

Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei: *Augustine on Jews and Judaism*

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Seen in the perspective of the *contra Iudaeos* tradition, Augustine emerges as an idiosyncratic and innovative thinker whose tone when speaking of Jews and Judaism is exceptionally mild and whose estimate of the Jewish role in history is surprisingly positive. This essay argues that Augustine's relatively ironic "theology of Judaism" is the measure of his affirmation, against the Manichees, not of Jews per se, but of the God of Israel. This affirmation drove him ultimately to affirm, as with divine acceptance of Saul (*ad Simplicianum*) so with divine rejection of carnal Israel (*c. Faustum*), that God is just, though his justice is in principle hidden, *occultissima*. Against Blumenkranz, the essay concludes that theological encounters with Manichees, and not social encounters with Jews, stimulated Augustine's peculiar teaching. 12

Augustine's vision of the Jews as a living witness to Christian truth was both original¹ and, compared with his attitude toward pagans and non-Catholic Christians, uncharacteristically tolerant. Unlike these two other groups, contemporary Jews, Augustine argued, had a continuing positive

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1. Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1973; orig. pub. 1946), 211. This has proved to be the foundational study of Augustine's teaching on Jews and Judaism; see also, idem, "Augustin et les juifs: Augustin et le judaïsme," *RA* 1 (1958): 225-41.

role to play in the story of redemption. Dispersed throughout the earth since the Roman destruction of rebel Jerusalem, their hostile community witlessly preserved the original prophecies to Christ, and thereby testified to Christian truth:

The Jews who killed him and who refused to believe in him . . . were dispersed all over the world . . . and thus by the evidence of their own Scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ. . . . It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our Scriptures, their own Scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with blind eyes. . . . 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, wherever the Christian Church spreads. . . . Hence the prophecy in the Book of Psalms: “. . . Do not slay them, lest at some time they forget your Law; scatter them by your might.”²

But Augustine's position on contemporary Jews, with its attendant argument for an immunity from religious coercion enjoyed by virtually no other community in post-Theodosian antiquity,³ had been preceded by an equally novel, and surprisingly positive, evaluation of the Jewish past—both the distant past of the Scriptures, and the more recent past of the transitional generation of Paul, the other apostles, and Jesus himself. These views emerge together with—I will argue in consequence of—the understanding of divine justice and human freedom that Augustine comes to as he learns to read the Bible, and especially the letters of Paul, in new ways in the decade following his conversion.

I propose, then, to account for Augustine's teaching on Jews and Judaism by anchoring it in the biblical hermeneutic that he develops during the 390s. I will trace the evolution of this hermeneutic along a trajectory of his anti-Manichean writings, beginning with the *c. Fortunatum* (392), passing through his early commentaries on Paul (394/5), his radical reassessment of the Pauline dynamics of grace and faith in the *ad Simplicianum* (396) and its autobiographical companion-piece, the *Confessions* (397), and

2. Ps 59.10f. in *civ.* 18.46 (CCSL 48.644–45); trans. Henry Bettenson, *The City of God* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1972), 828. This argument, with Psalm 59 as proof-text, appears also in *psal.* 58.1.18–2.7 (CCSL 39.743–51); *fid.* 6.9 (CCSL 46.16); and *iud.* 7.9 (PL 42.57).

3. For this legislation, the excellent source compendium by A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1987); for analysis of its social intent, M. R. Salzman, “The Evidence for the Conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity in Book 16 of the *Theodosian Code*,” *Historia* XLII/3 (1993): 362–78. See, too, the earlier essays by P. Brown, “St. Augustine's Attitude toward Religious Coercion,” 260–78; and “Religious Coercion in the Later Roman Empire: The Case of North Africa,” 301–331, in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

ending with his massive refutation of Latin Manichaeism, the *c. Faustum* (398). Finally, I shall close not on a historical point but a historiographical one, suggesting ways in which the work of the great student of Augustine's anti-Jewish polemic, Bernhard Blumenkranz, might be reconsidered.

I

The church that Augustine joined in 387, in Milan, was not the church he joined in 391, when he was inducted into the clergy at Hippo Regius. Milanese Catholicism in the 380s had flourished in the light of Greek philosophical learning.⁴ It was here that Augustine encountered the books of the Platonists—Plotinus and Porphyry, in translation—and heard the sermons of Ambrose, who incorporated the Alexandrian allegories of Philo and Origen into his own preaching. The perspective of *paideia* had finally provided Augustine with a coherent theodicy in answer to Manichaean dualism and moral determinism. God did not create evil, since evil was nothing, an absence rather than a substance, the *privatio boni*. Man sinned not because an evil soul compelled him, but because of a defective movement of his own free will: sin was a choice.⁵ In the months following his conversion and, later, baptism, Augustine deployed these arguments to refute the Manichaean explanation of evil, criticizing their philosophical inconsistency (*de ordine; de duabus animabus; de libero arbitrio* I), their ethics (*de moribus Manichaeorum*), and finally, through philosophical allegory, their reading of Scripture (*de Genesi c. Manichaeos*).

His new arsenal did him little good, however, once he returned home, and became publicly involved in the life of the church. The traditions, temperament, and circumstances of North African Christian culture distinguished it in telling ways from its Italian cousin. Catholics and Donatists alike saw in their respective communities the "church of the martyrs," which they celebrated through public readings of *acta martyrorum* and community-wide *laetitiae*, feasts held over the holy tombs;⁶ and both communities

4. On the Neoplatonic renaissance of Milan in this period, see esp. the two classic studies by P. Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) and *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 2ème édition, 1968), esp. 157–67, for a reconstruction of Augustine's reading in the time surrounding his conversion.

5. Cf. Augustine's retrospective description of this moment, *conf.* 5.14.24 the effect of Ambrose's sermons (James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992] 1.57); 7.3.4–5 Manichaean theodicy (O'Donnell, 1.74–75); 7.9.13 the *libri platoniorum* (O'Donnell, 1.80).

6. On the African churches' temperamental liaison with the earlier herioc age, A.-G. Hamman, *La vie quotidienne en Afrique du Nord au temps du S. Augustin* (Paris, 1979),

affirmed ancient Christian hopes for the approaching End of Days, with the attendant belief in the fleshly *prima resurrectio* and bodily thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ on earth.⁷ African Catholics, Donatists and even Manichees, further, shared a conservative orientation toward biblical texts, preferring regional and traditional Latin renderings and fundamentalist interpretations.⁸ The international intellectual culture of Italian Catholicism in its hellenizing mood was of little local consequence.

Augustine discovered this the hard way: in public. In 392, one year after his forced entry into the clergy at Hippo, he was approached by a mixed delegation of Catholics and Donatists. "Distressed by the plague of Manichaeism [which] had taken hold both of citizens and visitors in great numbers," this group requested that he debate a local Manichaean priest, Fortunatus, whom they held responsible for the sect's successes. Augustine

318; R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of S. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 106–109; older and exhaustively documented, P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1966; orig. pub. 1901), 1.28–96. On the cult of the dead, particularly the feasting and drinking associated with it, F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 471–526; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 207, 299; idem, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981) for the Western churches generally; V. Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles* (Théologie historique, 55. Paris, 1980); W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 114, 174; idem, "The North African Cult of the Martyrs," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 9 (1982): 154–67.

7. A specifically African chronographical tradition, represented by Julius Africanus in the third century, Lactantius in the fourth, and Augustine's colleague, the bishop Hilarius in the fifth, all targeted the year c.e. 500 as the 6000th year since the creation of the world, hence the expected time of Christ's Parousia: Julius Africanus, *Chronica* (fragments), in *Reliquiae sacrae*, vol. 2, ed. M. J. Routh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1846), 238–309; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 7.24–25 (CSEL 19.658–65); Hilarius, *de cursu temporum*, in *Chronica minora*, vol. 1, ed. C. Frick (Leipzig, 1892), 155–72. On this chronographical tradition generally, R. Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography," *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988), 141–208; in the African context in particular, P. Fredriksen, "Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity," *VC* 45 (1991): 151–83, esp. 158ff. and notes 33–38 on the *laetitia* as the popular expression of this belief.

