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**Augustine on Jesus the Jew**

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*Memoriae R. A. Markus sacrum.*<sup>1</sup>

The quest for the historical Jesus is one of the hallmarks of modern New Testament scholarship. Many different (and often mutually exclusive) scholarly reconstructions of the figure of Jesus have resulted. Within the past half-century, however, and the quest's institutional shift away from faculties of theology toward faculties of comparative religion within liberal arts colleges and universities, a common interpretive point of principle has emerged: that, in ways meaningful to his message and his mission, Jesus was a Jew of his own time.<sup>2</sup>

From a traditional theological point of view, the modern quest's claim might appear—and may actually be—revolutionary.<sup>3</sup> But such a Jesus, a specifically and meaningfully *Jewish* Jesus, was already postulated, constructed, and defended some sixteen-plus centuries ago, in the work of Augustine of Hippo. Like his modern counterparts, surprisingly, Augustine asserted that Jesus's late Second Temple historical context determined what is (and is not) interpretively responsible, thus what is (and is not) theologically responsible. Unlike his modern counterparts, however, the ancient bishop defended his historical, Jewish Jesus with arguments

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1. I would like to thank Allan D. Fitzgerald and my colleagues at the Villanova University for the honor of their invitation to deliver the 2010 Augustine Lecture. Several months after that occasion, the world lost one of the giants of contemporary Augustinian studies, Robert Austin Markus, and I lost a very dear colleague, mentor, and friend. My own work over the years has benefited enormously from Robert's unending support and active interest, most recently when he read and commented on the first draft of *Augustine and the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Augustine's "historical Jesus," discovered in the course of writing that book, had intrigued him; I would like to think that he would have enjoyed seeing the idea lifted up here. This lecture, then, I dedicate to his memory, with deepest respect, gratitude, and love. In peace his sleep, and may his memory be for a blessing.
  2. This consensus notwithstanding, wide diversity of reconstruction still obtains, in part because of the very different ways that historians understand late Second Temple Judaism and Jesus's place within it. On precisely this historiographical question see, most recently, the essays assembled in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Historical Jesus: Subtexts in Criticism*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg and J. W. Marshall, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 275* (London: T & T Clark International, 2005). For historical studies that as a matter of principle situate Jesus within his Jewish context by way of continuity rather than contrast, see E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), emphasizing shared apocalyptic convictions; P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), emphasizing laws of purity; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 4 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), especially vol. 4, emphasizing halachic observance; and most recently and exhaustively, Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2010).
  3. On the theological repercussions of historical Jesus research, see my essay, "What Does Jesus Have to Do with Christ? What Does Knowledge Have to Do with Faith? What Does History Have to Do with Theology?," in *Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice*, ed. A. M. Clifford and A. J. Godzieba (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2003), 3–17.

that were forthrightly theological. At stake was nothing less, Augustine urged, than fundamental catholic doctrine, most especially the redemption of the flesh.

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In the geo-centric universe of Mediterranean antiquity, “flesh” with all its lability and liabilities especially characterized life in the sub-lunar realm. Flesh measured the distance between the calm beauty of the upper celestial spheres and the chaotic changefulness of life on earth. It shackled human mind or spirit, for human being, like its cosmic habitat, was also a composite of higher and lower aspects: a fleshly body animated by a lower soul, which humans shared with animals; and a higher part of soul, the vessel or docking point of “spirit” or “mind” (the soul’s “eye”). The higher, rational, eternal part of the human shared a fellowship with the stars, to which the souls of the good might repair after death. The lower, non-rational parts of the human, the soul subject to passion which joined spirit to mortal flesh, remained where they were native, in the realm below the moon.<sup>4</sup>

The dipoles of this cosmic architecture also echoed within the binary opposites that shaped *paideia*, high-cultural education: rhetoric, some forms of philosophy (and its subset discipline, theology), and literary theory. The One/the many; intelligible (seen with mind)/sensible (perceived through the senses); spirit/matter; soul/body: these dipoles not only shaped the universe, they coded values. Spirit was “better” than matter not only metaphysically but also morally; and the temptation to see the lower term as “bad” because the upper term so obviously coded “good” inhered in this system itself.<sup>5</sup>

Theologically, for Jews and eventually for Christians no less than for pagans, “flesh” also drew the distinction between the transcendent, changeless and perfect highest god and the many lower gods that presided over the “fleshy” cosmos. These gods were “fleshy” also—not constitutively (gods were immortal), but in terms of

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4. This model of the universe was at once “religious” and “scientific.” For an ancient pagan interpretation of this map of reality, see Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, ed. and trans. A. D. Nock (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966); this same structure underlies Origen’s cosmology in *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973). See too E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 6–14. On ancient views of human-astral confraternity, Dale C. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 117–123.
  5. On ancient philosophers’ general desire to avoid deeming matter “evil,” and the problems that their own systems gave them in this regard, see R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), esp. 49–50, with many references to the work of Augustine’s belated philosophical mentor, Plotinus.

their attachments. These lower gods attached, first, to particular places and peoples: like the human groups with whom they shared an almost familial bond, lower gods were “ethnic.” And lower gods attached *affectively* to flesh: they were solicited, placated or petitioned through the medium of blood sacrifices. Their particular human worshipers demonstrated affection and respect for these deities by adhering to their *paradosis patrikon* or *mos maiorum* or *ta nomima*, the inherited (thus ethnically specific) protocols of correct cult that defined ancient notions of piety.<sup>6</sup> As intermediaries between heaven and earth, these gods might also be designated as *angeloi*, “messengers.”<sup>7</sup> “The gods of the nations are *daimones*,” sang the Psalmist in Greek (Ps 95:5 LXX): a *daimon* was, specifically, a lower god.<sup>8</sup>

The Jews were odd in this last regard, claiming both that their god was ethnic, the “god of Israel” who presided over Jewish history, *and* insisting that he was the lord of the entire universe. We will see shortly how some intellectual Christian gentiles will later interpret this Jewish claim.

