

REVIEWS & NOTICES



Daniel C. Timmer

Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31:12–17; 35:1–3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective,
Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur
des Alten und Neuen Testaments 227
(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009)

Readers and scholars have long noticed an abrupt “break” in the narrative of Exodus. Following the liberation from Egypt (Exod. 1–19), the making of the covenant at Sinai, the reading of the Law, and the ratification of the covenant by the people (Exod. 19–24), Moses is called up to the mountain for forty days and forty nights. There God gives him instructions for the liturgy of the covenant and the building of the Tabernacle, the sanctuary where God will meet his people and accept their sacrifices. The next six chapters (Exod. 25–31) essentially lay out, in minute detail, the requirements for the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and Israel’s sacrificial cult.

Then comes the “break”—the story of the golden calf apostasy and its fallout, depicted as occurring while Moses was up on the mountain receiving his liturgical orders (Exod. 32–34). The narrative resumes after this long break—as if nothing has happened in the meantime. Moses delivers God’s instructions to the people and they implement all that the Lord requires for the Tabernacle and the liturgy (Exod. 35–39); Exodus ends with God filling the Tabernacle with the glorious cloud of his presence (Exod. 40).

The question from both narrative and theological standpoints is how to explain the interruption and its possible meaning in Exodus. Daniel Timmer has proposed an answer based on a little-noticed fact: that the gold calf episode is bracketed by what he calls a “Sabbath frame,” two passages that talk about the Sabbath. The front side of the frame (Exod. 31:12–17), directly preceding the golden calf episode, recalls the purposes of the Sabbath as a “sign” of God’s covenant in creation and a reminder that God alone is the source of holiness for the people. The back side of the frame (Exod. 35:1–3), which directly follows the golden calf episode, repeats prohibitions against working on the Sabbath and again stresses the themes of “holiness” and divine rest.

This finding leads Timmer to inquire into the creation themes and typology in Exodus. He makes good use of the growing body of recent scholarship on inner-biblical creation imagery. And the result of his inquiry is a clearer understanding of

the connections between the covenant in creation and the Mosaic covenant at Sinai. Timmer's focus on *protology*—God's purposes in creation, or what Timmer nicely describes as the "latent eschatology in creation"—is refreshing and illuminating. He helps us to see that the themes of the Mosaic covenant, which establishes Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6), are present in the creation account—priesthood, the sanctuary, holiness, "solemn rest" (*šabbāt šabbātōn*). In Timmer's canonical reading, creation was intended to be the sacred space where God dwells with his people, and Adam, representative of humanity, was created to be a priest in this cosmic temple of creation. Israel's Tabernacle is intended to be the fulfillment of creation, as the priesthood of Adam is to be fulfilled in the royal priesthood of Israel which, like Adam, is a "firstborn" son (Exod. 4:22).

At the center of this complex of creation imagery is the Sabbath. In Exodus, the Sabbath is explained as a sign of the eternal covenant of creation and also as a sign of the Sinai covenant—thus stressing the continuity of God's covenantal purposes from the beginning. Timmer notes that throughout Israel's history "the goal of God's redemptive actions is consistently put in terms of rest" (see Deut. 3:20; 12:9–10; 25:19). The Sabbath "rest" is intended to be a participation in God's own "rest," understood as God's dwelling with his people. As Timmer writes:

Yahweh is encouraging [Israel] to experience, amid human existence in a fallen world, an analogue of his own rest. In the same way that created humanity was originally to enter God's rest upon successful completion of its probation in the Garden of Eden, the creation of Israel led her from slavery to rest (Lev. 26:13; Deut. 5:15) and to the vocation to serve God without reservation (Exod. 19:4–6). Furthermore, until Israel's completion of this vocation, the Sinai covenant's Sabbath served as the symbol of her goal, just as the seventh day on which Yahweh rested represented the goal to which Adam and Eve were to aspire. Further, by blessing and consecrating the Sabbath day, God made every seventh day of Israel's covenant life one on which he reminded them of their duty to obey his law and his consequent promise to sanctify and bless them, both now and eschatologically.

Timmer notices that both in creation and in the Exodus, God's covenant plans are interrupted by sin—first by the sin of Adam and later by the sin of the golden calf. In framing the golden calf episode with references to the Sabbath, "the gravest sin imaginable is set in the context of God's unchanging commitment to sanctify Israel." It is surprising that Timmer has no use for the rabbinic interpretive tradition which, in seeing the golden calf as a reenactment of Adam's sin, reinforces the findings of his own inner-biblical exegesis. Nonetheless, he rightly sees that the Sabbath is the sign and pledge of God's covenant faithfulness, and that the liturgy

of the Tabernacle is the means by which Israel is to be sanctified and its sins atoned for. God's redemptive purposes and Israel's holiness and vocation to the nations is "ensured by the Sabbath and achieved by the Tabernacle," Timmer writes.

