

aid would be a disservice to the unemployed." Hoover was a staunch ideological conservative who remarked, in 1928, that "even if governmental conduct of business could give us more efficiency instead of less efficiency, the fundamental objection to it would remain unaltered and unabated." This was not, to put it mildly, Roosevelt's philosophy.

Hoover himself would have found the notion that Roosevelt mostly carried on his work offensive. During the campaign of 1932 he warned that, if the New Deal came to fruition, "the grass will grow in the streets of a hundred cities, a thousand towns." This was not mere campaign rhetoric. After Roosevelt won, Hoover desperately sought to persuade him to abandon his platform. He spent the rest of his years denouncing Roosevelt's reforms as dangerous Bolshevism. Leuchtenburg records that Hoover wrote a book about the New Deal so acerbic that his own estate suppressed its publication to avoid further tainting his reputation.

Of course, the transition from one presidency to another always involves some level of continuity. The world never begins completely anew with a presidential inauguration. But the break between

Roosevelt and Hoover was certainly sharper than that between any president and his predecessor in American history. After 1932, generations of Democrats continued to paint Republicans as neo-Hooverites. This was mostly a calumny. Though Hoover himself continued to assail the New Deal as calamitous socialism right up to his death in 1964, from 1936 on the party remained in the hands of men who understood that the New Deal had built an enduring base of support and could not be directly assailed.

But now we have come to a time when leading Republicans and conservatives—not just cranks, but the leadership of the party and the movement—once again sound exactly like Herbert Hoover. "Prosperity cannot be restored by raids upon the public Treasury," said President Hoover in 1930. "Our plan is rooted in the philosophy that we cannot borrow and spend our way back to prosperity," said House Minority Leader Boehner in 2009. They have come to this point by preferring theology to history, by wiping Hoover's record from their memories and replacing it with something very close to its opposite. It is Hoover, truly, who is the Forgotten Man. ♦

ism, historicism, liberalism, and secularization, but it found new and influential proponents in the modern age. In his *Table Talk*, Adolf Hitler reported confounding two Catholic bishops who came to complain about his anti-Jewish policies, by telling them that he was only carrying out what their Church had always taught. And his party employed plenty of Protestant theologians—in organizations such as the Institute for Research and Extermination of Jewish Influence in German Ecclesiastical Life—who preached the gospel of a God who had always been at war with Judaism. In her splendid new book *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*, Susannah Heschel details the Nazi Party's careful efforts to establish a resonance between its own anti-Semitic ideology and the religious teachings of the Christian confessions, and demonstrates the eager willingness of many theologians and believers to make that project their own.

Was Hitler right? Are Christian teachings essentially anti-Jewish? And if so, did this anti-Judaism authorize, or at least contribute to, the genocidal policies of the Nazis? Beginning with Marcel Simon's *Verus Israel: A Study of Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire*, which appeared in 1948, a series of scholarly works looked backward from Auschwitz in order to explain the emergence of anti-Judaic theses in early Christian testimonies, and to trace their future. Such a "long view" had its critics even in the immediate aftermath of World War II (Hannah Arendt disparagingly dubbed it "Eternal Anti-Semitism"), and it is today quite unfashionable. Still, efforts to explain the Holocaust in terms of the distant past did prove fruitful, especially in that field the Nazis themselves had so assiduously cultivated: the study of early Christianity.

These questions were not only scholarly. They were very much in the minds of Pope Paul VI and the bishops assembled at the Second Vatican Council in 1965, as they tried to circumscribe Scripture's lessons about Jews in *Nostra aetate*, the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions":

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. John 19.6); still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy

David Nirenberg SLAY THEM NOT

AUGUSTINE AND THE JEWS: A CHRISTIAN DEFENSE OF JEWS AND JUDAISM

By Paula Fredriksen
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WHEN AND HOW did relations between Christians and Jews ever become so terrible in the first place?" Medieval Christian theologians thought that the answer to this question, posed in the prologue to Paula Fredriksen's remarkable book, was to be found at the dawn of time. Cain murdered Abel, jealous that his earthly sacrifices were rejected by God in favor of his younger brother's more spiritual ones. The innocent Abel prefigured Christ, while Cain prefigured the deicidal Jews, his fratri-

cide the first of their many acts of perfidy against God and his prophets. Medieval rabbis also explained the conflict between Christians and Jews as sibling rivalry, this time between Isaac's twin sons Jacob and Esau. The slightly elder Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of stew, but then regretted the bargain and raged at Jacob's assumption of God's promise. Esau's descendants were the gentile Christians, who inherited his penchant for persecuting Israel. Some rabbis even read Genesis as a "how-to manual" for the survival of future suffering. When Jacob divided his camp out of fear of Esau's attack, he was teaching the Jews of later millennia to divide their population among many lands, so that if they were destroyed in one nation they might persist in another.