Finally, the very approach taken by the thoughtful reader who sought meaning in texts was shaped by the structures presupposed by cosmology. The obvious meaning of a text, the narrative immediately available to even the most simple reader, corresponded to its “body” or “flesh.” But beneath or above this obvious level lay

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6. Herodotos, *Hist.* 8,144,2–3 famously correlated ethnicity, language, cult and custom; for a Jewish restatement of the same idea (minus, necessarily, the appeal to *homoglossa*), see Paul, Rom 9:3–4; on what we think of as “religion” as the “customs of the fathers,” Gal 1:14. On “religion” in antiquity as inherited, therefore intrinsically ethnic, P. Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins whose Time Has Come to Go,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 35 (2006): 231–246; also *Augustine and the Jews*, 6–13 and notes (see n. 1).
  7. So the famous Oenoanda inscription, which presents Apollo as speaking of the highest deity (“Born of itself, without a mother, unshakeable, not contained in a name, known by many names, dwelling in fire, this is God”), while referring to himself and to the other lower gods as angels (“We, his *angeloi* [messengers] are a small part of God”). For this translation as well as further information on this hexameter hymn, see S. Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hysistos between Pagans, Jews and Christians,” in *Pagan Monotheism*, ed. P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 81–148; the inscription is given in full on p. 82; the translation on p. 6. Justin Martyr was comfortable referring to Christ as God’s *angelos*, *Trypho*, 56 and 59. Both the imagined architecture of the universe and the definition of the sole, highest god called into being multiple divine intermediaries. Cf. Sallustius, *On the Gods and the Universe*, XIII: “The further removed the First God is from our nature, the more powers [Greek *dunameis*] there must be between us and him. For all things that are very far apart have many intermediate points between them.” This translation is that of Nock (see n. 4).
  8. On demons as lower, local gods, see H. Chadwick, “Oracles of the End in the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century,” *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et chrétienne*, ed. E. Lucchesi and H. D. Saffrey (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1984), 125–129; J. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 20.

the inner or spiritual or hidden meaning, one that pointed to higher truths. All sorts of reading strategies suggested ways to wrest the truths that a text might hold from what it simply said. Ancient thinkers with commitments both to high philosophical culture and to inherited, traditional narratives about divinity—be they pagan, Jewish, or Christian—ingeniously resolved the tensions that could result by developing various “spiritual” understandings of their literatures. Drawing correspondences between cosmos, text, human intelligence and ancient anthropology, the great Christian scholar Origen of Alexandria summed up these reading techniques as a pedagogical principle. “The simple man should be edified by what we may call the ‘flesh’ of scripture, that is, its obvious interpretation; while the man who has made some progress may be edified by its ‘soul,’ as it were; and the man who is *teleios* [‘mature’ or ‘perfect’] may be edified by the spiritual law. For just as man consists of body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does scripture” (*On First Principles* 4,2,4; cf. 1 Cor 2:6–7).<sup>9</sup> A “fleshy” man simply could not grasp a text’s highest, spiritual meanings: to speak spatially, the mind of such a man was stuck in the realm below the moon, where “flesh” was native. The spiritual man, however, read at a “high” level: for him, a sacred text was a window opening onto eternity.<sup>10</sup>

This is the cultural context within which we must interpret claims made for the figure of Jesus in those Hellenistic Jewish texts, such as Paul’s letters and the various gospels, which together with the Septuagint will eventually comprise the Christian canon. And it is also the cultural context within which we must understand how later gentile Christians, articulating the nature and the redemptive function of Christ, interpreted these originally Jewish texts. Only after we do this, will the claims that Augustine makes for his Jesus stand out in all their singularity.

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Paul, in the mid-first century, had made very high claims for Jesus as the son of the god of Israel. Before Christ had appeared “in the form [*morpha*] of a slave, coming in the likeness [*homoiomati*] of human beings, being found in the fashion [*schemati*] of a human,” Paul says, Christ had been “in the form [*en morphai*] of God,” not deeming it robbery to be *isa theou*, “equivalent to God” (Phil 2:6–8).<sup>11</sup>

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9. This translation of Origen is that of Butterworth (see n. 4).

10. For a wonderfully rich discussion of the complexities of Hellenistic theories of reading, see P. Struck, *The Birth of the Symbol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); for the ways that these impact Christian reading, see Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

11. So the RSV, with adjustments by the author. All quotations of Paul in what follows are based on the RSV, with occasional adjustments.

Translation of this passage is difficult. Four centuries after Paul's lifetime, councils of the imperial church will declare that Christ is "fully God," that is, as divine as god the Father, but Paul does not seem to claim the same here: the whole passage presents God as Christ's superior. Christ obeys God, Christ is humbled to the point of death, God is the one who lifts Christ up high, God is the one who is finally "glorified" (vv. 9–11). But clearly, Christ is the divine entity closest to God.<sup>12</sup>

Putting aside the question of Christ's degree of divinity here—Paul clearly does consider Christ to be a sort of god, here and elsewhere in his letters—this difficult passage raises another: How human did Paul imagine Christ to be? Those Greek words that I have pointed to speak of similarity or of surface appearance (form, shape, likeness). "Looking as if he were human" would capture their tone. So similarly Romans 8:3: "For God has done what the Law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own son *in the likeness* [*homoiomati* again] of sinful flesh and as a sin offering [or: on account of sin], he condemned sin in the flesh." This last verse compounds the problem of Christ's in-flesh-ness. Not only is human flesh (like the animal flesh that it is) bounded by the orbit of the moon. Such flesh, Paul says here, is also sinful. If flesh is too lowly to be brought into intimate connection with divinity, *sinful* flesh—the type of flesh that dies; mortal flesh (Rom 7:24)—is that much less appropriate, even nonsensical. By the coordinates of Greco-Roman *paideia*, the higher Christ's divinity, the harder to imagine him enfleshed.

