews depicts the establishment of Christ as high priest as a fundamentally new moment in redemptive history. The discontinuity between the testaments should therefore be located in the work of Christ. Second, however, Hebrews presents the new covenant as the means by which God brings to fruition the hope of the Old Testament. The continuity of the testaments thus resides in God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel and the common hope of the people of God across the covenants.

This chapter and the next draw heavily upon contemporary New Testament scholarship as an implicit argument for the fruitfulness of cross-disciplinary inquiry. The rigorous historical work of biblical scholars provides rich material for theological reflection, while the history of

biblical interpretation facilitates the incorporation of those insights into a larger theological framework. Moreover, the dialogue between biblical studies and theological inquiry need not proceed from the former to the latter. These two chapters in particular advance a case that beginning with a synthetic theological framework can actually enhance insight into the biblical text. As discussed in the introduction, this methodological approach will not conform to the guild standards of New Testament scholarship. In particular, I grant myself the freedom to use later theological categories – not least the distinction between the “Old Testament” and the “New Testament,” but even later developments in Nicene trinitarian theology – to present Hebrews’ unique contribution to the questions this study has sought to address. Nevertheless, I hope these chapters reflect my great indebtedness to and appreciation for the work of biblical scholars, even as I direct my remarks toward constructive theological proposal.

I have sought to isolate my reflections on Hebrews from assumptions concerning the provenance of the Epistle. The standard literature on Hebrews¹ addresses this question, and I certainly do not pretend to advance this discussion. In general, very little can be established concerning the author, date, or recipients of this letter, except that it is not Pauline. Our author appears, like Melchizedek, without father or mother or genealogy, though he leaves behind

¹ Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* and *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 47a-47b (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006). See also Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991); and three recent collections of essays: Gabriella Gelardini, ed., *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Richard Bauckham and others, eds., *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, Library of New Testament Studies 387 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), and *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

much material rich for Christological reflection. Greater certainty even on whether the letter was written before or after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE would significantly illuminate the trajectory of Hebrews' remarks on the Levitical priesthood, but I make no assumptions on this issue. The only important position I take concerning provenance is that this letter was written to what may anachronistically be called "Jewish Christians," and not primarily to a Gentile audience. But this is a point I address in greater detail later this chapter, not one I presuppose. Finally, in my remarks on Hebrews, I move relatively freely between different terms for the object of study: I sometimes speak of "the Epistle to the Hebrews," but at other points refer to "Hebrews," "the Epistle," "the author of Hebrews," and so forth. I use the masculine singular pronoun when referring to the anonymous author.²

5.1 Christ and redemptive history

Perhaps the central theme of Hebrews is the establishment of Christ as great high priest. The author of Hebrews narrates this moment by appeal to Ps. 110:4: "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."³ This psalm, in turn, forms the basis of the most developed argument of the letter, Heb. 7-10, which may be understood as an extended reflection on the implications of this declaration for the Levitical priesthood and the inauguration of a new covenant. In this section, I consider these issues in three steps. I first present Hebrews' depiction of the establishment of Christ as high priest, drawing heavily upon the work of David Moffitt. I then consider this event in light of Hebrews' eschatological vision, which I set against the backdrop of Calvin's understanding of the relation between the testaments. I argue that Calvin's

² See masculine participle in 11:32: *δηγούμενον*.

³ Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21; cf. 5:10, 6:20, 7:11.

muted understanding of the contrast Hebrews sets forth between the covenants derives in large measure from his conviction that Christ mediates all God's blessings to humanity. This perspective, though, tends to blur the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity, a topic about which Augustine has much to contribute. In the last part, then, I turn to his *De Trinitate* as a way of reflecting theologically upon the dynamics of continuity and discontinuity in Hebrews.

5.1.1 The establishment of Christ as high priest

Heb. 7 initiates its lengthy treatment of the priesthood of Christ with a discussion of Melchizedek. This is a topic to which the author has already alluded (5:6, 5:10; 6:20), but has postponed engaging in greater depth due to the immaturity of his listeners. "About this we have had much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (5:11). After a fiery, digressive exhortation on the importance of faithfulness (5:12-6:20), the author returns to the topic at hand and addresses directly the question of Christ's establishment as high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Moffitt suggests that Hebrews' treatment of Christ's establishment as high priest has an apologetic bent, addressing the potential and very reasonable objection that Christ could not be high priest, since he came from the tribe of Judah, "from which no one has ever served at the altar" (7:13).⁴ The example of Melchizedek helps defuse this issue, for he was able to act as a priest with no genealogical background. There is no biblical reference to Melchizedek's mother or father (7:3), yet he was such a great priest that Abraham himself honored him with a tithe

⁴ David M. Moffitt, "Jesus the High Priest and the Mosaic Law: Reassessing the Appeal to the Heavenly Realm in the letter 'To the Hebrews,'" to be published in *Problems Translating Texts about Jesus*, ed. John T. Greene and Mishael Caspi (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2010). I am grateful to Moffitt for an early copy of his piece.

(7:4-8). Indeed, it can even be said that, as a descendent of Abraham, Levi paid Melchizedek a tithe in an indirect sense (7:9-10), a striking claim given that it was the descendents of Levi who traditionally received tithes in their capacity as priests (7:5). Since Christ lacks the genealogy to serve as a priest in the line of Levi, the legitimacy of his priesthood must therefore depend on other grounds, namely, “the power of an indestructible life” (7:16). Thus, Christ is high priest, but according to a different order from that of Levi, an order so distinct that if Christ were on earth, “he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law” (8:4).

There are at least three primary differences between the priesthood of Christ and that of the Levites.⁵ First, the Levitical priesthood was characterized by death, but the priesthood of Christ was characterized by life and immortality. The Levitical priests were prevented from staying in office because they died, but Christ lives to intercede for us forever (7:8, 23-25, 28). Second, the Levitical priesthood pertains to this earth while the priesthood of Christ is heavenly (7:26, 8:1-2). Heb. 9 sets forth a description of the earthly tabernacle (9:1-10), only to proclaim Christ priest of a “greater and more perfect tent” (9:11), the heavenly sanctuary (9:24). Third and most important, the many sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood lacked the efficacy of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. The gifts and sacrifices of the former could not “perfect the conscience of the worshiper” (9:9), and dealt only with “regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation” (9:10), that is, those concerning external matters of purity.⁶ By contrast, the blood of Christ will “purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (9:13-14).

⁵ For an exposition of these themes, see Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament*, trans. J. Bernard Orchard (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s, 1986).

⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 243.

This difference in salvific power is particularly evident in the contrast between the repetitive nature of the Levitical sacrifices and the single sacrifice of Christ, efficacious for all time (7:27; 9:12, 25-28). “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near” (10:1; see 10:11). Indeed, if these animal sacrifices could have cleansed people of sin, then they should have ceased, for then there would be no more consciousness of sins (10:2). These sacrifices instead functioned as a reminder of sin (10:3), in contrast to the sacrifice of Christ, who through a single offering “has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (10:14).

Hebrews depicts the establishment of Christ as high priest through a consistent narrative sequence focusing on the incarnation, death, and bodily ascension of Christ. Since this sequence of events plays a critical role in Hebrews’ larger depiction of redemptive history, I dedicate extended attention to it here. The first such instance comes in 2:10, where the author writes, “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering” (2:10). Three points call for attention: first, Jesus was made perfect; second, this perfection occurred through suffering; third, Jesus brings about our salvation. The rest of this pericope (2:11-18) develops this sequence further. Jesus took on flesh and blood in order to die, such that he could destroy death’s hold upon us. It is because Jesus became human that he can now make expiation for our sins.

Heb. 5:5-10 illuminates this passage. In 5:5-6, the author cites Ps. 2:7 and Ps. 110:4 with regard to Christ’s being appointed high priest. Then Heb. 5:7-10 explains how this process took place.

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The most natural referent for Jesus' suffering is his death. The language in Heb. 5:7 concerning the days of Jesus' flesh and his prayer "to him who was able to save him from death" recall 2:14-15, which also link the assumption of flesh with subsequent death. Both units also connect Jesus' suffering with his being made perfect (2:10; 5:8-9), which produces for both passages the same result: Jesus has become high priest to bring us salvation (2:10, 17-18; 5:9-10). What Heb. 5 shows more clearly than Heb. 2 is the chronology of the events: it was through Jesus' death that he was perfected; and it was through his perfection that he became high priest.

Heb. 12:2 repeats the same themes, encouraging readers to trust in Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." As with 2:10, 12:2 explicitly connects the depiction of Jesus as pioneer with the idea of perfection. Like both 2:14 and 5:7, 12:2 also draws attention to Jesus' obedience in death. Finally, like 2:17 and 5:9-10, 12:2 stresses the positive result of Christ's faithfulness, albeit in slightly different terms. The earlier passages focus on Christ's establishment as high priest, while the latter describes Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. These two ideas, though, are closely linked throughout Hebrews: it is after Christ has been established as high priest and offers himself as a sacrifice that he sits at God's right hand.⁷

⁷ The connection between Christ's establishment as high priest and his being seated at the right hand of God can be seen in 1:3: "When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"; 8:1: "We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven;" and 10:12:

In three important passages (2:10-18; 5:5-10; 12:2), then, Hebrews consistently invokes the notion of perfection according to a common sequence of events whereby Christ is established as high priest. Still, these passages alone do not elucidate what causal relation exists, if any, between Christ's perfection and his ability to serve as high priest. For a broader consideration of this issue in light of other key motifs in Hebrews, I return to Moffitt, who presents the original and tantalizing proposal that perfection must be understood in terms of Christ's resurrection and physical ascent into heaven.⁸ Moffitt's argument begins with the opening chapters of Hebrews, which celebrate Christ's exaltation by way of comparison with the angels. No angel was ever called "Son," begotten of God. Rather, when God "brings the first-born into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (1:6). The Son reigns upon an eternal throne, seated at the right hand of God, with all his enemies a footstool for his feet (1:8, 12-13). The angels, by contrast, are spiritual: but "winds," "flames of fire," or "ministering servants" (1:7, 14). On Moffitt's reading, this depiction of the angels as spiritual is not incidental, but crucial to the author's treatment of the Son, for Hebrews will argue that it is precisely because the Son is not a spirit that he is qualified to act as high priest and rule at God's right hand.

"When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God ..." The allusion to God's right hand is derived from Ps. 110:1, cited in full at Heb. 1:13. Ps. 110, of course, also provides Hebrews with the declaration of a new priest in the order of Melchizedek. That "right hand" is explicitly used in Heb. 1:3, 8:1, and 10:12 in connection with Christ's priestly ministry tightens the connections we drew above between Heb. 2:10-18, 5:5-10, and 12:2. Heb. 12:2 refers to the priestly ministry of Christ, made possible only after he partook of humanity, suffered and died ("endured the cross, despising the shame"), and was made perfect.

⁸ David M. Moffitt, "A New and Living Way: Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle 'To the Hebrews'" (PhD diss., Duke Univ., 2010). See also his "If Another Priest Arises?: Jesus' Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews," in Bauckham, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, 68-79. For an alternative treatment of perfection, see David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

Moffitt defends this proposal in two steps. First, he argues for an identity of referent for the term “world” (οἰκουμένη) as it is found in both 1:6 and 2:5. It has traditionally been assumed that “world” in 1:6 refers to the earthly realm, such that the event depicted in this verse refers to the incarnation or parousia. On these readings, either the angels were told to worship the Son when he became human, or the angels will be told to worship the Son when he returns to earth. But these interpretations make little sense of the narrative sequence of 2:5-9, where Christ was made for a little while lower than the angels but has now been crowned with glory and honor above all other things. Since the incarnation brought the Son lower, not higher, than the angels, it would be rather odd for the angels to be told at this moment to worship him. Moreover, the emphasis in both 1:6 and 2:5 on Christ’s present status as ruling Son, exalted over the angels, rules out the possibility that 1:6 refers to the parousia. Moffitt suggests instead that the world into which God brought the Son in 1:6 is the same as “the world to come” in 2:5, namely, the heavenly realms. It was after the Son was made lower than the angels in the incarnation and then entered into the heavenlies to receive glory and honor that the angels were commanded to worship him.

A survey of material in the Greek psalter and Second Temple Jewish literature supports the plausibility of this reading. In particular, Moffitt discerns a relatively widespread eschatological expectation in the Second Temple period that the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled not through the repossession of physical Canaan but in a renewed, pure, incorruptible realm. This eschatological vision did not trade on a dichotomy between the spiritual and material realms; rather, the world to come would itself be physical, albeit transformed in the presence of God’s glory. If the language of Hebrews can be located against

this background, the identification of “world” in 1:6 and 2:5 makes good sense. The point would be that Christ was exalted above the angels when he entered this heavenly realm.

Having established this connection between Heb. 1 and 2, Moffitt then argues on the basis of 2:5-9 that it was precisely by taking on flesh that the Son was enabled to be exalted above the angels. Heb. 2 reflects upon Christ in light of Ps. 8: “What is man that thou art mindful of him, the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.” The psalm hints that it was God’s intention to exalt humans above angels, but Hebrews observes that this reality has not yet come to fruition. On Moffitt’s reading, Hebrews resolves this tension by interpreting Ps. 8 in light of Christ’s exaltation over the angels as a representative and forerunner of humanity. The vision of Ps. 8 has not yet been fully accomplished, but Christ by virtue of his individual entrance into the heavenly realms has paved the way for others “who are to obtain salvation” (1:14). Heb. 2:10-18 confirms this interpretation by stressing Christ’s solidarity with the rest of humanity and depicting him as the pioneer of our salvation. In order for humanity to be exalted over the angels, Christ had first to take on flesh and be exalted over the angels; his elevated status has now paved the way for humanity at large also to be exalted over the angels. If this reading is correct, then the contrast in Heb. 1 between the ruling Son and the spiritual angels trades very much on the notion that the Son took on flesh.

On Moffitt’s reading, 11:1-12:2 develops these ideas even further. Two key themes in this elegy of the heroes of faith are the preservation of life from death and the inheritance of incorruptible things. Abel still speaks, despite his death (11:4); Enoch was taken up without dying (11:5); Noah preserved his household from death and so became an heir (11:7); Abraham

and Sarah received children despite the deadness of their bodies, in hope of a city with foundations (11:10-12); Moses endured ill-treatment for the sake of future reward (11:26). Some received back their dead (11:35), and Abraham, of course, knew God was able to bring life from death (11:19). These instances testify to a kind of resuscitation, but the Epistle also speaks of a final resurrection and the eternal inheritance: the restoration of Isaac was but a symbol (*παραβολή*; 11:19), and the saints of old hoped to “rise again to a better life” (11:35), in a “better country, that is, a heavenly one” (11:16). Until the time of Christ, these heroes lived in faith, not fulfillment, so that “apart from us they should not be made perfect” (11:40). But this has all changed with Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (12:2), who by perseverance in trial received the promised inheritance he has now made available to us. Given the emphasis throughout Heb. 11 on the hope of resurrected life in an incorruptible inheritance, 12:1-2 must mean that Christ did in fact receive these rewards.⁹

All these considerations illuminate the meaning of perfection in 5:5-10, where the author says Christ offered up prayers and supplications to the one who could save him from death – and “was heard” (5:7). The depiction of Jesus’ test mirrors that of Abraham’s in 11:17-19, where Abraham, too, trusted in God’s ability to bring life out of death. In that vein, Moffitt suggests, it makes sense to understand Jesus’ being heard as a reference to his resurrection from the dead. It also follows naturally that the perfection of Christ in 5:9 is a reference to his resurrection.¹⁰ After Christ suffered and died, he was perfected, in part at least, by receiving a glorified body, which allowed him to enter the heavenlies and serve as high priest. The logic of this passage would thereby underscore the assertion of 7:16, already noted, that Christ “has become a priest, not

⁹ Moffitt, “If Another Priest Arises,” 73.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74-76.

according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life.”

To summarize, on Moffitt’s reading, there is a cluster of consistent images and ideas that develop Hebrews’ understanding of Christ’s establishment as high priest. As embodied creatures, humans were intended to be exalted over the angels, who are but ministering spirits. This reality has not yet taken place, except for the Son. He became a human to partake in our nature, and was obedient and suffered, even to death. Through this death, he would conquer the devil and release us from fear of death. He also received perfection by means of a glorified body and entered into the heavenlies, where he presented before God the single offering of himself and thus provided expiation for our sins, becoming for us an eternal source of salvation such that we too can be made perfect. He then sat down at the right hand of God, where he reigns above the angels and ever lives to intercede for us.

For our purposes, the key point is that this narrative indicates that the salvific benefits of Christ’s priestly ministry were never available before the sequence of events that began with his incarnation and led to his bodily ascent into heaven. Christ’s perfection and ascension were the preconditions of his becoming high priest and source of salvation, but he had to die before he could be perfected, and to take on flesh before he could die. Hebrews does praise the Son as the pre-existing creator of the world, but it does not suggest his pre-existence as high priest. The eternal Son could not act as high priest – that is, he could not take away sins, accomplish forgiveness, purify our consciences, remove our consciousness of sin, or bring us new life – until after his incarnation, death, and exaltation into heaven.

5.1.2 The climax of redemptive history

Hebrews' narrative depiction of the establishment of Christ as high priest establishes this moment as a fulcrum in redemptive history around which the distinction between the Old and New Testaments must be construed. Such a perspective poses a serious challenge for Calvin's construal of redemptive history. While Calvin does, of course, recognize the importance of the incarnation in revealing the knowledge of God the Redeemer, there is a deeper sense in which he defines the key turning point in redemptive history as the fall.¹¹ The *Institutes* is structured according to the twofold knowledge of God the Creator and God the Redeemer, and knowledge of God the Redeemer becomes available immediately after Gen. 3: Adam experienced it, as did Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs. Since knowledge of God is not, for Calvin, purely cognitive, but designates a personal, existential posture of trust, it must be understood salvifically; only those who are united with Christ experience knowledge of God the Creator or God the Redeemer, for either form of knowledge of God depends on the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. On Calvin's account, then, there is a significant sense in which the salvific benefits of Christ's work were available before the incarnation. Calvin affirms Christ as the foundation of redemptive history in the sense that his mediatorial work makes possible the salvific benefits available before or after his earthly ministry. Nevertheless, as David Steinmetz puts it, Calvin "saw the transition from the old to the new as a gentle slope more than as a sharp disjuncture."¹²

¹¹ I am grateful for C. Kavin Rowe for helping me to see this point.

¹² David Steinmetz, "John Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 286.

This understanding of redemptive history seems particularly incongruous with the theological vision of Hebrews in light of the Epistle's strong emphasis on the eschatological significance of Christ's establishment as high priest. The opening verses of Hebrews are programmatic: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (1:1-2). While God did indeed speak in the past to the Old Testament saints through various means – visions, dreams, prophecies, theophanies, and so forth¹³ – the decisive means by which God has now spoken is the Son. The agent of speech is the same in previous times as in the contemporary context, but the manner of revelation in "these last days" has decisively changed.

As C.K. Barrett argued in an influential article some time ago, Hebrews is characterized by the paradoxical eschatology typical of early Christian proclamation.¹⁴ On the one hand, Hebrews lays great stress on judgment day, when Christ will appear a second time (9:28), heaven and earth will be shaken and removed (12:27), and willful sinners will face destruction (10:39) and fire (10:27; 12:29) at the hands of the living God (10:31). On the other hand, Hebrews also affirms that the final days have already been ushered in with the first coming of Christ. Christ has already defeated his enemies (2:8ff.; 10:12ff), the blessings of the new age have already been made available (6:4-6), and all are called now to respond positively to the offer of salvation (2:1-4) as they approach the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22-24).

¹³ See discussion in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 37.

¹⁴ C.K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1956), 369-93. For other treatments of Hebrews' eschatology, see Harold W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest: The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 279-88; David A. deSilva, "Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* 21 (2000): 25-43.

On Barrett's reading, Hebrews' eschatology trades on both temporal and spatial contrasts. While Hebrews' references to the heavenly temple, for instance, indicate the existence of an eternally existing tabernacle that functions as an archetype of the earthly tabernacle, Hebrews also depicts Christ's entrance into the heavenly realm as a one-time eschatological event that will be followed by yet another eschatological event, the return of Christ (9:23-28). This mode of thought stands in sharp contrast with the Platonic tendencies in Philo and the Epistle of Barnabas. For Philo, God's charge to Moses to make the tabernacle after the pattern shown him on the mountain (Ex. 25:40) is a call to keep the soul sleepless and wakeful to the incorporeal forms while in the physical body; in Barnabas, the temple is the dwelling-place of the human heart. Hebrews, Barrett insists, stresses eschatological event, occurring in time with objective and corporate consequences, and not just timeless reality or subjective religious experience. "Jesus is primarily ... an actor in the eschatological drama of redemption rather than a mediator standing between the real and phenomenal worlds; rather a priest who makes atonement for the sin of mankind than a Gnostic mediator who procures their passage from the material world to the spiritual."¹⁵

We may discern the contrast between this reading of Hebrews and that set forth in Calvin by considering selected examples in his commentary on the Epistle where he treats the language of "last days." Calvin begins his treatment of Heb. 1, for instance, by acknowledging the differences between the old and new covenants: the Son of God is set in opposition to the prophets, we to the fathers, and various ways of speaking with the last revelation of Christ. But Calvin hastens to add that Hebrews still affirms the unity of the covenant. "In this diversity he

¹⁵ Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," 389.

still sets before us but one God, that no one might think that the Law militates against the Gospel, or that the author of one is not the author of the other.”¹⁶ The unifying factor behind all the differences is that it was God who spoke – whether by the prophets or by the Son, whether to the fathers or to us. On these grounds, Calvin says, “the agreement between the Law and the Gospel is established; for God, who is ever like himself, and whose word is the same, and whose truth is unchangeable, has spoken as to both in common.”¹⁷ Concerning the “last days,” Calvin explains, the author of Hebrews means simply that “there is no longer any reason to expect any new revelation, for it was not a word in part that Christ brought, but the final conclusion.”¹⁸ The last days, that is, are chronologically posterior, though not necessarily climactic.

Calvin’s treatment of the “today” language in 3:7-4:11 produces a similarly flattening effect. In his comments on 3:13, Calvin says the author “reminds us that the word *to-day*, mentioned in the Psalm, ought not to be confined to the age of David, but that it comprehends every time in which God may address us. As often, then, and as long as he opens his sacred mouth to teach us, let this sentence come to our minds, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice.”¹⁹

Later, he continues:

The particle *while*, then, or as long as, intimates that the seasonable time will not continue always, if we be too slothful to follow when the Lord calls us. God now knocks at our door; unless we open to him he will no doubt in his turn close against us the gate of his kingdom. In a word, too late will be their groans who despise the grace offered to them to-day. As, then, we know not whether God will extend his calling to to-morrow, let us not delay. To-day he calls us; let us immediately respond to him.²⁰

¹⁶ *Comm. Heb.* 1.1, OE 19:15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.1, OE 19:16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.13, OE 19:56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.13., OE 19:56-57. Cf. *ibid.*, 4.16, OE 19:73.

On 3:15, Calvin says,

[the author] intimates that the reason for making progress never ceases as long as we live, because God calls us daily. For since faith responds to the preaching of the Gospel, as preaching continues through the whole course of our life, so we ought to continue growing in our faith. The phrase, then, *while it is said*, is the same as though he had said: “Since God never makes an end of speaking, it is not enough for us readily to receive his doctrine, except we exhibit the same teachableness and obedience tomorrow and every following day.”²¹

On Calvin’s account, “today” simply refers to any time we may respond to God’s salvation, functioning figuratively to warn us against delaying until “tomorrow.”

Calvin is not completely tone deaf to the eschatological dynamics in Hebrews. In his treatment of 10:25, for instance, Calvin notes that the exhortation to continue meeting together, as “ye see the day approaching,” refers to the second coming of Christ: “Since Christ, after having completed all things necessary for our salvation, has ascended into heaven, it is but reasonable that we who are continually looking for his second manifestation should regard every day as though it were the last.”²² Nevertheless, Calvin’s treatment of the “last days” language goes little beyond acknowledging the basic chronology of redemptive history, and even in the passages where Hebrews most accentuates the contrast between these and the earlier days, Calvin hastens to qualify the opposition between law and gospel. Despite the opposition in 12:18-24 between an earthly mountain and a spiritual, for instance, Calvin rejects the implication that the law concerned only earthly matters: the law, he insists, was directed toward spiritual matters, and Christians today continue to practice external religious rites. We should understand the author of Hebrews to be speaking “comparatively (*secundum maius et minus*); and no one can

²¹ Ibid., 3.15, OE 19:58.

²² Ibid., 10.25, OE 19:169.

doubt but that the Gospel, contrasted with the Law, excels in what is spiritual, but the Law in earthly symbols.”²³

These passages reflect a rather muted eschatology that acknowledges differences across time in the dynamics of God’s revelation, but locates those differences in the context of a basic consistency of interaction between God and humans. God spoke throughout the Old Testament, but more clearly in Christ; humanity has always been called to heed God’s Word, but with more urgency in these last days. While acknowledging differences between the testaments of gradation and degree, Calvin’s more primary concern is to accent the unity of the covenant. At every point in redemptive history, humanity is confronted by the same God and called to the same faithfulness. Calvin’s flat treatment of the “last days” language obscures Hebrews’ insistence that the establishment of Christ as high priest initiates a fundamentally new dynamic in redemptive history. By eliding the eschatological dynamics of the Epistle, Calvin is left with a rather static depiction of Christ as the timeless basis for the eternal covenant. The incarnation initiates not a new covenant, but an enhanced form of the old.

5.1.3 The triune God in the economy of salvation

Calvin’s position on the relation between the testaments assumes that the one covenant is the only means by which humanity can enjoy God’s salvific beneficence, and that this covenant must be founded upon Christ. Indeed, the mediation of Christ practically names for Calvin the possibility of God’s dispensing any favor upon sinful humanity. Such a conviction undergirds, for instance, Calvin’s position that any promise in Scripture, whether in the Old Testament or the New, is ultimately rooted in God’s graciousness toward us in Christ. Yet on

²³ Ibid., 12.18, OE 19:228-29.

the reading of Hebrews presented in this chapter, the Epistle depicts the establishment of Christ as high priest as a major new event in redemptive history that enables God to show favor toward humanity in a way that had never before been possible. Is it possible to affirm Calvin's emphasis on the constancy of God in light of Hebrews' affirmation of the radical change that has come about with Christ? And to what extent should it be affirmed that God's favor toward his people in the Old Testament was rooted in Christ? Ultimately, these questions demand a Trinitarian response, one that can account for the internal and external dynamics of the Godhead with respect to the economy of salvation. In that regard, Augustine's treatment in *De Trinitate* on the economic and immanent Trinity proves a helpful resource.²⁴ In this section, then, I begin with an extended exposition of the opening books of this treatise, before returning to the implications of Augustine's Trinitarian vision for our reflections on Hebrews.

De Trinitate, Books 2-4 concern one basic objection to the Nicene understanding of the Trinity: "The one who sends is greater than the one who is sent."²⁵ Does the scriptural language of the Father sending the Son and the Spirit mean that the Father is greater than both? To answer, Augustine first discusses the nature of the sendings, or missions,²⁶ of the Son and the Spirit, before returning later to the relation between these external missions and the intratrinitarian relations within the Godhead. Augustine begins his treatment of the missions by wrestling with the locution that the Son and the Spirit are sent to creation, given that the whole

²⁴ References follow the numbering system of the Latin text, rather than that of Edmund Hill's translation, which omits the Roman numeral chapter numbers. Parts of this text were pirated and distributed probably from around 416, though the whole work was not completed until the 420s. See Rowan Williams, "Trinitate, De," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 846.

²⁵ *Trin.* 2.5.7, CCL 50:87. "Maiores est qui mittit quam qui mittitur."

²⁶ Both "mission" and "sending" are derived from the Latin noun *missio* (verb: *mitto*). I use these terms and their cognates interchangeably.

Godhead has always filled the heavens and the earth.²⁷ Since the Son's being sent can be identified with his being born of a woman, which was only made possible by the Spirit,²⁸ being sent must basically mean being made visible. On these terms, the Father is never sent, but the Son and the Spirit are. Yet, Augustine notes, there is an important distinction between the sendings of the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit was sent in taking on the form of a dove in Christ's baptism, or of fire on the day of Pentecost. But the Spirit did not take on the dove or fire in the same way as the Son took on flesh. There was no everlasting union between the Spirit and the dove, or the Spirit and fire; nor do we speak of the Holy Spirit as both God and dove, or both God and fire.²⁹ In contrast to the person Jesus, the dove and the fire were temporary physical phenomena – like the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and fire, or the thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai – that only came into being “in order to signify something and then to pass away.”³⁰

But, Augustine asks, if the Spirit was “sent” without taking on flesh like the Son, how are we to understand the Old Testament theophanies? Since they, too, were manifestations of God, how do they differ from the sendings of the Son and the Spirit?³¹ These are the topics of the rest of Books 2-3. In Book 2, Augustine turns to a survey of the theophanies, asking in each case which person of the Trinity was revealed.³² The most interesting discussion concerns Abraham's encounter at Mamre with three men (Gen. 18), each indistinguishable from the others and each

²⁷ Ibid., 2.5.7.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.5.8. Gal. 4:4 is Augustine's key text here.

²⁹ Ibid., 2.6.11.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.6.11, CCL 50:96.

³¹ Ibid., 2.7.12-2.7.13.

³² Ibid., 2.10.17-2.17.31.

called “Lord” (*dominus*).³³ That three figures appear, and not just one, demonstrates that it was not the Son alone who was made manifest in the Old Testament theophanies; indeed, Augustine says, all three persons of the Trinity could have been involved. Augustine acknowledges the speculative character of these matters, and he resists drawing certain judgments. Nevertheless, he does conclude his survey with two basic points: first, any of the persons of the Trinity – even the Father – could have been represented in these manifestations; and second, none of the manifestations revealed the substance of God.³⁴

In Book 3, Augustine considers the means by which God adopted physical form in the theophanies. Augustine begins this book with a series of lengthy digressions on God’s sovereignty as the first and highest cause behind all proximate or secondary causes,³⁵ including evil angels who are permitted within certain bounds to perform apparently miraculous deeds.³⁶ He then addresses the occurrence of special signs and wonders particularly designed to reveal something of God.³⁷ This particular form of divine self-presentation, Augustine says, is a subset of God’s general providence and serves the specific purpose of communicating some kind of message, whether through human prophets or angels who can take various forms. Augustine speculates briefly about how angels might manipulate physical objects – perhaps their own bodies, perhaps pre-existing external entities, perhaps bodies created for temporary purposes³⁸ – but ultimately concludes that humans cannot attain certainty about such matters. There are,

³³ Ibid., 2.10.19-2.12.22.

³⁴ Ibid., 2.18.35.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.1.6-3.6.11

³⁶ Ibid., 3.7.12-3.9.18.

³⁷ Ibid., 3.9.19-3.10.20.

³⁸ Ibid., 3.1.4-5, 3.10.19.

however, two points that can be known: first, there is a fundamental distinction between God and creatures in that God is invisible and unchangeable, while created things are visible and thus changeable;³⁹ and second, the Old Testament theophanies were produced by angels through created objects.

This latter point is critical for Augustine's argument, for it establishes for him the distinction between the testaments as that between angels and the Son. The biblical passages that provide the most support for Augustine's case come from Hebrews.

It is plainly stated in the letter to the Hebrews, where the author is distinguishing between the New Testament dispensation and the Old Testament dispensation, according to the requirements of different ages and times, that not only those visible phenomena of the Old Testament but also its verbal utterances were the work of angels. *To which of the angels, he writes, did he ever say, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool? Are they not all serving spirits, sent on service for the sake of those who are going to possess the inheritance of salvation (Heb 1:13-14)?* ... Next he goes on to show clearly that the word which is now delivered through the Son was then delivered through angels; he says, *For that reason we should attend more closely to the things we have heard, in case we drift away. If the word spoken through angels had valid force, and every transgression or disregard of it received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation (Heb 2:1-3)?* If you ask "What salvation?" he shows he is now speaking about the New Testament, that is the word spoken through the Lord, not through angels; *it was declared at first, he goes on, by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witnesses by signs and portents and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Heb 2:3-4).*⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., 3.10.21-3.11.21.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.11.22, CCL 50:151-52. "Apertissime quippe scriptum est in epistula ad hebraeos, cum dispensatio noui testamenti a dispensatione ueteris testamenti secundum congruentiam saeculorum ac temporum distingueretur, non tantum illa uisibilia sed ipsum etiam sermonem per angelos factum. Sic enim dicit: ad quem autem angelorum dixit aliquando: Sede ad dexteram meam donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum? Nonne omnes sunt ministri spiritus ad ministrationem missi propter eos qui futuri sunt haereditate possidere salutem? ... Deinde quia tunc per angelos nunc autem per filium sermo factus est, consequenter aperte que demonstrans: propterea, inquit, abundantius debemus attendere nos ea quae audiuiimus ne forte defluamus. si enim qui per angelos dictus sermo factus est firmus, et omnis praeuaricatio et inobedientia iustam accepit mercedis retributionem, quomodo nos effugiemus tantam neglegentes salutem? Et quasi quaereres quam salutem, ut ostenderet se de nouo testamento iam dicere, id est sermonem qui non per angelos sed per dominum factus est: quae cum initium accepisset, inquit, ut enarraretur per dominum, ab his qui audierunt in nos confirmata est coestante deo signis et ostentis et uariis

It was angels, Augustine continues, who appeared before Abraham at Mamre; an angel who commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, then ordered him to stop (Gen. 22:10, 15); an angel who spoke to Moses in the burning bush (Ac. 7:30); and angels who delivered the law at Sinai (Ac. 7:53).⁴¹ Nevertheless, it was the Son who ultimately ordained all these events, who through angels “was preparing his coming, arranging to find people to receive him by confessing themselves guilty, convicted of transgressions by the law they had not fulfilled. That is what the apostle says to the Galatians: *Why the law then? It was put forth because of transgression until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, who was prepared through angels in the hand of a mediator* (Gal. 3:19).”⁴²

In Book 4, Augustine develops this point further and finally addresses a basic question that has run throughout his discussion. In Books 2-3, Augustine repeatedly insisted that the Old Testament theophanies could not be equated with the substance of God, but rather represent the work of angels. Yet this bifurcation between the physical realm and the invisible, unchanging essence of God applies not just to the Old Testament theophanies but also to the revelations of the Son and the Spirit. Neither the physical body of Christ, nor the dove or fire of the Spirit, can be equated with the very substance of the Word whereby the Word is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, or with the very substance of the Spirit whereby the Spirit is co-equal and co-

uirtutibus et spiritus sancti diuisionibus secundum suam uoluntatem.” I have corrected the verse references in the English translation.

⁴¹ Ibid., 3.11.23-26.

⁴² Ibid., 3.11.26, CCL 50:157.

eternal with both the Father and the Son.⁴³ What, then, is the difference between the theophanies and the missions of the Son and the Spirit?

Augustine's answer is not easy to follow,⁴⁴ but it seems basically to be that the sendings of the Son and Spirit accomplish redemption and draw humanity back to God in a way that the angelic theophanies could not. Augustine provides in Book 4 several different accounts of the mediatorial work of the Son (devoting comparatively little attention to the Spirit), but each depends essentially on the incarnation, an event that obviously did not take place until the New Testament. Since the theophanies occurred before this time, it follows that they did not constitute the Trinitarian missions.

God is the source of our highest knowledge, ground of our being, and unchangingly perfect in truth, love, and eternity.⁴⁵ Yet, Augustine says, humanity is exiled from God in the far country, unable to participate in the Word because of sin. Our love for temporal things keeps us from contemplating the eternal truth of God, though we are not so estranged that we do not seek the eternity, truth, and blessedness God alone can provide. Since we are bound to this earth, our purification can only come about through temporal things. To explain, Augustine

⁴³ Ibid., 3.11.27.

⁴⁴ As Augustine complains in his introductory letter to Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, various books of *De Trinitate* were distributed before Augustine had been able to revise them properly. Edmund Hill alludes to this feature of the text in the introduction to his translation of Book 4. This book "contains some of the roughest, as well as some of the most splendid writing in the whole work, and had Augustine been able to revise as he wished, I think this book would perhaps have been one of the most thoroughly rewritten." *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, WSA 1.5 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1991), 147.

⁴⁵ Regrettably, space does not permit a full discussion of Augustine's various accounts in Book 4 of the mediatorial work of Christ. The exposition that follows draws upon the opening (4.1.1-4.1.2) and closing (4.18.24) sections of Augustine's discussion. The thematic interconnections between these two sections are obvious, indicating that Augustine considered the material of 4.1.1-4.18.24 a unit, and underscoring the importance of this particular depiction of the mediatorial work of Christ in Augustine's other writings.

quotes a Greek author, “*As eternity is to that which has originated, so truth is to faith.*”⁴⁶ He then uses these terms to set up a series of contrasts: mortal versus eternal, faith versus contemplation, sight, and truth. One day, we will be eternal and contemplate the truth by sight with full clarity, but until then, we are mortal and need to be purified by faith in originated things. Christ has made this possible by adopting humanity while retaining his divinity.

Truth itself, co-eternal with the Father, originated from the earth (Ps 85:12) when the Son of God came in order to become Son of man and to capture our faith and draw it to himself, and by means of it to lead us on to his truth; for he took on our mortality in such a way that he did not lose his own eternity ... So it was proper for us to be purified in such a way that he who remained eternal should become for us “originated”; it would not do for there to be one person for us in faith, another in truth. Nor, on the other hand, could we pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things, unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition, and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.⁴⁷

For our purposes, the value of Augustine’s treatment of the divine missions lies in the framework it provides for understanding the relation between the testaments in light of the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity.⁴⁸ We recall Calvin’s insistence that every expression of God’s favor toward us is only possible through the mediation of Christ, and the implication that the one covenant across the testaments must therefore be grounded in Christ. Augustine’s reflections on the Trinity present a significant challenge to Calvin’s understanding of God’s action in redemptive history. For Augustine, the divine missions reflect

⁴⁶ *Trin.* 4.18.24, CC 50:191. “Quantum ad id quod ortum est aeternitas ualet, tantum ad fidem ueritas.” The original source is Plato *Timaeus* 29c, but Hill speculates that Augustine’s uses Cicero’s translation (*The Trinity*, 183n75).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.18.24, CCL 50:192. “Ipsa ueritas patri coaeterna de terra orta est cum filius dei sic uenit ut fieret filius hominis et ipse in se exciperet fidem nostram qua nos perduceret ad ueritatem suam qui sic suscepit mortalitatem nostram ut non amitteret aeternitatem suam ... Ita ergo nos purgari oportebat ut ille nobis fieret ortus qui maneret aeternus ne alter nobis esset in fide, alter in ueritate; nec ab eo quod orti sumus ad aeterna transire possemus nisi aeterno per ortum nostrum nobis sociato ad aeternitatem ipsius traiceremur.”