Despite the differing details, there was inter-faith agreement on the broader point: the conflict between Jews and Christians began in the earliest pages of sacred history, and would continue until that history's end. The credibility of this grim continuity was undercut by human-

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Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

In place of a continuity of perfidy, *Nostra aetate* pointed to a continuity of promise: God did not collectively reject the people whom he foreknew, and they did not collectively reject him. The importance of this shift is not diminished by the fact that many (such as Mel Gibson) have found it unconvincing.

One reason for the new dogma's lack of conviction is that it required the revision of centuries of teaching and belief. (Already in 1965, Catholic traditionalists joined anti-Zionist Middle Eastern bishops in defeating more explicit condemnation of the charge of "deicide.") Another reason, equally important, is that "the truth of the Gospel" is itself not so clear. Matthew's gospel is often called the "most Jewish" of the gospels, but his Jesus was certainly capable of taking an extremely long view of Jewish evil:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ... Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape sentence in Gehenna? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of the innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah. ...

So from A to Z, the righteous have always been and will always be persecuted by the Jews. Similar-sounding sentiments can be found in some of the earliest documents from the Jesus movement, such as Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, as well as in all the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. In fact, Jewish enmity became so closely identified with godliness in the Late Antique religious imagination that the Qur'an adopted it in support of Muhammad's own prophetic claims: "Is it ever so, that when there comes to you a messenger from God with that which you yourselves do not desire you grow arrogant, and some you disbelieve, and some you slay?" (Qur'an 2:87, echoing Acts 7:51-53).

It is easy to conclude, as the Catholic theologian Rosemary Reuther did in 1974,

that "the truth of the Gospel" already encodes the negative teachings about Judaism that *Nostra aetate* rejects. "Christian scriptural teaching and preaching *per se* is based on a method in which anti-Judaic polemic exists as the left hand of its christological hermeneutic," she wrote. And "if we wish to reaffirm the gospel without this anti-Judaic left hand, we must analyze and reconstruct the basic dualisms which shaped early Christian self-understanding." To put it another way, those who want to claim that God does not condemn the Jews cannot simply dismiss the anti-Judaic content of the gospel. Nor can they ignore the diverse reading practices through which myriad Christian communities in the past two millennia put that content to the hard work of making sense of their canon and their cosmos. In place of continuity, the Christian argument against anti-Judaism needs to invoke rupture. It must posit the formation of a gap between what it understands as Jesus's own teachings about Jews and Judaism and the more sinister form those teachings eventually took in the canonical gospels; between the "spirit of Christ" and the widespread anti-Jewish beliefs and practices that many Christian communities eventually came to think of as the "truth of the Gospel"

Beginning in the 1960s, a remarkable generation of American New Testament scholars—E. P. Sanders, John Gager, Louis Martyn, and others—set itself the task of opening this gap. Paula Fredriksen is that generation's heir. Already the author of two clarifying studies of the historical Jesus and the early Jesus movement, she now gives us that rare gift, a volume much vaster than its title. *Augustine and the Jews* is certainly an illuminating treatment of an influential Church Father's teachings on Jews and Judaism. But it is also an introduction to the cognitive landscape of the entire ancient Mediterranean world, a map of the cosmologies and communities that produced Christianity and were in turn transformed by it.

II.

AUGUSTINE AND THE JEWS begins where so much else began, with the conquests of Alexander the Great, roughly seven centuries before Augustine's birth in 354 C.E. There was a good deal of culture stuffed in the backpacks of Alexander's armies, and though they did not impose new religions on those they conquered, they did bring with them new questions about the gods, and new tools (such as philosophy) with which to work on those questions, and

even a new language (Greek) in which to ask them. Chief among these questions was one we nowadays encounter—if we encounter it at all—in freshman dorms, between the covers of Plato's *Republic*: is god active or perfect?