Yet Paul speaks elsewhere and easily of Christ's "blood" and of Christ's "death," phrases that certainly strongly imply that his body was mortal, thus normally human. And Paul's Christ is "born of woman" and "born under the Law" (Gal 4:4)—that is, a Jew—descended from David *kata sarka*, "according to the flesh" (Rom 1:4). So what did he mean? The best that we can conclude, I think, is the obvious: When Paul speaks of Christ, whether of some aspects of Christ's divinity or of his humanity, he speaks neither categorically nor consistently. A mid-first-century Jewish apocalyptic visionary, Paul was not burdened by an obligation to frame a coherent or a systematic Christology in the way that later theologians will be. He proclaims his gospel in order to prepare his communities for Christ's rapidly-approaching Second Coming, and for the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

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12. To the degree that the first-century texts assembled in the NT can be said to have "a" Christology, that Christology is subordinationist: Father is superior to Son, *theos* is superior to *logos*, and so on. R. C. P. Hanson gives a thorough overview of the bumpy road to Athanasian orthodoxy in *The Search for a Christian Doctrine of God* (London: T & T Clark, 1988).

13. On this apocalypticism as the impetus of Paul's message, see P. Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: the Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 232–252. John Marshall explains the fundamental importance of Paul's apocalypticism, and traces how the second century

Later readers of his letters, however, were by definition in a different situation. The Kingdom had tarried. Traditions from the first generation of the movement had to be reinterpreted to remain meaningful. (The deutero-Pauline epistles of the NT canon are some of our earliest evidence for this effort.) We know that by the late first-early second century, collections of Paul's correspondence were circulating. And we know that they confused people. "There are some things in them that are hard to understand," warned a second- or third-generation pseudepigraphic author, "which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction" (1 Pet 3:15–16). The binary pairs that shaped Paul's rhetoric—Gospel and Law, Grace and "works," Greek and Jew, the "uncircumcised" and the circumcised, and of course, "spirit and flesh"—came to be read as polarized opposites. By the end of the second century, in all forms of gentile Christianity known to us, these poles were construed similarly: "Gospel," "grace," "uncircumcised," "Greek" and "spirit" were "good." "Law," "works," "circumcision," "Jew," and "flesh" were "bad." In this way, rhetorical and theological anti-Judaism became a constitutive aspect of virtually all forms of ancient gentile Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

Imperial military successes amplified these polarities. In the year 70, Rome defeated the first Judean revolt, destroying the temple in Jerusalem; and in the year 135, Rome defeated a second Judean revolt, destroying Jerusalem itself. From the perspective of the pagan majority, the gods of Rome had conquered the god of the Jews.<sup>15</sup> From the perspective of our various gentile Christian communities, a gap opened up between themselves and "the Jews"—and thus, accordingly, between "the Jews," Judaism, and Jesus.

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loses sight of it, and, thus, misreads him, in "Misunderstanding the New Paul: Marcion's Transformation of the *Sonderzeit* Paul," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19, no. 4 (2011), forthcoming.

14. The polemical targets of the earliest NT texts—Paul's letters, the gospels—are most often other Jews, whether within the Christian movement (e.g., 2 Cor 11; Mt 7) or without (scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and so on). As the ethnicity of these texts' readership changes in the second century, however, so does the perception of this intra-Jewish polemic: the author's condemnation of a type of Judaism different from his own shifts to a condemnation of Judaism *tout court*. For a brief developmental history of the origins of Christian anti-Judaism, see P. Fredriksen and O. Irshai, "Christianity and Judaism in Late Antiquity: Polemics and Policies, from the Second to the Seventh Centuries," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: The University Press 2006), 977–1035; a narrative reprise of the argument in *Augustine and the Jews*, 41–102 (see n. 1).
15. "The lonely and miserable nationality of the Jews worshipped one God, and one peculiar to itself," runs an early Christian apology, voicing a pagan perspective, "and he has so little force or power that he is enslaved, with his own special nation, to the Roman deities," Minucius Felix, *The Octavius* 10.4. Tertullian fends off this accusation in *Apology* 26.3: "You would never have dominated Judea if she had not transgressed to the utmost degree against Christ." The Roman gods had not defeated the Jews' god, in other words; the Jews' god, rather, had deserted the Jews because they did not follow Christ. So too, e.g., Origen, *c. Celsum* 4,32.

Some gentile Christians, for example, holding that Jesus was the son of the high god, concluded that the god of Israel could not be that god. The books of the Jews already broadcast this fact. According to Genesis, the Jews' god had shaped the lower cosmos. He appeared in history, speaking to and acting alongside various humans. He demanded, and savored, blood sacrifices. All of these activities and characteristics pointed toward a lower god or *daimon*. And in keeping with Mediterranean antiquity's normative association of particular gods with particular ethnic groups, these Christians saw the god of Genesis, the god worshiped by Jews in Jerusalem, not as some sort of universal deity but rather (and sensibly enough) as himself an ethnic god, the god of the Jews.<sup>16</sup>

Different theologians took this insight in different directions. Both Valentinus and Marcion, for example, severed Genesis (and by extension the Septuagint) from a directly positive relation to the Christian gospel, in effect relinquishing the Septuagint to the Jews. The high god, the Father, was revealed only for the first time through the coming of Christ, who brought the knowledge of salvation.<sup>17</sup> For these Christians, Christ's gospel brought the good news of redemption *from* the flesh, of the ascent of spirit through the physical cosmos to an upper realm of spirit, light, and love.<sup>18</sup> As Paul himself had said in Corinthians, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of god (1 Cor 15:50), and the risen body (both Christ's and the believer's) is *pneumatikon*, "spiritual" (1 Cor 15:44).

Other theologians, such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, insisted that the Septuagint was a book of Christian revelation, provided one knew how to read it with spiritual understanding. Such a reading revealed the true identity of the Bible's busy deity. In agreement with Valentinus and with Marcion, they too held that this being was not the high god—that much was self-evident. Rather, they claimed, this immanent god was the high god's agent in Creation, the true object of enlightened

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16. When Faustus the Manichee opined that the Jews' god was a demon, he drew a commonsense inference from that god's ethnic specificity ("the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob") and his appetite for blood sacrifices, *c. Faust.* 18,2.

17. For the similarities and the differences between Gnostic and Marcionite constructions of the lower creator god depicted in Genesis, see D. Brakke's pellucid discussion, *The Gnostics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 96–105. Here Brakke considers the ways that "flesh" and "spirit" come into play. In *Against Heresies* 1,27,1, Irenaeus explains that Cerdo "taught that the god proclaimed by the law and the prophets was not the father of our lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known, but the latter unknown." For this translation of Irenaeus, see the *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. I, p.352. For a Valentinian view of the Jews' god as the demiurge, see Ptolemy, *To Flora* 7,2–8. On Marcion's separation of the Law from the Gospel, see Tertullian, *Against Marcion* I,19; cf. I,27 for more on the high god and the lower god.