8. On this aspect of African biblical culture, Brown, *Augustine*, 42f., 136. For the Manichaean use of Scripture, F. Decret, *Aspects du Manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1970), 123–49 (OT) and 151–82 (NT); on local allegiance to Old African translations of the NT, Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire*, 1.136; *retract.* I.21(20).3 (CSEL 36.100), on the variety of African readings. African Catholics, evidently, would have preferred not to switch to Jerome: Aug., *ep.* 71.3.5 (CSEL 34.253) on the near-riot that broke out at a service when the presiding bishop introduced Jerome's translation of Jonah.

consented, and on the 28th and 29th of August, before a "large and interested crowd" of all creeds, he and Fortunatus, a former colleague from his Manichee days in Carthage, met to debate the nature of evil.⁹

Practically the entire debate turned upon the interpretation of certain New Testament texts. Fortunatus urged that only a separate and independent malevolent force sufficiently protected God from implication in the problem of evil; that a true physical embodiment of God's son would be both unreasonable and unscriptural; that moral evil is best understood as a battle between contrary natures. Augustine responded continually with the assertion that only *his* God was the consistently philosophical (i.e., impassable) one, and that only the uncoerced movement of a single will sufficiently accounted for sin, since if sin were not voluntary, God would not be just in punishing sinners. Augustine made his case through argument and philosophical tautology;¹⁰ Fortunatus, interestingly, through a near-continuous appeal to Scripture: the Gospels of John (*Fort.* 3) and Matthew (14), and especially the letters of Paul.¹¹

Not until the second day of the debate, buffeted by a sudden fusillade from Fortunatus of Matthean and Pauline texts urging the existence of non-moral evil—"for, apart from our bodies, evil things dwell in the whole world" (21)—did Augustine change his tack. He again invoked human will, but this time nuanced the concept by tying the will's operation into two earlier moments: Adam's sin, and the preceding sins of the individual agent. Adam's sin affected all subsequent humanity, and the individual's sin, through the creation of habit, affects all subsequent action.

9. Possidius, *vita S. Augustini* 6 (PL 32.38). The topic of the debate is nowhere spelled out, but it seems to have focused on the origin of evil and the respective virtues of Catholic and Manichaean theodicies, *Fort.* 19 (CSEL 25/1.96-97); cf. *Retr.* 1.16(15) (CSEL 36.82-83).

10. E.g.: "God gave man's rational soul free will. For merit is possible only if we do good voluntarily, not necessarily," *Fort.* 15, to which Fortunatus responds by quoting Eph 2.1-18, Rom 11.1 and Rom 1.1-4 (*Fort.* 16, 17; CSEL 25/1.91-95). All English citations of the *c. Fortunatum* are taken from the translation by A. H. Newman, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, no date; orig. pub. 1887), 113-124.

11. Phil in *Fort.* 3; Eph in 17. Fortunatus inadvertently brought the first day of the debate to a close when he concluded his citations with 1 Cor 15.5^b: "caro et sanguis regnum dei non possidebunt, neque corruptio incorruptelam possidebit." The crowd at this point vociferously intervened, and then broke into various small discussions (19: I think that they objected strongly to Fortunatus' adducing 1 Cor 15.5^b against the possibility of both Incarnation and fleshly resurrection; see above, n. 7). When they reconvened the following day, and took up the question why man sins, Fortunatus effortlessly adduced more Scriptural support for his position: Mt 15.13 and 3.10; Rom 8.7; Gal 5.17; Rom 7.23-25; Gal 5.14 (*Fort.* 21; CSEL 25/1.102-103).

I say that there was the free exercise of the will in that man who was first formed. . . . But after he freely sinned, we who descend from his stock were plunged into necessity. . . . For today in our actions, before we are implicated by any habit, we have free choice. . . . But when by that liberty we have done something [evil] . . . and the pleasure of that deed has taken hold on the mind, the mind by its own habit is so implicated that it cannot afterwards conquer what it has fashioned for itself.¹²

By so linking moral choice both to Adam's fall and to the individual's psychological/moral development, Augustine had, de facto, reduced the free operation of the will: these historical events—one distant, one proximate—necessarily impinged. But Augustine was still committed to his fundamental principle: to be justly punishable, sin had to be utterly voluntary, just as did virtue, if it were meritorious. And if "Adam" and "habit" implied that human agents, though culpable, functioned with diminished capacity, then the origins of their condition had to be compatible with the justice of God, the source of their condition. Thus, in the wake of his encounter with Fortunatus, Augustine turned first to Genesis,¹³ then again to Paul's letters, to construct an historical and Scriptural understanding of sin and salvation against the Manichees that would neither "seem to condemn the Law [and thus the God who gave it] nor take away man's free will."¹⁴

To this end, explicitly in his comments of 394, the *Expositio Propositionum ex Epistola ad Romanos*, and implicitly in the other Pauline writings that followed, Augustine worked out a four-stage scheme of history:

12. "Liberum voluntatis arbitrium in illo homine fuisse dico, qui primus formatus est. . . . Postquam autem ipse libera voluntate peccavit, nos in necessitatem praecipitati sumus, qui ab eius stirpe descendimus. . . . Hodie namque in nostris actionibus antequam consuetudine aliqua implicemur, liberum habemus arbitrium faciendi aliquid, vel non faciendi. . . . Cum autem ista libertate fecerimus aliquid, et facti ipsius tenuerit animam perniciosam dulcendo et voluptas, eadem ipsa sua consuetudine sic implicatur, ut postea vincere non possit, quod sibi ipsa peccando fabricata est," *Fort.* 22 (CSEL 25/1.103–104). *NP–NF*, 121.

This is an argument for diminished capacity, brought on by the freely willed acts of the individual agent; it is *not* an argument for involuntary sin. Cf. M. Alflatt's two essays, "The Development of the Idea of Involuntary Sin in St. Augustine," *REAug* 20 (1974): 113–34, and "The Responsibility for Involuntary Sin in St. Augustine," *RA* 10 (1975): 170–86; and R. J. O'Connell's recent critique, "'Involuntary Sin' in the *de libero arbitrio*," *REAug* 37 (1991): 23–36; see also the analysis of this moment in Augustine's theological development in James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 86–98.

13. His first, and failed, attempt at a non-allegorical reading of Genesis against the Manichees appeared in 393, the *de Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*.

14. *Propp.* 13–18.1. Latin text and English translation in Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans; Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 5.

*ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia, and in pace.*¹⁵ Earlier, Augustine had divided history into six periods, corresponding to the six days of creation, and the six ages of an individual's life.¹⁶ In that scheme, the six periods corresponded to successive stages in God's dealings with humanity and, specifically, Israel: the first five related to Old Testament times; the sixth, to the period of the New; the seventh would begin with the Second Coming and the millennial rest of the saints. His four-stage model likewise periodized history from humanity before Israel to the second coming of Christ. But these periods also recapitulated the stages of spiritual development for the individual believer. They thus placed at dead center the crucial transition, the moment of conversion, the movement between Stage 2 and 3:

*Ante legem, we pursue fleshly concupiscence; sub lege, we are pulled by it; sub gratia, we neither pursue nor are pulled by it; in pace there is no concupiscence of the flesh. . . . Thus [under grace] we still have desires, but, by not obeying them, we do not allow sin to reign in us (Rom 6.12). These desires arise from the mortality of the flesh, which we bear from the first sin of the first man, whence we are born fleshly (carnaliter). They thus will not cease save at the resurrection of the body. . . . Then there will be perfect peace, when we are established in the fourth stage.*¹⁷

Scriptural history and the individual's experience coincide at their shared extremes: birth in Adam, eschatological transformation in Christ. Augustine thus expanded on the one biblical theme that he had sounded against Fortunatus: the price for Adam's sin paid by all humanity in the moral and physical lability of flesh (*Fort.* 22). But his new schema also united salvation history into a single, telescoped development: the Law of the Old Testament *is the same* as the Law of Christ; the Christian who serves the Law of sin is in *the same moral position* as the Jew (*Propp.* 52). God's work of redemption is thus continuous from the foundation of

15. *Propp.* 13–18.2 (Landes ed., 4); cf. qu. 66–68 of *quaest.*, which I would date after the works on the epistles (CCSL 44A.150–83); *ad Simplicianum* I.1 treats the first and second stages, before and under the law; I.2, the moment of transition, when man passes *sub lege* to *sub gratia*. For a detailed consideration of the argument of these treatises, Paula Fredriksen, "Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine on Paul against the Manichees and the Pelagians," *RA* 23 (1988): 87–114, esp. 89–93.