The Greeks had no difficulty imagining active gods: gods who were men writ large, moving among us, helping those whom they favor, harming those who displease them, even—like Zeus—raping those whom they fancy. Beginning around the fifth century B.C.E., however, some of their philosophers began to think of divinity as perfection. The cosmos may well be full of all sorts of gods—daemons, demiurges, assorted deities—some of whom may act in the world, and even be acted upon. But the highest among these must be perfect, unmoved and unmoving, eternally rather than contingently true, suffering none of the constant change to which the physical world and the passions of men are subject. It was for this insight that Augustine would praise the Greeks almost a millennium later: "These philosophers have been raised above the rest by a glorious reputation, which they thoroughly deserve. They recognized that no material object can be god ... and that nothing changeable can be the supreme god."

In the meantime, philosophical perfection posed a problem. The gods, after all, were known to man through ancient stories about their actions in the world. Did philosophy demand that these stories—or these gods—be discarded? Or could divine perfection and divine action be reconciled? One way to address the problem was to develop new techniques with which to read old texts. Allegory—from the Greek *allos*, other, and *agorein*, to speak, or "otherspeak"—was one of the most important of those techniques, a way of moving from what a text "literally" said to what it "truly" meant. In "otherspeak," Zeus's rape of Ganymede signifies the rapture that seizes the soul when it contemplates the divine Being, the One. Such methods of reading rescue the text by dividing it into two parts, literal and allegorical, outer and inner, or—in the terms that Greek philosophy applied to the human being—body and soul, matter and spirit.

Jews also spoke Greek, and their God confronted the challenges of philosophy every bit as much as Zeus did. How could he be the highest god, if his emotions were so human, his form so anthropomorphic (except when he changed into some other object, like a burning bush or a pillar of fire), his involvement with creation so intimate, and his

demands so physically detailed? In the centuries after Alexander's conquests, allegory provided many Jews with a way to find philosophical truth in the seemingly carnal details of their scriptures. The point, in the words of Philo of Alexandria, was to read texts for "the hidden meaning that appeals to the few who study soul characteristics, rather than bodily forms." Through such techniques, the many demands that God imposed on the bodies of his followers—such as circumcision, dietary laws, and ritual ablutions—could be seen to express spiritual as well as physical teachings.

Unlike some of his early first-century contemporaries, Philo was careful to insist that Jews should not separate the two levels of meaning. "We should look on all these [outward observances] as resembling the body, and [these inner meanings as resembling] the soul. It follows that, exactly as we have to take thought for the body, because it is the abode of the soul, so we must pay heed to the written laws. If we keep and observe these, we shall gain a clearer conception of those things of which these are the symbols." By incarnating the spirit of philosophy in the body of scripture, Jews like Philo sought to maintain the possibility of a god who was simultaneously perfect and active, unchanging yet present in the constant flux of the material world.

AT MUCH THE same time that Philo was writing in Alexandria, a much more scandalous incarnation was taking place in a neighboring province of Rome's empire. Two thousand Christmases and Easters have dulled us to the shock that many educated ancients, Jewish or gentile, would have felt at the idea that the supreme god could be born in the flesh, suffer, and die on the cross. The overcoming—or rather, the embrace—of this scandal was one of the most difficult challenges faced by the Jesus movement. It met that challenge by thinking, with Philo, about the correct way to read Jewish scriptures. The twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke personifies this process with particular poignancy, in the form of two dejected disciples who meet a stranger on the road to Emmaus. The stranger—the newly risen Christ—consoles them by explicating how all of scripture prophesied "that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory."

But more than a generation before Luke's Gospel was redacted, indeed before any of our canonical Gospels were circulating at all, it is the apostle Paul whom we find teaching how scripture should be

read by the followers of Jesus. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans are the two great primers of this pedagogy. In them he re-reads the scriptures in order to explain the relationship between the covenant of Abraham and the promise of Jesus; between the Law and the gospel; between the responsibilities and rewards of Jesus's Jewish followers, and those of his increasingly numerous gentile ones. In them he also takes on the necessary task of explaining why it is that most Jews refused to read their own scriptures this way: why they did not recognize Jesus, why they persecute his followers, and with what consequences for themselves. And in all of this, as in this example from Galatians, allegory is one of Paul's most important tools:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery: she is Hagar ... she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ... Now we, brethren, like Isaac are children of promise. ... But what does scripture say? "Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."