⁴⁸ For contemporary reflections on this issue from the perspective of a New Testament scholar, see C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 295-312.

the intratrinitarian relations but do not constitute them. The sendings of the Son and the Spirit reveal that the Son comes from the Father, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father and is thus sent by the Father; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is sent by both;⁴⁹ since the Father is the source of all divinity,⁵⁰ he is never sent. This correspondence between the economic and the immanent Trinity is, for Augustine, not just a matter for speculation, but crucially embedded in the logic of redemption. It is by recognizing that the Son comes from the Father that those with faith in Christ move from his visible flesh to that invisible substance whereby the Son is co-eternal and equal with the Father. Nevertheless, there is an important distinction between the divine missions and the intratrinitarian relations. The latter concern the immutable order of the Godhead; the relations are, to put it in Thomist terms, constituted by eternal processions. The missions, on the other hand, concern God's action in time, and what God does *ad extra* cannot simplistically be retrojected into the immanent Trinity.

This does not mean for Augustine that God is subject to change.⁵¹ In Book 5, Augustine wrestles with the idea that the Spirit is everlasting "gift," but "donation" only from a certain period of time. Augustine insists both that "nothing happens to [God] in time because he is not changeable"⁵² and that humans need some vocabulary for expressing new dynamics in our interaction with God. His solution, not necessarily convincing, is to acknowledge changes of relationship that occur in us and from our perspective, and not in God himself, who perceives

⁴⁹ It is not necessary to discuss in this context Augustine's relation to the *filioque* clause.

⁵⁰ *Trin.* 4.20.29, CCL 50:200. "... totius diuinitatis, uel si melius dicitur deitatis, principium pater est."

⁵¹ I am grateful to Paul Griffiths for directing my attention to this issue.

⁵² *Trin.* 5.16.17, CCL 50:225. "... nihil accidit deo temporaliter, quia non est mutabilis."

all temporal events simultaneously. A coin, for instance, may become the price of some object without any mutation in the form or nature of the coin: how much more with the unchangeable substance of God? Concerning the psalmist's confession, "Lord, you have become our refuge" (90:1), Augustine writes: "God is called our refuge by way of relationship; the name has reference to us. And he becomes our refuge when we take refuge in him. Does this mean that something happens then in his nature, which was not there before we took refuge in him? No, the change takes place in us; we were worse before we took refuge in him, and we become better by taking refuge in him. But in him, no change at all."⁵³

Given Augustine's basic affirmation of the unity of divine action, there is, of course, a sense in which all God's dealings with humanity during the Old Testament must have involved Father, Son, and Spirit. But this is not to suggest that the dynamics of God's activity in redemptive history are also unchanging, that the mediatorial work of the Son revealed in the New Testament identifies the interaction between God and humanity during the Old Testament as well. According to Augustine, the sendings of the Son and the Spirit constitute decisively new events in redemptive history that enact a fundamental change in humanity's ability to participate in God, even if no change cannot be posited of God himself. The salvific benefits of Christ's mediation were not available during Old Testament times,⁵⁴ quite simply because the Son had not yet been sent.

The distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity allows Augustine to

⁵³ Ibid., CCL 50:226. "Refugium ergo nostrum deus relative dicitur; ad nos enim refertur; et tunc refugium nostrum fit cum ad eum refugimus. Numquid tunc fit aliquid in eius natura quod antequam ad eum refugeremus non erat? In nobis ergo fit aliqua mutatio; deteriores enim fuimus antequam ad eum refugeremus, et efficimur ad eum refugiendo meliores; in illo autem nulla."

⁵⁴ Or at least, not *widely* available. Augustine does think the Old Testament saints were able to participate proleptically in Christ, receiving the blessings of the New Testament during Old Testament times. I think the logic of Hebrews precludes this possibility, but I will return to this issue in the next section.

recognize the historical particularity of the divine missions and the radical change they enact while also affirming the constancy of God's character and purposes in the economy of salvation.

In his concluding remarks on the divine missions, Augustine proclaims,

There you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent. Everything that has taken place in time in 'originated' matters which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal, and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate the truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the Son of God.⁵⁵

On Augustine's account, the novelty and uniqueness of the incarnation must be located within the context of God's common salvific purpose across the testaments. On the one hand, the theophanies did not constitute, but only prefigured the sending of the Son in the incarnation; there is a distinction between testimonies to this mission and the mission itself. On the other hand, both the angelic theophanies and the incarnation were designed to lure humanity back from our estrangement from God. The Old Testament theophanies were thus oriented toward salvation in a preliminary sense; yet it was only at the fullness of time was Wisdom sent,

not to fill angels nor even to be an angel – except in the sense that she declared the counsel of the Father which was also her own – nor to be with men or in men, since she had already been like this in the patriarchs and the prophets; no, it was in order that the Word might become flesh, that is, become man. In this sacrament that was prophesied for the future lay the salvation of those wise and holy men also who were born of women before he was born of the virgin; and in this sacrament now proclaimed as achieved lies the salvation of all who believe, hope, and love.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Trin.* 4.19.25, CCL 50:193. "Ecce ad quod missus est filius dei; immo uero ecce quod est missum esse filium dei. Quaecumque propter faciendam fidem qua mundaremur ad contemplandam ueritatem in rebus ortis ab aeternitate prolatis et ad aeternitatem relatis temporaliter gesta sunt aut testimonia missionis huius fuerunt aut ipsa missio filii dei."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.20.27, CCL 50:197-98. "Missa est non ut impleret angelos, nec ut esset angelus nisi in quantum consilium patris annuntiabat quod et ipse erat, nec ut esset cum hominibus aut in hominibus, hoc enim et antea in patribus et prophetis; sed ut ipsum uerbum caro fieret, id est homo fieret, in quo futuro reuelato sacramento etiam eorum

This discussion provides a framework for reflecting theologically upon Hebrews. Hebrews affirms Christ's identity as pre-existing Son, but never suggests that Jesus was eternally qualified to act as high priest. Quite the opposite: on the reading presented in this chapter, Christ was established as high priest only after his incarnation, death, and bodily ascent into the heavenlies, and it was only after he was established as high priest that he became the source of our salvation. In many and various ways, Augustine might say – through angels, who manipulated matter to deliver a divine message – God spoke of old to our fathers. But in these last days, God has spoken to us by the Son – the creator of all things, coequal with the Father from eternity, yet only now having adopted flesh to become for us the great high priest who invites us into the very presence of God. As for Hebrews, so also for Augustine, the difference between the testaments is the difference between angels and the Son; the angels were sent to prepare the way for our salvation by testifying of the things to come, but it was only in the fullness of times that the Son was sent to bring us the redemption they could never provide. There was never a time when the Son was not, but there was a time when he was neither human nor high priest.

5.2 Israel and the faithfulness of God

In the previous section, I argued that the establishment of Christ as high priest enacted a new era in redemptive history prior to which the salvific benefits of his mediatorial work were not available. Such a position naturally raises questions about the condition of the Old

sapientium atque sanctorum salus esset qui priusquam ipse de uirgine nasceretur de mulieribus nati sunt, et in quo facto atque praedicato salus sit omnium credentium, sperantium, diligentium.” The “sacrament” referred to here seems clearly to refer to the incarnation, not e.g. to the Lord's Supper.

Testament patriarchs and God's commitment to Israel. In previous chapters, we saw that the question of the Old Testament saints presents a recurring source of difficulty for both Augustine and Calvin. Augustine acknowledges the presence of the church during Old Testament times, but identifies this church not with Israel, but with the patriarchs, whom he defines as redemptive-historical aberrations who mediated the Old Testament as they belonged to the New. One reason Augustine is able to hold such a position is that he tends to characterize salvation in terms of knowledge and enlightenment.⁵⁷ At the end of *De Trinitate*, Book 4, Augustine strikingly expands the term "mission" to encompass the individual moment by which a person perceives the Word to come from the Father. The Son of God is sent "*either* in the fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world ... *or* in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind."⁵⁸ This move allows Augustine to affirm the salvation of the Old Testament saints by virtue of their prophetic knowledge of Christ. "Now what is proclaimed to us as already having been achieved was also shown to the just men of old as still to be achieved, in order that they too might be made weak through being humbled by the same faith as we and once weakened might be perfected."⁵⁹ Since salvation comes by knowing God through Christ, the Old Testament patriarchs were able to receive salvation through their prophetic insight concerning the Son.

⁵⁷ Though certainly not simplistically, nor universally. *Conf.* 7-8 constitutes a kind of argument that knowledge is not enough for salvation, and that the will, too, must be healed. I am grateful to Paul Griffiths for nuancing my language on this point.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.20.28, CCL 50:198. "... uel eo quod apparuit huic mundo uerbum caro factum ... uel eo quod ex tempore cuiusquam mente percipitur." English italics mine.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.1.2, CCL 50:162. "Quod autem factum nobis annuntiatur, hoc futurum ostendebatur et antiquis iustis ut per eandem fidem etiam ipsi humiliati infirmarentur et infirmati perficerentur."

Calvin, too struggles with this issue, setting forth two somewhat contradictory explanations. On the one hand, Calvin identifies the church with Old Testament Israel and explains the blessings of the Old Testament by appeal to relative comparison. The salvific benefits of the New Testament are so much greater than those of the Old that Scripture sometimes speaks as if people did not experience them during Old Testament times; but these blessings were to some extent available during Old Testament times, just to a lesser degree. On the other hand, Calvin sometimes reverts to the same line of argument as Augustine: the patriarchs experienced New Testament blessings by way of transfer, as exceptions, before that dispensation when these blessings would be more widely and appropriately dispersed. These two explanations make for a rather uneasy fit: given Calvin's insistence on the availability of the knowledge of God the Redeemer during Old Testament times and his depiction of such knowledge of God as the sum of all piety, it makes little sense to describe the salvific benefits mediated through Christ as exceptional during Old Testament times.

Hebrews provides a significantly different perspective on these issues, especially in its eleventh chapter on the Jewish heroes of faith. In this section, I first argue that Heb. 11 denies the availability of the salvific benefits of Christ before the incarnation, but affirms an identity of hope for the people of God across the testaments. In this regard, Hebrews strongly rejects Augustine's depiction of Old Testament Israel as a carnal people who hoped in temporal goods. I then consider Hebrews' treatment of the new covenant, suggesting that the author's appeal to Jer. 31 on the abrogation of the old covenant primarily concerns the Levitical priesthood, against Pauline interpretations of this Old Testament prophecy. Finally, I turn to the question of God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel and the Jewish people in light of the Epistle's insistence on the superiority of Christ.

5.2.1 Hebrews 11 and the Old Testament saints

Heb. 11 teaches quite clearly that the Old Testament heroes of faith did not experience the blessings made available only in these last days through the establishment of Christ as high priest. Pamela Eisenbaum's study of this chapter provides a number of helpful observations in this regard, despite her more dubious interpretation of its overall purpose.⁶⁰ First, Eisenbaum notes that in comparison with recapitulations of Jewish history in the Hebrew Bible, there is a striking absence in Heb. 11 of any reference to Israel's possession of the land. Ps. 105:42-44, for instance, reads: "For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. He gave them the *lands* of the nations, and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples ...". Ps. 135:10-12 is also noteworthy: "He struck down many nations and killed many kings – Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan – and gave their *land* as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel."⁶¹ In these and other passages, the inheritance of the land figures prominently as confirmation of God's covenant with Abraham. Hebrews, though, lays no emphasis on the possession of the land and teaches instead that the heroes of faith looked to a better, heavenly country (4:8; 11:16).

Second and related, Eisenbaum notes the difference between Heb. 11 and Jewish Hellenistic hero lists concerning the issue of rewards. 1 Macc. 2:51-60 provides perhaps the clearest example of associating faithfulness with some kind of prize: Joseph resists Potiphar's

⁶⁰ Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBL Dissertation Series 156 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997). For a rhetorical analysis of this chapter, see Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1988).

⁶¹ Both passages cited in *ibid.*, 31-32. Italics hers. Eisenbaum also highlights Neh. 9:36, Eze. 20:42, Ps. 78:55, and Ps. 136:18-22.

wife, then becomes lord of Egypt; Phinehas routs out sin, then receives the covenant of the priesthood; Elijah defies a sinful king, then ascends to heaven.⁶² In each case, obedience to Torah in the face of adversity results in some concrete and public reward. This theme contrasts sharply with Hebrews, which teaches that the heroes of faith “did not receive what was promised” (11:39). This verse, Eisenbaum says,

is so out of the ordinary that it is impossible to imagine that it could have been said by a Jew ... By saying that the heroes did not receive what was promised them, the author implies that the heroes, relative to his perspective, were somehow disadvantaged. They were not honored and rewarded in their own lifetime. The lack of honor accorded the heroes of Hebrews diverges substantially from the consistent interest of Jewish texts in naming the honors and rewards which the heroes received.⁶³

Third, Eisenbaum argues that the thread connecting the faith of the heroes is not their individual greatness, but their ability to anticipate the future and foresee something better. Abel and Enoch trust in a God who rewards those who find divine approval in this life; Noah builds the ark because he knows what destruction will come; Abraham sojourns patiently, because he awaits a heavenly homeland; Moses rejects the wealth of Egypt for a future reward; and Rahab’s actions reflect an awareness of the victory God will grant the Israelites. By contrast, no attention is given to Moses’ miracles before Pharaoh or even his leadership in the exodus, deeds that might be expected in a Jewish Hellenistic hero list. Faith in Heb. 11 is thus connected with eschatology, a point that gains additional support if 11:1 is read in light of 2:5-9. Just as the recipients of the Epistle “do not yet see everything in subjection” to Christ (2:8), so also is faith

⁶² Ibid., 41-43.

⁶³ Ibid., 82-83.

“the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1).⁶⁴ Given these considerations, Eisenbaum judges that the heroism of the figures

is not attributable to their achievements in their own time, but to their ability to anticipate a better time (that is the essence of their faith). The heroes of Hebrews function as seers who portend the future, but whose own heroic image is mitigated by their being part of the old world order. Like the levitical system of worship, the tabernacle, the temple, the priests, or other biblical institutions, the author uses the heroes as historical examples for teaching, but at the same time devalues them because they are what made the old covenant old.⁶⁵

Eisenbaum’s observations lead her to the curious conclusion that Hebrews’ depiction of the heroes of faith is an attempt to denationalize biblical history, making room for Gentile Christians to claim this history as their own and paving the way for the formation of Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism. For our purposes, it is not necessary to engage the details of this conclusion, not least because Eisenbaum herself has come to reject it. In a word, Eisenbaum’s earlier thesis traded on the assumption that the distinction between Judaism and Christianity was clear and established at a relatively early date, an assumption that recent scholarship has increasingly challenged. Having since developed a greater appreciation for the complexity of early Jewish-Christian relations, Eisenbaum has more recently written,

Whereas I once would have lumped Hebrews together with Barnabas because of its supersessionist theology, I now see Hebrews’ “supersessionism” as possibly a desperate attempt to construct anew a religious heritage that seems to have all but disappeared. It is in some ways neither Judaism nor Christianity and in other ways it represents both – a unique form of Judeo-Christianity that perhaps existed briefly before Rome was the common enemy of Jews and believers in Jesus and

⁶⁴ On this point, Eisenbaum appeals with qualification to Robert Brawley, “Discursive Structure and the Unseen in Hebrews 2:8 and 11:1: A Neglected Aspect of the Context,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 81-98.

⁶⁵ Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity*, 183-84.

before the rhetoric of Christian and Jewish leaders could construct firm boundaries between Judaism and Christianity.⁶⁶

In two insightful articles, Matthew Thiessen pushes this line of thought further, arguing that Heb. 11 is part and parcel of a larger narrative framework seen throughout the Epistle that depicts the new covenant as the continuation, not abrogation of God's faithfulness to Israel.⁶⁷

Thiessen takes as his starting point the logic of 3:7-4:11, which begins thus:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall never enter my rest'" (3:7-11).

This passage provides an extended citation of Ps. 95:7-11, which recalls the rebellion at Meribah and Massah⁶⁸ where that generation of Israelites was barred from entering into the promised land (Num. 14). Hebrews warns its addressees not to follow their example, urging them to be faithful so that they may enter God's rest.

Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, while it is said, "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (3:12-15).

As Thiessen observes, this passage assumes rather strikingly that the Israelites never entered God's rest. Yes, Josh. 21:44 claims that "the Lord gave [the Israelites] rest on every side just as

⁶⁶ Pamela Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews within the Literary Landscape of Christian Origins," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 236-37.

⁶⁷ Matthew Thiessen, "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus," *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007): 353-369, and "Hebrews 12.5-13, the Wilderness Period, and Israel's Discipline," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 366-79.

⁶⁸ Narrated in Ex. 17, and also cited in Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8.

he swore to their fathers.” Yes, Solomon rejoiced in 1 Kg. 8:56 that the Lord “gave rest to his people Israel, according to all that he spoke.” But Hebrews insists that this rest remains unclaimed: “For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day” (4:8). As Hebrews envisions them, the addressees are still in the wilderness wanderings, not yet having entered the promised land.

This context makes greater sense of Eisenbaum’s observation that Heb. 11 depicts Israel’s heroes of faith largely in terms of their not having received what was promised, without adopting her (earlier) suggestion that this chapter seeks to denationalize Israel.⁶⁹ Israel remains the people of God, even if she has not yet entered God’s rest. Thus, Abraham sojourns as an alien in the land of God’s promise, yet he does not receive this land as his inheritance. Joseph’s request that his bones be taken to Canaan reveals his hope in the promised land – for his people, if not for himself. Moses is treated primarily in terms of his identification with Israel and subsequent marginalization in Egypt. Joshua is not mentioned at all – he could not be, for he did not lead the people into the promised land. Just when the Israelites would otherwise be entering Canaan, the list trails off (11:32-38) and the chapter concludes, “All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised” (11:39). Finally, in 12:1-3, the author introduces Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (cf. 2:10). Thiessen notes that the word “pioneer” is a translation for ἀρχηγός, a term commonly used in the Old Testament with regard to the leaders of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 13:2-3; 16:1-3; 25:1-5). According to Hebrews,

⁶⁹ Thiessen, “Hebrews and the End of the Exodus,” 360-67. Thiessen depends on Eisenbaum’s findings in *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity*, but significantly departs from her earlier position that Heb. 11 serves to downplay national Israel. On Thiessen’s account, Hebrews does not separate the heroes of faith from national Israel but rather highlights Israel’s history of marginalization, which it considers a sign of belonging to God’s people.

Joshua, the first ἀρχηγός, failed to lead God’s people into the rest; Jesus, the second ἀρχηγός, will finish the task.

In the subsequent verses (12:5-13), the author urges his readers not to resent the suffering they are currently enduring, but to view it as a form of fatherly discipline. Thiessen locates this language against the backdrop of a longstanding Jewish tradition that understood the wilderness wanderings as a period of educational discipline whereby God’s people would be prepared to enter the land of promise.⁷⁰ In some instances, this παιδεία is even likened to an athletic contest, a point that bears resonance with Hebrews’ exhortation to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (12:1).⁷¹ Finally, Heb. 12:28-39, the rhetorical climax of the letter, situates the addressees in the wilderness, in between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion, ready to enter the promised land Joshua never delivered.

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them ... But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel (12:18-24).

Thiessen concludes:

The letter to the Hebrews thus envisions its audience at the very spot that the book of Deuteronomy envisions the people of Israel – at the doorstep of God’s promised land of rest. By means of this rewriting and reconfiguration of Israel’s history, the author of the letter to the Hebrews demonstrates to his readers that their experience is in continuity with the

⁷⁰ Thiessen, “Hebrews 12.5-13, the Wilderness Period, and Israel’s Discipline,” 369-73.

⁷¹ Ibid., 374-75.

entire history of Israel, and should be deemed as evidence for the fact that they are God's children, to whom the long-awaited rest is still open.⁷²

For our purposes, Heb. 11 underscores two central points: a sense of incompleteness in the Old Testament narrative, and the continuity between Old Testament Israel and those now called to fix their eyes on Christ. On the one hand, the greatest figures in the Old Testament – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses – “did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (11:39-40). This reference to perfection in a chapter so characterized by an emphasis on land draws together a wide range of themes already developed throughout the Epistle, themes that converge with decisive force in the opening verses of Heb. 12, where the author identifies Jesus as both high priest and new Joshua. As high priest, Christ is the reason we can draw near to the throne of grace (4:16; cf. 7:25; 10:22; 11:6) and pass into the inner shrine (6:19), the sanctuary (9:8; 10:19), the greater and more perfect tent (9:11), or heaven itself (9:24). As new Joshua, Jesus enables us to seek the city to come (13:14), approach the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22), be led into glory (2:10), receive the eternal inheritance (9:15), and enter God's rest (4:11). Therefore, Hebrews urges, we must run with perseverance the race set before us, “looking to Jesus the pioneer” – new Joshua – “and perfecter” – high priest – “of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

Hebrews' treatment of the Old Testament patriarchs thus challenges both Augustine and Calvin's strained efforts to assert the equivalence between the spiritual experiences of the patriarchs and those of New Testament believers. Just as the Old Testament believers did not

⁷² Thiessen, “Hebrews and the End of the Exodus,” 369.

receive the promised land, so also did they not receive perfection. Since both blessings were only made possible with the coming of Christ, there is no question of redemptive historical aberrations, nor does it suffice to appeal to differences of degree or gradation. The establishment of Christ as high priest inaugurates a decisively new age in redemptive history that fundamentally alters the availability of redemptive blessings for those who participate in the covenant.

On the other hand, *Hebrews* insists that the Old Testament heroes of faith looked by faith for the same reward now set forth before those who follow Christ. As Heb. 11 reads Israel's history, the eternal inheritance is what the Israelites hoped for all along, not some new blessing revealed only at the coming of Christ. What Christ brings for the first time in redemptive history is not the knowledge of an eternal inheritance, but the ability to claim it. In that regard, Augustine's construal of Old Testament Israel is utterly incongruous with that found in *Hebrews*. As we have seen, Augustine repeatedly claims that Israel was a carnal, earthly people who sought only temporal goods, and that this difference in hope constitutes one of the primary differences between the testaments.⁷³ "None of us doubts that the Old Testament contains promises of temporal realities and is called the Old Testament for that reason, and that the promise of eternal life and of the kingdom of heaven pertains to the New Testament."⁷⁴ For Augustine, the Old Testament did not reveal the promise of eternal life, but veiled it.

For this reason the Old Testament, with its earthly promises, veiled and, in a certain sense, wrapped in deep shadows the secret of the kingdom of

⁷³ To be precise, Augustine does acknowledge that there are some earthly promises in the New Testament, but he does not think they characterize the New Testament hope. See *c. Adim.* 18.1. Augustine alludes to Mt. 19:29 and quotes 2 Cor. 6:10. The usefulness of the latter for Augustine's argument is not clear to us.

⁷⁴ *C. Faust.* 4.2, CSEL 25.1:268-69. "Temporalium quidem rerum promissiones testamento uetere contineri et ideo uetus testamentum appellari nemo nostrum ambigit, et quod aeternae uitae promissio regnumque caelorum ad nouum pertinet testamentum."

heaven, which was to be revealed at the proper time. But when the fullness of time came, so that the New Testament, which was veiled by symbols of the Old, might be revealed, it had now to be shown by clear testimony that there was another life, for whose sake this life ought to be held in contempt, and another kingdom, for whose sake it was necessary to endure most patiently the opposition of all earthly kingdoms.⁷⁵

Augustine also suggests that the reason God gave such earthly promises is that the people were carnal, “not yet capable of receiving the heavenly promises.”⁷⁶ Giving them earthly blessing might keep them from the worship of idols and demons. Augustine does acknowledge indications in the Old Testament that earthly blessing was not an end in and of itself: Ps. 144:11-15, for instance, condemns the wicked for indulging in material blessing, and other psalms and the wisdom literature praise righteousness, wisdom, and God’s law as superior to earthly possessions.⁷⁷ But the contrast remains, and as we have seen, Augustine argues that those of the Old Testament who understood the true purpose of the temporal promises pertain more to the New Testament than to the Old.⁷⁸ For Augustine, the Old Testament promises were temporal, and their chief value lay in their function as figures of the realities to come.⁷⁹

On this issue, Calvin comes far closer to the theological vision of Hebrews. We recall that the central point of Calvin’s chapter on the similarity of the testaments (*Inst.* 2.10) is the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 22.76, CSEL 25.1:674-75. “Unde et uetus testamentum secretum regni caelorum tempore oportuno aperiendum promissionibus terrenis operuit et quodam modo umbrosius opacauit. Ubi autem uenit plenitudo temporis, ut nouum testamentum reuelaretur, quod figuris ueteris uelebatur, euidenti testificatione iam demonstrandum erat esse aliam uitam, pro qua debet haec uita contemni, et aliud regnum, pro quo oportet omnium terrenorum regnorum aduersitatem patientissime sustineri.” See *c. adv. leg.* 1.17.35, CSEL 25.1:64.

⁷⁶ *C. Adim.*, 18.2, CSEL 25.1:175. “... nondum capientibus promissa caelestia.” See *ibid.*, 18.1, CSEL 25.1:172-73. “Carnal and temporal rewards were suitably promised to a people that was still carnal, but they were promised by the one God, to whom ever creature belongs, both higher and lower “(*carnali adhuc populo congruenter carnalia et temporalia praemia fuisse promissa, sed tamen ab uno deo, cuius est creatura omnis et superior et inferior*). See also *ibid.*, 20.2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.2. Augustine cites readings from Ps. 37:16, 119:72, 19:9-10; Pro. 3:13-15; Wis. 7:7-9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.2. See *c. adu. leg.* 2.8.31, *c. Faust.* 4.2.

⁷⁹ *C. Faust.*, 10.2.

common hope of the people of God across the testaments. Almost the entirety of this section concerns the hope of immortality in the Old Testament. Much of Calvin's argument concerning this hope depends on inference from various biblical and doctrinal considerations. The Israelites embraced the Word of God, which enables participation in God, which is accompanied by the blessing of eternal life; the promise of the covenant that Israel would be God's people must entail everlasting mercy; given the earthly trials Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs suffered, it would make no sense to call them blessed unless their hope were directed elsewhere. On this point, Calvin explicitly cites Heb. 11 and concludes, "If these holy patriarchs looked for a blessed life, as they undoubtedly did, from God's hand, they both conceived and saw it as a blessedness other than that of earthly life."⁸⁰ It is only later in the prophets, Calvin acknowledges, that the "feeble spark" of this promise grows into a fuller light, and only with the coming of Christ that this promise bursts forth with all radiance.⁸¹ The prophets spoke about these eternal promises under lineaments, mixing into the promises of eternal life incentives for temporal benefits. Yet Calvin insists that the purpose of the earthly promises was to direct the minds of the Israelites to their heavenly heritage, leading them from lower to higher things.

For Hebrews, what unites those of the new covenant with the Israelites of old is not equivalence in the availability of salvific benefits, but a common hope of an eternal inheritance in the heavenly country. Hebrews' renarration of Israel's history in 3:7-4:11 follows the pattern Calvin describes by transforming the meaning of rest such that it is no longer understood in terms of Canaan but as an eternal blessing made possible by Christ's physical ascent into the heavenly realm. While such a reading of Israel's history may have come as a surprise to the

⁸⁰ *Inst.* 2.10.13, OS 3:414.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.10.20, OS 3:420.

recipients of the Epistle, the author of Hebrews insists, not unlike Calvin, that this hope of an eternal reward characterized Israel's heroes from the very beginning. Augustine's move to distinguish between the testaments according to a difference of hope runs completely counter to the theological vision of Hebrews.⁸²

5.2.2 The establishment of a new covenant

Despite its affirmation of a common hope across the testaments, Hebrews clearly asserts the existence of two covenants and says the second covenant is better than the first: "Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (8:6; cf. 7:22; 8:7-13; 9:1, 9:15-22; 12:24; 13:20). Indeed, Hebrews even insists that the existence of a new covenant implies the abrogation of the old. To appreciate better the force of these remarks, we must consider Hebrews' appropriation of Jer. 31:31-34, the chief passage through which the author legitimizes his assertion of a new covenant.

For he finds fault with them when he says: "The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me,

⁸² Jon Levenson presents a similar kind of argument as that found in Hebrews (and Calvin) concerning Jewish hope for the resurrection of the dead. While he acknowledges that explicit evidence for this hope does not appear until late in the development of the Jewish canon (Dan. 12:1-3), he argues that the idea had nevertheless developed over the course of centuries before the Second Temple period as a natural outgrowth of several biblical themes, especially God's faithfulness to his promises of life for Israel. See Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006); and Kevin J. Madigan and Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection: The Power of God for Christians and Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008).

from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (8:8-12).

This passage is not cited anywhere else in the New Testament,⁸³ and the instance here is the most extensive Old Testament quotation in the New.⁸⁴ A number of points on Hebrews’ appropriation of this passage call for attention: first, the first covenant was unable to restrain sin. God finds fault with his people (8:8), because those who received the first covenant, established during the exodus, “did not continue in my covenant” (8:9).⁸⁵ Second, and by way of contrast, this new covenant will be characterized by the internalization of God’s law: “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts” (8:10; cf. 10:16). Third, this new covenant will bring about the forgiveness of sins. “For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (8:12). The author further underscores this theme in 10:17-18, where he quotes the same verse and concludes, “Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (10:18). Fourth, Jer. 31 implicitly predicts the end of the first covenant. “In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (8:13).⁸⁶

This last point receives confirmation elsewhere in the Epistle. In the chiastic unit of 7:11-19, which contains the most direct affirmation in Hebrews of Christ’s qualification to be high priest despite his non-Levitical lineage, the opening and closing verses assert that the law

⁸³ R. T. France, “The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 (1996), 264.

⁸⁴ George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003), 282.

⁸⁵ There is a text critical issue in 8:8 concerning whether God found fault with the people or with the first covenant. As Hays argues, though, in an article to which I will refer again momentarily, the overall point of the text encompasses both meanings: “The inadequacy of the covenant may be thought to consist precisely in its inability to create an obedient people.” See Richard Hays, “‘Here We have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and others, 151-73. Quotation on p. 160.

⁸⁶ ἐν τῷ λέγειν καινὴν πεπαλαίωκεν τὴν πρώτην· τὸ δὲ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ.

could never bring about perfection. The second and penultimate verses proclaim a change of law. Heb. 7:12: “When there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.”⁸⁷ Heb. 7:18: “A former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness.”⁸⁸ Priesthood, law, and covenant form a cluster of institutions, and the change effected by Christ involves the replacement of an entire system of earthly, temporal, inefficacious worship by a new system of heavenly, eternal, salvific worship. Christ “abolishes (ἀναιρεῖ) the first in order to establish the second” (10:9).

In her monograph on this issue,⁸⁹ Susanne Lehne argues that Hebrews goes beyond any New Testament author, including Paul, in his articulation of a conscious break with the institutions of Israel. Hebrews defines the law exclusively in terms of the Jewish cult, and rather paradoxically retains the language and form of the old covenant – blood, sacrifice, high priest, and tabernacle – to reject the continuation of its actual practices. Such a treatment of the Levitical system was utterly unique in the Jewish context. In her survey of Second Temple Jewish literature, Lehne finds virtually no material that reflects Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant; indeed, she notes, there seems to be a “studious avoidance”⁹⁰ of this language. The one notable exception is the Qumran community, which considered the Jerusalem temple system corrupt and avoided participating in its rites. Nevertheless, the perspective of this sectarian group differed significantly from that of Hebrews: while the Qumran community expressed great devotion to the Law and longed for a purified, material temple system with a

⁸⁷ μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται.

⁸⁸ ἀθέτησις μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγόσης ἐντολῆς διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές.

⁸⁹ Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 44 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990).

⁹⁰ Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 35.

legitimate priesthood, Hebrews envisioned a radical break from the old cultic system, which the author deemed inherently defective and inefficacious.

The abrogation of the Levitical priesthood is a logical corollary of the establishment of Christ as high priest. The former system was inefficacious (7:18-19), unable to take away sin (10:11), characterized by repetitive animal sacrifices (10:1-4), administered by priests who were themselves sinful (7:27) and constantly needed to be replaced upon their death by a system of succession (7:23). Christ, on the other hand, brings about the forgiveness of sins as sinless, eternal high priest (7:24-28) through the once-for-all sacrifice of himself (9:25-28). Some have remarked on the oddity of Hebrews' retention of Levitical imagery to describe the priestly ministry of Christ, when the Epistle also asserts the qualitative superiority of Christ's ministry over that of the Levitical priests.⁹¹ Yet the logic of Hebrews' argument does not proceed from the priority of the Levitical priesthood system, which Christ then surpasses, but rather from the opposite direction. The earthly tabernacle Moses constructed was a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, and Moses was instructed to build his tabernacle according to an already existing image presented to him (8:5; cf. 9:23-24; 10:1). In that sense, the heavenly sanctuary has ontological priority over the earthly, even if, from a human perspective, the earthly has epistemological priority over the heavenly. It is not that Jesus' priestly ministry resembles the Levitical, but the other way around. Since the Levitical priesthood was designed as an image of Jesus', it follows that when Christ is established as high priest, the Levitical priesthood ceases to serve a purpose.

⁹¹ Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest," 92-93.

In a still valuable article titled, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,”⁹² George Caird pushes this point a step further. Caird argues that the argument of Hebrews is structured upon four key Old Testament passages (Ps. 8; Ps. 95; Ps. 110; Jer. 31), and that each receives attention for its confession of the inadequacy of the old covenant. (I will consider these psalms in greater depth in the next chapter.) Jeremiah predicts the establishment of a new covenant because he perceives the problems with the current one; Ps. 110 declares an eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek during a time when the Levitical priests still control the temple cult; Ps. 95 speaks of God’s rest when the Israelites already reside in Canaan; and Ps. 8 sets forth a glorious picture of man when we do not see everything in subjection to him. In these arguments, Caird says, “the epistle seeks to establish its main thesis, that the Old Testament is not only an incomplete book but an avowedly incomplete book, which taught and teaches men to live by faith in the good things that were to come.”⁹³ In that regard, Hebrews’ exegetical concern is not “to prove the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old, nor to establish the inadequacy of the old order. His interest is in the confessed inadequacy of the old order.”⁹⁴ These considerations reveal the author’s conception of the purpose of the old order. On Caird’s reading of the Epistle, the old covenant was a kind of picture, whose purpose was to signify, but not to enact a real effect on the world.

The priesthood had all the outward trappings of true priesthood, but not the essential quality of enabling men to draw near to God. The sacrifices had the appearance of true sacrifice, but not the power to purify the conscience from dead works. What then is the permanent significance of these outworn institutions? ... A picture of an unknown fruit resembles

⁹² George B. Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5:1 (1959): 44-51.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

the real thing in all except reality: it will not satisfy your hunger, but it may help you to recognize the real fruit if you should come across it. Similarly, the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices were only shadow pictures of reality, but they prepared men to appreciate the reality when it appeared in Jesus Christ. God spoke to the fathers in the cultus in order that they might become familiar with a picture language without which they could neither apprehend nor convey the full scope of his later word of salvation.⁹⁵

Caird's reading of Hebrews is, I think, substantially right: the Epistle insists on the limited purpose of the old covenant and its obsolescence in light of the establishment of Christ as high priest. Nevertheless, it is also important to note what Hebrews does *not* say concerning the old covenant or its people. On this point, we may compare Hebrews' appropriation of Jer. 31 with that found in Augustine, whose treatment of this passage, in turn, deeply shaped Calvin's.⁹⁶ For Augustine, Jer. 31 is a central proof-text for the distinction between the testaments. This passage is the only locus in the Old Testament that explicitly mentions the future existence of a New Testament, and the language found therein corresponds to that found in 2 Cor. 3:6, which refers to the apostles as "ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." Augustine's reading of Jer. 31 is deeply inmeshed in his reading of Paul, stressing the way the moral law (to use the term somewhat anachronistically) brings about death. Gal. 3 thus becomes an important passage for interpreting Jeremiah's prophecy. On Augustine's account, Paul teaches that the law was given to produce transgressors, whether by inflaming the concupiscence of those who willfully disobey God's will, or by producing obedience based solely in fear. The result of this dynamic was to increase the desire for grace. Grace, in turn, was given that we might fulfill the law, which is the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁶ In what follows, I draw upon *spir. et litt.* 19.33-20.35, already considered in the second chapter.

promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah: the law no longer results in transgression, but is written on our hearts that we may obey it by the Holy Spirit, motivated by love, not fear. Augustine's treatment of Jer. 31 thus focuses on the role of the moral law in redemptive history, playing the Old Testament against the New according to the distinction between the slavery and fear of the former, and the freedom and love of the latter.

In Hebrews, by contrast, the discussion of Jer. 31 arises in the middle of an extended discussion about the Levitical priesthood. In the preceding passage (8:1-6), the author discusses Jesus' identity as high priest of a heavenly tabernacle compared to which Moses' was but a shadow and copy. The subsequent passage (9:1-10) continues with a description of the earthly sanctuary. In this context, the purpose of 8:7-13 is to explain the assertion that Christ is minister of a better covenant (8:6) with reference to the implications for the Levitical priesthood. Hebrews never suggests that the law was given to increase sin, nor, for instance, that we would not have known what coveting was until we heard the command, "Do not covet." Indeed, Hebrews' argument concerning the need for forgiveness appeals not to the moral law, but to the ceremonial. Heb. 10:1-4:

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

According to Hebrews, and in contrast to Augustine, it is primarily the limitations of the Old Testament ceremonies, and not our inability to obey the God's commands, that creates a sense of anticipation about a new and better covenant.