18. On Marcion's solely spiritual salvation, see, e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1,25,2.

Jewish worship, Jesus Christ before his incarnation.<sup>19</sup> And since Christ, in this account, was the author of flesh, and he had truly come in the flesh, then flesh, though now marred by sin and death, was nonetheless salvageable: the gospel brought the good news of redemption *of* the flesh. When Christ returned to establish his father's kingdom on earth, the saints would rise in their flesh as well, to reign with Christ in a renewed Jerusalem for a thousand years.<sup>20</sup>

This interpretation solved the problem of flesh, but it put in sharper focus the problem with Jewish law, which gentile Christians like Justin and Tertullian in principle did not keep. The problem was this: If the pre-incarnate Christ were the god of the Septuagint, why would he have commanded honors so intrinsically pagan as blood sacrifices? Why so peculiar (and, in the Graeco-Roman view, repulsive) a practice as circumcision? Why so arbitrary a set of rules as those concerning food, or keeping the Sabbath? Why, in short, did the pre-incarnate Christ give the Jews the Jewish Law?

For two reasons, said these theologians. The first was to give Israel a body of law that, understood with spiritual insight, actually coded for Christ, or for ethical truths, or for Christian traditions. Thus the true meaning of the Passover sacrifice was the Crucifixion; the true meaning of circumcision was the excision of sexual desire; the twelve bells on the robe of the high priest symbolized the twelve apostles, and so on. On this construction, the law was never meant to be undertaken literally; it was meant to be understood—as the spiritual heroes of Israel, such as David or Isaiah, had understood it—in a higher sense, as pointing toward Christ and his church.<sup>21</sup>

The second reason why the Jews got the law was to punish them for their proverbially stony hearts, stiff necks, blind eyes. This religious obduracy was exemplified by the episode of the Golden Calf. Shortly following their redemption from Egypt,

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19. "Even now all Jews teach that the unnameable god spoke to Moses," complains Justin, who goes on to argue that Isaiah teaches otherwise, i.e., that the god who spoke with Moses was Christ, see *First Apology* 63.1. And see 2–11 for his full statement of Christ as divine "go-between," whether as *angelos* or as *logos*. For more on distinguishing the god who spoke to Moses from God the Father, see *Trypho*, 56.

20. In *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80–81 and with references to Is 65 and Rv 20, Justin provides a description of the expectation that the saints, in their raised bodies, will assemble with Christ in Jerusalem and reign on earth for 1000 years. For a review of the career of this idea in early Christianity, and Augustine's several responses to it, see *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. A. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), s.v., "Apocalypticism" by P. Fredriksen.

21. Melito's Easter Homily is a monument to this sort of Christological decoding of the Septuagint, wherein all of Exodus becomes an occult script for the crucifixion. On the apostolic significance of the high priest's bells, see Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 42. Justin comments elsewhere (cf. *ibid.*, 29) that Jews read scripture but miss its *nous*.

having already received the ten commandments, Israel nonetheless built an idol, worshiped it, and indulged in sexual excess (Ex 32). On this second construction, then, Israel received the endlessly detailed instructions about sacrificial protocols as a divine effort to distract them from their perennial tendency to worship idols.<sup>22</sup>

But these same scriptures also prophesied that the Jews would resist the spiritual message of the Law, and would fail to see when its prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. In this understanding, Jesus had come finally and specifically to teach against the Jews' understanding of Jewish law, as the prophets had before him. These holy men, and finally God's own Son, had denounced the Temple, had criticized the Jewish observance of the Sabbath, and had censured fleshly Jewish practices generally, as the apostles (especially Paul) in their turn would also do. Again, to no avail. Herein, then, lay the truth about and true significance of the Temple's destruction in 70. Rome had not destroyed the temple. As punishment for the Jews' rejection of Christ, and as an unequivocal repudiation of its blood-soaked cult, the temple was destroyed, through Roman agency, by God himself.<sup>23</sup>

Some two centuries after all these arguments had been formulated, they found a common spokesman in the person of Faustus. A North African pagan with a good rhetorical education, Faustus had converted to Manichaean Christianity, becoming one of its itinerant *electi* and bishops. For a brief moment in Carthage, in 382, he worked with another successful Manichaean missionary, the young Augustine. In 386, caught up in an imperial persecution, Faustus was exiled to a bleak island in the Mediterranean. During that time he wrote the *Capitula*, a handbook for Manichaean missionaries whose field was North African catholics. In that work, Faustus

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22. Justin and, following him, Tertullian, emphasize the Jews' sinfulness in general, and their proclivity for idol-worship in particular, as the reason for the giving of the Law, whether as punishment or as distraction, see, e.g., *Trypho*, 16, 18, 21–22 and *passim*. Many of Justin's arguments reappear, nicely amplified, in books 2 and 3 of Tertullian's polemic *Against Marcion*. On the laws of sacrifices specifically to distract Jews from worshiping idols, see *Against Marcion* 2,18. Earlier Hellenistic anti-gentile Jewish polemic, such as we see in *Wisdom of Solomon* and in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, had focused on idol worship as the *pagan* sin par excellence. Acts 're-ethnicizes' idol-worship, making it into the *Jewish* sin par excellence. Stephen's speech, for example, points to the episode of the Calf and correlates it to the building of the Temple (Acts 7:35–53), and the trope enters into Christian anti-Jewish polemic thereafter. The emperor Julian's decision in 362 to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, as part of his program to reinstitute traditional *latreia* more generally, only compounded—or, apparently, legitimized—this chestnut of *contra Iudaeos* tradition; cf. *Against the Galileans*, 306B.