Abraham's families, one slave one free, here unleash a chain of significations. Hagar and Ishmael represent flesh and slavery, Sarah and Isaac spirit and freedom. Thus far the reading would not have surprised its audience. But next comes an earthquake. Hagar and Ishmael, flesh and slavery, are associated with the law given at Sinai and terrestrial Jerusalem. But Sarah and Isaac, spirit and freedom, are a new covenant and a heavenly city. One bold allegorical stroke reverses the traditional readings of this story. The Mosaic Law and the people and polity that observe it are condemned as "of the flesh," sentenced to slavery and exile.

Every word of these epistles has a long future in Christian thinking about Jews. The "slavery" of Sinai's children, further explored and amplified by Augustine, will eventually help medieval English lawyers justify the unfree legal status to which they consigned Jews in their kingdom. But Paula Fredriksen wants to understand Paul in terms of the intention of his thought, not of its future. From that point of view, she insists, it is anachronistic to

classify Paul's beliefs as "Jewish" or "Christian," and nonsensical to call him anti-Jewish. True, he did deploy the Exodus generation as a "negative role model" for the communities to which he was preaching. But unlike later Christians, he always thought of himself as a Jew preaching Judaism. Moreover, he believed in the brevity of the slavery to which he condemned his opponents. He was convinced that the end of time was coming soon, and with it the recuperation of Israel.

Fredriksen's goal here, like that of her teacher John Gager, is to emancipate Paul's epistles—and thus the earliest teachings of Christianity—from the "anti-Judaism" that so many other readers have found in them. Some of those readers might object that, whatever Paul claimed about the qualities of his own Judaism, the various Jewish communities that punished or expelled him certainly considered his teachings threatening and heretical. Others might claim that, whatever his intentions, the conflict surrounding his teaching to the gentiles led him to draw a fatefully sharp contrast between the carnal particularism of Jewish law and ritual, and the spiritual universalism of the Christian. Still others might protest that our evidence for the circumstances of composition and transmission of Paul's texts is too meager, and too corrupted by later sources, to allow decisive knowledge about their context; or that it is in any case a fallacy to think that we can approach intention through text in this way. All of these objections are valid. Yet there is a real benefit in trying to free Paul (or any thinker) from the future of his thought. Cut off from its later instantiations, we begin to see new possibilities in Paul's teachings, potential futures other than those we know. And with this benefit comes the real relief—no less real for having been mocked by Nietzsche—of knowing that however badly history turned out, it might have turned out otherwise.

PAUL'S LETTERS could certainly authorize many different visions of the future. As a later New Testament text puts it, "there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction." But the fact remains that, despite all these potentials, early Christians quickly reached consensus about Paul's teachings on the Jews. The Jews—"carnal Israel"—stood for the flesh, for attachment to the outer form of things in this world, as opposed to their inner truth. They stood for a fleshly way of reading: one that saw only the body of the text, its "letter," rather than its inner

meaning, its “spirit.” They stood for the death of the soul: “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.”

The young Marx would identify this line from Paul as the most “dangerous enemy” of “real humanism.” But for early Christians it proved a key axiom in their debate over how best to explain the scandal of Jesus’s death on the cross. There were three broad schools of thought in that debate: those who solved the scandal by making Jesus a man and not a god; those who solved it by making him a god and not a man; and those who heightened the scandal by making Jesus both a god and a man. The first of these probably included many of the first Jewish followers of the historical Jesus, who did not require that their messiah be divine. But this position was overrun early, overwhelmed by the Roman legions who destroyed the earthly Jerusalem and the gentile converts who swelled the heavenly one. Henceforth it was abandoned to heresies: to “Judaizing” sects such as the Ebionites, to Islam’s prophet Jesus, and to the ethical Jesus of Enlightenment and modernity. The conflict between the second and third schools (both of which claimed Paul as their headmaster!) proved more stubborn.