Still less does Hebrews set the new covenant against the old according to the distinction between fear and love, or slavery and freedom. Indeed, Hebrews features some of the most severe warning passages in the New Testament, and it uses quite a bit of fear to motivate obedience.

A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (10:28-31).

Rather than replace fear with love, Hebrews depicts the New Testament as a time of heightened fear, with even greater consequences for unfaithfulness than the Old. "For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him" (Heb. 2:2-3). On this matter, too, Caird's remarks retain force:

There is nothing here of the Pauline contrast between the transitory régime which brought condemnation and death and the permanent régime of justification and life, between Mount Sinai in Arabia whose children are slaves and Mount Zion whose children are free. For in Paul's experience the law was not merely incomplete; it had claimed completeness, claimed to be a way of salvation and to give that life which in fact it had no power to give, and just because it had exceeded its God-given function it had become a demonic agency which enslaved its adherents. But in Hebrews part of the validity of the old order is its constant disclaimer of finality. Throughout the Old Testament period men were constantly being warned not to think more highly of their present religious status than they ought to think, and if they were men of

faith, they confessed themselves to be strangers and sojourners to whom the old covenant offered no abiding city.⁹⁷

5.2.3 Jesus and the people of the covenant

The two claims of this section, that Hebrews locates the continuity between the testaments in a common people with a common hope, and that Hebrews asserts the abrogation of the old covenant in light of the establishment of Christ as high priest, come to a head when Hebrews' affirmation of God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel meets the Epistle's insistence on Christ as the fulfillment of God's purposes during the Old Testament. Richard Hays explores this topic in an article titled, "‘Here We Have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews."⁹⁸ In light of recent scholarship on the complexity of identity formation in early Christian communities, Hays wonders how Hebrews might read without the assumption that "Christianity" already existed as a defined, predominantly Gentile movement distinct from "Judaism."⁹⁹ After all, Hebrews mentions nothing about the relation between Jews and Gentiles, or the Gentile mission. There is virtually no discussion of circumcision or food laws (except 9:10 and 13:9), nor much polemic against Jewish leaders (except 13:10). And Hebrews' criticism of the Mosaic Law focuses almost exclusively on the Levitical cult.

Hays surveys Hebrews' appropriation of Israel's Scriptures and concludes that the Epistle presents the new covenant as one that does not abrogate, but carries forward the narrative of this chosen people. On the appropriation of Jer. 31 in Heb. 8, for instance, Hays

⁹⁷ Caird, "The Exegetical Method of Hebrews," 46. For a more recent comparison between Paul and Hebrews, see James C. Miller, "Paul and Hebrews: A Comparison of Narrative Worlds," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods – New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini, 245-64.

⁹⁸ Cited above.

⁹⁹ The depiction of Hebrews that follows differs slightly, but not substantively from the provided by Hays in "‘Here We Have No Lasting City,'" 154.

discerns no reference to Gentile Christianity or the rejection of the Jews, but rather an eschatological vision of the glorification of Israel quite in line with the original force of the prophecy. Neither this passage nor any other suggests that the Old Testament promotes legalism, self-righteousness, or some other defective conception of morality or God. Hebrews embraces and confirms Israel's Scriptures and stories, even if they are incomplete without the final revelation of Christ. Given these considerations, Hays writes, "it may be unhelpful to describe Hebrews' teaching as a form of 'Christianity' over against 'Judaism'; rather, it is better described as a form of Jewish sectarian 'New Covenantalism.'"¹⁰⁰

This issue demands further consideration, particularly in light of the oft-repeated charge that Hebrews is an anti-Jewish text. Hays, for instance, winsomely cites his own *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* for the (now abandoned) position that Hebrews is the "paradigmatic illustration in the New Testament" of a "relentlessly supersessionist" text that "builds its typology on the rhetorical ground of inference from the lesser to the greater."¹⁰¹ Centuries of strained Jewish-Christian relations have made it natural for modern readers to think of Judaism and Christianity as completely distinct religions, one consisting of Jews who do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and the other of Gentiles who confess the identity of Jesus and God. Here, though, we are presented with a letter that resists such dichotomies, setting forth the superiority of Christ and the establishment of a new covenant as a continuation of God's promises to Israel, with no expressed concern for the Gentiles whatsoever. To put a sharper edge on this issue, it may be helpful to turn by way of comparison to Paul, or at least the way

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 155.

¹⁰¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), 98-99, 177, noted in Hays, "Here We Have No Lasting City," 151-52. For a survey of these kinds of remarks, see Clark M. Williamson, "Anti-Judaism in Hebrews?" *Interpretation* 57 (2008): 266-79.

recent scholarship concerning Paul has grappled with his understanding of Jewish and Christian identity. In the remainder of this section, then, I look to Daniel Boyarin's *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*¹⁰² to explore the questions he raises concerning Paul in relation to Hebrews.

Boyarin's unique and provocative project is to read Paul from the perspective of "a talmudist and postmodern Jewish cultural critic,"¹⁰³ considering the complex dynamics of Paul's identity as a first-century, self-identifying Jew who adopted radical, Hellenistic positions that necessarily put him in tension with Judaism. Methodologically, Boyarin takes as his starting point Paul's statement in Gal. 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." On Boyarin's reading, this passage reflects Paul's desire for a universal human essence that transcends all difference and particularity. This universalism, in turn, trades on a dualistic opposition between body (which represents particularity) and spirit (which represents universalism), and a hermeneutical dualism between literal and allegorical interpretation. Paul's impulse toward the One not only animates his spiritualizing interpretation of Israel's Scripture, but also produces a posture of indifference toward Jewish practices, which, Boyarin insists, is precisely to disregard Jewish difference. Ultimately, Paul cares very little about Jews remaining Jewish, "although Paul, were he here, would probably argue that he was redefining Jewishness in such a way that everyone could be Jewish."¹⁰⁴

Boyarin's treatment of Gal. 3-4 provides a lens into his overall depiction of Paul's theology. Boyarin rejects the interpretation of Gal. 3:19, often associated with Luther, that the

¹⁰² Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1994).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

law was given to produce transgressions and therefore increase the scope of God's grace, proposing instead an interpretation according to which the law was given either to restrain or to punish transgression. Paul does not oppose the law as if it were inherently demonic or evil, nor does he condemn law obedience as such. Nevertheless, Boyarin argues, Paul does deny that the law could bring life, and he depicts the law as a pedagogue, given only as a kind of temporary babysitter until the child is prepared for adulthood, at which point the pedagogue is no longer necessary. When, in Gal. 4:1-7, Paul speaks of the adoption of slaves as sons and heirs at the coming of Christ, he reveals the very limited and temporal worth he accords the law and the Jewish people. Jews and Judaism, Boyarin says, had for Paul value during the childhood of humanity, but that time is now over and the signifier has been superseded by the signified; Israel therefore has no more role to play in history.

Boyarin acknowledges Paul's grief and concern for the Israelites, and his hope that the Jews will be redeemed by faith in Christ. But, Boyarin argues, "if the only value and promise afforded the Jews ... is that in the end they will see the error of their ways, one cannot claim that there is a role for Jewish existence in Paul. It has been transcended by that which was its spiritual, allegorical referent always and forever: faith in Jesus Christ and the community of the faithful in which there is no Jew or Greek."¹⁰⁵ On the one hand, Paul is neither anti-Semitic nor anti-Jewish; he loves his brethren and believes they will receive salvation. On the other hand, "this salvation ... is precisely for the Jews a bitter gospel not a sweet one, because it is conditioned precisely on abandoning that to which we hold so dearly, our separate cultural,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 151.

religious identity, our own fleshy and historical practice, our existence according to the flesh, our Law, our difference. Paul has simply allegorized our difference quite out of existence.”¹⁰⁶

In the very passage where Paul warns most clearly against Gentile boasting over the Jews, Paul actually further reifies his particular version of supersessionism. Paul urges the Gentiles in Rom. 11 to recognize that they are like wild olive branches grafted onto a cultivated olive tree where other branches have been cut off. The problem with this passage, Boyarin writes, is that

the Jewish root which supports them has been continued solely in the Jewish Christians. The branches which have been lopped off – for all Paul’s confidence that they may be rejoined some day – are those Jews who remain faithful to the ancestral faith and practice and who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah. We thus see the peculiar logic of supersession at work here. *Because* Israel has not been superseded, therefore most Jews have been superseded.¹⁰⁷

Paul’s supersessionism, Boyarin acknowledges, is different from the view that God has rejected all Jews and replaced them entirely with Gentile Christians; Paul does not claim that there was any inherent fault in the Jews or Judaism that prompted their rejection. But he nevertheless redefines “Israel” such that it is no longer understood as a community of flesh, with the concomitant entailments of genealogy and circumcision, but as one of faith. This is a radical departure from the prophetic literature, which repeatedly depicts faithful Israelites as a remnant that would secure the salvation of the rest of Israel and humanity. Paul adopts the prophetic perspective only to reverse it. As Boyarin puts it, the prophets defined the remnant

by faithfulness to works – all works, circumcision *and* charity – while for Paul the ground has explicitly shifted from works to a new, arbitrary election of some of Israel who have been chosen to have faith in Christ

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 152.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 201-2.

now. A new, if temporary, election has been added to the original one. Although God has not abandoned the original election by grace of Israel, a new act of grace has taken place which replaces those who are faithful to the original covenant with those who have faith in Christ as the remnant of Israel. Surely, those left behind will in the end be gathered into this community of faith, so God's honesty has not been impugned, but for the moment at least, Jews who have not accepted Christ are simply left by the wayside.¹⁰⁸

In *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, John David Dawson provides an appreciative but incisive critique of Boyarin's charges against Paul.¹⁰⁹ In particular, Dawson argues that Boyarin's depiction of Paul relies too heavily on binary oppositions concerning texts and meanings that obscure Paul's actual claims concerning the complex dynamics of continuity and discontinuity in God's activity in history. There is, Dawson suggests, a way to read Paul, or at least a better way of thinking about the questions Paul raised, that preserves Christianity's relation with Judaism without obliterating "the independent religious identity of Jews, and more broadly, the diverse identities of all human beings."¹¹⁰

Concerning Rom. 11, for instance, Dawson argues that Boyarin presumes without warrant that Paul's use of the term "Israel" is a disingenuous move to replace the proper referent of that term – the historical community of Israel – with a generic, universal community defined by faith in Christ. According to Dawson, Paul's remarks in this chapter do not reflect some kind of linguistic trick but the conviction that "God has expanded Israel by including gentiles in a way that preserves the continuity of that community's identity with the Israel made up of Jews who

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰⁹ John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2002). See especially pp. 19-64.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

practiced Jewish law without belief in the messiahship of Jesus.”¹¹¹ Boyarin misses this possibility because he denies it out of hand. While Paul claims that Christianity represents the fulfillment, not the repudiation of his Jewish identity, Boyarin assumes that Jews who become Pauline Christians necessarily abandon membership in the Israel of the flesh. On Dawson’s account, Boyarin preemptively forecloses the possibility that Jewish Christianity could manifest itself in an actual, visible community. This accounts for Boyarin’s simplistic reading of the “Jewish root” in Rom. 11, which cannot consist simply of those who have given up circumcision and other Jewish practices by turning to Christ; Abraham, too, counts as a “Jewish Christian” in the sense that Christianity represents the true fulfillment of Judaism.¹¹²

One of Boyarin’s chief concerns is that Pauline universalism and allegory undermines the value of embodiment, a precondition of Jewish particularity: the spirit replaces the body, as do the abstract and universal the concrete and particular. Dawson responds, drawing upon Origen, that such radical dualism is unwarranted; a better understanding of spirituality focuses on transformation, not abstraction. When Origen speaks of a spiritualized body, he does not mean that the old body is annihilated to make room for the new, but that the old body is transformed into something better, yet still continuous with the old. For Origen, there is an intrinsic relation between what are often taken to be opposites: visible/invisible, corporeal/incorporeal, manifest/hidden, earthly/heavenly. Origen does not, for instance, suggest that the soul is radically other than or trapped in the body, but that the body just is what cooled souls become. Indeed, Dawson claims, Origen “revalues the bodily realm” by making “the body the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹¹² Ibid., 22.

soteriologically necessary site of the soul's recovery of its former status as mind or spirit."¹¹³ Our final end is not disembodied spirithood but spiritualized embodiment; we will leave only corruption, not our bodies, behind.¹¹⁴ Given the possibility of the spiritualized body – a new entity that does not abandon but transforms the old – Dawson suggests that Christianity, too, can make a place for understanding a transformed Judaism, one that can claim Christ as the fulfillment of Israel's history without leaving Jewish identity behind.

This excursion into Paul should make clear the very different context in which Hebrews operates. Boyarin's charge that Paul sacrificed Jewish identity in his turn to the Hellenistic One simply does not apply to Hebrews. There is no rejection of particularism in this Epistle, no indication that the author is at all concerned with the Gentile mission or uniting different kinds of people. Hebrews does not wrestle with questions concerning the ongoing validity of distinctive Jewish practices like circumcision, Sabbath, or food laws. On the few occasions where food laws even come to view (9:10, 13:9), the author's remarks are obscure at best; it is certainly not clear, in any case, that his remarks reflect some major controversy concerning dietary laws. Not even Hebrews' remarks about rest seem designed to undermine the Jewish practice of Sabbath, though the author envisions a wider meaning of the term than a once weekly cessation from work. There is nothing in the logic of the letter that demands the rejection of practices that serve to distinguish the Jewish people from surrounding communities.

What Hebrews does undermine is the ongoing validity of the Levitical priesthood system. The animal sacrifices were but shadows of the good things to come and could never take away sin; the repetitive character of the sacrifices should have made this clear. Yet at no point

¹¹³ Ibid., 63.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 78-79.

does the author suggest that the new covenant brings with it a new people radically distinct and unrelated to the people with whom God established the first covenant. Indeed, *Hebrews* argues quite the opposite: the eternal inheritance to which the recipients are called is exactly that for which Israel's heroes also hoped. The establishment of the new covenant and the abrogation of the old do not correspond to the creation of a new community and the erasure of an old one; only the priesthood system, not the people, has been superseded. If *Hebrews* was written after the destruction of the temple, the author's remarks about the abrogation of the sacrifices could even take the form of encouragement. To put it in Dawson's terms, Judaism and its people have not been repudiated but transformed. Because of Christ, faithfulness, perseverance, and obedience to the law have been made possible such that the Israelites can enter God's rest. That which brought the Levitical priesthood system to an end enables the Israelites to be more, not less faithful to the covenant God originally established with Abraham. The new covenant is with the same people.

This does not mean that *Hebrews* presents no challenge to the Judaism(s) of its day or the contemporary context. The author does depict Jesus as the culmination of Jewish history, surpassing the things of old: he is greater than the prophets, greater than Moses, the new Joshua, the reality the shadows of the law only reflect. Indeed, and somewhat ironically, it is because *Hebrews* addresses only Jews (and not also Gentiles) that it focuses the relation between Judaism and Christianity more precisely than the Pauline epistles do. In his survey of the secondary literature on Paul, Boyarin addresses briefly what he calls the "[Lloyd] Gaston-[John] Gager Hypothesis," that Paul never intended to replace law with Christ as the means of salvation for the Jews, but only to set forth Christ as a means of salvation for Gentiles. On this view, ethnic Jews were not required to accept Christ, and Paul's remarks on the law were directed, not

toward Jews, but toward Judaizers who demanded that Gentiles convert to Judaism and keep the Jewish law. Boyarin rejects this position as exegetically unconvincing, and deems especially untenable Gager's claim that "gentiles could become part of Israel without observing the law, and that this would not result in a fundamental redefinition of what being part of Israel meant?"¹¹⁵ First, "the notion that one could be part of Israel and not subject to the Law issues in a fundamental redefinition of Israel."¹¹⁶ Second, such a mixed community would be structurally unworkable, and it was not, in any case, the practice at Antioch. Third, this position contradicts Paul's claims that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matter in Christ (Gal. 5:6).

On the reading of Hebrews presented above, the Gaston-Gager Hypothesis is not even an option. Salvation has been made possible through the establishment of Christ as high priest, and this salvation is for the Jews. No other community is addressed, and Christ cannot be siphoned off for the Gentiles while the law is left for the Jews. For the author of Hebrews, salvation depends on obedience and faithfulness to the covenant, and it impinges not the least on Jewish particularity. There is no question about the replacement of the Jews by the Gentiles, still less about any inherent defect in the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Hebrews does insist on Christ in his high priestly ministry as the only source of salvation, and thus presents a point of finally irreconcilable difference between Jews who do and do not affirm Jesus as the culmination of Israel's history. It is not clear, on Boyarin's terms, that such a position should be considered anti-Judaic. Boyarin treats Paul's discourse as "indigenously Jewish, thereby preempting (or at least recasting) the question of the relationship between Paul and anti-Semitism. This is an inner-

¹¹⁵ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 272n9. See discussion on p. 42 and the related notes on pp. 272-73.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Jewish discourse and an inner-Jewish controversy.”¹¹⁷ In this regard, Boyarin says, there is a parallel with modern debates between Orthodox and Reform Jews: despite their radically different positions on the Torah, “no one doubts the Jewishness of either group, nor considers the other ‘anti-Semitic!’”¹¹⁸ Hebrews, it would seem, lends itself even more readily than Paul to such an analogy. If the depiction of redemptive history found therein is to be called supersessionism, this is a charge the Christian cannot completely escape.¹¹⁹

5.3 Conclusion

In Augustine and Calvin, we considered two different models for construing the relation between the testaments: two covenants and two peoples versus one covenant and one people. We also observed each figure struggle to account for the Old Testament saints and God’s ongoing faithfulness to Israel. In Hebrews, we discover another proposal: two covenants, but one people. This position both affirms and challenges our earlier expositors. Calvin was right to highlight the continuity between the testaments with reference to the people of God and their common hope. Hebrews does set forth the eternal inheritance as a promise revealed to and understood by Old Testament Israel, and if we may follow Calvin’s distinction between broader and narrower meanings of the term, there certainly is a sense in which God’s “covenant” with Israel remains operative. God’s decisive new action in Christ does not nullify, but fulfills God’s promises to Abraham.

Nevertheless, Calvin’s position on the availability of Christ’s salvific benefits during the Old Testament does not conform to Hebrews’ vision of the new realities enacted in the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 205.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ For a similar sentiment, see Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, 216-18.

establishment of Christ as high priest. Augustine is right that the grace of the New Testament was veiled in the Old, and that the signs and figures foreshadowed but did not reveal what was to come. The establishment of Christ as high priest inaugurates a new eschatological age, such that the old covenant is not enhanced, but replaced. This does not, to belabor the point, mean that *Israel* is replaced. God's faithfulness to his covenant people can never be abrogated, but only the particular modes of administration that characterized a temporary system of worship. Hebrews affirms the unity of the testaments according to God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel, but asserts the establishment of a new covenant with regard to the salvific realities now available through Christ. In this way, it advances a significantly different vision for the relation between the testaments than either Augustine or Calvin. In the next chapter, we will see that Hebrews diverges from both with regard to the interpretation of Scripture as well.

6. The voice of the Psalms

Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, while it is said, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Hebrews 3:12-15, quoting Psalm 95:7-8

In the previous chapter, I argued that Hebrews presents a different vision of the relation between the testaments than either Augustine or Calvin. Against the latter, the Epistle asserts a strong disjunct between the testaments corresponding to the establishment of Christ as high priest. Against the former, Hebrews locates the continuity of the testaments in the people of God and their common hope. The question that now confronts us is the extent to which these redemptive-historical dynamics shape the author of Hebrews’ reading of the Old Testament. We recall that Augustine’s twofold understanding of the relation between the testaments corresponds to a twofold understanding of Scripture involving both a literal and a spiritual sense. For Calvin, on the other hand, the unity of the covenant corresponds to a rather expansive literal sense that encompasses various fulfillments in redemptive history. In this chapter and the next, I argue that Hebrews presents a reading of the Old Testament that both attends to the literal sense and transforms it, without proposing an alternate level of meaning. This chapter considers three examples of Hebrews’ interpretation of the Psalms, while the next provides a more synthetic theological account for Hebrews’ use and understanding of Scripture.

Of all the Old Testament sources from which Hebrews draws, the Psalms play a particularly central role in shaping the Epistle. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Caird has suggested that the main argument of the Epistle is structured upon four Old Testament

passages: Ps. 8, Ps. 95, Ps. 110, and Jer. 31, in order. The details of his proposal have been questioned,¹ but the importance of the Psalms in general and these psalms in particular have not. Each plays a crucial role in advancing positions on theological topics essential to the argument of the Epistle. Since Jer. 31 was considered at some length in the previous chapter with regard to the establishment of a new covenant, I concentrate here on the other three passages, interfacing as before not only with contemporary New Testament scholarship but also with our primary dialogue partners. Conveniently enough, both Augustine and Calvin wrote expositions on the entire psalter, providing an easy point of comparison with Hebrews. In what follows, I first consider Augustine and Calvin's treatments of the psalm in question before turning to Hebrews. I draw primarily from Augustine's *Expositions of the Psalms* and Calvin's commentary on the Psalms, though I also provide some supplementary remarks for Calvin from his commentary on Hebrews. I do not treat the psalms in order of appearance in Hebrews but according to thematic considerations. Ps. 95 sets forth the basic redemptive-historical structures that shape the Epistle's theology. Ps. 110 provides the grounds for the Hebrews' argument concerning the establishment of Christ as high priest. And finally, Ps. 8 explicates Christ's establishment as high priest in light of his humiliation and exaltation. This study will reveal the author of Hebrews as an expositor significantly less prone to allegorical speculation than Augustine, yet with a far more dynamic vision of redemptive history than Calvin.

¹ R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 (1996): 245-276, for instance, suggests that Hebrews should be understood according to seven expositions, the four that Caird mentions plus Hab. 2:3c-4, Prov. 3:11-12, and Mount Sinai imagery, to account for the the remainder of the Epistle from 10:32 and following. France's work draws in part upon the work of Richard Longenecker, who sees Hebrews in terms of five expositions: the four Caird mentions, plus the opening catena. This scheme is still found in the slightly updated edition of his earlier work, originally published in 1975: Richard N. Longenecker, "Hebrews and the Old Testament," in *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 140-65.

6.1 The use of the Old Testament in Hebrews

Before considering the specific psalms in question, it is appropriate to begin with some general remarks on Hebrews' interpretation of the Old Testament.² Pamela Eisenbaum's *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity* provides a helpful introduction on this matter.³ Eisenbaum counts 31 different scriptural citations in Hebrews, defined (contra, e.g., allusions) according to a formal introductory formula and the integrity of the citation: twelve from the Pentateuch, seven from the Prophets, twelve from the Writings. All the Writings citations but one (Pro. 3:11-12 in

² Besides those mentioned above, studies of the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews include: Robert Rendall, "The Method of the Writer to the Hebrews in Using Old Testament Quotations," *Evangelical Quarterly* 27 (1955): 214-20; Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Soest, 1961); Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews: An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper, 1962), 53-78; Kenneth J. Thomas, "The Old Testament Citations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 11 (1965): 303-25; George Howard, "Hebrews and the Old Testament Quotations," *Novum Testamentum* 10 (1968): 208-15; H. J. B. Combrink, "Some Thoughts on the Old Testament Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971): 22-36; Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979); J. C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980): 363-79; Ronald E. Clements, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28 (1955): 36-45; Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBL Dissertation Series 156 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997); George H. Guthrie, "Old Testament in Hebrews," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 841-50; "Hebrews' Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research," *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003): 271-94; "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 919-995; Karen H. Jobes, "The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5-7," *Trinity Journal* 13 (1992): 181-91; Thomas Ladd Blackstone, "The Hermeneutics of Recontextualization in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (PhD diss., Emory Univ., 1995); Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series 10 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1995); A. T. Hanson, "Hebrews," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF*, ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 292-302; Stephen Motyer, "The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 50 (1999): 3-22; Harold W. Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 197-212; Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Scriptural World of Hebrews," *Interpretation* 57 (2004): 237-50; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Sawing Off the Branches: Theologizing Dangerously *Ad Hebraeos*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 56 (2005): 393-414; Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Interpretation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 260 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). See especially Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 9-82 for an overview of scholarship on this issue.

³ Cited above.

Heb. 12:5-6) come from the Psalms.⁴ There is universal scholarly agreement that the author uses a Greek and not Hebrew text, though there have been various assessments and explanations of the author's fidelity to his source.⁵

The most striking feature of the citations, Eisenbaum argues, is that almost all of them involve quotations of direct speech.⁶ Very rarely, by contrast, is a narrative text quoted. In their original contexts, these quotations might have expressed the words of a prophet or psalmist, but as Hebrews presents these citations, they usually convey the very words of God.⁷ The vast majority of these passages are introduced by words of speaking, usually in the present tense: “when he brings the first-born into the world, he says (λέγει) ...” (1:6). In almost every instance, the original human speaker is not named.⁸ Hebrews avoids Matthean formulations like, “as it was spoken by the prophet,” and, contra Paul, never uses the phrase, “it is written.” The word “Scripture” does not appear, nor the name of a biblical book. From its opening words, Hebrews stresses the orality of Scripture: “In many and various ways God spoke (λαλήσας) of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken (ἐλάλησεν) to us by a Son” (1:1-2). Eisenbaum concludes, “There is no doubt that the oral and immediate character of scripture is

⁴ Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity*, 92. For other ways of counting the citations, see Blackstone, “The Hermeneutics of Recontextualization in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 16-23. See also Guthrie, “Old Testament in Hebrews,” 846-49 for a comprehensive chart of Old Testament references in Hebrews that distinguishes between quotation, allusion, summary, and reference to a name/topic.

⁵ See Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 121-42 for a discussion of this issue in light of the most recent developments in Septuagint studies. See also Guthrie, “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament,” 275-77.

⁶ The two exceptions are Gen. 2:2, cited in Heb. 4:4 with reference to the meaning of the term “rest”; and Gen. 5:24, cited in Heb. 11:5 with regard to Enoch’s avoiding death. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity*, 92n14.

⁷ In two important passages, though, the speaker is Christ: Heb. 2:12-13, citing Ps. 22:22 and Is. 8:17, 8:18; and Heb. 10:5-7, citing Ps. 40:6-8. Note also the references to the Holy Spirit in Heb. 3:7 and 10:15. On the psalms as responsive expressions of Jesus and his followers, see Attridge, “The Psalms in Hebrews,” 208-12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 94-96. The two significant exceptions are 4:7 (David) and 9:19-20 (Moses), both of which stress the speaker’s particular context for the sake of the larger argument. The other exception is 12:21, where Moses simply says that he was afraid.

what is most stressed in Hebrews. Even though the letter typically quotes from the same kinds of texts as other NT documents, our author takes these quotations quite literally to be the words of God – words which are not mediated by a speaker, a body of writing, or even in many cases by the historical context. For him, these divine words flow directly from the mouth of God to the listener.”⁹

Two interesting studies of Hebrews’ use of ancient rhetorical techniques complement these observations. In her study of Heb. 10:5-7,¹⁰ Karen Jobes argues that the textual variations of the author’s citation of Ps. 40:6-8 reflect the deliberate use of a widespread phonetically-based rhetorical technique called paronomasia, whereby word substitutions and shifts of word order produce assonances of rhythm and rhyme. Thus, the textual changes need not be attributed to variant manuscripts, a lapse in the author’s memory, or the author’s general lack of concern for precision. They rather reflect the author’s desire to produce a powerful effect on his listeners, especially, in this case, by heightening the contrast between David’s past speech and Jesus’ speech in the present. Michael Cosby’s study of the use of rhetorical techniques in Heb. 11 draws similar conclusions.¹¹ In 11:3-31, the anaphoric repetition of *πίστει* (found eighteen times in these verses) produces a rhythmic effect suggesting the author could produce a virtually inexhaustible list of examples. A number of rhetorical techniques in 11:32-38 – asyndeton (the absence of conjunctions), polysyndeton (the use of many conjunctions), isocolon (the use of phrases of approximately equal length and equivalent structure), and so on – create a different

⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰ Jobes, “The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5-7,” cited above.

¹¹ Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1988). See also his “The Rhetorical Composition of Hebrews 11,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 257-73.

kind of rhythm whereby the author juxtaposes quick, staccato repetition with a series of slower verbal movements, heightening the magnitude of both the number of heroes and the suffering they endured. Both Jobes and Cosby's studies underscore a general scholarly consensus that Hebrews is a kind of homily, deliberately crafted for oral presentation.

Eisenbaum stresses the performative dynamic of this emphasis on orality. By quoting direct speech, a statement can be "inserted into a new situation that creates a contextual conflation between what is quoted and the context in which it now finds itself."¹² While narrative redescription juxtaposes the past and the present such that the two contexts remain distinct, direct speech re-presents prior speech, such that what is quoted exercises its effect with as much immediate impact as it did in the original context. The citations in Hebrews do not function as fulfillment formulae but actually enact realities in the present. This dynamic is perhaps most clearly seen in the use of Ps. 110:4: "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." Yet another revealing example is Hebrews' distinct use of Ps. 22:22 in Heb. 2:12-12. In contrast to much early Christian interpretation, the author of Hebrews uses this psalm not to explicate the events of Jesus' passion, but rather to present the words Jesus currently proclaims, thereby highlighting Jesus' kinship with his followers.¹³

Hebrews' use of direct speech, Eisenbaum argues, privileges certain parts of Scripture over others.¹⁴ At various points, Hebrews engages in extended "retellings" of Scripture whereby

¹² Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian Antiquity*, 109.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 131-33. The stark contrast Eisenbaum draws in Hebrews between Scripture used in direct speech and that rendered in historical retelling is, I think, somewhat overstated, particularly given that her central example of retelling as a mode of denigrating parts of the biblical narrative is Heb. 11. As discussed in the previous chapter, and as Eisenbaum has herself conceded, Heb. 11 does not undermine the national distinctiveness of Israel. Nevertheless, her basic point stands that Hebrews assigns different hermeneutical weight to different parts of Scripture.

the biblical text is rendered narratively rather than quoted directly. In Heb. 9, for instance, the author provides an extended description of the tabernacle and priestly ministry but avoids quoting divine speech from the passages in Exodus where God actually communicates the specifications for the Levitical system. Yet in Heb. 10:5-10, the author quotes Ps. 40:6-8 as the words Jesus spoke upon his entrance into the world to declare the abolition of the sacrificial system. Later in Heb. 10:15-18, the citation of Jer. 31 is enlisted toward the same end, though this time the speaker is the Holy Spirit. Unlike contemporary rabbinic interpreters, Hebrews does not seek resolution of perceived contradictions in the scriptural text; it rather purposefully sets texts against each other such that the quotations of direct speech testify against various parts of the biblical narrative. “Scripture as God’s word is superior to scripture as mere historical record. Therefore, the word of God quoted in Hebrews can authoritatively contradict anything that might be contained in the historical record, such as the temple and the priesthood.”¹⁵

Thomas Blackstone adds additional nuance to this discussion in his study, “The Hermeneutics of Recontextualization in the Epistle to the Hebrews.”¹⁶ On Blackstone’s account, Hebrews practices what may be called a “hermeneutics of the ‘living voice,’”¹⁷ whereby Old Testament passages are recontextualized and adopt new meanings to communicate God’s ongoing presence in the life of the community. Blackstone classifies each Old Testament citation in Hebrews according to three categories.¹⁸ First, static recontextualization involves minimal disruption in the meaning of a text from its original context. Second, surface recontextualization

¹⁵ Ibid., 133.

¹⁶ Cited above.

¹⁷ Blackstone, “The Hermeneutics of Recontextualization in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 320-28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 104-10.

enacts a “modernization” of the text, such that a passage that had some degree of meaning for previous readers adopts an intensified level of meaning for contemporary readers. On this model, the thrust of the passage nevertheless remains largely intact. Finally, fluid recontextualization involves “accommodation,” such that a text is applied to a new situation without explicit reference to its original context. Under this technique, the new context controls the meaning of the text more than the original, much like a container determines the shape of the fluids placed in it.

Blackstone’s study helpfully highlights the following points. First, most of the quotations from the Pentateuch constitute static recontextualizations, but all the static recontextualizations in the Epistle come from the Pentateuch.¹⁹ Conversely, all the quotations from the Psalms and the prophetic literature are either surface or fluid recontextualizations. Thus, while Eisenbaum argued for a distinction in Hebrews between direct quotations and retellings such that the former exercises hermeneutical priority over the latter, Blackstone suggests a similar distinction within the direct quotations themselves: Hebrews adopts the speech of the Psalms and the prophets with greater flexibility than he does the narratival, historical portions of the Pentateuch. Second, Blackstone’s study underscores again the centrality of the Psalms for the author of Hebrews. Besides the sheer number of citations derived from this corpus, Blackstone finds that much of the historical material is mediated through the Psalms, “as though the voice of the latter is intended to be the hearer’s guide to the past (along with its contemporary and future implications).”²⁰ Finally, Blackstone further stresses the dynamism of Hebrews’ appropriation of the Old Testament. On this point, Blackstone criticizes Graham Hughes’ earlier description of

¹⁹ Ibid., 295-98.

²⁰ Ibid., 119.

Hebrews' interpretive practices as a "hermeneutics of permission."²¹ Hughes argued that the author of Hebrews operates within the trajectory of the semantic possibilities of the quotations, remaining bound to some degree by original context. Blackstone prefers a less static description of Hebrews that expresses more clearly the Epistle's depiction of the Old Testament as the ongoing words of God. On this point, Blackstone's conclusions match those of Luke Timothy Johnson: Scripture "is not simply a collection of ancient texts that can throw light on the present through analogy; it is the voice of the living God who speaks through the text directly and urgently to people in the present."²²

6.2 Psalm 95

Having considered some basic observations concerning Hebrews' interpretation of the Old Testament, I now turn to the interpretation of the three psalms. I begin with Psalm 95, which forms the basis of the Epistle's exhortation to faithfulness in Heb. 3:7-4:11. Hebrews uses the Israelites in the wilderness wanderings as an example of unfaithfulness, urging his readers not to imitate them, but to enter God's rest through obedient perseverance. The entire psalm, as translated by the Revised Standard Version, reads as follows:

O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it; for his hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

²¹ Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*. Cited above.

²² Johnson, "The Scriptural World of Hebrews," 240-41.

O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people who err in heart, and they do not regard my ways.” Therefore I swore in my anger that they should not enter my rest.

In what follows, I consider first Augustine’s, then Calvin’s exposition of this psalm, before returning in greater depth to Hebrews. In my comments on Augustine and Calvin, I focus primarily though not exclusively on the passages directly cited by Hebrews. Since Augustine, Calvin, and Hebrews are working with different Latin and Greek versions of the text and these texts do not always correspond with the English translation provided above, I will frequently supply the verses they are commenting upon in the course of my exposition. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I retain the chapter/verse numbering system of contemporary English translations through the chapter.²³

6.2.1 Augustine

Augustine’s exposition on Ps. 95 reflects his concern for the relevance of this song for the church in New Testament times, understood primarily but not exclusively as Gentile.²⁴ This orientation is particularly manifest in his comments on a passage found in Augustine’s Old Latin version but not in the Hebrew, “*The Lord will not reject his people.*”²⁵ Augustine treats Paul’s discussion of this issue in Rom. 11 as a commentary on this verse. “We have no authority to

²³ The citations in the footnotes will thus vary from the references found in the body of the text.

²⁴ Augustine’s expositions on the psalms are notoriously difficult to date. He probably began preaching on the Psalms around 392 and completed the entire collection around 421-22. See Michael Cameron, “*Enarrationes in Psalmos*,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 290-91, and the general introduction by Michael Fiedrowicz in *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, trans. Maria Boulding, WSA 3.15 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2000), 15-16.

²⁵ *En. Ps.* 94.7, CCL 39:1336. See *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*, trans. Maria Boulding, WSA 3.18 (Hyde Park: NY: New City, 2002), 415n10.

impose any meaning on the text, because these words have been commented on in advance by the apostle, who has explained what the statement means.”²⁶ On Augustine’s reading of Paul, the people in view are the Jews, from whom the prophets and patriarchs sprang, in whom were established the temple and priesthood system that prefigured Christ. Not all Jews were rejected; Paul teaches that many branches had been lopped off because of their sterility and pride, but that an olive tree still remains. Indeed, if all the branches had been cut off, one could not account for the existence of the early church: Peter and the disciples, Paul, the five hundred who saw Jesus risen from the dead, those who received salvation at Pentecost. Nevertheless, Augustine argues, this psalm was fulfilled only in those who believed in Christ, and not in all Israel.

In [the Jewish people] was the Lord’s people to be found, but not in all of them; for as scripture says, *A remnant shall be saved* (Is 10:22; Rom. 9:27). Not in all of them; for when the threshing had been carried out, the grain was extracted and the chaff left lying. All the Jews whom you see to have been rejected, you see as chaff; but from this place where you now view the chaff, there has already been a collection of grain, and the grain is stored away in the barn. Let us observe both, and distinguish them from each other.²⁷

Note the distinction between Augustine’s use of the metaphor here and the way he typically refers to the wheat and the tares in the Donatist controversy. While the latter concerns final judgment, such that the church now is a mixed body, the former depicts judgment according to one’s response to Christ in this earthly life. Already, and not just at the end of times, it is known that those Jews who rejected Christ have been rejected as chaff.

²⁶ Ibid. “Hoc nobis interpretari aliquid non licet; prescriptum habemus ab apostolo, exposuit hoc apostolus unde sit dictum.”

²⁷ Ibid., 94.7, CCL 39:1337.

Augustine proceeds to the next line: “*Because all the ends of the earth are in his hand.*”²⁸ This passage teaches that Christ is the cornerstone, for he has tied together two walls that come from different directions but meet harmoniously as a corner. One wall, the circumcised, comes from the apostles and the Israelites who believed; the other wall is the Gentiles who have also received salvation. On the one hand, “The Lord will not reject his people”; on the other, “All the ends of the earth are in his hand.” Christ has thus made one people out of two, as the apostle says (Eph. 2:14). Again, Augustine sees the fulfillment of the psalm not in God’s faithfulness to Israel at large but in the establishment of the church, which consists of both Jews and Gentiles.