23. The argument that the "death" of the Temple is linked to the death of Jesus first appears in the Gospel of Mark, written probably just after the temple's destruction; for a literary and historical exploration of Mark's development of this theme, see P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44–52 and 177–185; for the patristic afterlife of this tradition, see above n. 15.

redeployed the anti-Judaism of both of the older Christian traditions, i.e., of the heterodox as well as the orthodox, against a newer target: catholic Christians. Not only were Jews and their books invariably carnal, urged Faustus; so, too, he said, were the catholics themselves. Like Jews, catholics endorsed marriage and child-birth. (In fact, catholics insisted that the only legitimate function of marriage was to produce children. Manichaeans promoted celibacy, and advocated birth control in order *not* to trap more souls in fleshly darkness.) Like Jews, catholics celebrated festivals carnally, with meat and wine. (Manichaeans fasted.) Like Jews, catholics imagined redemption as the resurrection of the fleshly body. (Manichaeans looked forward to their liberation from this lower cosmos.) In every way that mattered, Faustus insisted, catholics *were* Jews. And their insistence that the Old Testament bespoke Christian truth was simply nonsense:

These books [of the Law] . . . portray a god so ignorant of the future that he gave Adam a command without knowing that he would break it. . . . Envy made him fear that a human being might eat of the tree of life and live forever. Later, he was greedy for blood and fat from all kinds of sacrifices, and jealous if these were offered to anyone other than himself. At times his enemies infuriated him, at other times, his friends. Sometimes he destroyed thousands of men over little; at other times, over nothing. And he threatened to come with a sword and to spare no one, whether the righteous or the wicked. (*c. Faust.* 22,4)

Such a morally impaired deity, Faustus continued, was well matched with the sort of heroes—patriarchs, kings, and prophets—who peopled the pages of Israel’s sacred scripture:

We [Manichees] are not the ones who wrote that Abraham, enflamed by his frantic craving for children, did not fully trust God’s promise that Sara his wife would conceive. And then—even more shamefully, because he did so with his wife’s knowledge—he rolled around with a mistress [Gen 16:2–4]. And later—in fact, on two different occasions—he most disreputably marketed his own marriage, out of avarice and greed selling Sara into prostitution to two different kings, Abimelech and Pharaoh, duplicitously claiming that his wife was his own sister, because she was very beautiful [Gen 20:2; 12:13]. And what about Lot, . . . who lay with his own two daughters once he escaped Sodom [Gen 19:33–35]? . . . And Isaac who, imitating his father, passed off his wife Rebecca as his sister, so that he could shamefully benefit from her [Gen 26:7]? . . . And Jacob, Isaac’s son, who had *four* wives and who rutted around like a goat among them [Gen 29–30]? . . . And Judah, *his* son, who slept with his own daughter-in-law Tamar [Gen 38]? . . . And David, who seduced the wife of his own soldier Uriah, while arranging for him to be killed in battle [2 Sam 11:4,15]? . . . Solomon, with his three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines [1 Kngs 11:1–3]? . . . The prophet Hosea, who married a prostitute [Hos 1:2–3]? . . . Moses, who committed murder [Exod 2:12]? . . . Either these stories are false, or the crimes that

they relate are real. Choose whichever option you please. Both are detestable. (*c. Faust.* 22,5)<sup>24</sup>

Their insistence that they claimed to revere the Old Testament, Faustus continued, further exposed the catholics as flagrant hypocrites: their contempt for Jews and Judaism proved that they actually detested Jewish scripture. “I reject circumcision as disgusting; so do you,” Faustus observed. “I reject blood sacrifices as idolatry; so do you. Both of us regard Passover as useless and needless. . . . Both of us despise and deride the various laws against mixing types of cloth or species of animals. . . . You cannot blame me for rejecting the Old Testament, because *you* reject it as much as I do. . . . You deceitfully praise with your lips what you hate in your heart. I’m just not deceitful, that’s all,” (*c. Faust.* 6,1). In short, Faustus suggested, not all that much divided catholics from Manichees. Indeed, the two Christian communities were united in fundamental agreement by their shared contempt for Jews and Judaism.

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A traditional Christian way to demean the position of another Christian opponent was to liken it to carnal Judaism. And the traditional way to deal with intra-Christian exchanges of anti-Jewish insults was to assert, louder than your opponent, that *you* were not just like the Jews: *he* was.<sup>25</sup>

But this scripted anti-Jewish rhetoric evidently did not tempt Augustine. Instead, he chose to fight Faustus on the terrain that the latter’s *Capitula* had marked out: the texts of the Old and New Testaments. Augustine’s point of departure against his Manichaean opponent was a principle of biblical interpretation that he had defended a short while earlier, during a protracted correspondence with Jerome. That earlier argument had focused on Gal 2, and whether Paul had told the truth there when reporting his falling out with Peter in Antioch. Jerome had held, despite Paul’s report in Galatians, that the two apostles had only pretended to fight so that their audience might be edified: surely Peter, the Lord’s disciple, could not possibly have defended the observance of Jewish law (*ep.* 75). Augustine had pushed back hard: Paul would not have “lied” twice, Augustine insisted, once when pretending to fight

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24. Here and elsewhere all translations of passages from *c. Faust.* are my own; I have also supplied all the biblical references that appear in brackets within the body of the quotations.

25. For this reason, the most vituperative statements of Christian anti-Judaism appear, curiously, not in formal treatises *contra Iudaeos* so much as in Christian anti-heresiological writings. This pattern within patristic polemic was first noted by D. Efroymson, “The Patristic Connection,” *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. A. T. Davis (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 98–117.

in Antioch and once again when writing a deliberately duplicitous account of that fight in Galatians. To impute falsehood to scripture was to undermine absolutely its authority (*ep.* 82,2,6).<sup>26</sup>

Augustine now applied this same principle, against Faustus, to the full sweep of biblical history. The essential point for him was that the Bible cannot lie. No divine dissembling. Its symbolic richness notwithstanding, scripture also and always reliably “reports things that were done” (*facta narratur; c. Faust.* 12,7).

Therefore, Augustine now argued against Faustus, if the Bible depicts God as giving the Torah to the Jewish nation, and as praising the Jewish nation for keeping and enacting his law, then the text must not be taken to speak “as if;” that is, seeming to commend behavior but actually offering only allegories. If God praised Israel, then the only possible pious conclusion was that the Jewish understanding of the Law—as enacted by Israel and as described in the Bible—was good.