16. *Gen. Man.* I.23.35–24.42 (PL 34.190–93); cf. *ver. rel.* 26.49 (CCSL 32.218–19); qu. 58.2 (CCSL 44A.99–101). Augustine never abandons the seven-stage scheme, though he interprets it variously. It reappears shortly after these commentaries, in *Faust.* 12.8 (CSEL 25/1.336); and structures the finale of the huge *City of God*, 22.30 (CSEL 48.862–66). On this earlier period, the fundamental essay by F. E. Cranz, "The Development of Augustine's Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy," *HTR* 47 (1954): 255–316; on such schemes and their place in Christian theology, A. Luneau, *Histoire du Salut chez les Pères de l'Église: La Doctrine des âges du monde* (Paris, 1964).

17. *Propp.* 13–18.2 and 10 (Landes ed., 5, 7).

Israel—indeed, from Creation itself—through the coming of Christ and the establishment of his church. This is a radical and original response to the Manichaean critique and repudiation of the Old Testament.

How, then, the transition from law to grace? “One must take care,” cautions Augustine, “lest he think that these words deny our free will, for it is not so.”¹⁸ The key, he insists, lies precisely in man’s will. Insufficient to prevent sin, man’s will can at least prompt him, *sub lege*, to turn in faith to Christ and implore his aid (44.3). Receiving grace through faith, man then moves *sub gratia*. The motor of this movement is the will.¹⁹

But is man really so free? What about God’s choice of Jacob over Esau, “which moves some people to think that the Apostle Paul has done away with the freedom of the will” (60.2; cf. Rom 9.11–13)? What about Pharaoh: how free was he after God hardened his heart (Rom 9:17)? In response, Augustine adduces a line from Matthew’s gospel: “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt 22.14; *Propp.* 55.1–2). God justly distinguishes between those he calls and those he chooses by his inerrant foreknowledge. God foreknows the movements of the human heart; he foresees who will respond freely with *bona voluntas* to his *vocatio*. The reward to the man of good will is to be called so that he receives faith as a gift.

Thus God chose Jacob, whom he foreknew would respond to his call, which Esau would spurn. So too Pharaoh, whose heart God justly hardened as punishment for foreknown infidelity (55.2–5). God is just; he is neither arbitrary nor ineluctable; he distinguishes between those whom he calls and those whom he chooses justly, on the basis of merit, the merit of faith freely willed. *Non opera sed fides inchoat meritum* (62.9).

I review Augustine’s position in such detail because it erodes so entirely over the course of the next eighteen months. Between the composition of the *Propositiones* and the completion of qu. 1 of his response to Simplicianus, Augustine returned repeatedly to Paul’s letters, to the episodes in Genesis they evoked—Adam’s sin, the choice of Jacob over Esau, the hardening of Pharaoh—and to the points of principle of a Catholic theodicy vis-à-vis Manichaean dualism. These issues remain paramount, his

18. *Propp.* 44.1 (Landes ed., 17).

19. “Quod autem ait: *Non enim quod volo, hoc ago, sed quod odi, illud facio. Si autem quod nolo, hoc facio, consentio legi, quoniam bona est, satis quidem lex ab omni criminatione defenditur, sed cavendum ne quis arbitretur his verbis auferri nobis liberum voluntatis arbitrium, quod non ita est. Nunc enim homo describitur sub lege positus ante gratiam. Tunc enim peccatis vincitur, dum viribus suis iuste vivere conatur sine adiutorio liberantis gratiae dei. In libero autem arbitrio habet, ut credat liberatori et accipiat gratiam, ut iam illo, qui eam donat, liberante et adiuvante non peccet atque ita desinat esse sub lege, sed cum lege vel in lege implens eam caritate dei, quod timore non poterat,*” *Propp.* 44.1–3 (Landes ed., 16).

commitment to the uncoerced nature of sin as unambiguous as ever. Yet in 396, Augustine executed a dazzling exegetical *volte-face*: man's will itself, he then argued—not just the will to fulfill the Law, but the good will with which man might choose to greet God's call—is from God. The initiative of conversion lies entirely outside the individual:

For the good will does not precede the calling, but the calling precedes the good will. The fact that we have a good will is rightly attributed to God who calls us. . . . So the sentence, "It is not him who wills nor him who runs but God who has mercy" cannot be taken simply to mean that we cannot attain what we wish without the aid of God; but rather that, without his calling, *we cannot even will*.²⁰

Restat ergo voluntates eliguntur. Election, Augustine concludes, is *entirely unmerited*. He makes this case in the *ad Simplicianum* especially by focusing on the solidarity of the race in Adam. Since Eden, all humanity is part of the *massa damnata*, literally the "lump of perdition": damnation is all anybody deserves. From this *massa* God mysteriously, and in complete freedom, chooses whomever he wishes: the initiative is solely and totally his.²¹

The torturous intricacy of Augustine's reasoning in the *ad Simplicianum*, the startling novelty of its conclusion, and its significance as a turning point in his understanding of Paul, are well known to students of Augustine's thought. But this treatise also marks the beginning of a new hermeneutical and theological trajectory—how to read the Bible and what it means—that leads to his teaching on Jews and Judaism. This becomes clearer if we attend to two aspects of the treatise's concluding argument: Augustine's views on divine justice and the radical nature of divine freedom, on the one hand; and his presentation of human freedom at the conversion of Saul, on the other.

How are humans to understand God's justice? In 394, in his unfinished commentary on Romans begun shortly after the *Propositiones*, Augustine had argued that divine justice transcended human precisely because God's mercy was incomparably greater. For this reason, man should never despair of gaining God's pardon, since God pardons much more readily and fully than do men. On the basis of this understanding, Augustine had

20. "Et enim quia non praecedit voluntas bona vocationem, sed vocatio bonam voluntatem, propterea vocanti Deo recte tribuitur quod bene volumus, nobis vero tribui non potest quod vocamur. Non igitur ideo dictum putandum est, *Non volentis neque currentis, sed miserentis est Dei*, quia nisi eius adiutorio non possumus adipisci quod volumus, sed ideo potius quia nisi eius vocatione non volumus," *Simpl.* 1.2.12 (CCSL 44.37); transl. John H. S. Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 395.

21. Fredriksen, "Body/Soul," 96, for discussion of the *massa* and the way it transmutes in the Pauline works that cluster in the mid-390s.

defined the "sin against the Holy Spirit which can never be forgiven" as despair (cf. Mt 12.31–32). If one despairs of divine forgiveness, he has no motivation for repentance; if he does not repent, he cannot reform, and so he continues to sin. To be driven by this hopeless despair, then, to so profoundly misunderstand the nature of divine mercy, hence justice, "is to resist the grace and peace of God."²²

If arguments can have opposites, then Augustine in 396, concluding his response to Simplicianus, had reversed his position entirely. Divine justice, such a brief time earlier seen as incomparable to human justice on account of God's great mercy, Augustine now held to be incomprehensible in its very operation. God is not required to be merciful; all humankind has been justly condemned, and all are bound, justly, into the Adamic equalizer of the species, the *massa damnata*. That God chooses to remit punishment to anyone at all is a great mystery. There must be some principle of differentiation, since God does make choices. But, Augustine concluded, again citing Paul, the reasons for his choices are unfathomable in principle: "Inscrutable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom 11.33, at 1.2.16). Augustine, in short, abandoned any thought of God as an exemplar of justice. Piety demands that man—on precious little evidence—believe that God judges by some standard of equity; but that standard of equity, hidden from human understanding, is *occultissima*.²³

22. "Quid aliud restat nisi ut peccatum in spiritum sanctum, quod neque in hoc saeculo neque in futuro dimitti dominus dicit, nullum intelligatur nisi perseverantia in nequitia et in malignitate cum desperatione indulgentiae dei? Hoc est enim gratiae illius et paci resistere. . . ." *Epistolae ad Romanos Inchoata Expositio* 22.3–4, also 7; cf. 14.1, and the concluding passage of this treatise in 23.13 regarding those who "continue in their sins with despairing and impious stubbornness" (Landes ed., 86, 70, 89).