Augustine continues this line of interpretation with regard to Ps. 95:7: “*We are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hands.*”²⁹ Augustine first notes “how elegantly” the psalmist has inverted the order of modifiers: instead of “people of his hands, sheep of his pasture,” the psalmist writes the opposite, indicating clearly that “people” and “sheep” refer to the same entity.³⁰ Augustine finds it perfectly appropriate for the psalmist to call us the sheep of God’s hands, since unlike human shepherds who only buy sheep, God actually made us. The word “sheep” triggers Augustine’s memory of a passage from Song of Songs: “*Your teeth are like newly-shorn flocks, coming up from their washing. All of them bear twins; there is never a barren one among them* (Sg 4:2; 6:5).”³¹ The church is like God’s teeth, because the church is the means by which God speaks; she is newly-shorne by having shed the burdens of the world; she comes up from her washing in baptism; she bears twins in the twofold love commandment. The passage cited here also arises at a

²⁸ Ibid., 94.8, CCL 39:1337.

²⁹ Ibid., 94.11, CCL 39:1339.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

paradigmatic moment in *De doctrina christiana*, where Augustine considers the purpose of obscurities and concludes simply that it is more pleasing and elegant to learn truths through figures than through straightforward teaching.³² Thus, Augustine's exposition of Ps. 95:7 conforms to his own instruction in his handbook on biblical interpretation. By treating "sheep" figurally, Augustine transfers the referent of the term from Israel to the church.

Now Augustine comes to the passage cited in Hebrews: "*If you hear his voice today ...*"³³ On Augustine's reading, God speaks not just to the Israelites of the Old Testament but to all his people, both Jews and Gentiles, and especially through Christ.

Long ago you heard his voice through Moses, and you hardened your hearts. He spoke again through his herald, and you hardened your hearts. Now at last, when he speaks with his own lips, let your hearts become tender. He sent heralds ahead of him, time and time again, but now he graciously comes himself. He who used to speak through the mouths of the prophets speaks here with his own.³⁴

The phrase, "*For forty years I stayed very close to this generation,*"³⁵ refers in the first place to the signs and acts of power by which God demonstrated his presence with the Israelites. Yet the forty years should not be understood only in terms of that literal duration but also as "the whole course of the ages, as though time reached its fullness at the number forty."³⁶ Jesus fasted and was tempted for forty days, and he also stayed with his disciples for forty days after his resurrection: the first forty represents temptation, while the second forty signifies consolation.

³² *Doc. Chr.* 2.6.7-8. Augustine's interpretation of the passage here is substantially the same, though he suggests differently that the teeth signify the way the church tears people away from errors, and softens such people, as in mastification, to enter the church.

³³ *En. Ps.* 94.12, CCL 39:1340.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.14, CCL 39:1341.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

By the term “forty,” the church understands that she must endure temptations in this world, but her consoler remains with her.

Concerning God’s oath, “*They shall never enter my rest,*”³⁷ Augustine warns that these words must be taken very seriously. It is already a great matter for God to speak, even more for God to swear. Moreover, God swears by himself, for there is none greater by which to swear.³⁸ God’s oath does not apply only to the Israelites of old, but to anyone who now rejects God. “As you must be utterly sure about gaining rest, happiness, eternity, and immortality, if you have kept his commandments, so you must be equally sure of perdition, the heat of eternal fire, and damnation with the devil, if you have despised his commandments.”³⁹ Augustine is certain that some must enter God’s rest; it is impossible that this rest be granted to no one. It stands, then, for the church to do what the Israelites of old could not. “They have been disqualified,” Augustine exhorts, “but we shall enter it. Some of the branches were broken off because they had lost their likeness to God and were unfaithful, but let us be grafted in through faith and humility. Let us enter into his rest.”⁴⁰

Augustine’s treatment of this psalm thus reflects the broad lines of his thought we have already sketched in prior chapters. While he does acknowledge the import this passage might have had for Old Testament Israel, he treats it primarily with regard to the church addressed “today” in Christ. Augustine locates the fulfillment of this psalm not in Israel as a whole, but in those particular Jews who trusted in Christ and the Gentiles who did the same. Augustine’s

³⁷ Ibid., 94:15, CCL 39:1341.

³⁸ Note the illusion here to Heb. 6:13, though Augustine changes the referent of the oath in Hebrews from the promise to Abraham that God would bless and multiply him, to the threat that the Israelites would not enter God’s rest.

³⁹ Ibid., 94:15, CCL 39:1342.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

figural reading of the sheep and the forty years is consistent with the hermeneutical guidelines he sets forth in *De doctrina christiana*, underscoring the connection between his interpretive practices and his position on Old Testament Israel.

6.2.2 Calvin

Calvin's treatment of Ps. 95 presents a rather different perspective.⁴¹ Though Calvin, too, focuses on how the text concerns the church, he sees no need to depart from the literal sense and appeal to allegory. Since Israel simply was the church during Old Testament times, God's manner of addressing Israel in Ps. 95 is substantially identical with how God addresses the church today. Concerning Ps. 95:6, for instance, Calvin clearly orients his remarks toward the Israelites. He begins, "The Psalmist exhorts God's chosen people to gratitude, for that pre-eminency among the nations which he had conferred upon them in the extension of his free favor."⁴² He then discusses the duties incumbent upon "the children of Abraham (*filiis Abrahae*)," who were adopted unto the hope of eternal life.⁴³ On Calvin's reading, the command to kneel before "*the face of the Lord*" means that the Israelites "should prostrate themselves before the Ark of Covenant, for the reference is to the mode of worship under the Law (*de legali cultu*)."⁴⁴

Yet in his comments on the subsequent verse, Calvin subtly shifts his attention to the church. Concerning Ps. 95:7, Calvin remarks, "While it is true that all men were created to praise God, there are reasons why the Church is specially said to have been formed for that end."⁴⁵ On

⁴¹ Calvin's Psalms commentary was written from 1553-57 and published in 1557. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1986), 15, 31.

⁴² *Comm. Ps.* 95.6, CO 32:30-31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, CO 32:31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.7, CO 32:31.

the one hand, the psalmist impresses upon “the children of Abraham”⁴⁶ the privilege of God’s protection. On the other hand, the psalmist thus reveals God to be “the Shepherd of the Church” (*ecclesiae suae pastorem*).⁴⁷ The chief point of Calvin’s remarks is that there is a distinction between the favor God generally bestows upon humanity, and that special favor whereby God separates the church from the rest of the world, bestowing upon her his particular, paternal care. Strikingly absent from Calvin’s discussion of this issue is any distinction between Israel and the church. They are both set apart from the world, and they both receive God’s special favor, simply because they are the same people.

Calvin’s treatment of the “today” language reflects the same exegetical posture, focusing directly on the Israelites without any reference to the way the word “today” could legitimize the appropriation of this passage in a new redemptive-historical context. God’s address simply warns the people that they would only enjoy the privilege of adoption through perseverance and obedience. Calvin depicts the blessing of the law as a kind of crook by which God revealed himself to be the shepherd of Israel and no other nation. The “great distinction between the Jews and the surrounding nations” was that “God had directed his voice to the former.”⁴⁸ By using the word “today,” Calvin says, the psalmist “indicates how emphatically the Jews, in hearing God’s voice, were his people, for the proof was not far off, it consisted in something

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The phrases, “*the people of his pastures*” and “*the flock of his hand*,” prompt different judgments from Calvin than what we saw in Augustine. Calvin suggests that the expression “might have run more clearly” (*poterat quidem distinctius loqui*) if the modifiers had been reversed. The psalmist’s concern, though, was not elegance of expression, but to highlight the inestimable blessing of adoption by which one enjoys God’s guardianship. Also against Augustine, Calvin interprets “God’s hand” as being governed, not made, by God. By this phrase, Calvin says, the psalmist commends God’s intent to feed and guide his flock.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 95.7, CO 32:32.

which was present and before their eyes.”⁴⁹ The Israelites did not receive this blessing only once, or even once a year; they enjoyed “a constant opportunity of hearing the voice of God,”⁵⁰ such that there could be no doubt that they were chosen to be God’s flock.

Calvin does acknowledge the applicability of the psalmist’s exhortation to other contexts, but he always roots this generalizing move in the history of Israel. On the one hand, the Israelites were particularly warned not to follow their predecessors’ examples, because they were of all people the most liable to do so, given their penchant for boasting in their fathers.⁵¹ On the other hand, hardness of heart is a condition that afflicts all people when they show contempt for the Word of God. Though this sin may take various forms – receiving God’s Word coldly, putting it away fastidiously, rejecting it proudly, open blasphemy – the psalmist “comprehends” (*complectitur*) them all in this one phrase.⁵² The fathers’ sin of tempting God also invites wide application. On the one hand, the Israelites in the desert were particularly culpable of seeking proof of God’s power when they had just witnessed great proofs of it in their deliverance from Egypt. The particular incident at Meribah is mentioned by way of synecdoche, as a representation of Israel’s other sins, or perhaps as the culmination of their rebellion against God.⁵³ On the other hand, this lesson is “equally applicable to ourselves (*aeque ad nos pertinet*),”⁵⁴ for we receive all manner of blessings from God yet still demand proof of his goodness. God’s

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 95.9.

⁵² Ibid., 95.8, CO 32:33.

⁵³ Ibid., 95.9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 95.9, CO 32:33.

warning to the Israelites extends to all God's people, but Calvin treats it in the first place as a warning to the Israelites.

Calvin's treatments of the forty years and the rest also underscore his emphasis on Israel's history. Concerning the former, Calvin explains rather straightforwardly that God "had constant grounds of contention with his people, throughout the whole forty years."⁵⁵ There is no discussion about the potentially symbolic significance of the number forty; the years refer simply to that time during which God displayed great works that the Israelites then disregarded. Concerning the latter, God's oath that the Israelites would never enter his rest just means "there was good reason for their being prohibited, with an oath, from entering the land."⁵⁶ The rest, Calvin explains, refers to the land of Canaan in the context of God's promise to Abraham. Abraham and his posterity had merely been wanderers in this land, and Egypt represented a time of exile. When the Israelites were poised to return to their rightful territory, God "very properly (*merito*)" called it his rest.⁵⁷

At the end of this discussion, Calvin pauses to consider the treatment of this expression in Heb. 3-4. The author of Hebrews, he states, cannot be "considered as undertaking professedly to treat this passage (*neque enim ex professo tractandum locum suscipit*). He only insists upon the adverb *To-day*, and upon the word *Rest*."⁵⁸ Concerning "today," Hebrews teaches that God continues to speak, and has especially revealed himself in his Son. As such, "today" should not be confined to the time of the law, for it applies also to the gospel, when God has begun to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 95.10, CO 32:35.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.11, CO 32:35-36.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 95.11, CO 32:36.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

speak more openly. Hebrews then “reasons from the *rest*, to an extent which we are not to suppose that the words of the Psalmist themselves warrant.”⁵⁹ On Calvin’s account, the author observes the implied promise of the text and deduces that

there must have been some better rest promised to the people of God than the land of Canaan. For, when the Jews had entered the land, God held out to his people the prospect of another rest, which is defined by the Apostle to consist in that renouncing of ourselves, whereby we rest from our own works while God worketh in us. From this, he takes occasion to compare the old Sabbath, or rest, under the Law, which was figurative, with the newness of spiritual life.⁶⁰

For Calvin, then, Hebrews presents a use of Ps. 95 that extends beyond what the text actually supports, even if the conclusions drawn reflect reasonable inferences according to a certain theological logic.

Calvin’s treatment of Heb. 3-4 in the Hebrews commentary is consistent with his remarks in the Psalms commentary. First, he stresses the constant importance of heeding God’s voice: “As God from the beginning would have his voice obeyed, and could not endure perverseness without punishing it severely, so at this day he will not lightly punish our stubbornness, unless we become teachable.”⁶¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Calvin says “the word *to-day*, mentioned in the Psalm, ought not to be confined to the age of David, but that it comprehends every time in which God may address us.”⁶² Second, Calvin emphasizes the continuity of the message communicated to the Old Testament Israelites and to contemporary readers. Commenting on Heb. 4:2, he writes, “[The author of Hebrews] reminds us that the

⁵⁹ Ibid. “... de requie subtilius disputat quam ferant prophetae verba.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Comm. Heb.* 3.7-13, OE 19:52.

⁶² Ibid., 3.13, OE 19:56.

doctrine by which God invites us to himself at this day is the same (*eandem esse doctrinam*) as that which he formerly delivered to the fathers; and why did he say this? That we may know that the calling of God will in no degree be more profitable to us than it was to them, except we make it sure by faith.”⁶³

Third, Calvin associates the “rest” of Ps. 95 primarily with the land of Canaan, though he also expands the notion of rest. On the one hand, Calvin explains that “the land of Canaan was to be, according to the promise, their perpetual inheritance; and it was in reference to this promise that God called it *his* rest: for nowhere can we have a settled dwelling, except where we are fixed by his hand.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, Calvin insists, the Old Testament Israelites had always known that they were to seek a rest beyond this physical land.

[The author of Hebrews] meant not to deny but that David understood by rest the land of Canaan, into which Joshua conducted the people; but he denies this to be the final rest to which the faithful aspire, and which we have also in common with the faithful of that age; for it is certain that they looked higher than to that land; nay, the land of Canaan was not otherwise so much valued except for this reason, because it was an image (*imago*) and a symbol (*symbolum*) of the spiritual inheritance.⁶⁵

By alluding to Sabbath, Calvin says, the author of Hebrews seeks “to reclaim the Jews from its external observances; for in no other way could its abrogation (*abrogatio*) be understood, except by the knowledge of its spiritual design (*spirituali fine*)... He shews us in passing what is the true design of the Sabbath (*vera ... Sabbathi ratio*) lest the Jews should be foolishly attached to the outward rite.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid., 4.2, OE 19:60.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.11, OE 19:55.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 4.8, OE 19:62.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.10, OE 19:64.

Finally, Calvin distinguishes between the literal understanding of Ps. 95 and Hebrews' creative appropriation of it, especially with regard to "rest." From Heb. 4:3 on, Calvin, says, the author

begins to embellish (*exornare*) the passage which he had quoted from David. He has hitherto taken it, as they say, according to the letter (*secundum literam*), that is, in its literal sense (*in genuino sensu*); but he now amplifies and decorates it (*expoliando amplificat*); and thus he rather alludes (*alludit*) to than explains (*interpretetur*) the words of David. This sort of decoration (*ἐπεξεργασία*) Paul employed in Rom. x. 6, in referring to these words of Moses, "Say not, who shall ascend into heaven!" &c. Nor is it indeed anything unsuitable, in accommodating (*accommodetur*) Scripture to a subject in hand, to illustrate by figurative terms (*similitudinum ... coloribus illustrare*) what is more simply delivered. However, the sum of the whole (*summa omnium*) is this, that what God threatens in the Psalm as to the loss of his rest, applies also to us, inasmuch as he invites us also to this day to a rest.⁶⁷

In sum, and as expected, Calvin's on Ps. 95 reveals his concern for the literal sense. He consistently reads the text with regard to Old Testament Israel, eschewing any symbolic or figural interpretation of the forty years or rest. Calvin's regular references to the church pertain in the first place to Old Testament Israel as God's adopted people, and then to the New Testament church, which enjoys the same status. Unlike Augustine, Calvin does not distinguish between the nation of Israel and exceptional individuals within it, nor does he indicate that the promises apparently given to Israel are really promises to the New Testament church. The applicability of Ps. 95 to the church arises logically from the identity between church and Israel, not by means of some hermeneutical trick. Hebrews' appropriation of Ps. 95 is to be understood

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.3-10, OE 19:61. "Iam locum illum, quem citaverat ex Davide, exornare incipit. Hactenus eum tractavit secundum literam, ut loquuntur; hoc est, in genuino sensu. Nunc autem expoliendo amplificat. Ideoque alludit magis ad verba Davidis quam interpretetur. Eiusmodi ἐπεξεργασία est apud Paulum, ad Rom. 10.6, in tractando Mosis testimonio, 'Ne dicas, Quis ascendet in caelum?' Nec vero absurdum est, ut ad praesentem usum accommodetur Scriptura, similitudinum (ut ita dicam) coloribus illustrare quod illic simplicius dicitur. Porro summa omnium huc redit, ad nos quoque pertinere quod de privatione quietis suae minatur Deus in Psalmo; sicuti nos ad quandam quietem hodie quoque invitat."

not as an illustration, but as an explanation of the text. There is, however, no impropriety in this mode of embellishment, and the author of Hebrews rightly stresses the continuity of hope between the Old Testament Israelites and current readers. If Augustine reads Ps. 95 primarily for how it bears upon the contemporary church, without denying entirely its purchase in the history of Israel, Calvin begins with the original sense for Israel, and then expands this sense to include all God's people.

6.2.3 Hebrews

Hebrews' appropriation of Ps. 95 differs in significant ways from both Augustine and Calvin's treatments of the text. Susan Docherty's recent study on the use of the Old Testament in Hebrews provides a helpful rubric for considering these dynamics.⁶⁸ Docherty bases her study on the assumption, also adopted in this study, that Hebrews is a Jewish text, that "at the time when the letter was written, Christianity was historically still a form of Judaism."⁶⁹ She therefore treats Hebrews' interpretation of the Old Testament as an example of early post-biblical Jewish exegesis. In particular, Docherty turns to the recent work of Arnold Goldberg and Alexander

⁶⁸ Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, cited above. For other treatments of Hebrews' use of Ps. 95, see Harold W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest': The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 279-88; A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 197-220; Peter Enns, "The Interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3.1-4.13," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 148 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 352-63; Jon Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest: The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3-4* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); David A. deSilva, "Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* 21 (2000): 25-43; Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 281-303; Matthew Thiessen, "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus," *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007): 353-69. Note also two earlier pieces: Ernst Kasemann, *The Wandering People of God*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg (1939; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984); Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 94-102.

⁶⁹ Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 1.

Samely on “form-analysis” (not form criticism), originally developed with regard to midrash, but also illuminating for the interpretive dynamics in Hebrews.

Form-analysis begins with the identification of small literary units and then explores the interrelation between these units in more complex forms of literature. Much rabbinic literature, for instance, consists of the arrangement of individual biblical citations into new literary units. By removing the citations from their original contexts, the same words may be used for different purposes than how they might have otherwise been understood. There is a distinction between the *Aussage* (statement) and the *Bedeutung* (meaning) of a citation. The *Aussage* remains the same, while the *Bedeutung* can change depending on the new context. The “co-text,” or “the purely linguistic environment of a text,” counts more than the “context,” or the text’s “non-linguistic setting.”⁷⁰ According to Goldberg, “the editors of the rabbinic works were in fact not interested in what their citations were meant to say in their original contexts, but in what they can say now, presumably regarding this new meaning as being inherent in the original words.”⁷¹ This practice in turn reflects a view of Scripture less concerned with the events recorded in Scripture than with the interplay of individual linguistic signs in the text. “Whilst the number of graphic signs is finite, determined by the limits of the written text of scripture, the meaning of the signs is infinite, as they remain open to constant interpretation and are understood as polysemic by divine intent.”⁷²

This discussion provides a useful vocabulary for understanding Hebrews’ appropriation of Ps. 95. In the first place, Docherty notes the author’s fidelity in Heb. 3:7-4:11 to his Greek

⁷⁰ Ibid., 107.

⁷¹ Ibid., 103.

⁷² Ibid., 105.

source text.⁷³ Almost all the differences between Hebrews' citation and the majority of Septuagint witnesses could reflect an alternate Greek text. The most significant point where the author seems deliberately to have altered his source is 3:10, where the addition of *διό* ("therefore") alters the referent of "forty years" such that the expression refers to the time when the Israelites tested God, as opposed to the time of their punishment.⁷⁴ In Hebrews' subsequent treatment of this psalm (3:17), though, the forty years is clearly associated with the time of God's anger, consistent with the main Septuagint witnesses. Docherty does not consider this point of difference theologically significant, suggesting that the awkward insertion of the introductory particle in 3:9-10 simply reflects the author's move to treat this extended citation as two, one spanning Ps. 95:7-9 and the other Ps. 95:10-11. A similar example can be found in Heb. 2:13, where Is. 8:17 and 8:18 are cited as two individual texts, separated only by a single word.⁷⁵

This fidelity to the wording of the source text brings into relief the creativity of Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament. Docherty notes what we have already considered in Eisenbaum and Blackstone: Hebrews consistently cites the Psalms and other Old Testament texts that contain first-person direct speech. As Docherty argues, the act of removing a text from its original context and placing it in a new co-text whereby the citation adopts new meaning works particularly well for direct speech passages, "because their original contextual links are often weak or ambiguous, and because it is very easy to provide new co-text for them

⁷³ Ibid., 137-39.

⁷⁴ See Enns, "The Interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3.1-4.13," for an argument that this variant is theologically motivated. Attridge suggests the author conceived of two forty-year periods. Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 115.

⁷⁵ Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 186-87.

simply by means of specifying more precisely a speaker and/or addressee.”⁷⁶ Hebrews’ appropriation of Ps. 95 exploits this dynamic such that the psalm no longer addresses the original hearers, but the recipients of the Epistle. The speaker of the scriptural text remains God, but the “you” are those whom the author of Hebrews addresses now.

The expression “today” also plays into this dynamic. In the new co-text, “today” is associated with “every day” (3:13), stressing the ongoing relevance of God’s message, as well with the general sense of eschatological expectation found throughout the letter. The “today” of Ps. 95/Heb. 3-4 may also be linked to the citation of Ps. 2:7 in Heb. 1:5a: “Thou art my Son, *today* I have begotten thee” (italics mine). If this passage refers to Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God, as Docherty thinks, then the “today” of Ps. 95 further underscores for Hebrews the present reality of God’s activity through Christ, and so the urgency of responding positively to God now.⁷⁷ The *Aussage* of the citation has been preserved, while the *Bedeutung* has adopted new valence in a new context.

Similar remarks apply for “rest.” Docherty highlights a rabbinic technique the form-analytical school calls “opposition resources,” whereby one biblical word is heavily stressed so as to exclude the opposite.⁷⁸ On this model, the statement, “They shall never enter my rest,” means not just that they – the Israelites of the wilderness – will *not* enter it, but also that other people *will*. Since this oath was binding on that earlier generation and that generation alone, the oath is not, at this juncture, binding on anyone else. On Docherty’s account, this technique allows

⁷⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 151.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 191.

Hebrews to transform the psalm into a promise. The author does not simply warn his recipients against hardness of heart, but also encourages them that the rest remains open.

Hebrews wrestles with the claim that there remains a promise for rest when the people have already entered the land of Canaan (4:8). In particular, Ps. 95 speaks of “*my rest*,” which, Docherty suggests, prompts the author of Hebrews to search for another text that refers to God’s resting.⁷⁹ Gen. 2:2 functions well in this regard, especially because it describes this rest in terms of the works of creation, a theme that Ps. 95 also stresses in its reference to God’s works (Ps. 95:9/Heb. 3:9) and God’s status as “Maker” (Ps. 95:5). Although the use of *gezera shawa* with Ps. 95 and Gen. 2 focuses primarily on the term “rest,” the thematic and linguistic points of contact between the two texts in passages not explicitly cited further strengthen the intertextual resonances, while also suggesting the author of Hebrews’ close attention to the larger context of the texts used. As Docherty notes, this textual interplay presupposes the coherence and consistency of Scripture. “The truth of one scriptural passage is thus confirmed by its connection with a second, and the meaning of each text is coloured by its relationship with the other. It is assumed that scripture gives an accurate account of God’s emotions and behaviour, and that these are consistent, so that if faithlessness and disobedience angered God in the wilderness period and led him to enact punishment, they will do so again in the present.”⁸⁰

One final feature of Hebrews’ use of Ps. 95 concerns the Epistle’s interest in chronology. The reason “rest” must refer to a Sabbath rest and not Canaan is that the psalm continued to speak of rest long after the people had entered the physical land, which will one day be shaken

⁷⁹ For a helpful exposition of the traditions concerning “rest” that shape Hebrews’ treatment of it, see A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” 205-14.

⁸⁰ Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 190.

and removed anyway (Heb. 12:26-27). A similar form of argumentation arises in Heb. 8, where the author claims that God's announcement of a new covenant implicitly declares the old one obsolete. So also in the citation of Ps. 40:6-8 in Heb. 10:5-10, Christ first proclaims, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings," before he states, "Lo, I have come to do thy will." As Docherty notes, such a form of argument is not unique in the New Testament: Paul argues in Rom. 4 that Abraham was reckoned righteous before he was circumcised, and in Gal. 3 that the law, which came 430 years after God's promise to Abraham, could not overturn the earlier covenant. This emphasis on chronology is not, however, found widely in early Jewish interpretation, which stresses the independence of scripture from the particularities of time. "In general, early post-biblical Jewish exegesis does not make use of the same kind of temporal argument in interpreting scripture as occurs here, perhaps because the eschatological outlook of the New Testament writers encouraged them to see God's revelation in a more linear way than other contemporary Jewish exegetes, as leading to its fulfillment in Christ."⁸¹

These observations make clear the radical difference between Hebrews' treatment of Ps. 95 from those of Augustine and Calvin. Against the former, there is no indication in Hebrews of some kind of replacement theology whereby Old Testament Israel gives way to a primarily Gentile church. The force of Hebrews' argument depends on the presumed kinship between those of the desert generation and the current addressees. "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers" (4:2). The illuminating parallels Docherty draws between contemporary Jewish

⁸¹ Ibid., 192.

interpretation and Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament only underscores the thoroughly Jewish character of the document.

A more subtle point of difference arises from formal, not just material considerations. For Augustine, there are two senses of Scripture, and the words of the text provide material for wide-ranging allegorical speculation. Augustine's interpretation of the Old Testament is not without controls: he appeals often to the *totus Christus* principle, and the significations he advances draw upon a fund of regular associations: Ps. 95 is not the only passage that prompts Augustine's reflections on the number forty, and the otherwise perplexing allegory of the newly shorn flocks seems less surprising in light of Augustine's exposition of this text in *De doctrina christiana*. Nevertheless, Hebrews' treatment of Ps. 95 reveals no interest in this sort of word play. Whatever the forty years refer to – the time of God's works or God's wrath, or both – this number is not simply adopted into a network of symbolic resonances including, e.g., the forty days of Christ's temptation and the subsequent forty days between the resurrection and ascension. So also, Hebrews' transformative interpretation of rest receives impetus from specific textual details, like the fact that the psalmist refers to rest so many years after Israel would have entered Canaan, or that the psalmist refers not to just any rest, but rather to “*my*” – God's – “rest” (Heb. 3:11; Gen. 2:2).⁸² The term “rest” does not become for Hebrews a linguistic prompt for all sorts of different associations, but is rather strictly (if ambiguously) defined according to the theological context of the Epistle, with its repeated references to an eternal inheritance and the heavenly sanctuary where Christ has now been exalted as high priest. While Hebrews transfers the direct speech of Ps. 95 into a new context for his theological purposes, his

⁸² See Attridge, “Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest’: The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11” for a clear discussion of the relation between antitype (eschatological rest), type (Canaan), and even more original type (God's rest).

appropriation of the text is significantly continuous with the literal sense in its original context. The term “today” invites reappropriation in new contexts, and Heb. 11 functions as a kind of argument that the rest set forth in Ps. 95 was the object for which the Old Testament heroes of faith hoped throughout the course of Israel’s history.

This does not mean, however, that Hebrews’ appropriation of Ps. 95 lines up with Calvin’s. The Reformer’s chief concern is to explicate the text, to make clear the author’s intent and meaning. Only after discussing the psalm with regard to its original context and Israelite hearers does Calvin gesture toward the application of this passage to other contexts. This generalizing move draws theological justification from Calvin’s identification of Israel with church. Hebrews’ treatment of Ps. 95 is far less static. The author of Hebrews does not explicate the literal sense to apply it; he rather exploits difficulties in the literal sense as indicators that some other meaning must be intended. How could David speak so long after the wilderness generation of another day, “today,” to enter God’s rest (4:7-8)? It must be that some other rest is meant than the physical land of Canaan; and since God speaks through David of “my rest,” this must be tied to God’s resting after the works of creation, which in turn functions as a model for our eschatological hope, when we will rest from our labors as God did. On Hebrews’ reading, Ps. 95 makes little sense without this larger theological framework; the text itself points to a greater reality not yet available in the original context but now set forth to the faithful as a prize to be seized. In this regard, Hebrews is not far from Augustine’s position that God intentionally designed Scripture to contain obscurities such that readers would be led from the literal sense to figural meanings. Nevertheless, Hebrews’ eschatological appropriation of Ps. 95 creates a greater sense of immediacy and urgency than either Augustine’s allegorical speculations or Calvin’s

flattening literal sense. God speaks literally and directly to hearers now, with increased intensity and richer theological valence in this final, climactic dispensation of redemptive history.

6.3 Psalm 110

Having treated Ps. 95 with respect to the Hebrews' broader understanding of redemptive history and God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel, I turn now to Ps. 110 for its promise of a new priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. This psalm is the most cited Old Testament passage in the New Testament, and Attridge rightly judges it "undoubtedly" the most important text cited in the Epistle.⁸³ Ps. 110:1 consistently functions in Hebrews as an affirmation of the exaltation of the Son, while Ps. 110:4 furnishes the basis for the author's discussion especially in Heb. 7 of the establishment of Christ as high priest. The English translation of the psalm reads thus:

A Psalm of David.

The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your foes! Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

6.3.1 Augustine

Augustine considers Ps. 110 so obvious and important a prophecy of Christ that he prefaces his exposition of the passage with a lengthy introduction on the broader dynamics of redemptive history. God has established an era of promise and an era of fulfillment. The former

⁸³ Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," 197.

extends from the prophets to John the Baptist; the latter begins from that point. God did not owe us anything, but he became our debtor by virtue of the many promises he made to us. Yet God was not content with oral promises alone; he also wanted these promises to be codified in writing. God thus “gave us a signed copy (*chirographum*) of his promises, as it were, so that once he had begun to fulfill them we could study the scriptures and learn the sequence of their realization.”⁸⁴

Augustine lists as God’s promises a series of eschatological blessings: “eternal salvation, a life of happiness with the angels that would never end, an unfading inheritance, everlasting glory, the delight of seeing his face, his holy home in heaven, and resurrection from the dead, after which we need never fear death again.”⁸⁵ These promises are given to the undeserving, not as wages (*merces*) but as grace (*gratia*). Augustine recognizes that there are some who find it hard to believe that God would lavish such care upon humanity, and he exhorts his listeners to trust in God’s concern for their souls. It was because God’s promises seemed so incredible that he

was not therefore content to provide us with a written guarantee of his promises to help us believe in him. He even appointed a mediator to establish his good faith: not some nobleman, nor an angel, nor an archangel, but his only Son. Through his Son God could show us the way whereby he meant to lead us to the destiny he had promised us. But he wanted to do more than simply show us the way. It would not have been enough for God only to appoint his Son as a signpost to the way; he made him the Way, that you might walk in him who guides you.⁸⁶

For those who would believe, Christ revealed himself as both God and man: “the God by whom we were made, and the man by whom we were made anew.”⁸⁷ Through this union of

⁸⁴ *En. Ps.* 109.1, CCL 40:1601.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.2, CCL 40:1602-3.

⁸⁷ See next footnote for citation and Latin.

visible humanity and invisible divinity, Christ would become our mediator before God, acting as the means by which we would some day receive the promises. “Something was visible in him, something else hidden. What was hidden was far more excellent than what appeared, but that more excellent substance could not be seen. Through Christ’s visible nature the patient began to be cured, that he might later become capable of a vision that was withheld only for a time, not refused and put for ever beyond our reach.”⁸⁸ The Son of God became a man, died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, so that he could fulfill his promises amongst the Gentiles and then bring about the final things whereby he would judge between the wicked and the just. The prophecies that preceded Christ were given such that we would expect such things to happen and respond by faith, not fear.

After this lengthy introduction, Augustine finally turns to the matter at hand: “Our psalm deals with these promises. It speaks prophetically of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with such certainty and clarity that we cannot doubt that it is he who is proclaimed here.”⁸⁹ The conflict over this passage recorded in the gospels particularly secures this certainty. The Jews knew that the Christ would be the son of David, but they had no response when Jesus asked them how the Christ could also be David’s Lord. For “*David in spirit calls him Lord, saying The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet,*”⁹⁰ and this is the beginning of the psalm treated.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 109.3, CCL 40:1603. “Deum per quem facti sumus, hominem per quem recreati sumus. Aliud in illo apparebat; aliud latebat: et quod latebat, multo erat praestantius quam id quod apparebat; sed quod erat praestantius, uideri non poterat. Curabatur aeger per id quod uideri poterat, ut postea capax fieret uisionis eius, quae latendo differebatur, non negando auferebatur.”

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., citing Mt. 22:43-45.

Augustine's explanation of this incident reflects soteriological and Christological themes we have already witnessed in *De Trinitate* and Augustine's treatment of Ps. 95. The Jews were not wrong, Augustine says, to confess that the Christ would be the son of David. The very beginning of Matthew confirms that Jesus was the son of David, as do several other passages in Scripture.⁹¹ The problem was that the Jews did not go far enough: they confessed the Christ as David's son, but not as David's Lord – as man, but not as God. Augustine distinguishes between “transient acts (*aliud ... transitorium*) performed by the Lord” and “the stable reality (*aliud stabile*) of the Lord.”⁹² On the one hand, the Lord was transitory in his incarnation, birth, maturation, miracles, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. These things he did during the course of time and then disappeared. On the other hand, Jesus is also the Word, who in the beginning was with God and was God, through whom all things were made. Christ was thus David's son in the incarnation, but David's Lord from eternity. Augustine preaches:

In the beginning you were the Word, and as the Word you were with God, and you, the Word, were God. All things were made through you, and in this we know you to be David's Lord. But because of our weakness, because we lay prostrate, hopeless flesh, you, the Word, were made flesh in order to dwell among us; and in this we know you to be David's son. Being in the form of God you certainly deemed it no robbery to be God's equal: lo, you are David's Lord. But you emptied yourself and took on the form of a slave: lo, you are David's son. When you put to us the question, *Whose son is he?* you were not denying this but seeking to draw from us a confession of how it came about. *David calls him Lord*, you say. *How can he be David's son?* I am not repudiating that title, says Christ, but tell me how it came to be mine.⁹³

Ps. 110:1 teaches that Christ has now sat down at the right hand of the Father.

Augustine says this shows that it was only by virtue of being David's son that Christ could also

⁹¹ Augustine cites Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; and Mt. 20:30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 109.5, CCL 40:1605.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 109.6, CCL 40:1605-6.

become David's Lord. In human affairs, it is possible for a man's son to be exalted as king while the father remains an ordinary citizen. In the church, it is also possible for a man's son to become the father's father – if the son becomes a bishop. So also, Christ took flesh, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father; it thus follows that “in the same flesh that was so honored, so glorified, and so wonderfully transfigured into heavenly apparel, he is both David's son and David's Lord.”⁹⁴ Having been enthroned, Christ now awaits the complete subjugation of his enemies, when they all will become his footstool. This process, though, has already begun and will inexorably come to completion. Augustine cites Ps. 2:1-4, which mocks the nations who rage in vain against the anointed one, and then challenges his listeners: “You, whoever you are, were once his enemy; you will find yourself under his feet, either adopted or subjugated. Which place will you have under the feet of the Lord your God? The choice is yours, for you must have either grace or punishment.”⁹⁵

Concerning the priestly order of Melchizedek, Augustine argues that Christ was not a priest from eternity, but only after he had taken on flesh. “By his birth from the Father, as God with God, co-eternal with his Begetter, he is not a priest. He is a priest only because of the flesh he assumed, the body he received from us to offer as a sacrificial victim for us.”⁹⁶ God's oath underscores the seriousness of this promise. Humans, Augustine says, are forbidden from swearing lest they fall into perjury, calling God to testify for what may be some falsehood. God's oath, on the other hand, is a confirmation of his own promise and thus cannot fail.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 109.7, CCL 40:1607.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 109.9, CCL 40:1609.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 109.17, CCL 40:1617.

The psalmist's remark that God will not revoke his oath alludes to the contrast between the order of Aaron and that of Melchizedek. Unlike humans who may regret some prior decision, God can neither repent nor change. Scripture sometimes speaks of God's repenting, but this refers only to God's changing something in a way humans do not expect. All such changes actually reflect God's purview and prior decision. Concerning God's change with regard to the priesthood, Augustine remarks:

But what kind of priesthood is envisaged? Will it require those victims and sacrifices offered by the patriarchs, altars running with blood, and the sacred tent, and all the other emblems of the first covenant, the old one? By no means. All those things have been swept away (*sublata sunt*) with the destruction of the temple, the abolition of the old priesthood, and the disappearance of the victims and sacrifices that belonged to them. Not even the Jews have these now. They see that their priesthood according to the order of Aaron has ceased to exist, and they fail to recognize the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek.⁹⁷

That Christ now intercedes for us at the right hand of God means "he is like the priest entering the innermost place, the holy of holies, the secret recess of heaven, and cleansing us easily from sins because he has no sin himself."⁹⁸

It is this priest, Augustine proclaims, who "*has shattered kings on the day of his anger.*"⁹⁹ Christ is a victorious ruler who conquers earthly kings who conspire against him, and these kings could never succeed, because "*anyone who trips over this stone will be shattered against it, and anyone on*

⁹⁷ Ibid., 109.17, CCL 40:1617-18. "Sed sacerdos, secundum quid? Numquid erunt illae hostiae, uictimae oblatae a patriarchis, arae sanguinis et tabernaculum, et illa primi Testamenti Veteris sacramenta? Absit. Iam illa sublata sunt, euerso iam templo, remoto illo sacerdotio, pereunte uictima eorum et sacrificio: haec nec Iudaei habent. Vident perisse iam sacerdotium secundum ordinem Aaron, et non agnoscunt sacerdotium secundum ordinem Melchisedec."

⁹⁸ Ibid., 109.18, CCL 40:1618. "... tamquam sacerdos intrans in interiora uel in sancta sanctorum, in secreta caelorum, ille solus non habens peccatum, et ideo facile mundans a peccatis?"

⁹⁹ Ibid.

whom it falls will be crushed (Lk 20:18).” Once again, Augustine sees in this passage a reference to Christ’s humanity and divinity.