But why would God have wanted Israel to observe the Law in a fleshly way? Because, said Augustine, God had charged Israel with more than preserving the divine word of the Law in the text of his book. He had charged them as well with *enacting the commands of this same Law in the flesh, within historical time*—the dimension where humans dwell. Had the Jews understood the spiritual meaning of circumcision without also enacting the command in their flesh—as the earlier theologians, and Jerome himself, would have wished—neither they nor the Law that they were privileged to carry would have prefigured the fundamental *mysterium* of Christianity itself: the redemption of the flesh by Christ’s coming in the flesh, dying in the flesh and being raised in the flesh.

Above all else, insisted Augustine, Christ’s circumcision embodied this message. Christ’s being marked “in the organ of generation” pointed ahead to nothing less than to the *regeneration* of the flesh at the Resurrection. God the maker of flesh (attested in the doctrine of Creation), working in and through the flesh (Incarnation) will redeem the flesh on the Last Day (Resurrection). Israel’s announcing these (catholic) truths by performing all of their ancient rites and traditions *in the flesh* was precisely why God had given them the Law.

The essential synonymy of Jewish practice and Christian revelation that Augustine urges here drew in vital ways upon his understanding of semiotics, his ideas about how words work. He framed these ideas in another writing of approximately this same period, the *de doctrina Christiana* (*doctr. chr.*). In that work, while considering the

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26. For a review of this argument between Jerome and Augustine, see Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 290–302 (see n. 1); as well as A. Jacobs, *The Remains of the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 90–100.

correspondence between scriptural texts, historical events, and biblical interpretation, Augustine also began working at a more fundamental level on the correspondence between language and meaning. How can one determine the proper referent of scripture's language? Words are *signa*, signs that point toward something. Those informed by intentionality (*signa data*) can point in two different directions: to specific things or ideas within their own immediate interpretive context (*signa propria*, "proper" or "literal" or "self-referring" signs), or to things or ideas outside of their immediate context to something else (*signa translata*, "referred-away" or "metaphorical" signs; *doctr. chr.* II,10,15).<sup>27</sup> But the Bible is a special instance of *signa data* because of its unique double authorship: the timeless, eternal God who is its source, and the historically contingent human beings who were its medium (*doctr. chr.* II,2,3). Its *signa*, accordingly, are both *propria* and *translata*, historical and metaphorical; and the Bible's spiritual meanings, Augustine insists, can never undermine its "plain" or "historical" meaning. In other words, no matter how elevating the spiritual meaning, scripture must also always be understood *proprie* and *ad litteram* and *quam verba sonat*: within its own context, historically, according to its plain sense, "just as the words say."<sup>28</sup>

Writing now, in 399, against Faustus, defending both Jewish law and the Jewish *practice* of Jewish law, Augustine extends this idea about words and reference into a semiotics of ritual and prophecy. Deeds, he says, as well as words, form a language, "for material symbolic acts (*corporalia sacramenta*) are nothing other than visible speech" (*verba visibilia*; *c. Faust.* 19,15). This linguistic orientation toward actions gives Augustine a way to explain how ancient Jewish rites and current catholic rites can both indicate the *same* changeless truth, even though their outward forms, time bound and transient, diverge. The divinely mandated symbolic

27. Cf. CCSL 32, p. 41: "Duabus autem causis non intelleguntur, quae scripta sunt, si aut ignotis aut ambiguis signis obteguntur. sunt autem signa uel propria uel translata. propria dicuntur, cum his rebus significandis adhibentur, propter quas sunt instituta, sicut dicimus bouem, cum intellegimus pecus, quod omnes nobis cum Latinae linguae homines hoc nomine uocant. translata sunt, cum et ipsae res, quas propriis uerbis significamus, ad aliquid aliud significandum usurpantur, sicut dicimus bouem et per has duas syllabas intellegimus pecus, quod isto nomine appellari solet, sed rursus per illud pecus intellegimus euangelistam, quem significauit scriptura interpretante apostolo dicens: 'bouem triturantem non infrenabis.'"

28. This is *not* to say that Augustine in any way renounces or repudiates "spiritual" or allegorical readings of scripture. On the contrary, he advocates for a style of reading that, rhetorically, had always been counterposed and contrasted with "spiritual" reading. On the rhetorical juxtapositioning of "historical" or "plain" meanings to implicit or "spiritual" ones, see especially the illuminating essay of Margaret M. Mitchell, "Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory: Origen and Eustasthius put 1 Samuel 28 on trial," *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005): 414–445; on Augustine's development of his ideas about *signa propria* and interpretation *ad litteram* as meaning "historical," see *Augustine and the Jews*, 191–195 (see n. 1).

action (*sacramentum*), because it is enacted by time-bound human beings, can only be done (“spoken”) within the historical constraints of the obedient human’s life time. Thus blood sacrifices were appropriate to the period before the Temple’s destruction in 70 CE, and the Eucharist to the period since.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, both point to the same eternal truth, Christ’s redemptive sacrifice of his own body. “The actions and sounds pass away. . . . but the spiritual gift that they communicate is eternal” (19,15).

This historical semiotics pushes Augustine in new directions as he defends Jewish blood sacrifices against Faustus’s accusation (common as well to orthodox anti-Jewish rhetoric) that blood sacrifices as such are intrinsically pagan.<sup>30</sup> Why did God command blood sacrifices in particular? Why not encode the Christian *mysterium* in some other way?

Blood sacrifices alone served this purpose, explained Augustine, because blood sacrifices alone embodied both typologically and historically the true sacrifice of God’s son which, after Adam’s sin, was necessary for humanity’s salvation. “These [Jewish] sacrifices typified what we now rejoice in, *for we can be purified only by blood*, and we can be reconciled to God only by blood. The fulfillment of these types is in Christ, through whose blood we are both purified and redeemed,” (*c. Faust.* 18,6). “God, using certain types, prefigured the true sacrifice,” (22,21). Only by performing sacrifices *secundum carnem* could the Jews fully and truthfully prefigure and prophetically enact what Christ accomplished *secundum carnem* through the cross (12,9; 14,6; and frequently).<sup>31</sup>

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29. Both blood sacrifices *and* the Eucharist, uniquely, were enacted in the period of the first generation of the church, when even the apostles performed sacrifices in the Temple and even gentile members of the church appropriately Judaized. Augustine defends Paul’s performance of Jewish *sacramenta* against Jerome in *ep.* 40; for more discussion on this, see *Augustine and the Jews*, 238–240; on the Jewish observance of the apostles and the Judaizing of the first generation’s gentiles, cf. *c. Faust.* 32,12 as well as *Augustine and the Jews*, 256–257 (see n. 1).