23. Augustine again quotes Paul, criticizing those who cannot bear this seeming arbitrariness—O homo tu quis es (Rom 9.20)—and then concludes this passage: "Sic enim respondet Deo, cum ei displicet quod de peccatoribus conqueritur Deus, quasi quemquam Deus peccare cogat, cum ipse neminem peccare cogat, sed tantummodo quibusdam peccantibus misericordiam justificationis suae non largiatur, et ob hoc dicatur obdurare peccantes quosdam, quia non eorum miseretur, non quia impellit ut peccent. Eorum autem non miseretur, quibus miseracordiam non esse praebendam, *aequitate occultissima et ab humanis sensibus remotissima iudicat*," 1.2.16 (CCSL 44.42). Cf. his comment on precisely this verse, regarding God's hardening of Pharaoh, in qu. 68.4 of *quaest.*, written between the commentaries and *Simpl.*: "Prorsus cuius vult miseretur, et quem vult obdurat; sed haec voluntas Dei injusta esse non potest. Venit enim de *occultissimis meritis*; quia et ipsi peccatores cum propter generale peccatum unam massam fecerint, non tamen nulla est inter illos diversitas" (CCSL 44A.179–80).

This same defense of God's inscrutability in the face of the challenge of evil, by allusion to Paul's metaphor of the pot challenging the potter in Romans 9, had also occurred in the course of Augustine's debate in 392; but there it had been invoked by Fortunatus (*Fort.* 26; CSEL 25/1.109).

The way that Augustine illustrates his point about divine inscrutability—God's radical moral freedom (from the human point of view) to choose whom he will—is the second interesting aspect of this treatise's finale. Augustine turns, again, to Paul. But for the first time Paul provides something other than the occasion for exegesis: he stands as a concrete historical example²⁴ of the way that God, in his freedom, works:

What did Saul will but to attack, seize, bind and slay Christians? What a fierce, savage, blind will was that! Yet he was thrown prostrate by one word from on high, and a vision came to him whereby his mind and will were turned from their fierceness and set on the right way towards faith so that, suddenly, from a marvelous persecutor of the Gospel a more marvelous preacher was made. What then shall we say? . . . "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!"²⁵

Paul's personal history could not be accommodated to Augustine's earlier construal of the movement *sub lege* to *sub gratia*, which in the *Propositiones* he had argued turned upon God's foreknowledge of the individual's *bona voluntas*. Saul had had no preceding good will: a ruthless and unconflicted persecutor—indeed, a murderer—he had liked his work. Presumably, on the basis of prior record, Saul would have declined God's call if he could have.²⁶ Yet God, irresistibly, chose him anyway. Perhaps it did not seem fair, but there it was. Who was man to answer back to God?

The exegetical tour de force of *ad Simplicianum* qu. I ends abruptly on this moment of conversion, Saul into Paul, constructed not exegetically (as in the Romans commentaries of 394/5) but historically. And this ending, in turn, serves as a condensed paradigm for the narrative argument of the work that immediately followed, and followed from, it: the story of the "historical" Augustine as presented in the *Confessions* (397).²⁷ The *Con-*

24. References to Paul's conversion as depicted in Acts suddenly appear and cluster in the works of the 390s. See the *mémoire de licence* of Guy LeRoy, "Ac. 9 dans la prédication de Saint Augustin," Institut d'études théologiques, section francophone (Bruxelles, 1986), esp. the charts on 17–21; also L.C. Ferrari, "Saint Augustine on the Road to Damascus," *Aug. Stud.* 13 (1982): 151–70, esp. 156–68.

25. *Simpl.* 1.2.22 (CCSL 44.55); Burleigh, 406.

26. Cf. *Inch. Exp.* 9.3: illi . . . qui vocantem deum non spreverunt (Landes ed., 62). By implication, some *could* choose to spurn God's call; see also qu. 68,4–5. Augustine later does not hesitate to speak of Paul as having been coerced, *serm.* 24.7; *de correctione donatistarum* (ep. 185) 6.21 (where Christ, not God, does the forcing).

27. The opening passage of the *Confessions* concludes with an allusion to Paul, 1.1.1: "Invocat te, domine, fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium *praedicatoris tui*"; cf. 10.23.34, where Paul is "homo tuus verum *praedicans*" (O'Donnell ed., 1.3, 133); *Simpl.* 1.2.22, "repente ex evangelii mirabili persecutore mirabilior *praedicator* effectus est" (CCSL 44.55). Cf. Wetzel's

fessions is the most idiosyncratic, original and creative of Augustine's anti-Manichaean polemics;²⁸ and it represents the substantiation of his new understanding of Paul, of grace, sin, and will, by his applying the theological argument of the *Simpl.* to the data of his own past.²⁹

If the *Confessions* can be seen as a symphony in three movements—autobiographical (Books 1–9), epistemological (10, on knowledge, time, memory, and the Church), and exegetical (11–13 are an allegorical reading of the first thirty-one verses of Genesis)—the human experience of opacity threads like a minor-key theme throughout the whole. Its expression in Augustine's depiction of his own past, the narrative of 1–9, is the most accessible and in many ways the most poignant.³⁰ The inscrutable God of the *ad Simplicianum*, who gave grace to the unrepentant Saul and who hated Esau when Esau was still in the womb, is the God who had eluded Augustine throughout the latter's searches for him, the God who failed to respond clearly even once Augustine was intellectually and morally convinced of the truth of the Catholic Church.³¹ And Augustine's experience of God's opacity within his own history is terrifyingly duplicated in his experience of himself, and thus of everyone: because of the great sin that marks the beginning of history,³² man can neither know nor control himself. The spirit wars against the flesh, habit disorders love, compulsion governs desire, the will itself is divided. Consequently, as Augustine illustrates by examples from his own past, man fails to understand

close analysis of Augustine's parallel arguments between Paul's history and his own, *Augustine and Virtue*, 169–73.

28. See O'Donnell's remarks, *Augustine, Confessions*, 1.xlix and n. 97; also Wetzel, *Augustine and Virtue*, 138–60.

29. For the position that this retrospect created these data, Ferrari, "Augustine on the Road . . .," 168–70; more conservatively, I have concluded that Augustine's new perspective on Paul led him to revise (in the literal sense: to see again) his own experience "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *JTS* 37 (1986): 3–34, esp. 21 and 24; also Wetzel, *Augustine and Virtue*, 191–97.

30. Though the theme marks the whole. Book 10 poses the problem of how we know what we (think we) know, working from sense-knowledge to purely intellectual knowledge, and emotional knowledge as memory; 11–13, the difficulty of knowing God for time-bound human consciousness, and the ways the Church allays this. On these complex closing books, O'Donnell, *Confessions*, 1.xl.

31. Augustine is intellectually ready for Catholicism by Book 7; the problem of evil, and of appreciating Scripture, had been resolved. See O'Donnell's remarks, *Confessions*, xxxvii–xli.

32. Evoked immediately in the opening lines of Book 1: "et laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccati et testimonium quia superbis resistis," (O'Donnell ed., 3).

both his interior life and his exterior experience. The self, like God, is hidden from the self.³³

In the five years between his debate with Fortunatus and the appearance of the *Confessions*, Augustine had repeatedly tried to construct a reading of Paul against the dualism, moral determinism, and Scriptural criticism of the Manichees. Against their dualism, Augustine had always insisted on one God, the God of both Old Testament and New; but now, post-396, this God's ways, to time-bound humans, were unknowable in principle, opaque. Against their moral determinism, he continued to insist that sin, to be justly punishable, could only be voluntary. But human will, in his new view, was so divided and its motivations so obscure that it was utterly, radically dependent on grace. His arguments are superior to those of the Manichees, but this victory has a Pyrrhic quality. His response to Manichaean readings of the Bible, however, is haunted by no such *tristesse*.

Augustine had begun his assault on the Manichaean understanding of the Old Testament back in 389, while still in Italy, with a philosophically allegorical interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis, *de Genesi contra Manichaeos*. Evidently dissatisfied with this line of approach, he later began, and soon abandoned, a more historical reading, the *de Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber* (c. 393). Two events in the 390s then conspired to set Augustine along a new path: the Origenist controversy, which cast a pale of suspicion over the use of philosophical allegory as a technique of Scriptural exegesis, exploded in the Latin West;³⁴ and Augustine read Tyconius.³⁵

33. On this opacity of God and of personal experience, Fredriksen "Apocalypse and Redemption," 164–66.

34. The Origenist controversy in the West formally begins in 398, with Rufinus' translation in Rome of the *Peri Archon*. Rufinus translated his commentary on Romans in 404, and continued with the project of putting Origen into Latin until his death in 410. On the convulsions in fourth/fifth century Latin theology occasioned by this controversy, see the rich study by Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Social Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 194–244.