This conflict provides the context for *Augustine and the Jews*. Its bitterness is already apparent in early texts such as the Second Epistle of John: “There are many deceivers at large in the world, refusing to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in human nature. They are the Deceiver, they are the Antichrist.” Scholars call these “deceivers” Docetists, from the Latin *docere*, to teach. They were members of the second school: those who believed that the supreme god could not undergo change, corruption, or creation—that Jesus could not have had a human nature, though he might have assumed the appearance of a man heuristically, in order to teach among men (hence the name of Docetists). Nor could the perfect god have participated directly in the creation of the world without suffering change and involvement in lower levels of Being. The Old Testament, with its stories of the creation and the flood, could not be an account of the actions of such a god.

Some, called dualists, went even further, and made the material world of flesh the work of a creator god who was hostile to the perfect god. Did not Paul teach that “to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace”? And if there were two gods, then there were two scriptures: the Hebrew Scriptures of flesh for the killing god of creation, and the teachings of the

apostles for the salvific god of spirit. Paul, again: “acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law of my mind.” Flesh and Spirit, Hebrew Scripture and gospel, Jew and Christian, were inter-related antinomies that had to be separated. According to these docetists and dualists, Christians who believed that god had come in the flesh were not Christians but “Jews,” still clinging to carnality and Hebrew Scripture, still in need of de-Judaization. As Fredriksen puts it, “a Christ without human flesh heralded a Christianity without Judaism.”

But the same could be said of an Incarnate Christ. His advocates did hold on to the old scriptures, but only by stripping them of Jews and Judaism. The truth, as Ignatius wrote to the Magnesians and Philadelphians around 100 C.E., had never been Jewish: “The divine prophets lived according to Jesus Christ.” “Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity.” Half a century later Justin Martyr, the greatest of the Incarnation’s early defenders, expanded the claim. Even before the incarnation, the Son and Word of God had been available to all men in all times. Any man who lived according to that Word, or *logos*, was a Christian. (Socrates and Heraclitus were examples of such Christians, as were the prophets beginning with Abraham.) Since the Jews were too hard-hearted to live according to the Word, God gave them—not as a privilege, but as a punishment—an ambivalent scripture, one whose literal meaning was as carnal as they were, but whose allegorical meaning was spiritual and Christian. The Jews had never understood their prophets (“or rather not yours, but ours”), not heard how they proclaimed Christ’s truth, not recognized God walking among them in the flesh. This, says Justin, is precisely what his rivals, the docetists and the dualists, do. Just like the Jews, they dismiss the Old Testament as carnal because they can only read it literally. The dualist, as another champion of the Incarnation put it pithily circa 200, was “borrowing poison from the Jew.”

The key point here—I am stressing it a bit more than Fredriksen does—is that the vast stockpiles of anti-Jewish stereotypes built up in the second and third centuries were not the result of Christian struggles with Jews and Judaism. They were the product of conflicts between Christians, conflicts in which each party strove to claim the mantle of “true Israel” for itself, and to clothe the other in the robe of “Jew.” In Fredriksen’s words, “key features of the *adversus Iudaeos* tradition . . . formed as the rhetorical

run-off of internal battles between well-educated gentile Christian intellectuals.” This anti-Judaism became the one point upon which all sects agreed. (“If hatred of Jews makes the Christian, then we are all plenty Christian,” Luther and Erasmus would quip in the midst of a later sectarian struggle.) Hence the dualist champion Faustus could charge, circa 399, in his debate with Augustine: “Your Christianity, just like mine, is based on the belief that Christ came to destroy the Law and the prophets.” And again: “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.”

III.

ONE OF Augustine’s many achievements was to confront this charge. The confrontation was not the work of a single moment. It extended over the course of Augustine’s entire life, and motivated many of his most influential conclusions about how scripture should be read. These included his earliest teachings, when he was himself, like Faustus, a Manichaean, driven to dualism—as he tells it—in part by his loathing for the “absurdities” of God’s actions in the Old Testament. It was only in his thirties, listening to the preaching of Ambrose, that he began to move away from the Manichaeans: “I was delighted to hear Ambrose in his sermons to the people saying, as if he were enunciating a principle of exegesis: ‘the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.’ Those texts which, taken literally, seemed to contain perverse teachings, he would expound spiritually, drawing aside the mystical veil.” “The absurdity which used to offend me in those books. . . . I now understood to signify the profundity of their mysteries.”