They tripped over the stumbling block, and so those kings have been shattered. They say, “Christ? Who is Christ? Some Jew, some Galilean fellow. He was put to death, he died thus and thus ...” The stone is in front of your feet, lying there lowly and contemptible. You scorn it and so you trip over it; in tripping you fall; in falling you are shattered against it. If the anger of one still hidden is so devastating, what will his judgment be when he is revealed? ... When people trip over him and are shattered it is because he seems to be lying there humbly; but when he crushes them it will be because he comes from above. Notice how the different phases of Christ’s victory are suggested by these two verbs: shattering and crushing, tripping over him and being beneath him as he comes from on high. The two periods are those of Christ’s lowliness (*humilitatis*) and glory (*claritatis*), of hidden punishment and future judgment. Anyone who is not shattered by him as he lies humbly will not be crushed when he comes.¹⁰⁰

6.3.2 Calvin

Calvin begins his treatment of Ps. 110 by setting forth four chief points in the psalm: first, that God conferred upon Christ supreme dominion and power to subjugate his enemies; second, that God would extend widely the boundaries of Christ’s kingdom; third, that Christ is established as both priest and king; and fourth, that the new order according to which Christ is priest would be eternal and would bring to an end the Levitical priesthood, which was only temporary. Calvin then provides a few remarks on the certainty that Christ is the referent of the psalm. Were it not even for Christ’s explicit testimony in the gospels that this psalm refers to himself, Calvin says, it would still be obvious that this is the proper interpretation. The language of the psalm could not be asserted of David or any of his successors, for none enjoyed such wide dominion while also being established as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 109.18, 40:1618-19.

Indeed, by definition no mortal person could assume such an honor, since it would be terminated immediately upon death. This psalm, then, must be understood with reference to Christ.

Commenting on the first verse, Calvin acknowledges that God's establishment of a kingly figure could to some extent be applied to David, or any king for that matter. There is a sense in which all rule and authority comes only by God's decree, though there is an important difference between the rule of David, who perceived himself anointed by God, and that of other kings, who do not recognize God as the source of their authority. Still, Calvin argues, the scope of this psalm must extend beyond David, as is clear from Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees. David spoke in this psalm as part of the church, "a member of the body under the same head,"¹⁰¹ confessing alongside other godly people the Lordship of Christ. Speaking by the spirit of prophecy, David foresaw the future reign of Christ, when Christ would be made manifest as the supreme head of the church. Despite Christ's taking on flesh, Calvin says, the psalm indicates "there is something in Christ more excellent than his humanity, on account of which he is called the Lord of David his father."¹⁰² This point gains particular force in light of the psalmist's confession that Christ would sit at the right hand of the Father. This language, Calvin teaches, indicates that "one king is chosen in a peculiar manner, and elevated to the rank of power and dignity next to God, of which dignity the twilight only appeared in David, while in Christ it shone forth in meridian splendour."¹⁰³ Christ would be exalted above all powers,

¹⁰¹ *Comm. Ps.* 110.1, CO 32:160.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, CO 32:161. "Unde etiam sequitur, aliquid natura humana praestantius in Christo esse, cuius respectu vocatur Davidis patris sui dominus."

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* "... nempe regem unum peculiariter eligi qui secundum a Deo potentiae et imperii gradum obtineat: cuius dignitatis exigua tantum scintilla emicuit in Davide, perfecta autem claritas enituit in Christo."

including the angels and principalities in the heavenlies. Such honor could not be affirmed of David or any other king.

Concerning the phrase, “*Until I make thine enemies thy footstool*,”¹⁰⁴ Calvin draws out two lessons. On the one hand, Christ will surely subdue all who oppose his reign, no matter how many rise up and rage to subvert his kingdom. On the other hand, the “until” indicates that the kingdom of Christ will not enjoy complete tranquility until the last day. The next verse confirms this point: “*Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*”¹⁰⁵ On Calvin’s reading, the term “enemies” refers to the reprobate, those who will fall under Christ’s feet to their own ruin and destruction, and not to those who will be converted and submit to Christ willingly. The reference in the following verse of this king going out from Jerusalem to rule over his foes reveals another point of difference between David and Christ: David’s rule was geographically limited, whereas Christ rules over the ends of the earth in the calling of the Gentiles.

The affirmation of a priest in the order of Melchizedek furnishes Calvin the opportunity to address the relation between king and priest. Even amongst God’s own people, Calvin says, kings were not allowed to adopt for themselves priestly duties. Uzziah, for instance, was struck with leprosy for trying to offer incense to God (2 Chr. 26:21). Amongst the “heathen nations,”¹⁰⁶ some kings admittedly did enjoy the priestly office, but Melchizedek was not some pagan; he was called “the priest of the most high God,” presumably for his devout and proper worship, and he held the office of both priest and king by divine appointment. Calvin argues that this peculiar combination is what made Melchizedek distinct, for Salem was a small, obscure town, and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 110.4, CO 32:164.

Melchizedek would not otherwise have merited much attention. Many kings sought the sacerdotal office, “but it was by divine authority that Melchizedek was invested with both these functions.”¹⁰⁷

Calvin argues that God sealed Christ’s appointment by oath to underscore the importance of this event and to confirm Christ’s superiority over all other kings. God is not wont to mix his name with frivolous matters, Calvin says, but only in weighty and important concerns. In this case, the oath is of obvious importance, for it is the very turning point of our salvation. We could not enter the presence of God without Christ as mediator, nor could we approach God in prayer without the presence of an advocate who secures our acceptance before God. Given Christ’s appointment as priest, Calvin reasons, it follows that the Levitical priesthood must be abrogated. “Because, while that remained entire, God would not have sworn that there should be a new order of priesthood unless some change had been contemplated. What is more, when he promises a new priest, it is certain that he would be the one who would be superior to all others, and would abolish the then existing order.”¹⁰⁸

On Calvin’s interpretation, the key point of similarity between Melchizedek and Christ is the perpetuity of their priesthood. It is not, contra some interpreters, the fact that Melchizedek offered Abraham bread and wine, as if this were a symbol of the Eucharist. Melchizedek sought only to provide Abraham physical refreshment from his journey, not to make some sacrifice to God. “Melchizedek is described by Moses as if he were a celestial individual; and, accordingly, David, in instituting a resemblance between Christ and him, designs to point out the perpetuity

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 110.4, CO 32:164-65. Nec abs re contendit apostolus, hoc modo abrogatum fuisse leviticum sacerdotium, quia illo stante non iuraret Deus novam fore rationem, nisi futura esset aliqua mutatio. Iam quum promittit novum sacerdotem, non dubium est, aliis omnibus praeferri, et qui receptum morem aboleat.

of his priestly office. Whence it follows, (a point which is handled by the Apostle,) that as death did not interrupt the exercise of his office, he has no successor.”¹⁰⁹ One can easily see, then, why the Popish mass constitutes such sacrilege, for it pretends that the priest effects reconciliation between God and humans, thereby denuding Christ of the particular honor conferred upon him.

Calvin’s remarks on Ps. 110 in the Hebrews commentary both elaborate upon these points and address more directly the question of the Levitical priesthood. As in the Psalms commentary, Calvin stresses the particularity of one person holding the offices of both priest and king. In that vein, he appeals repeatedly to Uzziah as an example of a king who was punished for seeking to attain the priestly office.¹¹⁰ Though Calvin affirms Melchizedek’s status as a type of Christ, he distinguishes between Melchizedek’s “private capacity” and those particular features according to which he is depicted as an image of Christ. It is not that Melchizedek actually had no parents, but Scripture does not record his genealogy for the purpose of making him a type with regard to the eternity of Christ.¹¹¹ Melchizedek was just a normal human being with the particular distinction of being both king and priest; he was not, Calvin insists, an angel, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 110.4, CO 32:165.

¹¹⁰ *Comm. Heb.* 1.13, 5.6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 7.3, OE 19:106-7. “It is indeed certain that he descended from parents; but the Apostle does not speak of him here in his private capacity; on the contrary, he sets him forth as a type of Christ” (*certum quidem est, a parentibus fuisse progenitum. Sed hic eo tanquam privato homine Apostolus non disputat; quin potius illum induit persona Christi*). Ibid., 7.3, OE 19:107: “And Melchizedek is not to be considered here, as they say, in his private capacity, but as a sacred type of Christ; nor ought we to think that it was accidentally or inadvertently omitted that no kindred is ascribed to him, and that nothing is said of his death; but on the contrary, that this was done designed by the Spirit, in order to give us an idea of one above the common order of men” (*atqui Melchisedec non hic in privata [ut aiunt] qualitate, sed quatenus sacer est Christi typus, consideratur. Nec vero fortuito vel per incogitantiam id videri omissum debet, quod nulla illi cognatio tribuitur, nullus habetur de morte sermo; verum id potius consulto fecit Spiritus, ut nos supra vulgarem hominum ordinem attolleret*).

Calvin lists five specific points of similarity between Melchizedek and Christ.¹¹² First, Melchizedek was called “the king of righteousness”; Christ brings righteousness, both in allowing us to be reckoned righteous before God and in renewing us by the Spirit to live godly lives. Second, Melchizedek was associated with peace; Christ brings that inward peace which calms our consciences of anxiety or inquietude. Third, Melchizedek had no genealogy; Christ is eternal. Fourth, Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham and, derivatively, the Levites; Christ is worthy of greater dignity than all the house of Levi. And finally, Melchizedek blessed Abraham; Christ is superior even to this patriarch with whom God established the covenant of eternal life. The offering of the bread and wine does not constitute a point of similarity, contra the “extremely ridiculous” Papists who “yet prattle about about the sacrifice of bread and wine.”¹¹³

Scripture does not mention Melchizedek’s death, but this does not mean Melchizedek never died. Rather, Calvin says, Scripture passes over Melchizedek’s death in silence to provide an image of Christ’s eternal priesthood. The perpetuity of Melchizedek’s priesthood meant that it could not be invalidated by the establishment of a later priesthood characterized by temporality and death.¹¹⁴ On the contrary, Calvin asserts, the coming of Christ brought about the abrogation of both the Levitical priesthood and the Mosaic law. Commenting on Heb. 7:11, Calvin explains, “No covenant between God and man is in force and ratified, except it rests on a priesthood.”¹¹⁵ Since God has replaced the Levitical priesthood, it follows that the Mosaic law

¹¹² Ibid., 7.1-10.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7.10, OE 19:113.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 7.8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 7.11, OE 19:113. “Nullum foedus inter Deum et homines firmum ratumque esse nisi sacerdotio fulciatur.”

must also be abolished. “As the authority of the Law and the priesthood is the same, Christ became not only a priest, but also a Lawgiver; so that the right of Aaron, as well as of Moses, was transferred to him.”¹¹⁶

Nevertheless, Calvin asserts, there is a distinction between the law in its peculiarity, and the law as it contains the rule of life and the covenant of grace, and Christ abolishes only the former, not the latter. Both Moses and Christ, Calvin says,

in common offer God’s mercy to us, prescribe the rule of a holy and godly life, teach us the true worship of God, and exhort us to exercise faith and patience, and all the duties of godliness. But Moses was different from Christ in this respect, that while the love of the Gospel was not as yet made known, he kept the people under veils (*sub involucris*), set forth the knowledge of Christ by types and shadows, and in short, accommodated himself (*se attemperans*) to the capacity of ignorant people, and did not rise higher than to puerile elements. We must then remember, that the Law is that part of the ministration which Moses had as peculiarly (*propriam*) his own, and different (*separatam*) from that of Christ. That law, as it was subordinate to the ancient priesthood, was abolished when the priesthood was abolished (*hoc abolito simul cessat*). And Christ, being made a priest, was invested also with the authority of a legislator, that he might be the teacher and interpreter of the new covenant.¹¹⁷

The Mosaic law and the Levitical priesthood were characterized by a focus on external ritual; as shadows, the Old Testament sacrifices had no power in and of themselves. Still, Calvin says, these sacrifices were spiritual in meaning, and they were efficacious in as much as they depended

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 7.12, OE 19:114. “Cum eadem sit Legis et sacerdotii conditio, Christus non Sacerdos modo, sed legislator etiam creatur. Ita non tantum ius Aaronis, sed Mosis quoque ad eum transfertur.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid. “Commune est ambobus offerre nobis Dei misericordiam, regulam pie sancteque vivendi praescribere, tradere verum Dei cultum, ad fidem, ad patientiam, ad omnia pietatis officia nos hortari. Hoc autem diversum a Christo habuit Moses, quod nondum patefacta Euangelii claritate, sub involucris populum continuit. Quod re nondum exhibita, in figuris et umbris gustum proposuit Christi quod denique ad rudis populi captum se attemperans, non ultra puerilia rudimenta conscendit. Meminerimus ergo Legem dici partem illam ministerii quam propriam habuit Moses, et a Christo separatam. Ea quum veteri sacerdotio subiecta sit, hoc abolito simul cessat. Et Christus dum instituitur Sacerdos, legislatoris etiam potestate instruitur, ut novi Testamenti minister sit ac interpres.”

upon Christ (presumably in the sense that they constituted God's appointed means of mediating the gracious covenant of Christ during Old Testament times). The ceremonies

had nothing substantial in them, nor in themselves anything available to salvation; for the promise of favour annexed to them, and what Moses everywhere testifies that God would be pacified by sacrifices and that sins would be expiated, did not properly (*proprie*) belong to sacrifices, but were only adventitious (*adventicium*) to them. For as all types had a reference to Christ, so from him they derived all their virtue and effect; nay, of themselves, they availed nothing or effected nothing; but their whole efficacy depended on Christ alone (*a Christo uno pendeat*).¹¹⁸

6.3.3 Hebrews

Because Augustine and Calvin both treat Ps. 110 with reference to Christ, Hebrews' treatment of this passage shares many points of contact with theirs. Citations or allusions to Ps. 110:1 appear throughout Hebrews at significant junctures in the structure of the text.¹¹⁹ The first such reference is found in the exordium, signalling the importance of this verse for the rest of the Epistle: "When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs" (1:3-4). It is next found in the concluding verse of the scriptural catena of the first chapter (1:13), then in two important summary passages, 8:1 and 10:12-13, and finally in the climactic exhortation of 12:2. There are no differences between Hebrews' explicit citations of this text and the major Septuagint witnesses.¹²⁰ Hebrews' use of this verse with reference to

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 7.18, OE 19:117. "Sic autem loquitur caeremoniarum respectu, quae in se nihil habebant solidum, nec per se quicquam ad salutem valebant. Quod enim gratiae promissio illis erat annexa, quod passim testatur Moses placatum iri Deum sacrificiis, et expiatum iri peccata, id proprie non competebat sacrificiis, sed adventicium erat. Nam ut ad Christum referebantur figurae omnes, ita ab eo mutuabantur vim suam et effectum; imo per se nihil poterant, vel agebant, sed tota vis a Christo uno pendeat."

¹¹⁹ The following paragraph depends on Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," 197-98.

¹²⁰ Though, interestingly enough, slight variations arise when the author alludes to the passage instead of citing it. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 168-71.

Jesus is not especially unique; the New Testament witness indicates that the psalm was understood messianically from a very early juncture,¹²¹ and the gospels attribute this tradition to Jesus himself.¹²² Hebrews' particular contribution to the interpretation of this psalm concerns Ps. 110:4, first cited in 5:6, alluded to in 5:10 and 6:20, and then discussed more fully in Heb. 7, with two citations at 7:17 and 7:21.¹²³ Since the recipient of the direct address in Ps. 110:1 is easily identified with Jesus, it makes natural sense that Ps. 110:4 also be understood in this regard. If Jesus is the exalted Lord, he must also be a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews' striking treatment of Melchizedek has attracted a fair amount of scholarly discussion and debate, especially concerning the relation between Hebrews and other Jewish traditions.¹²⁴ While little consensus can be found concerning the influence of background

¹²¹ Ac. 2:34-35, Rom. 8:34, 1 Cor. 15:25, Eph. 1:20, Col 3:1.

¹²² Mt. 22:41-46, Mk. 12:35-37, Lk. 20:41-44. For a survey of early Christian interpretation of Ps. 110, see David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973).

¹²³ The citations depart only slightly from the main Septuagint witnesses. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 287.

¹²⁴ For a recent treatment of this matter, see Gareth Lee Cockerill, "Melchizedek without Speculation: Hebrews 7:1-25 and Genesis 14:17-24," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham and others (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 128-44. This study draws upon his earlier work, "The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1976). See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "'Now this Melchizedek ...' (Heb 7, 1)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 305-21, as well as "Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 25-41 and "Melchizedek in the MT, LXX, and the NT," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 63-69; M. Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 2 (1971): 115-35; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 134-53; Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976); Richard Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews: A Study in the Development and Circumstantial Expression of New Testament Thought," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert A. Geulich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 161-85; Mikael C. Parsons, "Son and High Priest: A Study in the Christology of Hebrews," *Evangelical Quarterly* 60 (1988): 195-215; Anders Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus: 11QMelchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 129-47; Deborah W. Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 81-94; Eric F. Mason, *You Are a Priest Forever: Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

traditions on the author of Hebrews, at least a few points relevant for our purposes may be asserted with relatively minor controversy. First, although Melchizedek appears at only two points in the Old Testament, Gen. 14:18-20 and Ps. 110:4, he receives attention in a wide range of Second Temple Jewish literature: Jubilees, 1 Maccabees, the Assumption of Moses, various Targumim, Josephus, and Philo, as well as the oft-discussed Melchizedek Scroll from Qumran (11QMelch). Hebrews' interest in this shadowy figure does not arise from a vacuum, even if its particular treatment of Melchizedek is unique.

Second, Hebrews' appropriation of Melchizedek is quite distinct from the kind of allegorical speculation found in Philo.¹²⁵ While Philo does present Melchizedek as a historical human figure, his chief concern is to depict Melchizedek allegorically as the eternal Logos. In his most significant treatment of Melchizedek,¹²⁶ Philo draws from Melchizedek's identity as "king of righteousness" and "king of peace" reflections on reason as a good pilot for the proper conduct of life, able to bring order to unruly passions. Such reason, Philo says, brings forth food full of cheerfulness and joy, and wine to intoxicate the soul with sober virtue. This sort of philosophical speculation is foreign to Hebrews, whose treatment of Melchizedek is thoroughly Christological and therefore historical in orientation. For the author of Hebrews, Melchizedek presents an image of the priestly ministry of Christ, not the proper relation between reason and the passions.

¹²⁵ The standard refutation of Philo's influence on Hebrews is Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970). See especially pp. 434-49 for his discussion on Melchizedek.

¹²⁶ *Legum Allegoriae* 3.79-82.

Third, whether or not 11QMelch influenced Hebrews, there are significant differences between the documents in their depictions of Melchizedek.¹²⁷ For the Qumran community, it seems, Melchizedek is a kind of heavenly redeemer-warrior figure identified with the archangel Michael, who with the assistance of other angels in the final battle will bring judgment upon the wicked and salvation for God's elect. For Hebrews, however, Melchizedek is a person who prefigures Christ, not the actual agent of eschatological deliverance.¹²⁸ In that vein, it is worth recalling Hebrews' repeated insistence on Christ's definitive superiority over the angels. For our purposes, the most important difference between these documents concerns their interest, or lack thereof, in Gen. 14:18-20 and Ps. 110:4. While Hebrews' treatment of Melchizedek draws heavily upon these loci, they are at best only superficially present in the Qumran scroll. On this matter, Fitzmyer's early judgment remains sound: "The fragmentary state of the text ... prevents us from saying whether this midrash has any connection with either Gen 14:18-20 or Ps 110, the two places in the OT where Melchizedek is explicitly mentioned. What is preserved is a midrashic development which is independent of the classic OT loci. And this is, in our opinion, the reason for saying that the tradition here is not the same as that in Hebrews, even though it does shed some light on the more general development."¹²⁹

These observations facilitate appreciation for the kind of scriptural reasoning exhibited in Heb. 7's discussion of Christ as high priest after the order of Melchizedek. The entirety of this chapter should be seen as a reflection upon Ps. 110:4, which, as we have seen, is readily understood with reference to Christ given widespread messianic interpretation of Ps. 110:1. The

¹²⁷ Cockerill, "Melchizedek without Speculation," 136-41.

¹²⁸ On this point, see Longenecker, "Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," 176-79.

¹²⁹ Fitzmyer, "Further Light on Melchizedek," 31. For an alternate view, see Aschim, "Melchizedek and Jesus."

author treats the affirmation of Christ as priest in the order of Melchizedek as a performative act, spoken at that temporal juncture when Christ was in fact installed as high priest in the heavenlies.¹³⁰ As in the scriptural catena of Heb. 1, Ps. 110 is treated as a dialogue between God and the Son, and the moment of Ps. 110 corresponds more or less with that described in Heb. 1:6, when God “brings the first-born into the world.” Heb. 7:21 stresses the solemnity of this declaration: “Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath, ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘Thou art a priest for ever.’”” On this reading of Hebrews, there is a sense in which Ps. 110 could not be actualized until after the incarnation, death, and bodily ascent of the Son into heaven. That is, this psalm, written hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, bore within itself the marks of incompleteness, speaking in advance of some future moment when God would establish a new priest, in the order of Melchizedek and not of Levi.

This interpretation of Ps. 110:4 naturally leads the author to consider Gen. 14:18-20, the only other Old Testament referent to Melchizedek. Hebrews indicates that Melchizedek, by virtue of his name and his location in Salem is a king of righteousness and king of peace. This moment of allegory does present a point of similarity between Philo and Hebrews, but the topic does not seem to figure prominently in the rest of Hebrews’ discussion.¹³¹ Hebrews then stresses two revelatory events in the narrative of Gen. 14: Abraham paid Melchizedek a tithe, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham. The tithe is a very significant point for the author, for the law prescribes that the descendants of Levi receive a tithe from their Israelites. In this case, though,

¹³⁰ Attridge, “The Psalms in the New Testament,” 209.

¹³¹ See Rooke, “Jesus as Royal Priest,” 84-85, though, for an argument that “righteousness” and “peace” were deliberately flagged to stress the messianic character of Jesus’ royal priesthood.

by virtue of Abraham's tithing to Melchizedek, there is a sense in which Levi is also tithing to Melchizedek. This indicates the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical. So, too, does Melchizedek's blessing Abraham, since "it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior" (7:7). Moreover, Hebrews draws strong attention to the lack of reference in the Genesis account to Melchizedek's genealogy: "He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever" (7:3). It has often been noted that this is an argument from silence, following a rabbinic principle, *quod non in thora non in mundo*,¹³² and it is difficult to discern whether the author means to affirm Melchizedek's actual eternity, or just that his lack of recorded genealogy makes him an appropriate type of Christ.¹³³ In any case, the author's interest in this issue clearly derives from the reference in Ps. 110:4 to an eternal priesthood.

In the remainder of Heb. 7, the author shifts focus from Melchizedek as depicted in Gen. 14 to Jesus' new Melchizedekian priesthood, the goal of the background discussion in 7:1-10. For our purposes, there are two points of particular importance in the argument of 7:11-28. First, the author draws from Ps. 110:4 implications for the Levitical priesthood. That God has established the Son as priest according to the order of Melchizedek means for Hebrews that there has been a change in priesthood, such that the Levitical priesthood is no longer valid. Since Melchizedek was a priest, Levitical descent cannot be a requirement for priesthood. Thus, Jesus can also be a priest, though he came from the tribe of Judah. Indeed, this new priesthood must

¹³² See, for instance, Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument of Hebrews," 276, or James Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps 110, 4 as the Substructure of Heb 5, 1-7, 28* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 92.

¹³³ See discussion in Cockerill, "The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28," 39-41. Attridge's judgment seems fair: "The author studiously avoids any direct claims about the mysterious figure of Psalm 110 and Genesis 14" ("The Psalms in Hebrews," 198-99).

be superior to the old, not just in light of Gen. 14 (Abraham paid Melchizedek a tithe; Melchizedek blessed Abraham), but also because Ps. 110:4 explicitly declares Melchizedek's priesthood to be eternal. This priesthood is grounded not in lineage, but in "the power of an indestructible life" (7:16). The fact that current priests die, such that there is established a system of succession and replacement, stands in sharp contrast to Christ's priesthood, which is effective because eternal. "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). Hebrews reasons from the position that Christ's priesthood supplants the Levitical, that there must have been some deficiency in the old system. "Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?" (7:11).

The second and related point concerns Hebrews' interest in chronology. In the concluding remarks of the chapter, the author says, "Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever" (7:28). The oath in view here corresponds to the words of Ps. 110:4, whereby God declared Christ to be high priest after his bodily ascent into heaven. That this event took place temporally later than the establishment of the Levitical priesthood prompts for the author a reevaluation of the earlier priesthood. The logic of the argument here resembles what we have already seen concerning the interpretation of Ps. 95 in Heb. 3-4. How can David speak so long after the time of Joshua about entering God's rest? This must mean that God's rest must be understood not as the physical land of Canaan, but as a cessation from works. Here in Heb. 7, the author asks on the basis of Ps. 110:4 what it could

mean that God declared the Son to be priest according to a different order than the earlier one established in the law. The answer must be that the older priesthood was somehow inadequate, intended to give way to a new priesthood. Only by reading Gen. 14 in light of this conclusion can the author discern textual hints that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, and derivatively to the descendants of Levi. The lack of reference to Melchizedek's genealogy and the empirical fact that the Levitical priests must be replaced after death further reinforces the point in Ps. 110:4 that Christ's new priesthood is better because it is eternal.

As with Augustine and Calvin, Hebrews treats Ps. 110 as a literal reference to Christ. Indeed, none of the expositions we have discussed gives serious attention to the idea that this passage refers to an earthly king. Calvin considers the possibility briefly only to dismiss it: the language of the psalm clearly exceeds that which could be posited of David, so it must be understood as messianic. For Augustine, too, there is no need to appeal to a spiritual interpretation beyond the literal: the psalm refers directly to Christ, not to some earthly king who signifies Christ. Hebrews' most dramatic hermeneutical maneuver is one that derives not from Philonic speculation, but from his particular concern for the literal meaning of the psalm. The Lord addressed in Ps. 110:1 is three verses later declared a priest in the order of Melchizedek: what could this mean for the ongoing validity of the Levitical priesthood? The author's conclusion that the Levitical priesthood has now been supplanted does not undermine, but upholds the ongoing relevance of the biblical text, even as later declarations assume greater hermeneutical weight than earlier ones. Hebrews' depiction of Ps. 110:4 as the very oath that enacted the establishment of Christ as high priest thus testifies to the author's conviction that God continues to speak in the words of the earlier prophets.

6.4 Psalm 8

Our final passage is Ps. 8, which the author of Hebrews reads in 2:5-9 for an image of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus. In 2:10-18, the author proceeds to reflect upon the salvific implications of Christ's suffering, particularly with regard to his identification with humanity. The English translation of Ps. 8 reads as follows:

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.
O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth! Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted by the mouth of babes and infants, thou hast founded a bulwark because of thy foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!

6.4.1 Augustine

Augustine draws a curious distinction between the two halves of Ps. 8:4: "*What is a mere man that you remember him, or a son of man that you visit him?*"¹³⁴ Had the psalmist written "and" (*et*) instead of "or" (*aut*), "son of man" could have been identified with "man." As it is, though, the two words are clearly meant to be distinguished, such that every son of man is a man, but not the other way around. On Augustine's reading, "man" refers to those who bear the image of the earthly man, while "sons of men" are those who bear the image of the heavenly man. "Man" and "son of man" are thus synonyms for "old man" and "new man": since a man becomes a new

¹³⁴ *En. Ps.* 8.10, CCL 38:53. "Quid est homo, quia memor es eius, aut filius hominis, quoniam tu uisitas eum?" The translation used inexplicably leaves off the "or," so I have added it to the translation above. Boulding, *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, 134.

man through spiritual regeneration, it is appropriate to call this new man a “son of man.” On Augustine’s account, earthly men are far from God while heavenly sons of men are close to God. Therefore, God is said to “visit” the latter, but only to “remember” the former, as from a distance. For support on this point, Augustine turns to Ps. 36:6-10, which associates “men” with beasts, but rhapsodizes about the benefits God brings to the “sons of men.” Augustine deduces that God remembers *men* by providing for their carnal needs, but God visits the *sons of men* with particularly mercy, extending to them the protection of his wings, the abundance of his house, and the riches of his delights to drink. It is through repentance, pain, and lamentation that the old man brings to birth a new man, or the son of man.

Augustine then moves from anthropology to Christology, on the grounds that Jesus is the ultimate representative of the church, the paradigmatic son of man.

The “son of man” is visited in the first instance (*primo*) in the person of the Lord-man himself, born of the virgin Mary. On account of his fleshly weakness, which the wisdom of God condescended to bear, and on account of the humility of his suffering, scripture rightly says of him, *You have made him a little lower than the angels*. But mention is made too of his glorification, in that he rose and ascended into heaven: *with glory and honor you have crowned him; and you have set him above the works of your hands*, says the psalm.

As the Son was set a little below the angels during the incarnation, so also will he be exalted above them in his glorification, since the angels, too, are the works of God’s hands.

Given this affirmation that the Son has been exalted above the angels, Augustine wonders about the purpose of the next line in the psalm: “*all sheep and cattle, and even beasts of the field, birds of the air, and fishes of the sea, who roam the pathways of the deep.*”¹³⁵ Here it seems that the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 8.12, CCL 38:55. “Oues et boues universas, insuper et pecora campi; uolucres caeli, et pisces maris, qui perambulant semitas maris.” For consistency, I have modified the translation slightly here and throughout my description of Augustine’s exposition. Boulding translates *pecora campi* in one place “wild beasts,” and at other points

angels have been left aside, and the psalmist has chosen instead to focus on animals, far lower in the order of being. The proper interpretation, Augustine suggests, is to treat these animals figurally. The sheep and the cattle are holy souls, both human and angelic. Like the sheep and oxen, these souls yield fruit and make the earth fruitful in the sense that they produce the fruit of innocence and draw earthly humans to new life. Other biblical texts confirm these associations. When the Lord left ninety-nine sheep on the mountains for the sake of one, Augustine says, he was really leaving the nine-nine angels in the lofty places to win the one man, Adam. So also, evangelists are sometimes called oxen, not to be muzzled when they are threshing (Dt. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18). In this regard, human messengers of truth resemble their angelic counterparts.

The other animals should also be interpreted figurally, as hinted by the otherwise inexplicable features in the text. For instance, there seems no reason to mention “beasts of the field” separately from sheep or oxen, when the latter also reside in fields. Yet the “even” (*insuper*) before the second list of animals seems to distinguish the beasts, birds, and fish from the sheep and the oxen. What could this division mean? Augustine reminds the reader of the preface to the psalm: “To the end for the presses (*torcularibus*), a psalm of David himself.” These presses, Augustine had commented, can produce both grapeskins and wine, just like a threshing floor contains both chaff and grain. They present an image of the church, which includes for the time being both good and evil people, until the judgment of God when they will finally be separated.

“beasts of the field.” She also translates *insuper* as both “even” and “what is more.” Sometimes she includes the articles, sometimes not. These changes obscure the force of Augustine’s remarks.

If the sheep and oxen represent holy people (and angels), Augustine says, then the beasts, birds, and fish represent evil people who can nevertheless be found in the church. Thus, the beasts of the field can be understood as those who indulge fleshly pleasures. Such a life involves no precipitous mountain climb, but only a field – like the broad road that leads to death, or the open place where Abel was killed. The birds of the air are the proud, those who boast in their eloquence, wafted high by the wind. The fish that roam the pathways of the deep are the unduly inquisitive who seek profundities in temporal things, which disappear as quickly as the evanescent waves of the sea. These three animals represent three paradigmatic vices: the indulgence of the flesh, pride, and inquisitiveness. Such sins are described in 1 Jn. 2:15-16: “*Love not the world, because all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and worldly ambition*”; they also correspond to the three temptations of Christ: to make the stones bread (lust of the flesh), to receive the kingdoms of the world (empty boasting), and to test the angels by throwing himself off the pinnacle of the temple (inquisitiveness).

Augustine acknowledges that the words found in the psalm could be taken differently in other contexts, but insists that he has provided the proper interpretation here.

This is not to say that these words can be understood or explained only in this way, but this is what the present context dictates (*pro locis*). Somewhere else they may have a different meaning. This rule of thumb is to be upheld in every allegory, that what is expressed through a simile (*per similitudinem dicitur*) should be judged in the light of its immediate context (*pro sententia praesentis loci consideretur*). Such is the teaching of our Lord and the apostles.¹³⁶

The psalm as a whole, then, concerns the mixed character of the church. The distinction between men and sons of men is that between earthly people and heavenly people; Christ is the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 8.13, CCL 38:57. “Non quia ista nomina isto solo modo intellegi et explicari possunt, sed pro locis. Namque alibi aliud significant. Et haec regula in omni allegoria retinenda est, ut pro sententia praesentis loci consideretur quod per similitudinem dicitur; haec est enim dominica et apostolica disciplina.”

ultimate son of man, who rules over the church, but the church consists of both good and evil people. Augustine concludes with an exhortation, “Let God work, then, in his churches and separate wine from grapeskins. Let us cooperate with God so that we may be wine or sheep or oxen, rather than husks or beasts of the field or fish that roam the pathways of the deep.”¹³⁷

6.4.2 Calvin

Calvin’s treatment of Ps. 8 demonstrates considerably less allegorical imagination. On his reading, this psalm is a tribute to God’s power and splendor in the created order, principally in humanity, “the brightest mirror in which we can behold his glory.”¹³⁸ Calvin highlights the juxtaposition of Ps. 8:3, “*When I see thy heavens, the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast arranged,*” with the following verse, “*What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*”¹³⁹ Though God is the creator of heaven, whose glory fills humanity with the greatest admiration, God condescends to care for our lowly species. Humanity is “miserable” (*miser, calamitosus*) and “vile” (*nullius pretii*), “but dust and clay” (*ex pulvere et luto*).¹⁴⁰ Those not astonished that God would take note of us are “more than ungrateful and stupid” (*plus quam ingratus et stupidus*).¹⁴¹

In contrast to Augustine, Calvin sees no contrast between “man” and “son of man,” or “remembering” and “visiting.” Indeed, the distinction between “man” and “son of man” is not even mentioned. God’s being “mindful” of us signifies his fatherly love in defending, cherishing, and governing us. The expression “visiteth” means much the same, reflecting a tendency in the

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *Comm. Ps. 8.1*, CO 31:88.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 8.4-5, CO 31:90.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.4-5, CO 31.91.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

psalms to communicate one thought in different words. Both terms remind us of the marvel that God continuously thinks upon humanity. God's fatherly care should not give rise to pride, as if we had obtained any excellence by our own merit or efforts; rather, we must recognize that God's blessings have been "gratuitously conferred upon those who are otherwise vile and contemptible creatures (*abiectis alioqui et sordidis*), and utterly unworthy (*prorsusque indignis*) of receiving any good from God. Whatever estimable quality, therefore, we see in ourselves, let it stir us up to celebrate the free and undeserved goodness of God in bestowing it upon us."¹⁴²

Concerning the phrase, "*For thou hast made him little lower than God; and hast crowned him with glory and honour*,"¹⁴³ Calvin focuses on how this passage applies to humanity as made in the image of God, created for immortality and blessedness, so exalted that their condition resembles divine, celestial glory.

The reason with which they are endued, and by which they can distinguish between good and evil; the principle of religion which is planted in them; their intercourse with each other, which is preserved from being broken up by certain sacred bonds; the regard to what is becoming, and the sense of shame which guilt awakens in them, as well as their continuing to be governed by laws; all these things are clear indications of pre-eminent and celestial wisdom. David, therefore, not without good reason, exclaims that mankind are adorned with glory and honour.¹⁴⁴

Calvin favors the reading that humanity is a little lower than God, rather than angels, though he notes the latter reading in the Septuagint and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. On the appropriation of this passage in Hebrews, Calvin says,

We know what freedoms (*quam libere*) the apostles took in quoting texts of Scripture; not, indeed, to wrest them to a meaning different from the

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 8.6, CO 31:92.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

true one (*non quidem ut torquerent in alienum sensum*), but because they reckoned it sufficient to show, by a reference to Scripture, that what they taught was sanctioned (*sancitum*) by the word of God, although they did not quote precise words. Accordingly, they never had any hesitation in changing the words, provided the substance of the text (*summa rei*) remained unchanged.¹⁴⁵

A trickier problem concerns the propriety of applying this passage to the humiliation (*exinanitio*) of Christ, as Hebrews does, when the psalm speaks instead of the excellence (*praestantia*) of humanity.¹⁴⁶ Calvin sets forth two issues of difficulty: first, the general legitimacy of applying to Christ what is said about humanity; and second, Hebrews' particular use of this passage with regard to the death and resurrection of Christ. On the first issue, Calvin acknowledges the basic principle that what is affirmed of the members of a body can also be transferred to the head,¹⁴⁷ but prefers a more textured theological explanation. "For Christ is not only the first begotten of every creature, but also the restorer of mankind."¹⁴⁸ What David says in the psalm properly concerns humanity in its prelapsarian condition.¹⁴⁹ Yet humanity has now fallen from that state of highest excellence to a point of wretched destitution, such that it no longer experiences God's liberty as David described. The image of God was not totally effaced from us, but only a small portion of it now remains. It is Christ, though, who is the image of God in a particular sense, able to renew that image within us.

But as the heavenly Father hath bestowed upon his Son an immeasurable fulness of all blessings, that all of us may draw from this fountain, it

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. "Scimus quam libere sibi permiserint apostoli citare scripturae locos: non quidem ut torquerent in alienum sensum, sed quia illis satis fuit digito monstrare, quod docebant Dei oraculis esse sancitum. Quare modo de summa rei constaret, verba mutare nulla illis fuit religio."

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.6, CO 31:93. "Tametsi vero sufficeret ad primam quaestionem solvendam, quod quidam dicunt, aptam et congruam esse anagogen a membris ad caput."

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. "Nam quae hic recenset David proprie ad creationis initium et integram naturam spectant."

follows that whatever God bestows upon us by him belongs of right to him in the highest degree; yea, he himself is the living image of God, according to which we must be renewed, upon which depends our participation of the invaluable blessings which are here spoken of.¹⁵⁰

Concerning the second issue, Calvin suggests that the apostle (Calvin assumes here that Paul is the author of Hebrews) treats the psalm by way of illustration rather than explanation.