These dates put the full outbreak of the controversy a little late for our period. Enough of Augustine's argument in the later sections of *de libero arbitrio* (completed in 395), however, speaks against Origen's in the *Peri Archon* to allow me to suspect that rumors of Origen's (now unacceptable) positions were circulating well prior to Rufinus' translations. Cf. *lib.* 3.23.68 and *PA* 1.8.1, on the sufferings of infants; *lib.* 3.5.16 against psychic transformation into lower bodies and *PA* 1.7.4; *lib.* 3.20.56–21.59 on theories of the soul's origins and *PA* 1. praef. 4.

35. Our surest date for Augustine's reading of Tyconius comes in his enthusiastic review of the *liber regularum* in *ep.* 41, to Aurelius of Carthage, written in 396. I have argued, on the basis of correspondences between Tyconius' argument on Paul in *lib. reg.*

The encounter with Tyconius was decisive.³⁶ In his handbook on Scriptural exegesis, the *liber regularum*, Tyconius had laid out rules for finding one's way through "the immense forest of prophecy" that depended on the use of typology. Typology is allegory: It says that Datum A prefigures or finds its meaning in Datum B. But it is allegory with a difference: it historicizes what is figured. The "future" and spiritually realized meaning of an interpreted event neither denies nor eviscerates the historical givenness of that event.³⁷ Further, Tyconius emphasized the continuity of biblical salvation history, disowning any sharp rupture between Old Dispensation and New. The Law *is* the Bible, and thus the Law encompasses God's promises; the Law speaks both to the period of Israel and to the age of the Church. Both Law and promise obtain at all times, and the Law works in the predestined to arouse faith.³⁸ Finally, focusing especially on Paul,³⁹ Tyconius interpreted the history of salvation as a process as much interior as linear. The subtle and mysterious interplay of grace, free will and divine foreknowledge, he argued, are constant across nations, times, and individuals; whether for Jacob or the generation in Babylon, for Paul or the contemporary believer, they remain the same.⁴⁰

The constancy of the way that God works in history, the religious validity of the Law, the historical integrity of events in the biblical past—these

3 and Augustine's in *Propp.*, that we can date Tyconius' influence to 394, the year Augustine writes his Pauline commentaries: see Fredriksen, "Apocalypse and Redemption," 163 and n. 54. Cited here is F. C. Burkitt's text, edited in 1894, as reproduced in the edition and translation by William S. Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

36. The classic study is A. Pincherle, *La formazione teologica di Sant'Agostino* (Rome: Edizioni Italiane, 1947), 175ff.; see also W. S. Babcock, "Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394-96)," *Aug. Stud.* 10 (1979): 55-74; my earlier essays "Body/Soul Dichotomy," 99-101, and "Apocalypse and Redemption," 157-64.

37. On Tyconian typology, "Apocalypse and Redemption," 158-60.

38. Thus, in a dazzling conflation of Genesis, Galatians and Romans, Tyconius characterizes the man who loves God as one who serves the Law not out of fear but love, like Isaac, the son of the free woman, "qui non accepit spiritum servitutis in timorem sed adoptionem filiorum clamantem Abba, pater?" *lib. reg.* 3 (Babcock ed., 44). Cf. Augustine's equally dazzlingly conflation of Genesis (the creation of lights in the firmament) and Acts (the creation of the Church at Pentecost): "ecce enim tamquam deo dicente, 'fiant luminaria in firmamento caeli', factus est subito de caelo sonus, quasi ferretur flatus vehemens, et visae sunt linguae divisae quasi ignis, qui et insedit super unumquemque illorum, et facta sunt luminaria in firmamento caeli verbum vitae habentia," *conf.* 13.19.25 (O'Donnell ed., 193).

39. Esp. in Book 3, *de promissis et lege*.

40. In Book 3, Tyconius continuously weaves together verses from the Pauline epistles and from the Old Testament, arguing that Israel's faith was always continuous with the gospel: "Lex inquam fidei erat demonstratrix. . . . Iusti enim Israhel ex fide in eandem fidem vocati sunt." See Babcock's remarks, *Tyconius*, 29 n. 1.

are the core convictions, articulated exegetically, that Augustine discovered in and took over from Tyconius. They turned him toward sacred history, the record of saving events in the Biblical past as the place where divine activity would be most clearly perceived. They contoured the way that Augustine grappled with his increasing sense of God's moral unknowableness, both with respect to the divine choices narrated in Romans 9, and with his retrospective assessment of the ways that God had acted in his own past, and especially in his own conversion.⁴¹ Finally, they compelled his construction of a biblical hermeneutic against the Manichees that is marked by an historical simplicity and an historical realism. We see this most clearly in the huge work of anti-Manichaean polemic that followed the *Confessions*, the *contra Faustum*; and it is there as well that we can see the ways that Augustine's historicizing hermeneutic affected his understanding of Jews and Judaism.

II

"Contra Faustum manichaeum blasphemantem legem et prophetas et eorum Deum et incarnationem Christi; scripturas autem novi testamenti quibus convincitur falsatas esse dicentem, scripsi grande opus."⁴² Since the *c. Faustum* is a work of Scriptural reclamation, references to Jews lie scattered throughout its thirty-three books. Of particular concern to us are Books 12 and 13, on the prophets. We can best appreciate their argument, and the consequences of Augustine's historical understanding of Scripture for his teaching on Jews and Judaism, if we view these books, briefly, from the perspective of two earlier writings likewise directed against Christian dualists: Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 150) and Tertullian's *adversus Marcionem* (207).

Justin in his dialogue had championed an allegorical understanding of the Septuagint directed against the views of his Jewish interlocutor, Trypho; but in the immediate ideological background of his presentation stood his Christian competition, Marcion and Valentinus.⁴³ These men, complained Justin, denied that God the Father of Jesus had anything to do with God the Creator in Genesis, whom they identified and repudiated as

41. Which is to say, through the generation of historical narrative, whether of Saul's conversion (derived largely from Acts 9) or of his own; Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives," 23ff.

42. *Retr.* 2.7.1 (CCSL 57.95).

43. Invoked obliquely as the dialogue gets underway in ch. 11; specifically repudiated in ch. 35. The Greek text with facing French translation is available in G. Archambault, *Justin, Dialogue avec Tryphon*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1909).

the God of the Jews. Tertullian argued directly against Marcion; and in Book III of his treatise, excoriating the docetic Christology that cohered with the dualist position, he leaned heavily on Justin's work.⁴⁴

Both authors strained to rehabilitate the Jewish Scriptures in the face of the dualist critique while reclaiming them interpretively for their own church. To this end, they relied on the twin tools of polemic and allegory. Thus, argued Justin (and, following him, Tertullian), the Jews had always understood their Scriptures literally, which is to say, carnally; attending to God's instruction, they had supposed that he wanted his commandments literally fulfilled. Not so. The true import of the Law was always exclusively allegorical, hence spiritual, but the Jews had never realized this. True circumcision is of the heart's foreskin (*Trypho* 18, and frequently); the true sabbath is the Sabbath in Christ (12). The Law was actually given because of Jewish hardness of heart (18, 21, 22, 27, and frequently). In fact, the God who appears throughout the Jewish Scriptures cannot have been the High God, God the Father: that would be unphilosophical.⁴⁵ Rather, the God who appeared to Abraham at Mamre and Jacob at Jabbok was the *heteros theos*, the pre-incarnate Christ; and the Jews, failing to grasp his true identity, consequently misunderstood their own Scriptures (56–62; 126–27)—“rather, not yours, but ours” (29). Thus, since Jews denied that the Christ has come, they share their poison with dualist heretics, whose docetic Christology amount to the same thing (*adv. Marc.* 3.8).

Augustine's opponent, Faustus, was the fourth-century avatar of these second-century dualists; and on many points of doctrine—docetic Christology, repudiation of Jewish Scriptures, divorce of God the Father of Jesus from the lower material realm—Marcion and the Manichees agreed. But Justin and Tertullian, in refuting these points, had placed the Old Testament in an ironic double context. In their view, the Law, embraced by the Jews as a blessing, had actually been intended as a curse. Literal obedience

44. I have used the edition by E. Evans, *Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1972); see esp. his useful introductions, both on Marcion, and on Tertullian's use of sources, 1.ix–xx.