Ambrose’s allegories gave Augustine the courage to defect to Catholic Christianity, a defection that his dualist friends and colleagues represented as a far worse conversion: “You have gone over to the barbarous tribe of the Jews.” But as a recovering dualist, he was also aware of the risks of “otherspeak.” When allegorists such as Origen, Ambrose, and Jerome denied the literal truth of scriptural passages that seemed perverse, they transformed absurdity into profundity, but at the cost of pushing letter and spirit further apart. The more they stigmatized the literal and elevated the allegorical, the more they approached dualism themselves, and the more they strengthened Faustus’s claim that, despite the profession of their lips, in their hearts Catholic

Christians hated the Old Testament just as much as Manichaeans did.

Against this claim, Augustine began to insist on the value of every literal word of Scripture. If, as he wrote to Jerome, we are willing to deny the literal truth of scriptural passages that seem awkward, then how can we counter dualists when they claim that this or that passage of scripture was false? "If he wrote what was false here, when did he say what was true?" "I would devote all the strength which the Lord grants me, to show that every one of those texts which are wont to be quoted in defense of the expediency of falsehood ought to be otherwise understood, in order that everywhere the sure truth of these passages themselves may be consistently maintained." The Lord granted Augustine a great deal of strength. From *Against the Manichees*, written shortly after his conversion in 387, to the *City of God* and the *Sermons Against the Jews*, completed shortly before his death in 430, he and his scribes produced countless works touching on the relationship between letter and spirit, Law and Gospel, Old Testament and New. Hundreds of these works survive, and more are still being discovered, and Paula Fredriksen has read them all, judging from the account that she gives, treatise by shimmering treatise, of the evolution in Augustine's approach to the interpretation of God's word.

That account extends over more than a hundred pages, and is the central achievement of her book. Anyone interested in philosophical theology, anyone interested in how the written word of scripture can mediate between man and God, will be fascinated by these pages, in which Augustine brings "the timeless, unchanging high god of philosophical paideia and the active, engaged chief personality of the Jewish Bible together into a single coherent whole." But another discovery awaits readers as well, for it turns out that Augustine's thinking about language—about the proper interpretation of scripture, the proper relationship between letter and spirit—occasions also a reevaluation of the Jewish past. No longer is the literal meaning of the Old Testament something to be overcome or left behind. Instead it is embraced as history: history full of allegorical meaning, yes, but also valuable in itself as a true account of God's relationship to his people. The rituals of the Jews are no longer seen as perversions and absurdities, but as age-appropriate ways of relating to God, and pleasing unto him. Even circumcision, mocked by Justin Martyr, Faustus, and so many others, is defended by Augustine as a sign of regen-

eration, a putting off of the mortal flesh in anticipation of Jesus's sacrifice.

We can almost pinpoint the moment when Augustine came to these conclusions. In 397, writing the first drafts of *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine insisted that Jesus had deliberately shown flagrant disrespect for Jewish law. In 399, in his arguments with Faustus, his position is precisely the opposite. Jesus never tried to turn Israel from the law, never broke a commandment. He even refused to violate the Sabbath after his crucifixion: hence he rose on the eighth day.

It is not only the Law that is re-valued by Augustine, not only the Jewish past, but also the Jewish present and future. In his effort to explain to Faustus the proper place of the letter and the Law, he also explains why Judaism persists even after the Gospel has put an end to the Law as a path to salvation. The Jews survive for two reasons, Augustine teaches. First, their existence testifies against all who might ever maintain—as Faustus does—that the ancient scriptures were false or falsified. Like fossils for the naturalist, their presence is proof of an earlier stage in salvation's evolution. Hence "no emperor or monarch . . . kills them, that is to say, makes them cease to be Jews, separate in their observance and unlike the rest of the world." Second, their survival testifies against those who might go too far in the opposite direction, "Judaizers" who might think—as Jerome wrongly accused Augustine of thinking—that there is any ongoing validity to Law as a path to salvation. Hence the Jews must live in exile and abjection, wandering like Cain over a hostile earth, their misery a silent monument to Christ's victory. Augustine found the perfect prooftext for this delicate balancing act between protection and perdition: "Slay them not, but scatter them in your might, lest your people forget your Law."