What the apostle therefore says in that passage concerning the abasement of Christ for a short time, is not intended by him as an explanation (*exegeticum*) of this text; but for the purpose of enriching and illustrating the subject on which he is discoursing, he introduces and accommodates to it (κατ' ἐπεξεργασίαν *ad suum institutum deflectit*) what had been spoken in a different sense. The same apostle did not hesitate, in Rom. x. 6, in the same manner to enrich and to employ (*per amplificationem ornare*), in a sense different from their original one, the words of Moses in Deut. xxx. 12: "Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" &c. The apostle, therefore, in quoting this psalm, had not so much an eye to what David meant (*quid David sensisset*); but making an allusion to those words, *Thou hast made him a little lower*; and again, *Thou hast crowned him with honour*, he applies (*constituit*) this diminution to the death of Christ, and the glory and honour to his resurrection. A similar account may be given of Paul's declaration in Eph. iv. 8, in which he does not so much explain (*interpretatur*) the meaning of the text, (Ps. lxxviii. 18,) as he devoutly applies it, by way of accommodation (*accommodat*), to the person of Christ.¹⁵¹

On Calvin's account, Hebrews' use of Ps. 8 transgresses the boundaries of the literal sense, and cannot be explained by appeal to a general connection between humanity and Christ, or body and head. Calvin must therefore appeal to a different mode of reading the Old Testament: illustration, not explanation.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. "Sed quia rursus donorum omnium plenitudinem coelestis pater in filium suum contulit, ut ex hoc fonte hauriamus omnes: iure in eum primo gradu competit quidquid per ipsum nobis Deus largitur: imo ipse est viva Dei imago, ad quam nos reformari oportet: unde reliqua omnia dependent."

¹⁵¹ Ibid. "Quod de brevi abiectioe deinde tractat apostolus, non est exegeticum, sed κατ' ἐπεξεργασίαν ad suum institutum deflectit quod alio sensu dictum fuerat. Neque enim dubitavit Paulus Rom. 10, 6 hoc modo per amplificationem ornare Mosis verba, ubi dicit: Quis ascendet in coelum, etc. Deut. 30, 12. Non ergo tantum spectavit apostolus quid David sensisset, verum ad nomen *diminutionis et decoris* alludens, illam in morte Christi, hoc in resurrectione constituit. Eodem fere accedit expositio illa Pauli, ad Ephesios capite 4, 8. Qua locum Psalmi 68, 19 non tam interpretatur, quam pia deflexione ad Christi personam accommodat."

Calvin's remarks on the remaining verses of the psalm reflect a similar concern for treating humanity Christologically. That God has set humanity over all creation is a singular honor; there is nothing lacking in creation for humans to enjoy a blessed life. Nevertheless, Calvin says, it is clear that humanity's rule over creation has not yet been brought to fruition. By our fall, we have not only been dispossessed of our former dominion, but we have even been made captives to shameful bondage. Christ is the lawful heir of creation, but he has not yet taken complete possession of this dominion, and it is only by him that we too may recover our rule over the world. We must therefore await our glorious end and the destruction of death when David's words will be fully accomplished.

Calvin treats the sheep, oxen, beasts, birds, and fish as exemplary particulars that both signify our rule over the whole world and direct our minds toward the heavenly treasures we enjoy in Christ. "There is no man of a mind so dull and stupid but may see, if he will be at the trouble to open his eyes, that it is by the wonderful providence of God that horses and oxen yield their service to men, – that sheep produce wool to clothe them, – and that all sorts of animals supply them with food for their nourishment and support, even from their own flesh."¹⁵² Yet once again, Calvin warns, this idea must be qualified by an understanding of the fall. Though our happy prelapsarian condition has been almost completely ruined, there still remains within us some marks of God's generosity toward us. Moreover, there is a particular sense in which David's words apply to the church.

In this mournful and wretched overthrow, it is true, the legitimate order which God originally established no longer shines forth, but the faithful whom God gathers to himself, under Christ their head, enjoy so much of the fragments of the good things which they lost in Adam, as may

¹⁵² Ibid., 8.8-10, CO 31:94-95.

furnish them with abundant matter of wonder at the singularly gracious manner in which God deals with them.¹⁵³

Calvin's Hebrews commentary mirrors many of these same themes, especially concerning the propriety of reading Ps. 8 Christologically. On the general application of the psalm to Christ, Calvin judges, there is little difficulty: the psalm's depiction of humanity could not refer to our postlapsarian condition. By our defection from God, we deservedly lost our dominion over the world; we may use the things of the created order, but we no longer have any right to them. Beasts attack us; the earth does not cooperate with our efforts to cultivate it; the sky, air, and sea often oppose us. Therefore, Calvin reasons, we must turn to Christ to receive again the right we lost in Adam. "If men, then, are precluded from all God's bounty until they receive a right to it through Christ, it follows that the dominion mentioned in the Psalm was lost to us in Adam, and that on this account it must again be restored as a donation. Now, the restoration begins with Christ as the head. There is, then, no doubt but that we are to look to him whenever the dominion of man over all creatures is spoken of."¹⁵⁴

A more vexing issue concerns the shift of meaning in *βραχύ τι* such that this phrase refers to the time of Christ's humiliation. As in the Psalms commentary, Calvin answers:

It was not the Apostle's design to give an exact explanation of the words (*genuinam verborum expositionem*). For there is nothing improperly done, when verbal allusions are made to embellish a subject at hand (*ad ornandam praesentem causam*), as Paul does in quoting Rom. x. 6, from Moses, "Who shall ascend into heaven," &c., he does not join the words "heaven and hell" for the purpose of explanation, but as ornaments (*non interpretationem, sed exornationem*). The meaning of David is this, – "O Lord, thou hast raised man to such a dignity, that it differs but little from divine or angelic honour; for he is set a ruler over the whole world." This meaning the Apostle did not intend to overthrow, nor to turn to

¹⁵³ Ibid., 8.8-10, CO 31:95.

¹⁵⁴ *Comm. Heb.* 2.5, OE 19:34.

something else; but he only bids us to consider the abasement of Christ, which appeared for a short time, and then the glory with which he is perpetually crowned; and this he does more by alluding (*alludens*) to expressions than by explaining (*exprimens*) what David understood.¹⁵⁵

In familiar fashion, then, Calvin demonstrates a willingness to apply the Old Testament to Christ, yet only as an extension of the literal sense. He treats the psalm primarily as a remark about humanity, but also adopts a Christological interpretation grounded in Christ's status as a representative of humanity. There is in Calvin's interpretation a kind of circular movement: the "man" God remembers is all of humanity, but in a greater sense Christ, and finally in a derivative sense the church, which is humanity as it participates in Christ. Calvin's hesitance with Hebrews' appropriation of the psalm concerns not the move from humanity to Christ, but the particular application of David's words to the death and resurrection of Christ. On that point, Calvin concludes, the author of Hebrews is not explaining the psalm at all.

6.4.3 Hebrews

Hebrews' treatment of Ps. 8 differs in obvious ways from either Augustine or Calvin's expositions of the text, but shares with both a very significant point of contact: the perception that what is affirmed about humanity can also be affirmed with regard to Christ. Hebrews' exposition of the psalm serves to explain the remark that "it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come" (2:5). The author introduces the citation with a rather ambiguous introductory formula, "It has been testified somewhere" (2:6a), and then quotes the text in 2:6b-

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.7, OE 19:35. "Non fuisse propositum Apostolo, genuinam verborum expositionem referre. Nihil enim est incommodi, si allusiones in verbis quaerat ad ornandam praesentem causam; quemadmodum Paulus, quum Rom. 10.6 testimonium citat ex Mose, 'Quis ascendet in caelum, etc.', statim non interpretationem, sed exornationem attexit, de caelo et inferis. Mens Davidis haec est, 'Domine, eo dignitatis extulisti hominem, ut parum distet a Divino vel Angelico honore, quandoquidem praefectus est toti mundo'. Hunc sensum noluit evertere Apostolus, neque alio deflectere; sed tantum in Christo considerare iubet diminutionem quae ad exiguum tempus apparuit, deinde gloriam qua in perpetuum coronatus est; idque facit alludens magis ad verba, quam exprimens quid intellexerit David."

8, following closely his Greek source text. The line, “You have set him over the works of your hands” (Ps. 8:6a) is omitted, perhaps to facilitate the application of this passage to Christ.¹⁵⁶

Then in 2:9, the author explicitly makes this connection: “But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.” Scholarly debate over Hebrews’ appropriation of Ps. 8 concerns the point where the author begins to treat the psalm Christologically, and whether the phrase “son of man” (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) should be taken as a Christological title. On the anthropological reading, the psalm is cited primarily with regard to humanity, and only applied to Christ in 2:9; on the Christological reading, the author has Jesus in view during the citation of the psalm, and not just from 2:9.¹⁵⁷

In its original context, the psalm expresses wonder at the care God has bestowed upon lowly humanity, given the majesty of the rest of creation. The psalmist marvels at humanity’s privileged status: lower than the angels,¹⁵⁸ higher than the beasts, crowned with honor and glory. Hebrews’ striking move is to turn this passage into a statement about Jesus, one less concerned

¹⁵⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 71.

¹⁵⁷ For a recent defense of the anthropological view, see Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implications for English Translations,” in Bauckham, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, 88-99. For a recent defense of the Christological view, see George H. Guthrie and Russell D. Quinn, “A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (2006): 235-46. For other treatments of Ps. 2:5-9, see Brevard S. Childs, “Psalm 8 in the Context of the Christian Canon,” *Interpretation* 23 (1969): 20-31, also found in his *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 151-63; Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Christ and His People: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Hebrews 2:5-18,” *Vox Evangelica* 6 (1969): 54-71; S. P. Brock, “Hebrews 2:9b in Syriac tradition,” *Novum Testamentum* 27:3 (1983): 236-44; Robert L. Brawley, “Discursive Structure and the Unseen in Hebrews 2:8 and 11:1: A Neglected Aspect of the Context,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 81-98; Thomas G. Smothers, “A Superior Model: Hebrews 1:1-4:13,” *Review and Expositor* 82 (1985): 333-43; L. D. Hurst, “The Christology of Hebrews 1 and 2,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 151-64; Lanier Burns, “Hermeneutical Issues and Principles in Hebrews as Exemplified in the Second Chapter,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1996): 587-607; Randall C. Gleason, “Angels and the Eschatology of Heb 1-2,” *New Testament Studies* 49 (2003): 90-107.

¹⁵⁸ The Greek text resolves an ambiguity in the Hebrew, by rendering as “angels” what could also be translated “gods” or “God.” Guthrie and Quinn, “A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9,” 236.

with the unchanging ontological status of humanity than with the sequence of events of Jesus' incarnation and exaltation. This move depends upon an ambiguity in the Greek citation of Ps. 8:5. Heb. 2:7 reads: "Thou didst make him for a little while (βραχύ τι) lower than the angels." While the phrase βραχύ τι could suggest a small measure of distance or substance – and almost surely does in the original context of Ps. 8 – the author of Hebrews chooses instead to treat the term temporally: the son of man was not "a little bit lower than the angels," but "for a little while lower than the angels."

This Christological move depends upon the continuity of argument between Heb. 1 and 2. In the previous chapter, I discussed Moffitt's recent assessment that "the world (οἰκουμένη) to come" in 2:5 refers to same οἰκουμένη mentioned in 1:6, the heavenly realms Christ entered in accordance with his establishment as high priest. Here I note the connection between Ps. 8 and Ps. 110:1. Ps. 110:1 appears in Heb. 1:13 as the concluding citation of the catena in 1:5-13, which treats the psalm as evidence for the superiority of the Son over the angels: "But to what angel has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?'" (1:13). Ps. 8 is regularly associated in the New Testament with Ps. 110:1 (1 Cor. 15:25-27; Eph. 1:20-22) by virtue of the verbal similarities between the two passages: Ps. 110:1 speaks of enemies being made a footstool, while Ps. 8:6 promises that "all things will be put under his feet."¹⁵⁹ In Heb. 2, the author draws upon this point of contact as well as Ps. 8's reference to angels to advance the argument of the first chapter: the way the Son was exalted over the angels (Ps. 110) was by first becoming lower than them (Ps. 8). Since the author takes Ps. 110:1 as evidence for the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 237-39. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 47a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 46-47.

superiority of the Son over the angels, Ps. 8 naturally commends itself in complementary fashion.

Hurst argues in line with Caird's earlier suggestion that the use of Ps. 8 controls the material of 1:3-13.¹⁶⁰ Against the tendency to read Heb. 1 with regard to a heavenly being who became a man, Hurst suggests that the emphasis of this chapter lies rather in the opposite direction: how a man was elevated over the angels. To put it differently, the author's primary concern is not the divinity, but the humanity of Jesus. The texts cited in this chapter are largely royal psalms that stress the qualities of an ideal king who acts as a representative of the people. This is most obvious in the citations of Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 in 1:5, and in the citation of Ps. 45:6-7 in 1:8-9, which stresses the exaltation of a king above his "comrades." Yet even the citation of Ps. 102:25-27 in 1:10-12, which sounds as if it must refer to God ("Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands ..."), can be understood as a reference to an earthly king who possesses divine, creative wisdom. In light of these observations, Hurst concludes, "The emphasis of chapter one is the same as that of chapter two: it concerns a figure who, *qua* man, is exalted above the angels and leads those whom he represents, as their ideal king, to an appointed destiny."¹⁶¹ "The author's *main* interest was not in a uniquely privileged, divine being who becomes man; it is in a human figure who attains to an exalted status."¹⁶²

On this reading of Heb. 1, the appropriation of Ps. 8 in Heb. 2 should be understood in terms of Jesus' role as a representative of humanity and the implications of his status for all

¹⁶⁰ Hurst, "The Christology of Hebrews 1-2."

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 163.

humanity. “The reversal of conditions in the future age will result in the supremacy over these angels by redeemed humanity rather than exclusively by a single individual.”¹⁶³ The verses following Hebrews’ citation of Ps. 8 confirm this point. Jesus tasted death “for every one” (2:9), “bringing many sons to glory” as the pioneer of humanity’s salvation (2:10). Because “he who sanctifies and those who sanctified have all one origin,” Jesus is “not ashamed to call them brethren” (2:11). Jesus partook in flesh and blood (2:14); he is concerned “not with angels,” but with the “descendants of Abraham” (2:16); and he was “made like his brethren in every respect” (2:17). In the terms of contemporary scholarly debate, the Christological and anthropological dimensions mutually implicate each other at the deepest level. The author of Hebrews treats Ps. 8 both as an image of the exaltation of Christ and as a promise for the rest of humanity. Those who remain faithful will also rule over angels in the world to come, but one representative has already entered this realm as our pioneer.

We may discern these dynamics more clearly by considering in greater detail the argument of 2:8-9. To this point, the referent of the psalm has been kept ambiguous. The introductory formula of Heb. 2:5 hints that the psalm has something to say about the Son, though the psalm was originally understood as a statement about humanity. Next comes the quotation of Ps. 8 in 2:6-8a, which concludes with the phrase, “putting everything in subjection under his feet.” In 2:8b, the author heightens the implications of this final line: “Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.” He then observes, “We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.” Since humanity cannot adequately function as the referent of the psalm, the author concludes that the person in view must be Jesus, first named in

¹⁶³ Ibid., 154. For a similar view, see David Moffitt, “A New and Living Way: Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle ‘To the Hebrews’” (PhD diss., Duke Univ., 2010), Ch. 2.

2:9, “who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.” William Lane describes the logic thus: “The author found in the quotation [of Ps. 8] a prophecy that will eventually be fulfilled. He regards Ps 8:7b as a legal decree, the realization of which is yet deferred. The recognition of the present unfilled state of affairs prepares him to see that the promised subjection has reference not to humankind in general (v 8) but to Jesus (v 9), whom God has appointed ‘heir of everything’ (1:2).”¹⁶⁴ There is thus in Heb. 2 a rich and lively interchange between humanity and Jesus: the psalm originally refers to humanity, but the psalmist’s vision has not yet been actualized; instead, we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, embodying this psalm as one exalted individual; yet by virtue of Christ’s participation in and representation of humanity, we, too, will receive such glory; then the psalm will reach its fullest consummation. On this matter, Caird’s early judgment seems right: Heb. 2 advances the author’s purpose from the opening catena of 1:5-14 “to illustrate the theme of the psalm that man has been destined by God to a glory excelling that of the angels and that this destiny has been achieved by Christ, both individually and representatively, as the pioneer of man’s salvation who came to lead many sons into their desired glory.”¹⁶⁵

On the reading here proposed, the author of Hebrews demonstrates concern for the literal sense, but also adds a Christological twist that ventures farther from the psalmist’s original meaning than in any of the other passages we have considered thus far. The move to treat **βραχύ τι** temporally rather than substantively significantly alters the contours of the psalm such

¹⁶⁴ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 47-48.

¹⁶⁵ George B. Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5 (1959), 49.

that its locutions refer to the sequence of events involving the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, and not to humanity's ontological status in the created order. Nevertheless, this radical transformation is theologically very much in line with the general thrust of the psalm. If its vision of humanity is understood not as present reality, but as eschatological hope – and indeed, we do not experience the fullness of this glory in our current postlapsarian state – then the psalm, in its original sense, provocatively invites the reader to consider how we might attain that end. Hebrews insists that such glory awaits us through the man Jesus, whose participation in humanity allowed him to act as our representative and pioneer into the heavenly realms. In this regard, Hebrews' admittedly creative appropriation of Ps. 8 remains miles away from Augustine's allegorical treatment of the beasts, birds, and fish, or even the distinction between men and sons of men. It also bears striking resemblance with Calvin's treatment of this passage in the movement from humanity to Christ to church, even if the author of Hebrews does move beyond "explanation" to "illustration" in his application of Ps. 8 to the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Most foundationally, though, the Epistle shares with both Augustine and Calvin the conviction that Christ is the ultimate representative of humanity who directs us to our final end.

6.5 Conclusion

We began this chapter with a basic typology: while Augustine reads the Old Testament at two levels, according to both a literal and spiritual sense, Calvin locates the interpretation of the Old Testament within an expansive literal sense that encompasses Christological references. In Hebrews, we see a distinct approach. The Epistle does not need two levels of meaning, nor does it appeal to a literal sense that envelops relatively constant realities in redemptive history. Rather, the author of Hebrews seeks to bring the Old Testament to bear directly and immediately on his

readers in way that is continuous with the literal sense while also transforming it. In his appropriation of Ps. 95, the author reconfigures the meaning “today” in light of his eschatological vision that God has spoken with decisive finality in these “last days.” “Rest” cannot mean the land of Canaan, so it must refer instead to the heavenly realms to which Jesus has already paved the way as our pioneer. With Ps. 110, the author simply adopts a widespread messianic reading, then pushes it a step further by reflecting on the perpetual priesthood of Melchizedek and its implications for the Levitical priesthood. Hebrews’ treatment of Ps. 8 constitutes the most radical departure from the original meaning of the text, but even here the move to treat the psalm in light of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ enhances, rather than undermining the literal sense. The psalm is still concerned with the glory of all humanity, even if it insists that this eschatological vision has only been made possible through Jesus. The author consistently exploits obscurities or apparent problems in these Old Testament texts to draw them into the orbit of a richly developed theological framework centered on the eternal priesthood of Christ in the heavenlies. Yet even within this new context, the literal meaning is largely preserved: there *does* remain a rest; Christ *is* a priest in the order of Melchizedek; humanity *will* be exalted over the angels.

Hebrews’ particular approach to the Old Testament produces a certain dynamism that neither Augustine nor Calvin fully display. The appeal to both literal and spiritual senses creates a division between relatively straightforward readings of the text and a wide field for interpretive play. The latter draws greater attention, as the interpreter indulges in a variety of speculations: the twin-bearing sheep represent the church’s obedience to the twofold love commandment; the beasts are the fleshly, the birds the proud, and the fish the inquisitive. Augustine’s interpretation of these passages do not arise from mid-air – his treatment of the sheep in Ps. 95 matches his

remarks on the Song of Songs in *De doctrina christiana*, and his interpretation of the animals in Ps. 8 finds alluring resonances in the temptations of Christ and in 1 John 2. Yet because such readings are not obviously continuous with the original sense, the text is not brought to bear in a direct way upon its hearers; congregants are rather drawn into a creative and fascinating, but highly speculative alternate level of reading.

This issue can be seen even more clearly with Calvin, whose reading of the Old Testament trades on a relatively static understanding of redemptive history wherein covenant, church, and Christ function almost as constants to which Scripture can be universally applied. God calls us to enter his rest – not “today” as the climactic, eschatological age inaugurated with the establishment of Christ as high priest, but “today” as any day in redemptive history – today, not tomorrow. So also, the warning not to harden one’s heart remains without temporal distinction, since postlapsarian humanity is ever prone to wander from God. Calvin acknowledges some additional urgency to this command in light of the revelation of Christ, but its basic thrust remains the same across the testaments for Israel and church. For the author of Hebrews, however, the literal sense speaks directly to the specific situation of the hearers, urgently called to faithfulness and perseverance, and the words of the psalms are enacted at precise temporal moments. The reference in Ps. 110 to a priest after the order of Melchizedek constitutes not simply a general principle for how to understand the Son, but an actual declaration of the Father that occurred in time long after the writing of the psalm, at some specific juncture following soon after that sequence of events whereby Jesus took on flesh, died, received perfection, rose again, and ascended into the heavenlies. The call to enter God’s rest comes *now*, not at any given moment in redemptive history, but at the very recitation of God’s Word. Such readings could not have been understood during Old Testament times; only in these

last days does the full meaning of the text appear. If Calvin advances a static but expansive literal sense, Hebrews sets forth a living Word of address that speaks directly to the present redemptive-historical moment.

Hebrews' dynamic appropriation of the Old Testament corresponds to its concern for chronology. As we have noted, the temporal context of the words cited invariably plays a critical role in Hebrews' exposition. In Ps. 95, a new rest is promised long after the Israelites had entered the land of Canaan. In Ps. 110, a new priesthood is declared while the Levitical priesthood is still in place. In Ps. 8, the lofty but non-actualized depiction of humanity becomes a promise of our eschatological hope. Of a very similar nature is a passage considered in the previous chapter, Jer. 31, where the announcement of a new covenant implicitly declares the old one old. Taken together, these passages create an image of the Old Testament as a time characterized by unfulfilled hope and promises that prompt anticipation of something better but as yet mysterious. This, too, is the picture Heb. 11 presents of the heroes of faith: ever longing for their final reward, yet never receiving what was promised. So also with the foundational structures of the Levitical priesthood system: the repetition of animal sacrifice hinted that some better sacrifice was necessary to take away sin; the mortality and guilt of the Levitical priests pointed forward toward an eternal, sinless high priest; the earthly tabernacle was modeled after a heavenly tabernacle that would demand the service of a heavenly priest.

All this hope and longing finally find their end in Jesus, who establishes a new priesthood, paves the way into the promised rest, and makes possible the glorification of humanity as its first representative. Christ brings new meaning to all the images in the Old Testament, revealing the purpose of the ceremonies, and enacting and fulfilling the latent promises of the psalmists and prophets. This transformation means some things must be left

behind: the realities have come, so the shadows must disappear. Thus, there is no more animal sacrifice, the Levitical priesthood has been abrogated, the earthly sanctuary has served its purpose, and the hope of rest no longer means earthly Canaan. Nevertheless, the coming of Christ brings to fulfillment the hope of the Old Testament in a way that extends and transforms God's mode of interaction with his people, as with the meaning of God's speech of old through the prophets. In the next chapter, I provide a more synthetic account for these dynamics with regard to Hebrews' theological vision for the use and purpose of Scripture.

7. The living word

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:12-13

This chapter builds upon the previous one by reflecting theologically upon Hebrews' use of the Old Testament. Given Hebrews' appropriation of the psalms as described above, what is the author's operating conception of the nature and purpose of Scripture? I do not, of course, presume to find in the Epistle a developed doctrinal position on these matters. I do, however, believe contemporary proposals on Scripture significantly illuminate the dynamics of Hebrews' interpretive practices. In this chapter, then, I draw upon three of the most promising approaches for the matter at hand: Henri de Lubac's work on the spiritual senses, Kevin Vanhoozer's appropriation of speech-act theory, and John Webster's dogmatic account of Scripture within God's revelatory purposes. Some of the suggestions proposed capture closely the vision of Scripture set forth in Hebrews; some reveal more precisely what Hebrews does not do. In either case, though, these treatments provide a valuable vocabulary for describing theologically the nature, purpose, and use of Scripture in Hebrews.

7.1 The fourfold method: Henri de Lubac

The most significant twentieth-century treatment of the spiritual senses of Scripture is unquestionably Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis*.¹ De Lubac not only presents the fourfold

¹ Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959-64); English translation: *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, Retrieval and Renewal: Ressourcement in Catholic Thought, vol. 1, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), and vol. 2, trans. E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI:

method as one of the most venerable interpretive practices of the church, but also attributes the long-standing prominence of this method to its correspondence with the inner logic of Scripture and the gospel. Despite the power and attraction of his magisterial work, I argue in this section that de Lubac's proposal does not finally accord with the particular dynamics of scriptural interpretation in Hebrews.

The standard medieval formula for the fourfold method is as follows:

The letter teaches events, allegory what you should believe,

Eerdmans, 2000). See also his *History and the Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Anne Englund Nash and Juvenal Merriell (1950; San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), and *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. Luke O'Neill (1967; New York: Herder and Herder, 2000). For other treatments on allegory, typology, and figural reading, see Wilhelm Vischer, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, trans. A. B. Crabtree (1936; London: Lutterworth, 1949); Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (1939; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002); Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in his *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. Ralph Manheim, *Theory and History of European Literature* 9 (Minneapolis: Univ. Minnesota Press, 1984; essay originally published in 1944), 11-76, and *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, 50th-anniv. ed., trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003); Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Don Wulstan Hibberd (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960); Claus Westermann, ed., *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, trans. James Luther Mays (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963); R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and the Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (1959; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002); James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); James Samuel Preus, *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1969); Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1974); David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980): 27-38; Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983); John David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1992), and *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 2002); Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997); Robert Louis Wilken, "In Defense of Allegory," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 197-212; Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 2002); Jason Byassee, *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Peter W. Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 283-317, based on *Origen: The Reading of Scripture* (PhD diss., Univ. Notre Dame, 2004). For a contemporary attempt to reappropriate the fourfold method, see Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), and a reflection on this volume by Geoffrey Wainwright, "Gospel Hermeneutics in Joseph Ratzinger's *Jesus of Nazareth*," *Nova et Vetera* 7 (2009): 7-17. A brief note on citations: *Exégèse médiévale* is notoriously rife with quotations from countless (and often very obscure) figures; endnotes comprise approximately half the text. I often quote de Lubac quoting other people, but I cannot see the value of providing in every instance the original source of these citations. As such, I will include quotation marks to distinguish citations from de Lubac's actual words, but will largely treat these quotations (when appropriated positively, of course) as his own position.

Morality teaches what you should do, anagogy what mark you should be aiming for.

*(Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.)*²

These verses are most often attributed to Nicholas of Lyra, though he was not the first to coin them, still less to discern in Scripture multiple senses. De Lubac discerns amongst the earliest proposals for distinguishing levels of meaning two primary methods of radically different force. The first is that cited above: literal-allegorical-moral-anagogical. Yet another model set forth only three senses, in a different order: literal-moral-allegorical. The distinction between three and four is not, in de Lubac's judgment, particularly noteworthy: authors sometimes left off the anagogical sense, or combined it with the allegorical. At other points, they might divide the allegorical according to Christ and the church, making a triple distinction seem like a quadruple. The order of the second and third senses, however, is of decisive significance. "When tropology came after allegory – and even, sometimes, after anagogy – it was sacred. It depended on faith. When it came before, it was profane – in principle, at least."³

On de Lubac's account, Augustine and especially Gregory of Rome stood behind the former; Cassian, Eucher, Ambrose, and Jerome the latter. Both methods, though, derive from Origen. In *First Principles* and elsewhere, Origen compares the senses of Scripture to human anthropology: the body, soul, and spirit of Scripture are the literal, moral, and allegorical senses. He does not, however, consistently follow this pattern, and more often puts the allegorical before the moral. For de Lubac,

this is a profound difference, because it is structural. In the first instance, Origen draws diverse "moralities" from the sacred text. It is possible for

² Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, 1 and 271n1.

³ *Ibid.*, 137.

them to have nothing specifically Christian, even before one reads in them any allusion to the Mystery of Christ. This is what it is custom nowadays to call, in a misleading turn of phrase, his “allegorism,” a term which is, indeed, opposed to ancient rules of usage. In the second case, we have the same starting point of “history,” and it is only after a statement of the Mystery and in relationship to it that he arrives at a spiritual explication. In the first case, he gives us, in general, a series of speculations on the soul, its faculties, its virtues ... In the second case, he expounds an asceticism and a mysticism that has a christological, ecclesial, and sacramental complexion. Founded as it is on dogma, it is a veritable history of the spiritual life.”⁴

The importance of this distinction for de Lubac trades on his construal of the unity of the testaments. De Lubac defines the literal and spiritual senses according to the Old and New Testaments: “The Christian tradition understands that Scripture has two meanings. The most general name for these two meanings is the literal meaning and the spiritual (‘pneumatic’) meaning, and these two meanings have the same kind of relationship to each other as do the Old and New Testaments to each other. More exactly, and in all strictness, they constitute, they *are* the Old and New Testaments.”⁵ He also expounds the unity of the testaments much as we have seen in Augustine: the spirit is not separate from the letter, but hidden within it; the letter is good in that it leads to the spirit, but ultimately instrument and servant. This is, de Lubac acknowledges, an odd kind of unity: “There is, in one sense, an opposition between the two Testaments: ‘one way then ... another way now.’”⁶ On the one hand, the coming of Christ was announced in advance. The Old Testament provided “an outline, a rough sketch, a ‘first draft,’ as it were,”⁷ of the realities to come. On the other hand, the new covenant constituted a decisive

⁴ Ibid., 146-47.

⁵ Ibid., 225. Unless otherwise specified, all italics his.

⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁷ Ibid., 235.

transition. It was established abruptly, not by way of gradual progress, nor through some process of spiritualization. There were not “two fullnesses of time,” but only one moment when Truth replaced shadow, and the kingdom of God surpassed the law and the prophets. Since this change, de Lubac writes, “the first Testament found itself surpassed, obsolete, outdated – ‘antiquated’ in all the parts of its writings that were not in conformity to the new ... Henceforth this Old Testament no longer exists for the believer except in its relation to the New Testament, which is to say that henceforth it has to be understood in its entirety ‘according to the spirit.’”⁸

This distinction between the testaments generates two primary senses: the literal and the spiritual. The latter, in turn, encompasses three subsidiary senses, the allegorical, moral, and anagogical, making four senses total. De Lubac proceeds through each successively. First, the letter is synonymous with *historia*, a term that refers to “the exterior and sensible aspect of things, as opposed to their mystic or hidden signification, which is not at all perceived by the senses but only by the understanding.”⁹ The literal sense, that is, records facts, things that actually transpired in time. For de Lubac, the reality of this sacred history constitutes the foundation of all interpretation. Paul’s remark, “The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life,” refers not to *res gesta*, but to the “‘Judaic’ interpretation of the Scriptures.”¹⁰

Under the opposition of the letter and the spirit, or of the shadow and the truth, in its varied and sometimes, for us, paradoxical expressions, there is therefore always the opposition of two peoples, of two ages, of two régimes, of two “economies,” which is affirmed. There are two peoples, two ages, two states, two régimes, two economies, which, however, are opposed to each other in a real contradiction properly speaking only once they have come to coexist, the first not having wished to disappear on the arrival of the one for which its whole task was to

⁸ Ibid., 228.

⁹ *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, 42.

¹⁰ Ibid., 50.

prepare, because it had not understood that it was merely the means of getting ready for it. Henceforth, therefore, the two peoples, the Jewish and the Christian, meet face to face. Each of them sucks at one of the two breasts of Scripture: the one is “the letter” ... and the other is “allegory”; the two breasts are none other than the Two Testaments, which are both, today, equally the heritage of the Church, and the second contains within it the whole substance of the first.¹¹

De Lubac next considers the allegorical sense, which enacts a kind of “conversion” of the literal sense.¹² The allegorical meaning is Christ and the church, sometimes one or the other, and sometimes both, since the church is the body of Christ. This reveals the deeply historical character of allegory: “This mystery is entirely concrete. It does not exist in idea. It does not consist in any atemporal truth or object of detached speculation. This mystery is a reality in act, the realization of a Grand Design; it is therefore, in the strongest sense, even something historical, in which personal beings are engaged.”¹³ Nevertheless, de Lubac argues, the object of allegorical reference cannot be contained within history and rather transcends it. Without the “infinite qualitative difference” between the testaments, the allegorical sense would not be a spiritual sense, but simply a new literal one.¹⁴ “This would not be to promote ‘the Synagogue’ to the level of the Church; it would rather be to change the Church once again into a synagogue. By merely affirming the succession and not the difference of the times one would suppress the difference at the heart of the legitimate heritage of the ‘Christian people’ regarding the ‘Jewish people.’”¹⁵ Allegory, then, leads to the historical reality of Christ, though Christ is no mere historical personage. “Everything culminates in one great Fact, which, in its unique singularity,

¹¹ Ibid., 54.

¹² Ibid., 83-84.

¹³ Ibid., 93-94.

¹⁴ Ibid., 98-99.

¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

has multiple repercussions; which dominates history and which is the bearer of all light as well as of all spiritual fecundity: *the Fact of Christ*.”¹⁶

This twofold difference between the testaments – both chronology and quality – suggests for de Lubac the inadequacy of typology as a way of relating the testaments. Typology alone

says nothing intrinsically about the dialectical opposition between the two Testaments or about the conditions of their unity. Therefore it is quite inadequate to show, in all its power, the work accomplished by Jesus Christ. It provides no thoroughgoing explanation of the New Testament’s rootedness in the Old, and, furthermore, it does not explain the emergence of the New Testament and its spirit of sovereign freedom. Giving itself the task of establishing ‘a correspondence between historical realities at different moments of sacred history,’ it does not in itself have the wherewithal to show that the New Testament is something other than a second Old Testament, which would still leave us, in the final analysis, within the confines of history. It does not express the link that spiritual understanding has with personal conversion and the life of the Christian, the relationship between the “New Testament” and the “New Man,” between the newness of understanding and spiritual newness. Nor does it concern itself with antithesis or ‘contrasting parallelism,’ which were so strongly underlined by the first Christian generations and always maintained by the tradition of the Church. It arrests the spiritual impulse halfway. In its very truth, it remains removed from the great Pauline influence that animates this whole doctrine.¹⁷

The third sense, the moral, arises from the allegorical. This transition demands no such jump as that between the literal to the allegorical, since both the allegorical and the moral reside within the spiritual. Nevertheless, de Lubac argues, the order of these senses is crucial – allegorical, then moral, not the other way around. The heart of tropology is not just any morality but a deeply Christian anthropology and spirituality: “Tropology draws its *exempla* from this *mysterium* ... If allegory, starting from the facts of history, envisions the mystical body in its head

¹⁶ Ibid., 101.

¹⁷ *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, 259.

or its totality, tropology envisions it in each of its members.”¹⁸ Thus, the moral sense is not inferior to the allegorical sense, but rather deepens it, unfolding its inner logic. “If it is true that nothing is superior to the Mystery of Christ, one ought not forget that this Mystery, which was prefigured in the Old Testament, is realized again, is being actualized, is being completed within the Christian soul. *It is truly being fulfilled within us.*”¹⁹ The moral sense internalizes the history and the mystery of the biblical datum,²⁰ animating Scripture such that is “fully *for us* the Word of God, this Word which is addressed to each person, *hic et nunc* [‘here and now’] as well as to the whole Church.”²¹ This sense comes to perfection in a single virtue: charity.

The anagogical sense brings to completion this précis of redemptive history. This final level of meaning represents the “third advent” of Christ.

The first advent, “humble and hidden,” on our earth, performs the work of redemption, which is pursued in the Church and in her sacraments: this is the object of allegory in the proper sense of the word. The second advent, entirely interior, takes place within the soul of each of the faithful, and is unfolded by tropology. The third and last advent is saved up for the “end of the age,” when the Christ will appear in his glory and will come to look for his own to take them away with him: such is the object of anagogy.²²

By directing us to the things above, anagogy also completes the Pauline triad: allegory builds up our faith, tropology charity, and anagogy hope.²³ Since there is a mystical identity between the earthly church where we now reside and the heavenly community we await, there is a natural

¹⁸ *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, 132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

²² *Ibid.*, 179.

²³ *Ibid.*, 181.

affinity between the allegorical and anagogical senses.²⁴ So also, since the moral sense directs us toward the condition we will only enjoy at the end of time, anagogy perfects tropology. The anagogical sense, then, does not present some unfiltered Platonic notion of escape, but the whole of the Christian mystery. “Anagogy realizes the perfection both of allegory and of tropology, achieving their synthesis. It is neither ‘objective’ like the first, nor ‘subjective’ like the second. Above and beyond this division, it realizes their unity. It integrates their whole and final meaning. It sees, in eternity, the fusion of the mystery and the mystic. In other words, the eschatological reality attained by anagogy is the eternal reality within which every other has its consummation. In its final state, it is that ‘new testament, which is the kingdom of heaven.’ It constitutes ‘the fullness of Christ.’”²⁵

This fourfold method is for de Lubac a divinely sanctioned mode of interpreting Scripture. On his account, the method began first and foremost in Paul, whose treatment of Hagar and Sarah indelibly legitimized the term “allegory,”²⁶ and whose basic approach to the law and the prophets inspired two fathers of biblical interpretation, Tertullian and Origen.²⁷ It then persisted, with variations, throughout the whole tradition. “In our view the doctrine is functionally one. In its most general outline, across many centuries it has remained self-identical, though more or less deeply understood (sometimes ill understood), more or less completely explained, and more or less subtly analyzed.”²⁸ On the one hand, de Lubac acknowledges, the tradition does not display complete consistency: “Each generation, each individual genius or

²⁴ Ibid., 184.

²⁵ Ibid., 187.

²⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁸ Ibid., 208.

each family of minds almost undetectably changes the accent of the doctrine. To be sure, it experiences dormant periods, mechanical repetitions, subsidences, unhealthy overgrowths, and its life is sometimes almost smothered under the mass of devices that were intended to assist it.”²⁹ On the other hand, each interpreter must be understood in the context of a broader consensus: “With his own proper individuality, having to respond to often quite new problems, he is, in his particular place, the witness of a tradition that perpetuates itself beyond him.”³⁰

This general unanimity arises from the inner logic of the method itself. There is, de Lubac says, a “dynamic unity” or “reciprocal interiority” amongst the four senses,³¹ such that each sense develops organically into the next:

The mystery that allegory uncovers merely makes it open up a new cycle; in its first season, it is merely an “exordium”; to be fully itself, it must be brought to fulfillment in two ways. First it is interiorized and produces its fruit in the spiritual life, which is treated by tropology; then this spiritual life has to blossom forth in the sun of the kingdom; in this [spiritual life consists] the end of time which constitutes the object of anagogy; for that which we realize now in Christ through deliberated will is the very same thing which, freed of every obstacle and all obscurity, will become the essence of eternal life.³²

From this perspective, de Lubac writes, Scripture becomes a vast world,

“undecipherable in its fullness and in the multiplicity of its meanings.” A deep forest, with innumerable branches, “an infinite forest of meanings”: the more involved one gets in it, the more one discovers that it is impossible to explore it right to the end. It is a table arranged by Wisdom, laden with food, where the unfathomable divinity of the Savior is itself offered as nourishment to all. Treasure of the Holy Spirit, whose riches are as infinite as himself. True labyrinth. Deep heavens,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 210.

³¹ Ibid., 201.

³² Ibid., 201-2.

unfathomable abyss. Vast sea, where there is endless voyaging “with all sails set.” Ocean of mystery. Or raging torrent ...³³

De Lubac’s magisterial exposition of the early and medieval tradition is difficult to critique. Despite the serious charges that have been raised against his highly sympathetic reading of the tradition,³⁴ the constructive theological proposals he sets forth are so richly suggestive that they rather incline the reader (this one, at least) to assent, if for no other reason than the inner coherence and beauty of the presentation set forth. The issue here, though, is not the historical durability of the fourfold method, nor the broader logic of Scripture, but rather the congruence of de Lubac’s overarching vision with the contours of scriptural interpretation we have witnessed in Hebrews. And on this matter, it seems, de Lubac proves less than helpful, except primarily – and regrettably – as a foil.

What de Lubac does helpfully elucidate is the correspondence between the reading of the Old Testament as text and the relation between the testaments as dispensations in the economy of salvation. The transition from the literal to spiritual sense arises for de Lubac directly from the radically new dynamics of redemptive history enacted by the coming of Christ. Much like Augustine, de Lubac construes the unity of the testaments according to the way the

³³ *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, 75.

³⁴ See Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, cited above. Indeed, de Lubac himself concedes this point: “Except for citing certain filiations for a passage or for distinguishing certain nuances, we have proceeded up till now as if the doctrine of the fourfold or the threefold sense, once constituted, formed a whole which never underwent any notable evolution for the whole length of the Middle Ages. In our exposition we have even been constantly mingling features borrowed from the earlier period, using numerous patristic texts, clarifying one set of texts by means of others without always taking care to be sure that there was a real filiation among them, and without each time ascertaining to whom the paternity of this or that exegesis ought to be assigned. Accordingly we have quite neglected the fine points, and perhaps have even suppressed certain points of opposition. We seem to have presented a sort of mosaic of doubtful objectivity and, at any event, of drifting chronology. If there is an offense against method in all this, the offense was premeditated. At the very least, let us say that we are aware of the paradox” (Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, 207-8). De Lubac promises in a corresponding note to address this issue to some extent in the third and fourth volumes (422n1).

old prefigures the new, and not, contra Calvin, according to the common manifestation of the gospel or the availability of salvific benefits across the testaments. Hidden things have now been made manifest for the first time. It is this revelation that propels a transformation in the reading of Scripture, such that the Old Testament is now seen to refer to Christ (and the church, his body). De Lubac is right that the spiritual sense is thus a historical one, oriented first and foremost to the events and realities of the New Testament, and not directly to ethical exhortation or philosophical speculation. While the contours of redemptive history demand some kind of Christological reading of the Old Testament, they provide no grounds for generic allegorizing. In that regard, de Lubac's insistence that the moral sense grows organically from, and does not bypass, the allegorical, is a salutary control.

From the perspective of Hebrews, however, de Lubac seriously misconstrues the shape of redemptive history at one critical juncture: the ongoing status of Israel. For de Lubac, the existence of two covenants naturally suggests the existence of two peoples: "there is therefore always the opposition of two peoples, of two ages, of two régimes, of two 'economies.'"³⁵ He is far from alone on this matter: we have witnessed much the same perspective in Augustine, and such a presumption seems to have characterized much of the early church. Justin, for instance, argues on the basis of Is. 51:4-5 and Jer. 31:31-32 that the Mosaic law was intended for the Jews only, while the new covenant concerns (primarily Gentile) Christians. Since the old covenant has been abrogated by the new, there is no obvious reason to affirm God's ongoing faithfulness to fleshly Israel.³⁶ Tertullian, too, draws upon these passages to contrast the old covenant for the

³⁵ Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, 54, quoted above.

³⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. Thomas P. Halton, ed. Michael Slusser (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. America Press, 2003), 20-21 (11.1-5).

Jews with the new covenant for the Gentiles. His key point is only that these two covenants do not entail two gods.³⁷ Each of these examples reflects apologetic concerns: against Marcion (or the Manicheans), Christians can retain the Old Testament; against the Jews, Christians need not follow its ceremonial observances. Far less prominent is the question of what the prophecy of a new covenant could mean for the Jews themselves, the original recipients of this promise. For much of the Christian tradition, that which was intended to encourage the Jewish people becomes a pretext for disregarding or even denying God's continued commitment to Israel.

Hebrews presents perhaps the singular New Testament witness against this pattern of interpretation – rather ironically, since it also provides the only citation of Jer. 31 in the New Testament. Free from concerns about Gentile Christianity, this Epistle presents a relatively straightforward understanding of the new covenant with reference to the Jewish people: it is theirs. The old covenant did not empower the Israelites to faithfulness, with the result that they fell in the desert and failed to enter God's rest; it could not provide forgiveness of sins, tied as it was to repetitive, inefficacious animal sacrifices; it was mediated under shadows, through copies of heavenly realities not yet fully revealed. Yet this temporal, earthly system would give way to a new covenant that would enable the Jews to receive all the blessings for which their fathers only hoped. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses – all these heroes of Israel's history longed for the eternal inheritance, though they lived as sojourners and strangers in the land, kept from such reward until these final days. Yet the prophets foresaw a better future: David spoke of a rest unclaimed, and Jeremiah announced God's renewal of Israel long before the coming of Christ. And now, in

³⁷ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem: Books 4 and 5*, ed. and trans. Ernest Evans (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972), 256-61 (4.1).

these last days, Jesus has been made high priest of that new covenant, ready to fulfill all these promises for *Israel*.

This narrative does not soften the radical rupture de Lubac sets forth with the change of the testaments. The saints of old did not experience the perfection only made available with Christ; a new reality has indeed been revealed that was only adumbrated under the earlier economy through hints and shadows. Yet Hebrews' assumption that the new covenant applies first and foremost to Israel suggests the importance of tighter controls on scriptural interpretation than de Lubac presents. The French Jesuit is right to narrate Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and to insist that the conversion of the literal sense is itself historical. Hebrews, however, advances a narrative more textured than de Lubac acknowledges. The church is not simplistically the body of Christ, such that any prophecy about Christ can without pause be applied to Gentile Christians. The church is inextricably defined by her relationship to Israel; the former extends, and cannot replace, the latter. It is therefore not enough to commend only Christological controls on the interpretation of the Old Testament; Israel must also be included. Any reading of the Old Testament that disregards God's ongoing commitment to the Jewish people cannot properly be called historical. The contours of redemptive history permit neither the replacement of Israel nor the abrogation of God's promises for his people. Failure to recognize these dynamics is the real danger of allegory – as the history of relations between Christians and Jews bears rueful witness.

Another dimension of de Lubac's divergence from Hebrews concerns the linguistic structure of allegorical interpretation. The framework set forth in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* indelibly shapes the Western medieval tradition: there is a distinction between signs and things; signs signify things, while things, inasmuch as they are things, do not so refer. Some

signs, however, signify things that in turn signify other things; such signs are figurative or metaphorical. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas will adopt and systematize this rubric to defend the fourfold method:

The author of Holy Writ is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property, that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it.³⁸

When addressing the objection that these senses might produce confusion through the accretion of meaning, Thomas responds, “The multiplication of these senses does not produce equivocation or any other kind of multiplicity, seeing that these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies several things; but because these things signified by the words can be themselves types (*signa*) of other things.”³⁹ Thomas’ treatment of this matter thus resembles Augustine’s:

Signs ⇒ things ⇒ other things

On this account, allegory hinges essentially on God’s providential ordering of redemptive history. God alone can arrange various persons, practices, and events such that one signifies

³⁸ ST I.1.10. “Respondeo dicendum quod auctor sacrae Scripturae est Deus, in cuius potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet (quod etiam homo facere potest), sed etiam res ipsas. Et ideo, cum in omnibus scientiis voces significant, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res significatae per voces, etiam significant aliquid. Illa ergo prima significatio, qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum sensum, qui est sensus historicus vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis; qui super litteralem fundatur, et eum supponit.” Latin edition: Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae* (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: San Paolo, 1988). English translation: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 6 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1948).

³⁹ ST I.1.10 ad 1. “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod multiplicitas horum sensum non facit aequivocationem, aut aliam speciem multiplicatis: quia, sicut iam dictum est, sensus isti non multiplicantur propter hoc quod una vox multa significet; sed quia ipsae res significatae per voces, aliarum rerum possunt esse signa.”

another. Since one thing in redemptive history may signify many other things, individual signs can figuratively refer to many things as well. Allegory thus produces a multiplication of meaning, not for the original referent of a sign, but for the many things that referent can in turn signify.

At one level, this picture does accurately present certain dynamics in Hebrews. The Epistle does indeed draw correspondences between various things in redemptive history: Jesus is greater than Moses; he is the second Joshua; he resembles Melchizedek. The tabernacle, priests, and sacrifices of the Levitical system provide an image of the heavenly tabernacle and Jesus' priestly offering of himself. Canaan anticipates the eternal inheritance. Such resonances match Erich Auerbach's definition of "figural interpretation."

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events of figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and fulfillment are real historical events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in second coming.⁴⁰

As Auerbach prefers, Hebrews does not deny the historical reality of Melchizedek, Moses, or Joshua, while nevertheless drawing correspondences between them and Jesus, and depicting Jesus as in some way greater than, or the fulfillment of, these earlier personages. The same applies for historical institutions like the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices. Moreover, Hebrews does not engage in the kind of allegory Auerbach distinguishes from figural reading (though he acknowledges that the figural reading is "'allegorical' in the widest sense,"⁴¹ since

⁴⁰ Auerbach, "Figura," 53. For an illuminating discussion of Auerbach's essay and his *Mimesis*, see Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, 83-126.

⁴¹ Auerbach, "Figura," 54.

allegory just means that one thing signifies another). On Auerbach's account, allegory generally concerns abstract concepts like virtues, passions, or institutions, and rarely definite historical events. Indeed, most allegory betrays an orientation toward the ethical or mystical, exemplified especially in Origen, whereby the concretion of history is stripped of its reality. Hebrews demonstrates no inclination toward such practices – though de Lubac does not either: on the substantive matters Auerbach presents, his definition of figural reading is identical to de Lubac's account of allegory.

Hebrews does, however, diverge significantly from both Auerbach's figural interpretation and de Lubac's allegory when it comes to words, and not just things, and this point forms a decisive break from the fourfold method de Lubac so winsomely presents. De Lubac tends to conflate the relation between narration and history. On the one hand, he argues that allegory is properly found in the realities narrated by the text, and not in the text itself – “not in history as recitation, but in history as event.”⁴² On the other, he so closely associates words and deeds that he rather freely extends the legitimacy of correspondences between events to those between utterances as well. “Scripture is in a way doubly the Word of God, since God speaks to us in it with words about what he has spoken to us in deeds. Biblical allegory is therefore essentially *allegoria facti*. More precisely, it is *allegoria facti et dicti*.”⁴³ Such a perspective draws considerably upon Augustine, who locates the possibility of figural interpretation in the

⁴² Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 2, 86.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

relation between signs and things, with words the preeminent kind of given sign.⁴⁴ It also animates the multiplication of meaning, as we have seen in Thomas.

Hebrews betrays no inclination toward the multiplication of meaning and relatively little interest in individual words as such. The meaning of “Melchizedek” receives passing mention (he is king of righteousness, and king of peace), but these reflections play a minimal role in the rest of the author’s argument. The term “rest” receives greater attention, but functions in a significantly different manner from Augustine’s account of signs. The author does not teach that the Israelites entered Canaan, which land signified the eternal inheritance. He rather suggests that “rest” should not be understood with reference to Canaan at all.

Not: “rest” ⇒ Canaan ⇒ eternal inheritance
But just: “rest” ⇒ eternal inheritance

Thus, Hebrews would not abide Augustine’s suggestion in *De doctrina christiana*, considered in chapter 4, that “land” could refer to Canaan, or the church, or heaven. The one true meaning of “rest” is the eternal inheritance to which Jesus has paved the way. Similar remarks apply for Hebrews’ use of the term “today.” This word does not refer to David’s time, which then refers to the time of the church. It rather adopts a direct eschatological valence: as God has in these last days spoken through his Son, so he calls us now to hear his voice and soften our hearts. Hebrews’ appropriation of the Old Testament is not primarily oriented toward individual words, but broader verbal units: declarations, commands, promises, threats, warnings, and exhortations. Such locutions do not correspond directly to things as word-signs do; they are complex linguistic structures that perform particular communicative acts. Hebrews presents figural readings of Old

⁴⁴ For conceptual problems with Augustine’s definition of sign according to individual word unit, see Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989), 35-59.

Testament things – personages, institutions, and events – but diverges significantly from an Augustinian account of signs when it comes to Old Testament quotations. For Hebrews’ actual engagement with the Old Testament text, a different framework from de Lubac’s will be necessary. For a helpful alternative, I turn now to Kevin Vanhoozer.

7.2 Dramatic speech-acts: Kevin Vanhoozer

In *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*,⁴⁵ Kevin Vanhoozer advances the image of a drama as a rubric for conceiving the relationship between Scripture, theology, and the life of the church. This model and its particular appropriation of speech-act theory provide a valuable vocabulary for construing Hebrews’ appropriation of Old Testament quotations. For Vanhoozer, “life is divine-human interactive theater, and theology involves both what God has said and done for the world and what we must say and do in grateful response.”⁴⁶ Revelation consists of God’s self-communication to the world in both word and deed. Amongst the series of such revelatory events in redemptive history, the culminating moment is the “event” of Jesus Christ. Correspondingly, the Bible is “the authorized version of

⁴⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005). See also his *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), and *First Theology: God, Scripture, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002). For treatments on related topics, see George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1984), and “Postcritical Canonical Interpretation: Three Modes of Retrieval,” in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 26-51; N. T. Wright, “How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?” *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004); Kenton L. Sparks, *God’s Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 37-38.

the drama of redemption and indispensable context for rightly understanding what God has done in Christ.”⁴⁷

These formulations resist two dichotomies for understanding the Word of God. First, Vanhoozer contrasts Carl F. H. Henry’s (depersonalized) emphasis on propositional revelation with Karl Barth’s (deverbalized) identification of the Word with the agent of revelation, namely, God. Second, he notes the tendency of earlier thinkers in the Biblical Theology movement to dissociate the acts and speech of God. Against both dichotomies, Vanhoozer argues, Scripture should be understood as a divine speech-act. Since saying is a kind of doing, speech performs a variety of actions beyond assertion, while still communicating content. “Speech-acts are both propositional (because all communication has content) and personal (because speakers *do* things with propositional content).”⁴⁸ As divine speech-act, Scripture does not just provide information but allows us to engage God himself. “Behind all the particular things God says and does in Scripture lies one overarching purpose: to communicate the terms, and the reality, of the new covenant. Scripture summons the church to be God’s covenant partner; Scripture communicates a share in the triune life.”⁴⁹

Speech-acts consist of three elements: locutions (what is said), illocutions (what the locutions do), and perlocutions (what the locutions effect). Different locutions perform a variety of illocutions: questions, commands, assertions, complaints, and requests. Illocutions, in turn, may or may not produce desired perlocutionary effects: a command could be rejected, a request denied, and so forth. This rubric allows Vanhoozer to define Scripture as a particularly triune

⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 47. Unless otherwise specified, all italics his.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 67.

speech-act. First, the three elements of speech-acts correspond to the individual persons of the Trinity.

According to Barth, God's Word is God himself in his revelation: "*God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself ... God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect.*" Something similar may be said about God's communicative action: the Father initiates communication; the Son is the content of the communication; the Spirit is the efficacy of the communication.⁵⁰

Second, the inspiration of Scripture encompasses the entire speech-act.

The locus of divine authority is "the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." Inspiration means not only that the words (locutions) are God's but that the word-acts (illocutions) are ultimately God's. To say that the Bible is inspired is therefore to acknowledge its divine authorship, the communicative agency of the triune God. When the Spirit speaks in Scripture today he is not speaking *another* word but ministering the written words: "[The Spirit] will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears" (John 16:13). The Spirit is active not in producing new illocutions but rather in *ministering* the illocutions that are already in the text, making them efficacious.⁵¹

And third, the purpose of Scripture derives from the Trinitarian missions. Christ's mission is to reveal the Father, and the Spirit is sent to bear witness to the Son; the Spirit thus "brings to fruition the plan of the Father and the work of the Son."⁵² Scripture advances this divine mission both by recounting and enacting God's work in the world. Vanhoozer discerns a threefold analogy between the missions of the Son and Scripture: "(1) both are species of triune communicative action – embodied in the case of Jesus, verbalized in the case of Scripture; (2) both aim to draw communicants into the new covenant community; (3) both are accompanied

⁵⁰ Ibid., 65, citing Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (1932; London: T&T Clark, 1975), 296.

⁵¹ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 67, citing the Westminster Confession of Faith 1.10.

⁵² Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 69.

by the Spirit and require the Spirit in order to complete their respective missions.”⁵³ In that vein, he argues, the uniqueness of Scripture ensues more from its function in redemptive history than from some ontology of inspiration. “Scripture is ‘holy’ not because the Bible possesses magical properties but because of its ultimate communicative agent and its ultimate communicative aim: to bring us to Jesus Christ and to sanctify us in the truth.”⁵⁴

On Vanhoozer’s analogy, Scripture is script, a covenantal document that rules our understanding of and continued participation in the drama of redemption. “*Just as the covenant norms the relationship between God and humanity, so the canon norms the meaning of the covenant.*”⁵⁵ This canonical script invites and governs ecclesial performance. Vanhoozer defends a “catholic evangelical” understanding of tradition.⁵⁶ On the one hand, tradition is biblical (1 Cor. 15:3-5; 2 Ths. 2:15; and elsewhere), “traditional,” inevitable, and most importantly, pneumatic: the church is the “distinct ‘public’ of the Holy Spirit,” and tradition is “‘the history of the effects’ of the Spirit.”⁵⁷ On the other hand, he argues, Scripture must exercise critical authority over tradition as an external check against “ecclesial sinfulness.”⁵⁸

Vanhoozer distinguishes between two understandings of tradition: Tradition I and Tradition II, or Performance I and Performance II.⁵⁹ The former (Tradition/Performance I), which might be called the “coincidence” or “coinherence” view, affirms the material identity

⁵³ Ibid., 70.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 190.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁹ See Heiko A. Obermann, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 58.

between Scripture and tradition: “tradition is simply Scripture properly interpreted.”⁶⁰ The latter (Tradition/Performance II) denies the material sufficiency of Scripture, setting forth tradition as a second source of revelation. Vanhoozer particularly associates this model with the cultural-linguistic school (Roman Catholicism receives far less attention).⁶¹ On his account, both Hans Frei and George Lindbeck define church practices and reception of Scripture as constitutive of the literal sense, reducing theology to “a matter of ecclesial self-description.”⁶² While the cultural-linguistic approach does advocate an intratextual theology, whereby Scripture “absorbs the world,”⁶³ Lindbeck undermines this position by identifying the meaning of Scripture with the life and language of the church. “*What theology now describes is not the ‘final form’ of the text but the ‘form of life’ in which the biblical language games function as Scripture.*”⁶⁴ For Vanhoozer, the problem with this model is that it “privileges the aims and interests of the interpreting community over the aims and interests of the playwright.”⁶⁵ Indeed, “interpretation begins to look like rewriting – even, at the limit, like authoring. In Performance II interpretation it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to say whether a certain performance is fitting or not (fitting *to what?*). It is one thing to describe the life and language of the Christian community, quite another to guard the gospel.”⁶⁶ Thus, Vanhoozer says, Lindbeck provides no resources for correcting church practices. “On Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic terms, what is there to stop the theologian from formulating a

⁶⁰ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 156.

⁶¹ While Vanhoozer’s arguments against Performance I understandings of tradition could, of course, be applied to Roman Catholicism, his concern especially with the cultural-linguistic approach is obvious from the subtitle of his book: *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶³ Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 118.

⁶⁴ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 172.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

grammatical rule for a *distorted* practice?”⁶⁷ Indeed, a harsh critic might even suggest (Vanhoozer distances himself somewhat from this claim): “If, for Feuerbach, theology is really only anthropology ... for Lindbeck, theology is really only *cultural* anthropology”⁶⁸ – a move from the individual to the corporate, with the same dangers and maybe worse.

Performance I interpretation, by contrast, defines Scripture first and foremost according to divine, and not human, performance. “To speak of divine canonical discourse is to highlight the role of *God as the divine playwright who employs the voices of the human authors of Scripture in the service of his theo-drama.*”⁶⁹ Properly speaking, Vanhoozer asserts, God is the theological unity behind the historical and literal unity of redemption and the biblical narrative. “The unity of Scripture is not a construct of the believing community but something the community discovers as it comes to know Christ. The church recognizes in the plurality of human discourses a distinctive unity that it ascribes to a single authoritative agent: the word-ministering Spirit.”⁷⁰ While Vanhoozer recognizes a distinction between divine and human authorship of Scripture, he nevertheless defends the primacy of God’s communicative agency and a presumption of coincidence between divine and human canonical discourse. “*We should assume that the stance and content of the human discourse coincides with the divine discourse unless there is good reason to think otherwise.*”⁷¹ Ultimately, then, “it is the divine illocutions – God’s use – that constitute biblical authority. Let us posit the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 177.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 178. Vanhoozer draws for this point upon Wolterstorff’s argument in *Divine Discourse* that the primary grounds for distinguishing between divine and human discourse is “what we think God is like, that is, what we believe someone like God is likely to be saying in a particular discourse” (178n122). Space does not permit me to pursue this issue here, but it seems to me critical. How, on Vanhoozer’s terms, can this principle be applied without appeal to some external authority, and would such a concession threaten the claim that Scripture is self-interpreting?

notion of a ‘canonical illocution’ to refer to ‘what God is doing by means of the human discourse in the biblical texts *at the level of the canon.*’⁷² In his most recent work, Vanhoozer notes, Lindbeck himself has come to espouse such a model, acknowledging the insufficiency of intratextuality alone to secure the faithful embodiment of Scripture, and affirming the importance of intentionality for determinate interpretation.⁷³

On Vanhoozer’s account, the dogmatic location of tradition derives from a proper understanding of Word and Spirit. In his prophetic office, Christ is “the *content* of the Scriptural witness, the one who *interprets* the Old Testament witness, and the one who *commissions* the New Testament witness. Accordingly, *Jesus is both the material and the formal principle of the canon: its substance and its hermeneutic.*”⁷⁴ The Spirit, on the other hand, testifies to the Son and ministers the Word; his role is to point to another, and not himself. “The Spirit leads the church not away from but deeper into the biblical word.”⁷⁵ The implications of this position can be seen in Vanhoozer’s treatment of the Rule of Faith. The *regula fidei*, he argues, is not an extratextual authority that governs Scripture. Rather, “*the authority of the Rule depends on its conforming to the Scriptures.*”⁷⁶ Thus, the rule is responsive, not constructive; it confesses, but does not control what Scripture means; it is an external aid to Scripture that remains open to correction. The authority of tradition, Vanhoozer asserts, is finally “derivative – ministerial, not magisterial.”⁷⁷ “Word, Spirit, tradition, and church belong together; all have a vital role to play. Only the Word

⁷² Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 179.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 183-85. See Lindbeck, “Postcritical Canonical Interpretation,” cited above.

⁷⁴ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 195.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

serves as a magisterial norm, however, for only the written word is the commissioned testimony of the church's Lord and Master."⁷⁸

Nevertheless, *sola scriptura* does not entail "‘solo’ *scriptura*"⁷⁹ or "‘*nulla traditio*."⁸⁰ For Vanhoozer, *sola scriptura* names "the practice of biblical authority in the church"⁸¹ whereby Scripture exercises supreme authority to govern Christian thought and life. This position does not reject tradition as such, nor deny the existence of any authorities outside Scripture. "Church tradition enjoys the authority not of the judge but of the *witness*. Better: tradition enjoys the authority that attaches to the testimony of *many* witnesses."⁸² Vanhoozer thus distinguishes his position as much from unnuanced understandings of *sola scriptura* as from the cultural-linguistic school. "The Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of all believers has mutated in modernity into the notion that individuals can interpret the Bible for themselves, without the benefit of church tradition. The danger in such individualism, however, is pride, yet another ‘presumption of coincidence,’ this time between one’s own interpretation and the word of God."⁸³

Vanhoozer’s account of Scripture and tradition stresses both the primacy of the divine Word and the church’s responsibility properly to respond to God’s speech-acts. "Performance I interpretation is essentially a matter not of authoring but of ‘answerability,’ of *acknowledging* what the playwright is doing in the many voices in Scripture and of *responding* to it in an appropriate

⁷⁸ Ibid., 209.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 233.

⁸¹ Ibid., 232.

⁸² Ibid., 234.

⁸³ Ibid., 233. In a footnote, Vanhoozer continues: "Sola scriptura thus works against the presumption of coincidence between God’s word and individual experience, just as it works against the presumption that God’s word and ecclesial corporate experience necessarily coincide" (233n80).

manner. Performance I interpretation privileges the script by acknowledging that it is the communicative initiative of its author, yet it does so without neglecting the significance of the readers' response or the context of the interpreting community."⁸⁴ Vanhoozer rejects two extremes for ecclesial performance of canonical script: slavish repetition and sovereign originality. The first attempts only to recreate a static, unchanging message, while the second allows contemporary concerns to drive a redescription or even rewriting of the biblical texts.⁸⁵ The theologian's task is "not to compose but to transpose, not to author but to resituate and interpret for a new audience."⁸⁶ Vanhoozer proposes improvisation as a model for ongoing participation in the drama of redemption.⁸⁷ Though improvisation involves some measure of spontaneity, it depends essentially upon prior training and discipline. Improvisers do not seek complete originality, which would rupture the organic connection between the new elaboration and the original script. "The spontaneity at the heart of genuine improvisation ... has nothing to do with arbitrary or random action. Spontaneity instead describes the state of an actor's readiness: one's preparedness to fit in and contribute to whatever starts to happen."⁸⁸ Indeed, Vanhoozer writes, memorization is actually more important than creativity. And the most valuable skill is reincorporation, which involves "*remembering and capitulating past elements in the narrative in order to make of the scene a whole and unified action.*"⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 253.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 254. Vanhoozer derives the term "transposition" from an essay by C. S. Lewis of that title, though with significant modifications. See C. S. Lewis, "Transposition," in *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 1976), 91-115.

⁸⁷ For another suggestion along these lines, see Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 6. See also Wells, *Improvisation*.

⁸⁸ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 338.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 340.

On Vanhoozer's terms, improvisation not only constitutes the ongoing life of the church but Scripture itself. He writes,

It is God who begins the play by offering himself as covenantal partner to humanity; the play continues despite repeated attempts by various human beings to block the divine initiatives. The "word of the Lord" propels the action forward, making further offers – promises, laws, wisdom, consolation, and so forth – to Israel. Sometimes the word is accepted, usually it is blocked; the divine improvisation continues regardless. God overaccepts even human blocking by incorporating it into the broader covenantal comedy. Even Israel's unbelief is overaccepted into the story, with the result – spontaneous but not discontinuous – that the Gentiles become part of the action too (Romans 9-11). The greatest divine improvisation is, of course, the incarnation, when the word of the Lord comes in a way that is different yet at the same time continuous with previous words. Indeed, one might say that the whole New Testament is an improvisation upon the Old. For, *what makes the whole Bible a unified canon is the unified action at its heart, and what gives the unified action closure is the recapitulation of all that has gone before in Christ.* All the significant persons and events in the earlier scenes – creation, exodus, temptation, prophets, priests, kings, sacrifice, sin offerings, miracles, wisdom – are reincorporated into the word-act that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁹⁰

This kind of improvisation preserves continuity without rigidity, enabling an identity of narrative and character that embraces the possibility of development and growth. To put it differently, ecclesial fidelity concerns "*ipse*-identity," but is not restricted to "*idem*-identity."⁹¹ The church discovers and exploits the "meaning potential" of Scripture through her ongoing participation in the drama of redemption.⁹² On Vanhoozer's account, authority rests in canon, not community, but the community can nevertheless draw from the text meanings that were previously hidden. "Instead of historicizing and confining a text to its own epoch ... or

⁹⁰ Ibid., 340-41.

⁹¹ Ibid., 127-28, drawing upon Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1992), 116.

⁹² Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 352, drawing upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

modernizing and distorting a text by reading it in light of current interests ... Performance I interpretation develops the potentials implicit in the text.”⁹³

The development of doctrine is thus a matter of *improvising with a canonical script*. The canon presents the initial assumption, an offer of grace – the judgment that God has spoken and acted in Israel and supremely in Christ to save the world – in a variety of literary and conceptual forms. Theology is the improvisatory play of word and Spirit in new contexts whereby the church seeks to render and respond to the same divine judgments preserved in canonical discourse in new contextual situations and with new conceptual forms.⁹⁴

Vanhoozer’s emphasis on divine speech-act provides a fruitful framework for describing Hebrews’ appropriation of the Old Testament. First and most obviously, the vast majority of Old Testament citations in Hebrews involve both the *divine* and *speech*. While Hebrews does occasionally acknowledge human speakers when quoting Old Testament passages (David: 4:7; Moses: 9:19-20; 12:21), the author far more often defines the speaker as God. As Vanhoozer suggests, God is the primary agent of scriptural discourse, and not any human. Moreover, the author of Hebrews primarily cites Old Testament examples of direct speech, especially from the psalms, thereby stressing the immediate, oral character of divine discourse. Beyond this basic observation, though, the threefold delineation of speech-acts into locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions allows for a thick description of scriptural authority that significantly illuminates the dynamics of interpretation in Hebrews. While Hebrews may at some points depart slightly from his Septuagint version, the author generally cites the Old Testament without alteration. The locution, that is, stays unchanged. Hebrews also retains the illocutionary force of the passages he

⁹³ Ibid., 352-53.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 353.

cites: declarations remain declarations, commands commands, promises promises, and warnings warnings. David exhorted the Israelites many years ago, and God continues to exhort the recipients of Hebrews now. This constancy in both locution and illocution preserves Hebrews' continuity with the original sense of the passages cited. In Vanhoozer's terms, it also presents God as a communicative agent who does not change over time.

Nevertheless, the Epistle does not simplistically reproduce Old Testament locutions according to their original meaning. The author of Hebrews has a keen eschatological sense, and repeatedly warns his readers that the age inaugurated with Christ is the penultimate and climactic stage of redemptive history before the culmination of all things. In this context, the Old Testament passages adopt heightened force and a distinctly Christological valence. These dynamics arise in significant measure from a clarification or specification of the propositional content embedded in the locutions cited. In its original context, for instance, the word "today" could refer to virtually any time Ps. 95 would be read; the passage invites its own reappropriation in new settings. In these last days, however, "today" assumes a very particular reference that does not undermine the original sense of David's words so much as animate the psalms with new and definitive meaning. So, too, the proclamation in Jer. 31 of a new covenant does not explicitly detail the means by which this promise would be accomplished; the Israelites could not have known what was in store. In light of Heb. 7, however, the word "covenant" triggers a rich set of associations to enhance the meaning of Jeremiah's words. The establishment of Christ as high priest effected a change of priesthood that necessarily brought about the abrogation of the law. This former covenant could make nothing perfect, with the result that the Israelites fell in the desert. The new covenant presents a perfected high priest who writes the law on our hearts, strengthens us to persevere, and beckons us into the presence of God. As above, this reading

does not threaten the original sense of Jer. 31, but furnishes it with more definitive content. The promise does not refer to just any modification or renewal of God's covenant, but enacts the one, decisively new covenant of Christ's high priestly ministry.

Vanhoozer cites approvingly Lindbeck's judgment that the crusader who cries, "*Christus est Dominus*," speaks falsely though the statement is ontologically true.⁹⁵ What Lindbeck labels intrasystematic coherence Vanhoozer calls fitting participation in the drama of redemption. For Vanhoozer, "the Crusader repeats the words, but his communicative act misfires; he mimics the locutions but fails to preserve their 'illocutionary force' (e.g., what one does in saying these words)."⁹⁶ This means identity of illocutionary force demands more than one-to-one equivalence of performative action, e.g., declaration-declaration, command-command; context contributes to illocutionary force in a broader sense. Thus, on Vanhoozer's account, faithful performance of a speech-act presupposes congruence to God's ongoing work in the economy of salvation. Interpretive legitimacy is essentially related to theological judgments about how to narrate God's activity in history. For Hebrews, then, fidelity to the Old Testament depends critically on whether the establishment of Christ as high priest does in fact constitute the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The author of Hebrews preserves the original sense of the Old Testament passages if and only if the new covenant of Jer. 31 actually is that which Christ has now enacted through the series of events that began with the incarnation. As Vanhoozer puts it,

Typology is the mainspring of theo-dramatic unity, the principle that accounts for the continuity in God's words and acts, the connecting link between the history of Israel and the history of the church, the glue that unifies the Old and New Testaments. To insist on theo-dramatic unity is to affirm what we could call, for lack of a better term, *typological realism*.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 133. See Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 64.

⁹⁶ Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 133.

Typological realism insists that history, like the biblical narrative, finds its coherence in Jesus Christ. History and typology alike display a unity and narrative coherence – not a sameness of equivalence but an *ipse*-identity guaranteed by God's personal constancy to his promises. The presupposition of figural reading is God's consistent action.⁹⁷

From this perspective, the long-standing practice of reading Jer. 31 primarily with reference to the Gentile church cannot be considered a legitimate interpretation of the text. This reading suggests a change in the very addressees of the divine locution, such that God's promise of renewal no longer applies to the original recipients except in a secondary, accidental sense. Hebrews does not always preserve the addressees of the locutions cited: a passage originally spoken to David or to some other earthly king may now refer to Jesus instead. But given the author's affirmation of God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel, especially in Heb. 11's depiction of the eternal inheritance as the fulfillment of Israel's long-awaited hope, a supersessionist reading of Jer. 31 must be rejected out of hand. As suggested above, proper controls on scriptural interpretation encompass not only Christ and the church but also the inviolability of God's covenant with Israel. On this view, the supersessionist reading is as false as the crusader's cry – historically, the former has indeed enabled the latter – for neither engages properly the dynamics of redemptive history.

Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament highlights the internal connection between literal and figural reading, a point Hans Frei advances insightfully in his *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.⁹⁸ Frei argues that Western biblical interpretation before the eighteenth century was characterized by realism, a sense that the text was oriented toward the "literal and

⁹⁷ Ibid., 223.

⁹⁸ Cited above. For a helpful discussion of Frei's treatment of biblical interpretation, see Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, 141-85.

historical,” even if it was also “doctrinal or edifying.”⁹⁹ On the one hand, individual biblical narratives were taken to refer to actual historical occurrences. On the other hand, figural reading provided a means to unite those individual stories into a single cumulative story that would bring coherence to the whole canon. By depicting earlier biblical stories as types of later stories, earlier interpreters were able to relate the Old Testament to the New as figure and fulfillment of one consistent narrative. On this rubric, Frei argues, literal and figural interpretation were not in conflict; rather, “figuration or typology was a natural extension of literal interpretation. It was literalism at the level of the whole biblical story and thus of the depiction of the whole of historical reality.”¹⁰⁰ This synthesis began to break down in the second half of the eighteenth century, as German scholars especially dissociated the biblical narratives from the historical realities they depicted. Temporal events began to assume a quasi-independent status, in principle accessible to description by a variety of sources, and not just the Bible. As scholars increasingly concerned themselves with the religious significance of the text, realism became an afterthought, categorized and dismissed as a matter concerning the historical likelihood of the narratives.¹⁰¹

This dissolution between the literal and historical soon led to the collapse of figural interpretation. Figural reading could not function on the new assumption that propositional statements have only one meaning. Nor did it seem possible that one event could refer predictively to another that would occur hundreds of years later. From both a literary and a historical perspective, figural reading had lost credibility and was increasingly set against the literal. Frei writes:

⁹⁹ Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5, 11-12.

Figural reading had been literalism extended to the whole story or the unitary canon containing it. But now figural sense came to be something like the opposite of literal sense. In the first place, verbal or literal sense was now equated with the single meaning of statements, a logical and grammatical rule prevalent everywhere so that figural reading of the Bible seemed a senseless exception to it. Secondly, the very attempt to read unity out of (or into) the Bible now seemed different from, if not incompatible with, the self-confinement of literal reading to specific texts.¹⁰²

The ultimate result of such a development was a loss of confidence in the Bible itself. “For that authority was bound to be gravely weakened if the Bible was neither reliable nor unitary.”¹⁰³

Frei looks to the Protestant Reformers, especially Calvin, for a model of biblical interpretation that held together the literal and figural. Both Luther and Calvin affirmed the self-interpretation of the Bible and the primacy of the literal sense, but also acknowledged the legitimacy of figural reading as a means of discerning the unity of the canon. Calvin, Frei notes, did not treat every passage figurally: he was wary of the Christological reading of the “seed” in Gen. 3:15, yet identified without hesitation Christ as the referent of the virgin birth in Is. 7:14. Nevertheless, Frei writes, Calvin completely assumed “a natural coherence between literal and figural reading, and ... the need of each for supplementation by the other. That one reads specific passages in one way rather than another in no sense denies their mutual enhancement. They supplement each other because there is a family resemblance between them. They belong together, though they are on the one hand not identical nor, on the other, a substitute for each other.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid., 7.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27.