45. It was a principle of Platonic (and later platonizing) philosophy that the High God was absolutely impassive, perfect, and without change: indeed, these aspects are essentially synonymous. According to Justin, God is “that which always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things,” *Trypho* 3. Two centuries later, the pagan Sallustius opined similarly: “All God is good, free from passion, free from change,” *On the Gods and the World* 1. This definition of God, which commanded the intellectual allegiance of the well educated in antiquity whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian, sat poorly astride the active deity depicted in the narratives of the Septuagint (cf. Philo's *de opificio mundi*, where intermediaries, whether angels or the Logos, do a lot of the work). Justin's pre-incarnate Christ protects God the Father from too direct an involvement with time, hence change.

to God's commands was the last thing that God had wanted, and the last thing Jews would have done had they truly understood the Law. Israel was not, and never had been, the Jews, but whether before or after Christ's incarnation had always been the Church. Thus these theologians refuted their opponents' docetic Christology; but in so doing, they created a docetic history.

Such an ironic double context, Augustine felt, undermined the authority of Scripture, and so played into Manichee hands. Thus when Jerome, in his commentary on Galatians, suggested that Paul's falling-out with Peter over the issue of judaizing (Gal 2) had actually been a pretense enacted for the edification of their audience, Augustine insisted that the text must be read literally, as the accurate report of a true disagreement.⁴⁶ So too with the text of the Jewish Scriptures: they could fortify Christian faith and yet still be read—indeed, must be read—in a straightforward, literal way.

We see the fruit of such a reading in the *c. Faustum*. The Jews, like the Manichees, may read the Law with "a veil drawn over their hearts" (2 Cor 3.15); but the Law itself, Augustine urged, had been intended and received as a good thing—otherwise, how could Paul have praised Israel for having it?⁴⁷ The Jews had been right to practice the Law "literally": the fault lay not with their observance, but with their failure to realize when the things the Law pointed forward to had been realized in Christ (12.9). They are like Cain who, once asked his brother's whereabouts, pled ignorance: "And what answer can the Jews give even today, when we ask them with the voice of God—that is, sacred Scripture—about Christ, except that they do not know the christ that we speak of?" What might have been the opportunity for an ugly charge of deicide instead becomes an elaborate ecclesial metaphor:

Then God says to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground." So the voice of God in the Holy Scriptures accuses the Jews. For the blood of Christ has a loud voice on the earth, when the responsive Amen of those who believe in Him comes from all the nations. This is the voice of Christ's blood, because the clear voice of the faithful redeemed by His blood is the voice of the blood itself.⁴⁸

46. See on this point his *Sermo super verbis Apostoli ad Galatas*, preached in 397, and recently edited by François Dolbeau in *Revue Bénédictine* 102 (1992): 52–63; see too Dolbeau's remarks, and his review of the controversy with Jerome, 45–49. "[Augustin] ne modifia nullement ses positions, de peur de laisser une porte ouverte aux critiques scriptuaires des Manichéens," 48 (cf. Augustine's especially clear statement to this effect, *ep.* 82.6). While earlier in their correspondence, Jerome and Augustine differed on the implications of lying (*epp.* 28, 40), their final salvos (*epp.* 75 and 82) are much concerned with the theological status of Jewish Law and custom.

47. *Faust.* 12.3–4; Rom 9.4.

48. "Dicit Deus Cain: Quid fecisti? Vox sanguinis fratris tui clamat ad me de terra."

Augustine proceeds to find typological resonances between figures or events in the Jewish Scriptures and in the life of Christ and the teachings of his Church. Thus Noah saved his family by water and wood, as Christ did also (baptism and crucifixion). The dimensions of the ark, through a Christian gematria, conform to precise aspects of doctrine (12.14). The variety of animals saved from the flood recalls the variety of nations saved in the Church (12.15). The waters came seven days after Noah entered the ark; Christians hope for salvation in the seventh day, the sabbath rest of the saints. Abraham left his country and kindred; so Christ, going out from his Jewish patrimony, extended his power among the Gentiles. Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice, Christ for his. Christ recalls the angel at Jabbok, the stone under Jacob's head; the evangelists, the angels ascending and descending the ladder (12.26). The parallels go on and on.

Augustine, through this typological reading, clearly savored the Christian significance of these biblical episodes; but he likewise insisted upon their historical and social reality. Thus he taunted Faustus: "Everyone must be impressed. . . . For although God is the God of all nations, even the Gentiles acknowledge him to be in a peculiar sense the God of Israel" (12.24). The salvation wrought by God is continuous between the two dispensations: "The same law that was given by Moses became grace and truth in Jesus Christ" (22.6). Christ's bride is the Church, but his mother is the Synagogue (12.8). Fleshly circumcision typologically embodied nothing less than the resurrection of Christ, and thus the redemption of all who believe (19.9).⁴⁹

This same historical realism, and a sure pastoral sense, marks as well Augustine's discussion of the Torah-observant first generation of Christians: they were brought to change their hereditary customs only by degrees. Some, like Timothy, even chose to conform fully to the ancient practices: no reason he should not (*non prohiberentur*, 19.17). This Jewish-Christian generation understood that these ordinances had pointed forward to and found their fulfillment in Christ. Forcing observance on Gentiles not brought up in these customs would have been confusing and counterproductive, and Paul rightly reprimanded Peter on precisely this point. But this unique Jewish generation, the font of the Church, was right

Sic arguit in scripturis sanctis vox divina Iudaeos. Habet enim magnam vocem Christi sanguis in terra, cum eo accepto ab omnibus gentibus respondetur, Amen. Haec est clara vox sanguinis, quam sanguinis, ipse exprimit ex ore fidelium eodem sanguine redemptorum," 12.10 (CSEL 25/1.339). All English translations are based on the version by Richard Stohert, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 4.155-345.

49. Cf. Justin, *Trypho* 16-17, where circumcision functions as a way to identify and so victimize Jews in order to punish them for deicide.

to cease the *actio prophetica* (as Augustine strikingly characterized Torah-observance) only gradually once the prophecy, through Christ's coming, had been fulfilled, "lest by compulsory abandonment it should seem to be condemned rather than closed" (19.17).⁵⁰

Thus, in Augustine's perspective, Jewish practice and tradition had a certain religious and historical integrity of their own. Biblical Jews, and even the Jews of the apostolic generation, had been right to observe the ordinances of the good Law given by God to Israel through Moses at Sinai. But Augustine's Jewish contemporaries continued to cling to these practices long after their purpose, through Christ, had been fulfilled, and thus as a community they denied and defied not only the universal Church, but divine intention. What of them?

Precisely because of the integrity of their religious identity, argued Augustine, contemporary Jews performed a unique, and uniquely important, service of witness for the Church. They are a *scriniaria*, a "desk for Christians, bearing the Law and the Prophets, testifying to the doctrine of the Church" by disclosing in the letter what Christians honor in the sacrament.⁵¹ So replete with Christian referents are the Jewish Scriptures that believers might fear an outside sceptic would suspect that Christians made these writings up *ex eventu*, were it not for the Jews who, like servants, carry these books for the church: "From the Jewish manuscripts we prove that these things were not written by us to suit the event, but were long ago published and preserved as prophecies in the Jewish nation" (13.10).

It is a great confirmation of our faith that such important testimony is borne by enemies. The believing Gentiles cannot suppose these testimonies to Christ to be recent forgeries; for they find them in books held sacred for so many ages by those who crucified Christ, still venerated by those who daily blaspheme Him. . . . The unbelief of the Jews has been made of signal benefit to

50. "Sed posteaquam in unum Apostoli congregati, etiam consilio suo censuerunt Gentes ad huiusmodi opera Legis non esse cogendas; displicuit quibusdam ex circumcissione Christianis, non valentibus mente discernere, illos solos ab huiusmodi observationibus non fuisse prohibendos, quos fides quae revelata est his iam imbutos invenerat; ut in eis iam consummaretur ipsa actio prophetica, quos ante adimpletionem prophetiae iam tenuerat, ne si et ab ipsis removeretur, improbata potius quam terminata videretur. . . . Prima atque populus Dei, antequam Christus veniret Legem Prophetasque adimplere, illa omnia quae hunc promittebant observare iubebatur: liber in eis qui haec quo pertinerent intelligebant," 19.17 (CSEL 25/1.515f.). Cf. his later statement, made in 405 to Jerome, that the first generation of Jewish converts to Christianity felt bound to observe the Law "propter commendandam scilicet auctoritatem divinam et sacramentorum illorum prophetica sanctitatem," *ep.* 82.9.