Compare the preaching of John Chrysostom a decade earlier: "When animals are unfit for work they are marked for slaughter, and this is the very thing which the Jews have experienced. By making themselves unfit for work, they have become ready for slaughter. This is why Christ said 'As for my enemies, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.'" Compare the admonition of Augustine's teacher Ambrose, who appeared in imperial court to defend clergy who had burned down a synagogue. The fire, he told the emperor, was lit "by the judgment of God," so the emperor could not punish the clerics for it without himself becoming a "Jew." And compare, from a

decade or two after Augustine's formulation, the letter that Severus of Minorca wrote to many of his fellow bishops, telling them that his flock had burned down his city's synagogue and converted its Jews, and urging them to likewise "take up Christ's zeal against the Jews," so that "the entire earth might be ablaze with the flame of love," consuming the Jewish "forest of unbelief." Compared to these chilling pronouncements, Augustine's "slay them not" seems to promise a very different future for the Jews.

WE MIGHT therefore conclude—along with the marketing blurb on the back cover of *Augustine and the Jews*—that the bishop of Hippo discovered "a vividly original" theology that "ultimately served to protect the Jews." But would we be right? Fredriksen's book contradicts itself on this question. It begins with a story told some seven hundred years after Augustine's death, in 1146, when soldiers marching to the Holy Land on the Second Crusade paused in the German Rhineland to massacre the Jews, just as the First Crusaders had done. This time, according to Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn, the Jews were saved by the preaching of Bernard of Clairvaux, who said to the crusaders "Who-soever touches a Jew to take his life is like one who harms Jesus himself . . . for in the book of Psalms it is written of them, 'Slay them not, lest my people forget.'"

Why begin a book on Antiquity with a story from the Middle Ages? And if a medieval story, why not a less happy one? In 1146, a dark year for the Jews of the Rhineland, Peter the Venerable wrote King Louis VII of France to *protest* the protection of that kingdom's Jews, which he thought excessive—and he, too, invoked Augustine: "slay them not, for God does not wish them to be entirely killed and altogether wiped out, but to be preserved for greater torment and reproach, like the fratricide Cain, in a life worse than death. . . ." Clearly Fredriksen chose her point of departure to convince us that Augustine's ideas saved Jewish lives. And just as clearly we are meant to believe that Augustine's ideas broke with the past and set a new pattern for the future, transforming the possibilities for history: "within the context of the *adversus Iudaeos* tradition," we later learn, "a revolution is precisely what he achieved."

And yet the last sentence of Fredriksen's last chapter explicitly distances itself from any such belief: "In the changed context of medieval Christendom, Augustine's invocation of Psalm 59, interpreted literally, ultimately would safeguard Jew-

ish lives. But that is a story of another time, for another time.” And throughout the book, the central claim is that Augustine’s thought, like Paul’s or any other early Christian thinker’s, must be understood within its own “context,” by which she means not so much the thinker’s era or society, but the immediate conflict of ideas within which each thought was thought, the very instant of discourse within which it was produced:

Augustine was as capable of bitter anti-Jewish invective as were any of his fourth-century peers. . . . If we regard Augustine’s theological teachings about Jews as evidence for what he really thought or really felt about Jewish contemporaries, we will come away with the impression of a man riddled with deep inconsistencies, emotional conflicts, unresolved anger, and so on. . . . What Augustine, in sermons or in treatises or in letters, said about Jews (or “Jews”) . . . often depended on what he needed to say in order to get his argument where he wanted it to go. In his response to Faustus, Augustine’s defense of the flesh, of Jewish cult, and of Jesus’ or Paul’s or Peter’s Jewish practice, does not give us evidence about what Augustine “really thought” or “really felt” about his actual Jewish neighbors and about local late-fourth century Judaism. What it does provide us with, in abundance, is evidence of his self-confident creativity when arguing against a theological opponent.

So the written record of Augustine’s thought provides no evidence about what Augustine “really thought” about the Jews. And even if we could determine what he “really thought” (a possibility Fredriksen puts in doubt), it would in any event not be continuous with what later readers thought he thought. (And how might we determine *that*?) The epistemology is certainly defensible. But what, then, can it possibly mean to write a history of Augustine’s thinking about the Jews?