30. See Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 223–232 (see n. 1), on the similarity of the orthodox and heterodox critiques of Jewish blood sacrifices as “pagan.” Augustine reverses the orthodox argument, maintaining that Jewish and pagan blood sacrifices seemed so similar only because the fallen angels, originators of idol worship, deliberately and deceptively imitated what they knew God would require for his own worship, cf. *c. Faust.* 20,18. In other words, the Jews weren’t acting like pagans when they made blood offerings to God; rather, the pagans were (unknowingly) acting like the Jews when they made blood offerings to “demons,” the apostate angels who presented themselves to them as gods. And, via Genesis, he clinches this argument by pointing to God’s pleasure in receiving the blood offerings made to him by Abel, cf. Gen 4:4, *c. Faust.* 22,17, and Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 248 (see n. 1).

31. Augustine’s “explanation” circles around the necessity of blood sacrifice for righting divine/human relationship without ever answering the more fundamental question: Why should blood sacrifices alone accomplish this? In part, he is constrained by his subject: he needs to account for

This unprecedented praise of actual Jewish practice led Augustine to striking revisions of his own earlier work. As recently as 394, in a commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, he had argued that Christ had alienated the Jews by not being scrupulous in keeping the Law. And in 396/97, in *doctr. chr.* III,6,10, he urged more dramatically that Christ had in fact treated the Torah with flagrant disregard. Now, in 399, against Faustus, Augustine sees the "historical Jesus" in quite a different way. He now argues: "Christ never tried to turn Israel away from the Law; but he charged *them* with being turned from the law." Christ criticized the Pharisees not because they were too scrupulous, but because they were not scrupulous enough. Jesus, he asserts, never broke a single one of God's commandments *as Jewishly understood*, "but he found fault with those around him who did" (*c. Faust.* 16,24). Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day; he was brought to the temple; he himself offered sacrifices in the temple. So vigilant was Jesus the Jew about keeping God's commandments that he made it a point to die before the beginning of the Sabbath. His fleshly Jewish body then "rested from all its works" in his tomb over the Sabbath, and he did not pick up his fleshly Jewish body again until Sunday, after the Sabbath was well over (cf. 16,29).

Thus, concludes Augustine, Jesus himself was a shining exemplar of traditional Jewish piety; so too the apostles, and especially Paul, for the entirety of the first generation of the church. In Augustine's new understanding, Jewish "fleshly" observances—circumcision, purifications, Sabbath and high holiday protocols—transmute from self-condemning signs of unintelligent biblical interpretation to positive historical enactments of God's will in the past.

And even more startlingly, Augustine defends "fleshly" Jewish practice no less in the present. This defense rests on his revision of another traditional anti-Jewish trope that Augustine's new understanding of scripture had inspired: the meaning of the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Earlier Christians had regarded the Temple's destruction with a certain *Schadenfreude*: it signaled God's permanent punishment of the Jews for their role in the death of Christ, and the definitive divine disowning of fleshly Israel. Not only was the Temple's destruction God's definitive repudiation of Judaism; without the Temple, these Christians argued, the practice of Judaism itself was no longer possible.<sup>32</sup>

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as well as construct the correspondence between sacrifice and Eucharist. But, in part, I also think, he does not question the appropriateness of sacrifice as a way of propitiating divinity because this is an all but ubiquitous assumption of his culture.

32. On the Temple's destruction as divine censure, see above n. 15; on the Christian argument that the subsequent practice of Judaism was impossible, see esp. Robert Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 151; and Christina Shepardson, "Paschal

Not so, says Augustine. The destruction of the Temple was fundamentally a gracious gift of God to the church, precisely because it initiated the spread of a vigorous Judaism throughout the known earth.<sup>33</sup> Far from abandoning Jewish practice as no longer possible, he says, Jews journeyed everywhere, enacting the Law *secundum carnem*, their allegiance to their practices and to their holy books *protected* by divine decree. It is *revera multum mirabile*, “a miracle to be greatly in awe of,” Augustine teaches, “that, while all of the nations subjugated by Rome went over to the rites of Roman worship. . . . the Jewish nation under foreign monarchs whether pagan or Christian has never lost the sign of their Law,” (*c. Faust.* 12,13). Only God could stand behind such a marvel. God sent Israel into exile after the death of the first generation of the church, explains Augustine, so that the Jews would travel with their sacred books throughout the known world, thereby serving as witness to the gospel. How so? Because if pagans were skeptical of Christian claims about Christ, Christians could defend the antiquity and integrity of the church’s Old Testament prophecies by pointing to their preservation by the Jews. The integrity and antiquity of the Jews’ Torah, protected by the integrity of Jewish loyalty to the Torah, guaranteed the *bona fides* of the Old Testament for the church.<sup>34</sup>

And Christ’s very flesh, Augustine insists, was also Jewish, also *bona fide*. It was true Jewish flesh—circumcised on the eighth day, descended from David’s house. And it was true human flesh. Christ’s flesh was truly human, in that it truly could suffer and die. But it was human as humanity was supposed to have been, before Adam’s fall: Christ’s flesh (unlike ours) was completely subject to his will, which was itself undivided, thus completely effective:

When the Gospel says that Jesus slept, Jesus really did sleep [Mt 7:24]. When the Gospel says that Jesus was hungry, he really was hungry [Mt 4:2]. When it claims that he was thirsty [Jn 19:28] or sorrowful [Mt 26:37] or glad or whatever else—all of these claims are true just as they were reported (*narrata*) and none of these states was feigned. Jesus actually experienced all of these emotions and conditions, undergoing them not out of a natural necessity, as we do, but rather

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Politics: Deploying the Temple’s Destruction against Fourth-Century Judaizers,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008): 1–28.