51. "Quid est enim aliud hodieque gens ipsa nisi quaedam scriniaria Christianorum, baiulans Legem et Prophetas ad testimonium assertionis Ecclesiae, ut nos honoremus per sacramentum quod nuntiat illa per litteram?" 12.23 (CSEL 25/1.351).

us, so that those who do not receive these truths in their heart for their own good nonetheless carry in their hands, for our benefit, the writings in which these truths are contained. And the unbelief of the Jews increases rather than lessens the authority of these books, for this blindness is itself foretold. They testify to the truth by their not understanding it.⁵²

In consequence of their blindness to Christian truth, contemporary Jews, scattered and bereft of their commonwealth, live in constant anxiety, subjected to the immensely more numerous Christians; terrified, like Cain, of bodily death. But as God marked Cain for his protection, so through the Law has he marked the Jews. Indeed, God himself protects them from murder, vowing seven-fold vengeance on would-be fratricides (12.12). Nor may any monarch coerce conversion, that is, "kill" Jews by forcing them to cease living as Jews: again, like Cain, they stand under the protection of God (12.13). Thus until the end of time, "the continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death" (12.12).

But the very clarity of the Scriptural prophecies of Jewish unbelief, and their unambiguous confirmation, raised once again the constellation of questions that had dogged Augustine during his earlier reading of Romans and in his examination of his own life. If the sin of unbelief is mandated by heaven (as in the case of Esau, Pharaoh, or anyone languishing *sub lege*), how is God just in punishing the sinner? If prophesied through the spokesmen of God, who has inerrant foreknowledge, is sin nonetheless fully voluntary? If not voluntary, can it still be "sin"? If God is just, how can he condemn those to whom he has chosen not to give grace? If he had offered grace, could the sinner possibly have refused?

Augustine's answers to these questions, as we have seen, had shifted dramatically between the Romans commentaries of 394 and his answer to Simplicianus in 396. In 394, the sinner had the freedom to resist God's offer of grace: this resistance had informed Augustine's definition of de-

52. "Eo ipso nimirum fortius atque firmitus, quod ex manibus inimicorum tanta de Christo testimonia proferuntur; in quibus ideo Gentes quae credunt, nihil de illo ad tempus possunt putare confictum, quia in eis libris inveniunt Christum, quibus a tot saeculis serviunt qui crucifixerunt Christum, et quos in tanto apice auctoritatis habent qui quotidie blasphemant Christum. . . . Magnum aliquid actum est in usum nostrum de infidelitate Iudaeorum, ut iidem ipsi qui haec propter se non haberent in cordibus, propter nos haberent in codicibus. Nec inde auctoritas illis libris minuitur, quod a Iudaeis non intelliguntur; imo et augetur: nam et ipsa eorum caecitas ibi praedicta est. Unde magis non intelligendo veritatem perhibent testimonium veritati: quia cum eos libros non intelligunt, a quibus non intellecturi praedicti sunt, etiam hinc eos veraces ostendunt," 16.21 (CSEL 25/1.463); NP-NF, 227.

spair.⁵³ But by 396, grace was not only unmerited, it was also utterly irresistible: "voluntati eius nullus resistit."⁵⁴ Hence his depiction of Saul "thrown prostrate," wrenched involuntarily into a new life *sub gratia*, chosen through some divine standard of justice that remained, by human measure, *inscrutabilia*.

Where in the *c. Faustum* Augustine considers the Jews, both ways of conceiving these issues appear. In 12.11, developing the theme of Cain the fratricide as a type of the Jews who killed Christ and who continue to resist the embrace of the Church, the pre-396 language of uncompromised volition creeps in. Jews are "the people who *would* not (*nolentis*) be under grace, but under the Law." Their lack of faith, within this discourse, seems the result of choice.

But in *c. Faustum* 13.11, considering Jewish freedom of choice in the perspective of prophecy, the question of God's justice again arose, since someone might object "that it was not the fault of the Jews if God blinded them so that they did not know Christ."⁵⁵ In defense of divine justice, Augustine again invoked divine inscrutability. Jewish blindness, Augustine grants, is a punishment, but not for the sin of killing Christ: evidently (this is my inference, not his argument) in fulfilling that prophetic script, and in so doing bringing salvation to the Gentiles, the Jews had committed a discrete sin. Their continuing blindness, however, was the penalty for some other sin. But what? God knows, says Augustine. We can with security only affirm his justice: "ex *aliis occultis peccatis Deo cognitis* venire iustam poenam huius caecitatis. . . . et [Jeremias] ostendit *occulti eorum meriti* fuisse ut non cognoscerent."⁵⁶ Jews too, then, like the rest of the unredeemed *massa damnata*,⁵⁷ languish *sub lege*. Whether God chooses to

53. See above, pp. 306–7.

54. *Simpl.* 1.2.17; cf. Rom 9.19. See J. M. Rist's discussion of will and grace in *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130–35. I am puzzled by Rist's assertion that Augustine "does not say that grace is irresistible, but that it is 'effective' in that it provides the will with 'most effective strength,'" 133; cf. 134 and n. 110, that, according to Augustine, no one can be compelled to will: Saul was.

55. "Quod si diceret, Quid ergo peccaverunt Iudaei, si Deus illos excaecavit ne agnoscerent Christum?" (CSEL 25/1.390).

56. CSEL 25/1.390–91. Cf. *Psal.* 68.26, where the Jews' blindness is God's *occulta vindicta* for their sin of malice; also *fid.* 6.9: "Nam eos non intellecturos ab eisdem prophetis ante praedictam est: quod ut certa oportebat impleri, et *occulto iustoque iudicio Dei* meritis eorum poenam debitam reddi. . . . Tamen propter ceteros, quos *occultioribus causis* fuerat deserturus, per prophetam tanta ante praedixit. . . ."

57. So too *Simpl.* 2.19, commenting on Rom 9.24, "*Quos et vocavit nos*, inquit, *non solum ex Iudaeis sed etiam ex Gentibus*; id est, vasa misericordiae quae praeparavit in gloriam. Non enim omnes Iudaeos, sed ex Iudaeis: nec omnes omino homines Gentium,

leave them or to bring some *sub gratia*, he does so, for them as for anyone, for inscrutable reasons, but justly.

III

Augustine's teaching on Jews as a protected witness people, a defining theme of his discussion in the *City of God*, was already in place by 398, in the course of his refutation of Faustus the Manichee. It was one aspect of a more general resolution to the hermeneutical, political and polemical problems that marked his development as a theologian in the decade of the 390s. The years intervening between these two works were marked by other controversies—with the Donatists, with the Pelagians, and with millenarian enthusiasts both within Africa and without. Yet the positions he first formulated against the Manichees, and the sources he drew on to formulate these positions—Tyconius, Paul, Genesis; his conviction that an historical reading of Scripture (which resulted ultimately in another mature masterpiece, *de Genesi ad litteram*) was essential to Christian faith⁵⁸—remained fundamental to all his later work.

Augustine's position on the continuing religious importance of the Jewish people, eventually sanctioned by his invocation of Ps 59:12 ("Slay them not, lest my people forget") ultimately served to safeguard later generations for centuries in medieval Christian Europe. Seldom has a biblical hermeneutic had such an immediate and perduring social effect. This is all the more striking, I think, given the absence of a social stimulus to the formulation of this hermeneutic. Put simply: it is his reading of the Bible in the course of his struggles against the Manichees, and not encounters with real Jews, that led Augustine to formulate his teaching.⁵⁹

To claim this, of course, is to part company with Bernhard Blumenkranz. In his classic study of Augustine's anti-Jewish polemic, *Die Juden-*

sed ex Gentibus. Una est enim ex Adam massa peccatorum et impiorum, in qua et Iudaei et Gentes remota gratia Dei ad unam pertinent conspersionem."

58. For Augustine's new emphasis on the historical dimension of Christian theology and, thus, biblical interpretation, see Rist, *Augustine*, 121–29.