According to Frei, this manner of reading is not an arbitrary imposition of the reader upon the text; it rather arises from the internal dynamics of the text itself. Calvin's understanding of the illumination of the Holy Spirit concerns the reader's enhanced ability to understand Scripture, not some addition to the text. Frei comments:

The meaning, pattern, or theme, whether upon literal or figural reading or, most likely, upon a combination of both, emerges solely as a function of the narrative itself. It is not imprinted on the text by the interpreter or by a multifarious interpretive and religious "tradition," a collective noun standing for the story as a product of the storyteller's own mind together with subsequent interpretations of it down to the present and latest reader, for any of whom this interpretive mental accretion itself, and not the text, becomes the cumulative story which is taken to be the text's real subject matter. Whatever Calvin might have thought about the latter possibility ("tradition") as a coherent framework for analyzing biblical texts, he was firm in declining it as a substitute for an actual reading of the narrative text in which literal and, by extension, figural reading render chronological sequence together with the teleological pattern that is a function of the cumulative story.¹⁰⁵

Such a mode of interpretation, Frei argues, stands in sharp contrast to allegory, defined as "the attachment of a temporally free-floating meaning pattern to any temporal occasion whatever, without any intrinsic connection between sensuous time-bound picture and the meaning represented by it."¹⁰⁶

On Frei's account, figural interpretation means reading forward, from figure to fulfillment. Calvin, for instance, rejects the position that Old Testament Israel existed only for the sake of New Testament church, teaching instead that the Jews awaited a heavenly reward. This means for the Reformer that the land of Canaan was actually a figure during Old Testament times, and not just according to later retrospection. Frei explains:

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 34-35.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 29.

Calvin is clearly contending that figural reading is a reading forward of the sequence. The meaning pattern of reality is inseparable from its forward motion; it is not the product of the wedding of that forward motion with a separate backward perspective on it, i.e. of history and interpretation joined as two logically independent factors. Rather, the meaning of the full sequence emerges in the narration of the sequence, and therefore interpretation for Calvin must be, as Auerbach suggests it is for the tradition at large, part of the flowing stream which is historical life. The only spiritual act is that of comprehension — an act of mimesis, following the way things really are — rather than of creation, if it is to be faithful interpretation.¹⁰⁷

This depiction of figural reading illuminates Hebrews' narration of redemptive history and its treatment of Old Testament people, institutions, and events. As John David Dawson writes, figural reading “extends rather than effaces” the literal sense, leading to its “intensification rather its supersession.”¹⁰⁸ Frei acknowledges that such reading may seem to Jewish readers like a distortion of the text, but as a Christian must nevertheless insist that “the figural reading of the Old Testament is precisely the reading that extends the meaning of Hebrew Scripture when that meaning is adequately grasped. Rather than some sort of misreading, Christian figural reading is actually the reading that aptly discerns the way the Old Testament is ‘leading *as it were by its own thrust* to its climactic fulfillment in the New.’”¹⁰⁹ He thus affirms the point we have considered above: the legitimacy of Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament depends ultimately upon a theological judgment about the nature and dynamics of redemptive history. Figural reading extends the literal sense if and only if Christ is, as the Epistle argues, the fulfillment of Israel's hope.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁸ Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity*, 141.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 163-64, citing Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1992), 59. Italics Dawson's.

Concerning Old Testament quotations, however, Frei's model requires more precision. We may, perhaps, distinguish between figural interpretation and the supposition of a figural sense different from, even if related to, the literal. Figural interpretation involves the practice of reading Old Testament locutions in light of Christ, but need not give rise to a second level of meaning that coexists with the original or literal. Frei's work draws heavily upon Auerbach, who defines figural interpretation primarily according to events or persons. As I have argued, such a model is incommensurate with Hebrews' concern with whole locutions, and not just things. There are not, for Hebrews, two senses, literal and figural, such that the literal means one thing and the figural means another. Rather, the "figural sense" specifies the "literal sense" according to the dynamics of redemptive history. Thus, it is not the case that the literal sense of Ps. 95 urges the Israelites to enter Canaan, but the figural sense urges contemporary hearers to enter the eternal inheritance. "Rest" could *not* mean Canaan, as the Israelites were already in the land; it can *only* mean God's rest, now made available to us through the establishment of Christ as high priest. The author of Hebrews extends and intensifies the literal, but does not create a new figural sense. He rather transposes the literal sense into a Christological key, and then asserts that this "new" meaning was the actual meaning all along.

The importance of this point can be discerned by comparison again with de Lubac. Rather than multiplying the meanings of a "vast sea" or an "infinite forest," Hebrews circumscribes the potential referents of Old Testament quotations to the things now experienced in these the last days. De Lubac begins his *Medieval Exegesis* by describing the *disciplina* necessary for the interpretation of Scripture: only those who have attained a certain level

of spiritual maturity can perceive in the text its fullest treasures.¹¹⁰ Such is not the Epistle of Hebrews' perspective. While the author does distinguish between milk and solid food, his purpose for his hearers is not contemplation, but action: perseverance in the face of trial after the example of Jesus. Hebrews' use of the Old Testament, then, corresponds to the purpose of God's self-revelation more broadly: to quicken the church to righteousness and truth. For more on this point, I turn to John Webster.

7.3 The revelation of God: John Webster

The discussion of this chapter gives rise to a fundamental question: what kind of document is Scripture that it may function as Hebrews uses it? John Webster's *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*¹¹¹ helps address this question by setting forth a "dogmatic ontology" of Scripture to account for "what Holy Scripture *is* in the saving economy of God's loving and regenerative self-communication."¹¹² As a term, Webster argues, "Holy Scripture" encompasses both its divine origin and its use in the church. On the one hand, Scripture is servant, and should not be accorded quasi-independent status from the theologically prior self-communication of the triune God. On the other hand, Scripture cannot be reduced to a human activity, defined primarily by community reception of the texts. These concerns are both addressed in a properly ordered

¹¹⁰ See also Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, cited above.

¹¹¹ John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003). See also his *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001). For treatments on related topics, see David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), originally published *The Uses of Scripture of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (London: T&T Clark, 1994), and *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation*, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002). Fundamental to Webster's discussion is the work of Karl Barth, especially *Church Dogmatics* 1/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (1932; London: T&T Clark, 1975), and *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (1938; London: T&T Clark, 1956).

¹¹² Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 2. Unless otherwise specified, all italics his.

dogmatic account of Scripture that defines the nature and purpose of Scripture according to three key terms: revelation, sanctification, and inspiration.

According to Webster, “*revelation is the self-presentation of the triune God, the free work of sovereign mercy in which God wills, establishes and perfects saving fellowship with himself in which humankind comes to know, love and fear him above all things.*”¹¹³ This definition advances three central claims. First, God is both the content and agent of revelation: God presents *himself*, and *God* presents himself. As such, revelation reflects God’s triune activity in creation. “As Father, God is the personal will or origin of this self-presence; as Son, God actualises his self-presence, upholding it and establishing it against all opposition; as Holy Spirit, God perfects that self-presence by making it real and effective to and in the history of humankind. To speak of ‘revelation’ is to say that God is one whose being is directed towards his creatures, and the goal of whose self-movement is his presence with us.”¹¹⁴ Second, revelation reflects God’s sovereign, free mercy. The presence of God is “majestically spontaneous and uncaused,” and God’s revelation “unexpected, undeserved, possible only as and because God is, and present after the manner of God.”¹¹⁵ God makes himself present in revelation on his own terms, and not as a completely accessible matter for our own classification and use. And third, revelation has a soteriological purpose: the establishment of fellowship between God and us. This fellowship embraces both the cognitive and relational, and should not be reduced to only one or the other. “Revelation is the self-giving presence of God which overthrows opposition to God, and, in reconciling, brings

¹¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 15.

us into the light of the knowledge of God.”¹¹⁶ On this account, revelation should not be construed primarily as a means of addressing epistemological questions or the sources and norms of Christian discourse. Rather, “the proper doctrinal location for talk of revelation is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and, in particular, the outgoing, communicative mercy of the triune God in the economy of salvation. Revelation is the corollary of trinitarian theology and soteriology.”¹¹⁷

Sanctification is for Webster an extension of revelation. In brief, “sanctification is the act of God the Holy Spirit in hallowing creaturely processes, employing them in the service of the taking form of revelation within the history of the creation.”¹¹⁸ This term, traditionally associated with soteriology, provides a conceptual resource for addressing how texts with a manifestly human, “natural” history can effect divine action in the economy of salvation. Both historical naturalism and its apparent opposite, the denial of creaturely contribution to the Bible, trade on a competitive understanding divine and human activity. Against such dualism, Webster claims, a triune account of divine action asserts God’s “continuing free presence and relation to the creation through the risen Son in the Spirit’s power.”¹¹⁹ Sanctification understands the biblical texts as creaturely realities uniquely set apart for God’s revelatory purposes.

Webster distinguishes his proposal from several other efforts to construe the relation in Scripture between the human and divine. On one account, for instance, Scripture resembles the hypostatic union: just as Jesus was both divine and human, so also is the Bible. For Webster, this

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 16-17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 17-18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

position threatens the uniqueness of the incarnation by characterizing all God's activity in the world as a union between the human and the divine. "Moreover, the application of an analogy from the hypostatic union can scarcely avoid divinising the Bible by claiming some sort of ontological identity between the biblical texts and the self-communication of God. Over against this, it has to be asserted that no divine nature or properties are to be predicated of Scripture; its substance is that of a creaturely reality (even if it is a creaturely reality annexed to the self-presentation of God); and its relation to God is instrumental."¹²⁰ Another, contrasting account might define Scripture by appeal to testimony: as prophetic or apostolic witness, the biblical texts refer to God, but are not themselves divine. According to Webster, this view falters for presenting "little intrinsic relation between the texts and the revelation to which they witness. In this way, the annexation of the Bible to revelation can appear almost arbitrary: the text is considered a complete and purely natural entity taken up into the self-communication of God. The result is a curious textual equivalent of adoptionism."¹²¹

Sanctification, on the other hand, defines Scripture according to divine communicative action through creaturely elements. The biblical texts are thus creaturely, but not natural.

Webster writes,

First, because they are sanctified, the texts are not simply 'natural' entities, to be defined and interpreted exhaustively as such. They are fields of the Spirit's activity in the publication of the knowledge of God. Second, because sanctification does not diminish creatureliness, the texts' place in the divine economy does not entail their withdrawal from the realm of human processes. It is *as* – not *despite* – the creaturely realities that they are that they serve God.¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹²¹ Ibid., 24.

¹²² Ibid., 27-28.

Sanctification concerns not just the text in its final form, but a range of activities encompassing the pre- and post-history of the text: both the historical dynamics that gave rise to the text, as well as its canonization and later interpretation. Divine action is thus not merely “occasional or punctiliar”;¹²³ “there is an election and overseeing of the entire historical course of the creaturely reality so that it becomes a creature which may serve the purposes of God.”¹²⁴

Webster’s final term is inspiration, which is “the specific textual application of the broader notion of sanctification as the hallowing of creaturely realities to serve revelation’s taking form. Where sanctification indicates the dogmatic ontology of the text as the servant of the divine self-communicative presence, inspiration indicates the specific work of the Spirit of Christ with respect to the text.”¹²⁵ Theologically, inspiration is a function of revelation and not the other way around: Scripture is not revelation because it is inspired; it is inspired because it is revelation. To flip this dogmatic order, Webster says, is “to make inspiration into a formal property insufficiently coordinated to the gospel content of Scripture, and to render the communicative presence of God contingent upon proven conviction of the text’s inspiredness.”¹²⁶ Such a position objectifies Scripture, giving it theological priority over the activity of the triune God. Yet, Webster argues, “inspiration does not spell the end of the mystery of God; it is simply that act of the Spirit through which this set of texts proceeds from God to attest his ineffable presence. Inspiration is a mode of the Spirit’s freedom, not its inhibition by the letter.”¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 30-31.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 33.

On Webster's account, Scripture must be understood primarily according to its broader soteriological purposes: "inspiration is not primarily a textual property but a divine movement and therefore a divine moving."¹²⁸ Still, Webster affirms the Spirit's role in generating both the content and form of the biblical text – its actual verbal character. "The relation of the words of Scripture to the communicative self-presence of God is not merely contingent; what revelation impels is writing."¹²⁹ Dictation theories of inspiration trade on a dualism between divine and human agency that leaves virtually no room for creaturely contributions to the formation of the text. To the contrary, Webster asserts, "being 'moved by the Spirit is not simply being passively impelled; the Spirit's *suggestio* and human authorship are directly, not inversely, proportional; the action of the inspiring Spirit and the work of the inspired creature are concursive rather than antithetical."¹³⁰

On this account, Webster argues, ecclesiology should be considered a function of the doctrine of God. As creature of the divine Word, the church is constituted first and foremost by the act of "faithful hearing."¹³¹ God directs humanity toward its salvific end by means of his self-communicating Word. The church responds by faith, enlightened and animated by the Holy Spirit. Since divine action is prior to the being of the church, Webster argues, Scripture cannot be defined according to immanentist ecclesial terms.

To understand Holy Scripture as without further qualification a part – even the most important part – of the church's cultural capital, its store of meanings, images, foundational narratives, and so on, is seriously to misconstrue the mode of Scripture's operation. Scripture works by

¹²⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 38-39.

¹³¹ Ibid., 44.

forcing the church into an external, 'ecstatic' orientation in all its undertakings; it builds the church up by breaking the church open, and therefore in large measure by breaking the church down ... Scripture is as much a de-stabilizing feature of the life of the church as it is a factor in its cohesion and continuity. Defined by Word and faith, the church is not a self-realising institution with Scripture as an instrument of its steady identity. Through Scripture the church is constantly exposed to interruption. Being the hearing church is never, therefore, a matter of routine, whether liturgical or doctrinal. It is, rather, the church's readiness 'that its whole life should be assailed, convulsed, revolutionised and reshaped.'¹³²

This perspective prompts for Webster two corollary positions on the nature of the church. First, the visibility of the church is a "spiritual visibility."¹³³ The church is not just "an outgrowth of natural human sociality or religious common interest or fellow-feeling";¹³⁴ its being rather depends on divine self-gift. As such, the church is "primarily spiritual event, and only secondarily visible natural history and structured form of common life ... The church has true form and visibility in so far as it receives the grace of God through the life-giving presence of Word and Spirit."¹³⁵ On this point, Webster particularly critiques Lindbeck's tendency to define Scripture according to general theories of sociality and textuality. Scripture does not simply function like other texts commanding cultural authority; the orientation of Scripture is external and vertical, bearing reference to the transcendent and living voice of God. "Attending to Scripture, therefore, is not a matter of being socialised, but of being caught up in the dissolution of all society – including and especially church culture – through the word of the one who smites the earth with the rod of his mouth (cf. Isa. 11.4)."¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., 46-47, citing Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2, 804.

¹³³ Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 47.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 47-48.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 50.

Second, the history of the church is apostolic. While the progress of the church through time bears certain similarities with that of other human institutions, the church is uniquely commissioned by the risen Christ and therefore subject to his authority. Properly speaking, “apostolocity is a matter of *being accosted* by a mandate from outside. It is a Christological-pneumatological concept, and only by derivation is it ecclesiological.”¹³⁷ Webster therefore insists upon a “strict demarcation”¹³⁸ between Scripture and tradition. On the one hand, the interpretation of Scripture cannot be abstracted from the life of the church, as if there were some “pure sphere”¹³⁹ for the reading and reception of biblical texts. On the other hand, “Scripture is not, as it were, swallowed up in or overwhelmed by that history; in its service of the divine Word, Holy Scripture cannot be made into part of the stock of traditional meanings which the church builds up over the course of time. Accordingly, ‘tradition’ is best conceived of as a *bearing* of the Word rather than a fresh act of *speaking*.”¹⁴⁰

In that vein, Webster defines the authority of Scripture as “its Spirit-bestowed capacity to quicken the church to truthful speech and righteous action.”¹⁴¹ The church does not bestow this authority upon Scripture but acknowledges it. Scripture possesses inherent authority that resists anthropological reduction to the authority communities may vest into the text. Nevertheless, Webster argues, such authority should not be construed as a formal property of the text that can somehow be abstracted from its revelatory or ecclesial setting. The authority of

¹³⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

Scripture is soteriological, oriented toward practical and teleological ends to be made manifest in ecclesial faithfulness. Webster writes,

The church's acknowledgement of Scripture's authority is not an act of self-government, but an exposure to judgment, to a source not simply of authorisation but also and supremely of interrogation. A church in which it makes sense to say: *scriptura sacra locuta, res decisa est* is the antithesis of a stable, statutory human project; it is, rather, a form of common life centred on a confession which subverts. Hence a church of the Word cannot be a closed, static set of relations, a social space characterized by maximal local cohesion and historical durability. It is an 'open' culture.¹⁴²

Webster's position on this matter funds his defense of the perspicuity of Scripture, again, not as a formal property of the text, but in the context of God's soteriological purposes in revelation. Divine revelation, he claims, is "self-presenting or self-explicating";¹⁴³ Scripture, in turn, is clear "because through the Spirit the text serves God's self-presentation."¹⁴⁴ Confidence to read Scripture well demands a functional pneumatology that trusts in the illumination of the Holy Spirit. On Webster's account, perspicuity names the priority of divine communication over creaturely reception: "Scriptural clarity is neither an intrinsic element of the text as text nor simply a fruit of exegetical labour; it is that which the text *becomes* as it functions in the Spirit-governed encounter between the self-presenting saviour and the faithful reader."¹⁴⁵ Perspicuity also protests the authority of interpretive traditions whose capacity to represent Scripture is necessarily derivative and secondary. Webster writes, "The precedence of the Word over the reader is what is indicated by the concepts of Scripture as 'self-interpreting' and 'perspicuous' or 'clear.' These notions, crucially, do not eliminate the necessity of reading, making exegesis a

¹⁴² Ibid., 56-57.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 94.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 95.

purely 'pneumatic' activity which bypasses the processes by which written materials are appropriated. Rather, they set those activities within the domain of God's self-explication."¹⁴⁶

From this perspective, the creaturely response of reading Scripture necessarily assumes a posture of passivity. "Like other acts of Christian existence it is a human activity whose substance lies in its reference to and self-renunciation before the presence and action of God. The act of reading Holy Scripture thus contains a certain self-negation."¹⁴⁷ The goal is not to think for oneself by the exercise of autonomous reason, but to attend faithfully to the text for the purpose of spiritual transformation. In our fallenness, our reading is characterized by ignorance and idolatry: the divine address seems strange to us, and we alter and reject it in a "defiance of grace."¹⁴⁸ Reading Scripture is therefore a moral matter that demands mortification and vivification. For Webster, proper reading occurs "as a kind of brokenness, a relinquishment of willed mastery of the text, and through exegetical reason's guidance towards that encounter with God of which the text is an instrument."¹⁴⁹ It is thus "an instance of the fundamental pattern of all Christian existence, which is dying and rising with Jesus Christ through the purging and quickening power of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵⁰ Still, Webster asserts, reading does demand creaturely involvement; it is a visible, even if primarily spiritual, act. Since the purpose of Scripture is to restore fellowship with God, there must be a creaturely counterpart to God's

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 93.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 106.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 87-88.

gracious self-presentation.¹⁵¹ Thus, “the Holy Spirit rules, accompanies and sanctifies the work of the reader in engaging the sanctified and inspired text.”¹⁵²

Webster’s dogmatic outline proves an apt description for the dynamics of scriptural interpretation in Hebrews. While the author of Hebrews does not, of course, describe his appropriation of the Old Testament according to the notion of sanctification, his use of Scripture very much resembles what Webster proposes. Scripture was written by human beings but adopts divine force, communicating God’s address directly to the recipients. Locutions once recorded come to life in this moment, here and now, as the very voice of God confronts his people. The author of Hebrews conducts no word studies, provides no discussion of provenance, engages in no comparisons with other Ancient Near Eastern parallels. There is no move to find in a passage some core, unchanging message to be applied by analogy to a new situation. Nor is there any suggestion that the message could be missed. Hebrews redefines particular words in ways that could not before have been understood, but insists that these new meanings effectively mediate God’s voice in the present. Indeed, the author of Hebrews does presume the kind of perspicuity Webster proposes. As an extension of the revelation of God, Scripture communicates God’s intent with effectiveness and force. While the responsibility is the hearers’ to obey, the priority of communication issues from God the initiator, who will ensure that his message is heard. There can be no retreat to ambiguity or confusion.

This presentation of the divine word raises fresh possibilities for how to construe the “literal sense.” In an article on the topic, Hans Frei observes “a wide, though of course not

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 70-71.

¹⁵² Ibid., 94.

unanimous, traditional consensus among Christians in the West on the primacy of the literal reading of the Bible,” and suggests that “the tradition of the *sensus literalis* is the closest one can come to a consensus reading of the Bible as the sacred text in the Christian church.”¹⁵³ As Brevard Childs has shown, however, the precise definition of the literal sense has taken different shape throughout the course of (both Jewish and Christian) biblical interpretation.¹⁵⁴ At what Childs considers the high point of the Christian tradition, the Protestant Reformers held together an emphasis on the literal sense with a concern for theological matters. Luther rejected both allegory and purely grammatical readings of the text, and Calvin spoke of the “*verus scripturae sensus* which is both literal and spiritual, the single true sense of the text.”¹⁵⁵ Childs charts a major shift with the rise of historical criticism, which he depicts as fundamentally characterized by a “total commitment to the literal sense of the text.”¹⁵⁶ Modern approaches rejected the Reformation identification of the literal sense with the historical, or verbal meaning with real reference. Childs writes, “The historical sense of the text was construed as being the *original* meaning of the text as it emerged in its pristine situation. Therefore, the aim of the

¹⁵³ Hans W. Frei, “The ‘Literal Reading’ of Biblical Narrative in the Christian Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break?” in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993; originally published in 1986), 117-52. Quotations from p. 118.

¹⁵⁴ Brevard S. Childs, “The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem,” in *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie*, ed. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), 80-93. See subsequent exchange: James Barr, “The Literal, the Allegorical, and Modern Biblical Scholarship,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 (1989): 3-17; B. S. Childs, “Critical Reflections on James Barr’s Understanding of the Literal and the Allegorical,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46 (1990): 3-9; J. Barr, “Wilhelm Vischer and Allegory,” in *Understanding the Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wisbart Anderson*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series* 152 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 38-60. For other treatments of the literal sense, see Kathryn E. Tanner, “Theology and the Plain Sense,” in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation*, ed. Garrett Green (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1987; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 59-78; Rowan Williams, “The Literal Sense of Scripture,” *Modern Theology* 7 (1991): 121-34; K. E. Greene-McCreight, *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the “Plain Sense” of Genesis 1-3*, *Issues in Systematic Theology* 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

¹⁵⁵ Childs, “The Sensus Literalis of Scripture,” 87.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

interpreter was to reconstruct the original occasion of the historical reference on the basis of which the truth of the biblical text could be determined. In sum, the *sensus literalis* had become *sensus originalis*.”¹⁵⁷

Hebrews bypasses this notion. For our Epistle, the authority of God’s word is not located in the historically reconstructed meaning of the text according to the original setting, nor some reading derived from community consensus. The literal sense is rather God’s speech to his people in the redemptive-historical present. This sense is continuous with what earlier hearers would have understood – a promise remains a promise, a command a command, and for the same people – but it adopts new meaning in this eschatological moment. The Old Testament Israelites could not have known the full meaning of “today” or the way to enter God’s rest or how God would establish a new covenant, but those shaped by these promises and exhortations would recognize the new meanings as a faithful, though transformative appropriation and fulfillment of the original sense. The Christological sense is the literal, and it alone can account for the true meaning of the original locution. This is the sense by which God addresses and exercises authority over his covenant people.

To this act of divine self-communication, God demands a response. Scripture’s mediation of God’s will compels not just assent to propositional information, but faithfulness – a quickening to righteousness and truth as Webster describes. Hebrews uses Scripture to destabilize the church, challenging her not to lose heart, rebuking her of unfaithfulness, goading her to greater maturity, warning her of the consequences of disobedience, assuring her of the rewards for perseverance. The task of God’s people is primarily to hear, not to speak – to adopt

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 89.

a posture of responsiveness and humility, and to welcome God's discipline in the midst of trial. In its exhortations, Hebrews employs the pattern of mortification and vivification Webster sets forth as the paradigmatic shape of the Christian life. Jesus endured suffering to the point of death, yet was heard for his obedience and received the reward for righteousness. The recipients of Hebrews must hold fast in the midst of trial if they, too, would receive their prize. The author beseeches his hearers with fearsome warnings of the repercussions for unfaithfulness – they will never be brought back to repentance, they will be consumed by fire, they will face the wrath of the living God, they will experience vengeance untold. Yet these words of death immediately give way to words of life: the author is sure of better things for his hearers, who have lovingly served the saints, who receive correction as sons, who may approach the throne of grace for mercy and grace, who will receive the eternal inheritance – if they persevere. Scripture is, as Webster suggests, a model for the entire Christian life, an image of cruciform sanctification in the pattern set forth by Jesus.

Ultimately, the purpose of revelation is, as Webster says, the restoration of fellowship between humanity and God. It was for this reason that Jesus became one of us, partaking of our flesh and blood. Unashamed to call us brethren, he adopts the voice of the psalms to sing God's praise, and welcomes our fellowship in the congregation of the faithful. God is, according to Hebrews, a speaking God, who has spoken preeminently through the Son but speaks still now through his word. It is in this sense that Scripture is living and active.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has set forth three primary models for understanding Scripture. De Lubac's presentation of the fourfold method does not accurately denote the dynamics of redemptive history or biblical interpretation in Hebrews. While de Lubac rightly stresses the rupture of the

Christ-event, he fails to include God's ongoing faithfulness to Israel as an essential element of the economy of salvation. This oversight contributes in part to a depiction of the spiritual sense as a panoply of meanings that controverts the specificity of Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament. Moreover, de Lubac's proposal trades on a sign-referent framework incommensurate with Hebrews' concern with larger linguistic units. Vanhoozer's presentation of Scripture as divine speech-act provides a more helpful rubric for describing the continuity between Old Testament locutions in their original sense and their use in Hebrews. This continuity resides primarily at the level of illocution, though the propositional content of the locutions cited adopts new valence in light of the establishment of Christ as high priest. Hans Frei's argument that figural reading extends and intensifies the literal sense generally coheres with the contours of scriptural interpretation in Hebrews, though the Epistle does not appeal to a figural sense over and above the literal. Finally, Webster's depiction of Scripture as an extension of the revelation of God proves an apt account for the purpose of the divine word as it functions in Hebrews, such that the literal sense can be defined as God's address to his people in the present redemptive-historical moment.

Again, Hebrews' use of Scripture differs significantly from the interpretive practices we have witnessed in either Augustine or Calvin. As Hebrews challenges Calvin's static depiction of redemptive history, so also does the Epistle present a more dynamic approach to Scripture than Calvin suggests. The literal sense is not for Hebrews a plain reading that straightforwardly reveals Christ; Old Testament locutions only yield their Christological import in the new redemptive-historical context. On the other hand, Hebrews does not engage in the wide-ranging speculation Augustine indulges. The meaning of an Old Testament quotation is for our Epistle circumscribed as God's direct address to his people, and retains the original illocutionary force.

Hebrews' particular depiction of the relation between the testaments thus funds a reading of Scripture both more continuous with the original sense than Augustine's and more dynamically revelatory than Calvin's.

Conclusion

In Augustine, Calvin, and Hebrews, we have witnessed three different understandings of the relation between the testaments and the interpretation of Scripture. While each is generally self-consistent, the key difference that separates Hebrews from the other two figures concerns their treatments of Israel. On the one hand, neither Augustine nor Calvin adopts a fully supersessionist view whereby Israel is fully replaced by the (primarily Gentile) church, and the covenant with Israel is simply null and void. Both have too much respect for the literal sense of Scripture to allegorize completely God's promises to Israel, and therefore retain some place for the restoration of ethnic Israel at the end of times. Indeed, it is telling that these two thinkers, so closely associated with hard-line predestinarianism and the assertion of God's prerogative to show mercy to some but not all, cannot countenance the possibility that God would abandon Israel entirely. Israel is not just another nation, with no particular claim on God's covenant faithfulness; she remains the elect people of God. On the other hand, Israel presents for both Augustine and Calvin a stumbling block, and neither provides a satisfactory account for the status of Israel and the Old Testament saints, the continuity of God's people across the testaments, or the grounds for God's plan eventually to restore Israel. If for Augustine, Israel is primarily a sign of the church and individual saints are redemptive-historical aberrations, Calvin can make little sense of the particular blessings of the New Testament or Israel's distinct existence from the church after the time of Christ.

It is the Epistle to the Hebrews' singular contribution to the canonical witness to insist that the church's identity is rooted in that of another people, that she does not bow down to a general, universal deity, but to the Lord of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hebrews is not, of

course, alone on this matter, but no other New Testament document provides such a fulsome account of Israel's law and history from such a self-consistently Jewish perspective. In a certain sense, it was not wrong for the church to categorize Hebrews with the writings of Paul – they both address many of the same issues – but the mode of association was misconstrued. Hebrews does not so much adopt the apostle's vision of Israel as provide a theological control for it: the covenant never bypasses Israel, no matter the inclusion of the Gentiles.

This is perhaps the central issue at stake in Hebrews' interpretation of the Old Testament. For centuries, the Christian tradition has appealed to allegory to legitimize the replacement of Israel by the church. It is, however, one thing to suggest that animal sacrifices were signs of a new mode of worship, and quite another to swap one people group for another as the privileged recipients of God's covenant promises. On my reading, Hebrews' appropriation of the Old Testament operates in significant continuity with the way Israel would originally have received her Scripture, and therefore affirms God's fidelity to his word. The new covenant would, of course, be a miraculous and mysterious event, but the least that could be affirmed of it was that this future act of God would somehow accomplish the renewal and restoration of Israel, and not some other people. Hebrews argues within this Jewish vision that God has now inaugurated this new covenant through Jesus. Given the establishment of Christ as high priest, the promises of old do adopt new force, but only to enhance, not to nullify the earlier hope. As I have argued, Hebrews locates the authority of Scripture in the literal sense according to God's self-communicative act in the redemptive-historical present. While this ultimately Christological sense is not constrained to the historically reconstructed meaning, it nevertheless extends what would have originally been understood.

These observations raise several unanswered questions that deserve further exploration. First, even if the author of Hebrews presents a vision of redemptive history defined by God's covenant faithfulness to ethnic Israel, his voice is just one within the variegated canonical witness. The church today is, in fact, primarily composed of Gentiles, and this condition has characterized her since shortly after her inception. Can the Epistle to the Hebrews facilitate theological reflection upon the current constitution of the church, or must we turn to Paul? A full treatment of this matter is obviously out of the question here, but I would simply gesture toward Paul's own concern for God's commitment to Israel. The apostle rejects the possibility that Israel's unfaithfulness could nullify God's faithfulness (Rom. 3:3); he retains his concern for her hallowed history and continued possession of sonship, the covenants, and the promises (Rom. 9:4-5); and he reminds the grafted branches that they were once a wild olive shoot, and have only unnaturally been adopted into the cultivated tree (Rom. 11:24). "The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). Read canonically, in the context of a largely Gentile church, Hebrews may be taken as a reminder of Paul's still pertinent admonition: "Do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" (Rom. 11:18). Indeed, Paul's warning to the Gentiles sounds at certain points very much like the voice of Hebrews: "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

Second, if the authority of Scripture is located within a literal sense that can adopt new valences at various points in the economy of salvation, can this dynamic continue throughout later church tradition? At one level, the answer must be no: we live in the same redemptive-historical moment as the recipients of Hebrews, between the comings of Christ. Augustine's *City*

of God remains an important witness against any kind of Eusebian view that would attribute to current developments ultimate eschatological significance. On the other hand, a robust confession of the Spirit's continued activity in the church may prompt a more nuanced response. In his last theological oration, Gregory of Nazianzus narrates the history of salvation according to three, not two, decisive moments: "The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clear demonstration of himself."¹ Gregory is not speaking of Pentecost; he means by this "third earthquake"² his own preaching and the contemporary flurry of discussion concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. While one might hedge on Gregory's equation of the fourth century with the giving of the law and the revelation of the gospel, there is a certain sense in which he was right: as Nicaea came to be received, it did indeed affirm for the church the divinity of the Spirit in terms that had not clearly been recognized before. Since then, the creed has set forth a rule for reading Scripture whereby references to the Spirit are attributed to the third person of the Trinity, coequal with the Father and the Son. A similar dynamic characterizes the confession that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father. In the third century, Origen could claim that the Word was with the *true* God, but the Word was only "God" in a lower sense.³ After the fourth century, however, this reading of Jn. 1:1-3 must be rejected: the "real" meaning of the text is and always has been that the eternal Son is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God."

¹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Theological Orations*, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward Rochie Hardy, in collaboration with Cyril C. Richardson, Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 209 (5.26).

² *Ibid.*, 208 (5.25).

³ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John: Books 1-10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, Fathers of the Church 80 (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. America Press, 1989), 98-99 (2.12-18).

If Gregory misconstrues the shape of redemptive history, he nevertheless affirms the Spirit's continued activity in guiding the church to greater understanding of Scripture. Such a position need not identify tradition as an independent, external source of revelation apart from the biblical text, but it does suggest that tradition can circumscribe the meaning of Scripture the church is to receive. If Hebrews locates the authority of the word in God's direct address to contemporary hearers, it seems to follow that scriptural locutions can continue to assume new dimensions that enhance and clarify, and do not abrogate earlier readings. To the extent that the revelation of Christ may be considered "Tradition," John Paul II's suggestion in 1995 for the chief area of ecumenical discussion remains a topic for continued exploration: "the relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God."⁴

Third, and related, these issues invite new proposals concerning the propriety of interpreting the Bible in dialogue with theology. Methodologically, this study did not presuppose any kind of sanctioned relationship between Augustine, Calvin, or Hebrews. I merely positioned Augustine and Calvin as theological interlocutors whose systematic reflections provide a helpful vocabulary for the contours of redemptive history and scriptural interpretation in Hebrews. This is formally no different from appealing to various forms of, e.g., postcolonial theory to explain the dynamics of some ancient text. One rubric will in principle work as well as another; there is no intrinsic or internal connection between the theoretical framework and the text explored. From a theological perspective, however, one may ask whether the communion of saints legitimates and even necessitates the practice of reading Scripture in light of later tradition.

⁴ John Paul II, *Ut unum sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 90 (par. 79).

According to the practices of the guild, New Testament scholars do not generally seek the meaning of biblical texts according to later ecclesial interpretation. A word study would instead investigate the meaning of a given term in other writings by the same author, in the New Testament, in Second Temple Jewish literature, or in the wider Graeco-Roman context, on the assumption that the most pertinent background for the text is the historical. Yet if the locus of biblical authority is not the historically reconstructed sense, but rather God's address to the church in the present dispensation, other passages from Scripture or even later readings of the text may in fact constitute a more appropriate context for interpretation than historical contemporaries. There would, for instance, be no obvious reason to prefer Graeco-Roman conceptions of *logos* to the decrees of Nicaea as a backdrop for interpreting Jn. 1:1-3. Again, the point is not to deduce what the human author could have meant or known, but what God intends to communicate to the church now. Such interpretive strategies would indeed qualify the value and necessity of historical inquiry, but they would also resemble more closely the practice of the church in earlier times.

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Biography

Gregory Woodae Lee was born to Yoon Joo and Sook Ja Lee on November 26, 1978 in Fairfax, VA. He graduated in June 1996 from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, VA. Greg then attended Princeton University, where he participated actively in the Princeton Evangelical Fellowship and Manna Christian Fellowship, serving as student president of the latter his senior year. He also studied abroad the second semester of his junior year at Oxford University, St. Catherine's College. Greg graduated in June 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in philosophy (honors), with a minor in Spanish. He also received the John Martyn Warbeke 1903 Prize in Metaphysics and Epistemology, awarded by the Princeton Department of Philosophy for best senior thesis in the field.

After working one year as a software engineer for Sapient Corporation, an internet consulting firm based in Cambridge, MA, Greg began the Master of Divinity at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. While completing his degree, Greg served for two years as a youth and college pastor at Agape Presbyterian Church (USA). He also received awards from the Korean American Scholarship Foundation (2003) and the Christian Woman's Scholarship (2003). After graduating in December 2003, Greg spent six months studying in Seoul at the Korean Language Institute of Yonsei University.

In August 2004, Greg began the Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Theological Studies at Duke University, Graduate Program in Religion, pursuing minors in New Testament and Islam. He spent the summer of 2007 studying at the Middlebury German Language School (VT), and the summer of 2008 in Rome for an intensive Latin program with Reginald Foster, OCD. The latter was made possible through the Duke Summer Research Fellowship. From 2005-6, Greg acted as Secretary for the American Academy of

Religion, Executive Director Search Committee, assisting Hans Hillerbrand, then president of AAR. In 2007, Greg worked with two colleagues to found the Duke Theology and Ethics Colloquium, for which he also acted as co-coordinator for two years. Greg has precepted for several Duke Divinity School courses, and has taught two courses for the Duke Department of Religion: History of the Christian Church, and Contesting the Christian Bible (twice). His spring 2009 course evaluations for the latter ranked among the top 5% of all Duke undergraduate instructors for that semester. Greg has delivered several presentations for the Society of Biblical Literature, the North American Patristics Society, and the Duke Theology and Ethics Colloquium. He recently submitted an article for publication entitled, "Republics and Their Loves: Rereading *City of God* 19."

Greg is a member of Blacknall Presbyterian Church (USA), and Chair of the Board of Trustees for Manna Christian Fellowship. He has one older sister, Christine. She and her husband, Ryan Buchholz, have two children: Jonathan WonGi (2004) and Catherine EunHae (2008).