33. Augustine here repeats another patristic trope, that the destruction of the Temple in 70 had marked the beginning of the Jews’ second (and this time permanent) exile. In point of fact, Jews had lived abroad in the western diaspora for centuries, voluntarily, especially in the wake of the consolidation of Mediterranean culture following Alexander’s conquests in 333–323 BCE; and they continued to live in the land of Israel after both rebellions, 66–73 and 132–135: the Christian interpretation of a “second exile” masks both of these data. Eventually, Jewish tradition internalizes this Christian trope of destruction/second exile in the Babylonian Talmud: see I. Yuval, “The Myth of the Jewish Exile from the Land of Israel,” *Common Knowledge* 12 (2006): 16–34.

34. For his full argument, see *Augustine and the Jews*, 265 and 271–277 (see n. 1).

through the effective exercise of his will, according to his divine power. For men feel anger or sorrow or weariness or hunger or thirst *involuntarily*, but Christ felt them voluntarily. Men are born without any act of their own will, and we all suffer against our own will. But Christ was born by an act of his own will, and he suffered as an act of his own will. Nonetheless, his experience of these states was no less real for being voluntary. And they were faithfully and accurately written down, so that whoever believes in Christ's gospel is not deluded with lies, but instructed with truth. (*c. Faust.* 26,8)<sup>35</sup>

Against the grain of upper-worldly Graeco-Roman philosophy, Augustine emphasized the value, even the necessity, of seeing history as vital to revelation, and of seeing flesh as vital to spirit. Thus, against the prior Christian traditions *aduersus Iudaeos*, which had emphatically denounced “fleshly” Jewish practices, Augustine asserted that such practices had been and still were absolutely fundamental to orthodox Christianity precisely because they were and are “fleshly.” True Christianity, he insists, is about the body and not just the spirit; about time, and not just eternity.

Praxis, the “traditions of the fathers” as Paul calls it (Gal 1:14), is where Judaism is at its most emphatically, distinctly, ethnically, carnally Jewish. Without this, said Augustine, you cannot have Christianity, because without this you cannot have the incarnate Christ. Against Manichaean Docetism, of course, and as others had long been doing, Augustine taught that Christ truly had a human body. Here, however, he affirms much more than that. *Christ is God at his most emphatically, distinctly, ethnically, carnally Jewish.* Christ, Augustine insisted, was God in a male Jewish body, which was necessary for the perfect fulfillment of the (Jewish) Law as articulated in that unique medium of revelation, the scriptures. And that Law had to be—indeed, could only be—fulfilled *secundum carnem*, because redemption is not just the redemption of the soul, but the redemption of the whole person, both body and soul. Thus, in his Jewish flesh, Christ piously and perfectly kept all of Israel's commandments, from the circumcision that he received on the eighth day of his human, Jewish life, up until he rose from his tomb in the flesh on the third day after his death (something he did only after the Sabbath had been completed). Augustine maintains that historical Jewish practice, understood in this positive way, not only enables a robustly “plain” reading of the Old Testament and of the New, but it also safeguards catholic doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

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35. This idea that the divided will measures the effects of Adam's sin will be the hallmark of Augustine's arguments against Julian of Eclanum. Augustine had already enunciated it in the mid-390s in both *Simpl.* and *conf.*; see *Augustine and the Jews*, 176–210 (see n. 1).

36. Much like he did against Faustus, in his *ep.* 82, Augustine also made these points as much against Jerome.

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“History” was not a secular subject for Augustine. He did not “do” history by gathering primary sources, critically evaluating evidence, reconstructing ancient context, and so on. All these are conventions of post-Renaissance historiography. Instead, Augustine “does history” by committing to a certain idea of textual interpretation. By reading *proprie* or *ad litteram*, Augustine defends the proposition that, whatever the myriad meanings available in biblical literature, a given passage or story must *also* have meaning within the narrative framing of the story itself—that is, it must have been meaningful in the past as well as meaningful in the present and in the future. This is because, beyond all the other mysteries that it preserves, reveals and enunciates, the Bible also narrates things that actually occurred: *facta narratur*.<sup>37</sup> Nothing less, or other, he felt, spoke adequately to Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection, all of which focus so resolutely on the flesh and its redemption. In short, Augustine “did history” by thinking with the doctrines of his church while reading the Bible.

Yet, intriguingly, the “historical Jesus” whom he thereby produced prefigures the defining features of the Jesus that has been produced by the modern historians’ quest. Augustine’s Jewish Jesus, a theological construct, reinforced how Augustine regarded, and, indeed, re-imagined, the past as it was narrated in the texts of the gospels. Modernity’s Jewish Jesus, an historical construct, has been established for various and different reasons, through very different methods and criteria, than was Augustine’s. But is this “secular” historical Jesus without theological significance in principle? I wonder. In the words of one renowned modern New Testament historian:

The third quest’s emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus has willy-nilly made a lasting contribution to Christology. . . . To speak in Johannine terms: when the Word became flesh, the Word did not take on an all-purpose, generic, one-size-fits-all human nature. Such a view would not take seriously the radical historicity of both human nature and divine revelation. The Word became truly flesh insofar as the Word became truly Jewish. No true Jewishness, no true humanity. . . . I think that a proper understanding of the Chalcedonian formula, illuminated by the third quest, necessarily leads to a ringing affirmation of the Jewishness of the flesh that the Word assumed. Even if the third quest has no other impact on

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37. Here Origen and Augustine symmetrically contrast. For Origen, not all passages of scripture have a “bodily” meaning, but every passage of scripture has a “spiritual” meaning (*On First Principles* IV,2,5; IV,3,5); whereas Augustine, especially in *ciu.*, will insist that, while not all biblical passages have a spiritual meaning, all have an historical one; see, e.g., XVII,4; also XIII,22, and XV,27.

contemporary Christology, the emphatic reaffirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus will make the whole enterprise worthwhile.<sup>38</sup>

For Augustine the theologian, working in the late fourth-early fifth century, theology affected history; and, indeed, for him, it also effected history. Perhaps we can begin to hope that in this instance, through us historians working in the early twenty-first century, doing history can begin to affect and to effect a new, non-anti-Judaic, Christian theology.

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38. John P. Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 459–487, at 486.