59. Jeremy Cohen argues similarly that the correct context for understanding Augustine's position on Jews and Judaism is "Augustine's method of interpretation—his interpretation of history as well as his interpretation of Scripture," in "Anti-Jewish Discourse and its Function in Medieval Christian Literature," unpublished paper for the 1992 New Chaucer Society Meeting, MS p. 6. However, he locates this historicizing hermeneutic specifically after Augustine's anti-Manichaean phase, in works written between 412–430. I thank Prof. Cohen for sharing his paper with me.

predigt Augustins (1946), and again in his later, more discursive reprise of this theme, "Augustin et les Juifs: Augustin et le judaïsme" (1958), Blumenkranz situated Augustine in a social context where the Jewish presence imposed, where Jews competed with the Church for both pagan and even Christian converts, and where Augustine in turn himself sought to persuade Jews to join the Church.⁶⁰

Against these points, I would simply repeat what I hope I have demonstrated: Augustine's remarks on Jews and Judaism arise primarily from his theological concerns, particularly against the Manichees. *That* is the encounter for which we have evidence in abundance: transcripts of debates, eyewitness accounts of controversies, the titles of Augustine's own treatises, his review of these works in the *Retractationes*. Real Jews, however—as opposed to "biblical" Jews (whether in the Old Testament or the New) or "hermeneutical" Jews⁶¹ (the Jews as shorthand for a particular, non-Christological reading of the Old Testament)—whatever their actual numbers in the cities of Roman North Africa, are by comparison in short supply in Augustine's writings.⁶²

Secondly, a supposed market competition between these two communities, Jewish and Catholic, cannot account for anti-Jewish polemic for the

60. The problematic Jewish presence, "Augustin," 226, 230; Jewish missionary efforts, 227; "missionary" counter-arguments, 233, 235–36; *Judenpredigt*, 110ff., 211.

61. Cohen's phrase, MS p. 28.

62. Most frequently cited on this question of population is P. Monceaux, "Les colonies juives dans l'Afrique romaine," *Revue des études juives* 44 (1902): 1–28. See too Blumenkranz, *Judenpredigt*, 59–68; H. Z. (J. W.) Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 21–40, with the map of population distribution, 22; review and analysis of archaeological data by Yann LeBohec, "Inscriptions juives et judaïsantes de l'Afrique romaine," *Antiquités africaines* 17 (1981): 165–207, and "Juifs et judaïsants dans l'Afrique romaine: Remarques onomastiques," *Ant. afr.* 17 (1981): 209–229.

Ep. 8* reveals an epistolary encounter between Augustine and Licinius, a Jew who had been defrauded of land by a certain Victor, Augustine's episcopal colleague. Augustine instructs Victor to settle with Licinius lest the case go to the bishops' court; and he likewise suggests that Victor restore the peace of Licinius' family (Licinius and his mother had quarreled, which had given Victor his opportunity). For text and French translation, *Lettres 1*-29**, *Bibliothèque augustinienne* 46b (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1987), 152–57; analysis, H. Castritius, "The Jews in North Africa at the Time of Augustine of Hippo," *Proceedings of the IXth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1986), 31–37; idem, with generous annotation, "Seid weder den Juden noch den Heiden noch der Gemeinde Gottes ein Ärgernis' (1. Kor. 10,32): Zur sozialen und rechtlichen Stellung der Juden im spätrömischen Nordafrika," *Antisemitismus und jüdische Geschichte*, ed. R. Erb and M. Schmidt (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Autorenverlag, 1987), 47–67.

simple reason that we have little evidence for actual Jewish missions in antiquity generally. Jews in principle welcomed converts, but do not seem to have mounted missions to attract them.⁶³ By Augustine's period, further, such activities would have long been illegal.⁶⁴ Both Blumenkranz and his friend and contemporary Marcel Simon, author of another classic study of Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity, had pointed to such competitive encounters by way of explaining Christian hostility toward Judaism and Jews.⁶⁵ The actual evidence we have, though, is too slight to comfortably bear the weight of such an interpretation.

I note, too, that both men published their studies in the years immediately following World War II—1946 and 1948, respectively. To place Christian anti-Jewish invective in such a context is to rationalize it, to give it some sort of reasoned and reasonable explanation. I respect and sympathize with the impulse for wanting to do so, especially in the wake of the antisemitic horrors of World War II: if something can be rationally explained, then perhaps it can also be rationally addressed and even made right. Methodologically, however, the explanation offered by this kind of functionalism—an academic form, perhaps, of wistful thinking—too fre-

63. I review the literature and arguments for and against the possible existence of Jewish missions to gentiles in antiquity in "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope," *JTS* 42 (1991): 532–64, esp. 535–48; now see Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1994).

64. On this legislation and its effects on conversion, Goodman, *Mission*, 134–35; Linder, *Jews in Roman Legislation*.

65. Simon, *Verus Israël: Étude sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'empire Romain (135–425)* (Paris, 1946), 433f., concluding his study (and passim); cf. Blumenkranz, who sees a general situation with Jews competing for pagan souls as well as Christians' ("Augustin," *art. cit.*, 226ff.) The Jew from Uzalis, mentioned by Augustine in *City of God* 22.8.21, becomes a closet missionary for Blumenkranz ("Le problème se pose quand ces Juifs veulent attirer à leurs pratiques des fidèles chrétiens. Tel fut le cas de ce guérisseur d'Uzali. . . ." p. 226), a "type du rabbin miraculeux" for Simon (p. 416).

This is one of the few times Augustine really does allude to a Christian's contact with an actual Jew, and it occurs during the catena of local miracle-stories that fills the middle chapters of his concluding book. Augustine's point is simply to emphasize the reality and efficacy of the manifest power of the saints who, through their (non-eschatological) thousand-year reign on earth, in the Church, by means of their relics, work healing miracles for those who have faith. Petronilla, in 22.8, went to a Jew for an amulet to wear *while* she went to a saint's monument for a cure: hers was a both/and, not an either/or approach. (She was divinely frustrated: the talisman mysteriously came undone.) Going to a Jew for a cure, however, hardly constitutes evidence of religious outreach or competitive contact, as both these later authors interpret this episode.

quently goes far beyond our ancient evidence, and the degree to which we can wring social data from it.⁶⁶

Finally, and briefly, I note that Blumenkranz based much of his reconstruction of Augustine's circumstances vis-à-vis Jewish contemporaries on his construal of the *Tractatus adversus Iudaeos*. In his view, the *Tractatus* served as prime evidence both of the challenge these Jews posed and also of the concern Augustine felt to convert them. But the *Tractatus* occupies a quite minor part in Augustine's rich corpus;⁶⁷ and as a sermon addressed to Christians, it would at best provide an oblique view of Augustine's supposed concern to convert Jews—a concern that would run completely counter to his clear statement in the *c. Faustum*: Jews are to remain Jews until the close of the age (12.12).

In his later essay, Blumenkranz comments on the degree to which, for Augustine, "la polémique antijuive est intimement liée à la polémique antihérétique."⁶⁸ I am struck by the degree to which the opposite is true. Augustine is no philo-Semite, and much of his anti-Jewish polemic is traditional and not particularly imaginative.⁶⁹ But it is precisely his *positive* statements on Judaism, and his insistence that Jews serve as authentic witnesses even *after* the coming of Christ and their own consequent condemnation, that so imaginatively and effectively undergird so much of his

66. I am indebted on this point to David Satran, whom I thank for sharing with me an MS of his essay, "Anti-Jewish Polemic in the *Peri Pascha* of Melito of Sardis: The Problem of Social Context." He notes: "The reconstruction of context is no simple matter, nor is it unburdened by larger questions of meaning and order. The presumption of a meaningful setting for anti-Jewish sentiments is, in no small measure, an assumption of their ultimate role and purpose in society. . . . [But] with what assurance or security do we impose a functionalist and rational purpose on all the many and varied expressions of anti-Judaism? Are we willing to dismiss the possibility that certain anti-Jewish phenomena may be irrational in an essential way and deeply dysfunctional within their social context? . . . The argument from (and for) social context must itself be placed in the broader and determinative context of our own ignorance and uncertainty," MS 11, 14. This essay is forthcoming in *CONTRA IUDAEOS. Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Jews and Christians*, ed. O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995).

67. It looms large for Blumenkranz in part because he looks at it from the perspective of earlier Latin *adversus Iudaeos* literature, composed by authors whose anti-Jewish polemic really did describe a significant aspect of their work, e.g., Tertullian, Commodian, and (though with a difference) Jerome, *Judenpredigt*, 9–11; 19–26; 45–47.

68. "Augustin," 237.

69. Blumenkranz, *Judenpredigt*, 62–68, reviews some of Augustine's more dismal remarks; cf. Augustine's endorsement of Jerome's view that any contemporary Christian who Judaizes, "sive ex Iudaeis sive ex Gentibus . . . eum in barathrum diaboli devolutum," *ep.* 82.18.

anti-heretical work. And, finally, it is in the course of his extended battle against those heretics *par excellence*, the Manichees, and thus of his protracted struggle to defend both divine justice and human freedom, that Augustine's argument, in its odd way, becomes as well a defense of Jews and Judaism.

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