I THINK THAT WE reach an impasse here, though with the best of intentions. Fredriksen wants to argue for the relatively peaceable existence of Jewish communities in Late Antiquity. But at the same time she wants to acknowledge the pervasively negative representations of Judaism within early Christian theology. She achieves both by treating theological invective as the “rhetorical runoff” of Christian intellectuals, with little impact on how people lived their lives. Yet of course she knows that in some times and

some places precisely this theology will be used by real people to attack real Jews. So in order to insulate early Christian intellectuals from anachronistic charges of anti-Judaism or philo-Judaism, their statements about Jews and Judaism are cut free from the fabric that others will stitch from them, and the meaningfulness of those statements is reduced to the discursive moment in which they were uttered. This strategy of distancing the intellectual from the social, of sundering idea from lived experience and widening the gap between rhetoric and reality, does protect early Christian thought from the reproach (or the praise) of its future. But it does so at the cost of de-materializing that thought, leaving it floating weightlessly outside the gravity of history.

Fredriksen seems herself dissatisfied with the un-Augustinian dualism of this solution, judging from her occasional attempts to close “the gap between rhetoric and reality.” But where can she find the “reality” of Christian-Jewish relations, if it is not contained in sermons, treatises, and letters? Her answer to this question seems a little crude for an author so gifted at the exposition of ideas: “Jews are Roman citizens, they sit on city councils. They own land.” “Late-fourth-century Jews are still part of ‘the system.’” With such political and legal arguments she dismisses as rhetorical Augustine’s claim that the Jews live “trembling in fear” among the Christians to whom they are subjected. The reality, she says, turning to scattered evidence of prosperity and power, is very different: “Augustine does not write in a society where the lives of Jews are under threat; nor is late-fourth-century North Africa the same sort of culture that much later medieval and early modern Europe will be.”

It is true that the late Roman Mediterranean was not early modern Europe. But despite that difference, fourth century Jews—and modern scholars—could still take seriously the theological invective aimed against them, still tremble at the violence that this invective sometimes sparked, still be (or think of themselves as being) distinctively vulnerable within “the system.” In order to decide such questions, we need to be very clear about why we choose to prefer some sorts of evidence over others. What methodology tells us that the language of lawyers is a better index of integration than the language of theologians? Why should we treat as a sign of integrative social reality the only document of Augustine’s that actually mentions an identifiable Jew (who shows up in Augustine’s court to plead for property taken from him by another

bishop), but dismiss as rhetorical the many in which he writes of the misery of “the Jews”? Certainly there are some surviving Christian documents that tell us that Jews “mock Jesus (thus Christianity) openly, to the point of provoking urban riots; and in one eastern city, Laodicea, they even physically abuse a local archdeacon.” But what theory of interpretation allows us to see in these documents evidence of a social reality in which “Jews do not act as if they felt marginalized,” while treating as rhetorical or unrepresentative those more numerous texts that tell us of the seizure and burning of synagogues, of occasional local expulsions and forced conversions? To the extent that these decisions about sources seem arbitrary, the resulting history of Christian-Jewish relations will seem so as well.

Augustine and the Jews is forced into these choices by its laudable desire that the history of Jewish-Christian relations be simultaneously intelligible and under-determined, that the words of the Fathers be meaningful but innocent of the meanings that the future will find in them. The result is somewhat paradoxical: a brilliant explication of early Christian theology that deprecates the importance of ideas; a powerful demonstration of an alternative past for Jewish-Christian relations, but one that severs the subject from its later history. The paradox is puzzling, but I think it reflects a double-mindedness that clings to the subject of Judaism within early Christianity itself—a double-mindedness that not even Augustine, the greatest champion of the Incarnate Christ, could quite avoid.

Over the course of his long career, the meaning of history was one of the many things about which Augustine changed his mind. The sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 deflated his early confidence that the future could be read in the past, that each moment in the unfolding of history pointed forward toward the glorious consummation of end-time. But for all his increasing skepticism about the legibility of history, on one point Augustine’s certainty did not waver: the Jews in their undying misery provide historical proof of Christ’s promise about the intelligibility of scripture. They remain “milestones,” “living letters,” “the desk of the Christians.” In old age Augustine no longer believed that God’s plan was clearly revealed in the confused events of earthly politics. Yet without perceiving any contradiction he still preserved the Jews, so to speak, in formaldehyde: inert witnesses, like Einstein’s brain in a jar, of a revolution in man’s understanding of the cosmos. ♦

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