Timmer also recognizes the promissory note in the Sabbath, both in creation and at Sinai. The Sabbath frame of Exodus provides an "eschatological foreshadowing of how God will finally dwell in uncompromised proximity with a fully sanctified people," he says. "The rest to which the Sabbath pointed, since it is dependent upon a complete resolution of the sin problem, is contingent upon a future, final act of Yahweh." Many books that begin as doctoral dissertations are overly specialized and narrow in their areas of concern. By contrast, this book is admirably broad in its ambitions. With this work, Timmer has made a real contribution to biblical theology that has implications for many areas of Old Testament and New Testament research. His work points to the overarching unities, not only between creation and the Exodus, but between the cosmos and the Tabernacle, the forbidden fruit and the golden calf, and Adam and Israel as covenant representatives.



John W. Welch

The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple

Society for Old Testament Study Monographs

(Surrey: Ashgate, 2009)

John Welch sees a strong Temple motif underlying the central presentation of Jesus' teaching, and his book gives us a fine reading of the Sermon on the Mount that stresses its covenantal and liturgical dimensions.

The sermon in Matthew's gospel (Matt. 5–7) is composed of numerous allusions, echoes, and outright quotations relating to the Temple—beginning with the sermon's setting. Jesus "went up (Greek: *anebē*) into the mountain (*eis to oros*)," with his disciples—the precise wording of the Greek Septuagint text describing Moses going up to Mount Sinai with the seventy elders (compare Matt. 5:1; Exod. 19:3, 20; 24:9, 12). As Welch notes, the "mountain" in the Old Testament—Sinai and Zion, especially—is the site of theophany and of the sanctuaries built to commemorate and perpetuate those visions of God. The Temple built by Solomon is on the "mountain of the LORD's house" (Ps. 24:11; Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1), and the meeting place of heaven and earth.

As the sermon starts with a Temple mount allusion, it concludes that way, too. Jesus compares those who accept his teachings with a man who "built his house upon the rock (*epi tēn petran*)."¹ It is interesting that the reference is not to

a rock, but *the* rock. Welch connects this with “the rock” stuck by Moses in the wilderness (Num. 20:8–11) and the altar of sacrifice in the days before the Temple (*tēn petran*; Judges 13:19). Finally, he suggests that “the rock” may refer directly to the Temple, which was thought to be built upon the *Shetiyyah*-stone, said to be the foundation of the world (see Job 38:6).

In between the beginning and end, Welch finds a Temple context—“temple vocabulary, temple authority, temple ritual, religious initiation, and group identity formation”—for every section of the sermon. At times, it must be admitted, his exegesis can seem a bit forced. But he provides a wide-ranging inner-biblical reading of Jesus’ sermon, and his Temple focus yields new perspectives.

Building on the work of Moshe Weinfeld and others on the place of the Ten Commandments in Israel’s worship, Welch sets the sermon in the context of Israel’s regular covenant renewal liturgies. In these liturgies, the Decalogue was reread and the people rededicated themselves to the covenant through sacrifices, prayers, and oath-swearing. The Sermon on the Mount was used in the same way, he believes, as a “covenant renewal discourse.” The sermon, he argues, “belongs every bit as much to the mediation by Jesus of a sacred covenant relationship between God and his people as to the covenant mediated by Moses between Jehovah and the children of Israel.” This “new dispensation of God’s commandments from a new mount” was meant to be “remembered, rehearsed, and perpetuated.” That is, just as the recitation of the Decalogue was meant to elicit the obedience of faith from God’s covenant people, so too was the Sermon on the Mount.

Welch demonstrates the influence of the cultic themes of the Psalter on the Beatitudes. The first word of the Psalter is the first word of Jesus’ sermon—“blessed” (*makarioi*)—and, as Welch notes, the psalms often pronounce blessings upon believers in the context of the Temple liturgy. Thus Jesus promises blessings to the poor (*ptōchoi*) who will possess the Kingdom, just as the poor (*ptōchoi*) come to the Temple to seek God (Ps. 69:32–33) and glory in his Kingdom (Ps. 145:11–13).

Throughout, Welch makes a convincing argument that Jesus’ vocabulary and thematic concerns—mercy, enemies, righteousness, glory, rejoicing, love, meekness, forgiveness, purity—are directly related to the themes of the psalms and Israel’s Temple liturgy. His reading of Matthew 5:48 (“You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect [*teleioi*].”) brings out the ritual and cultic aspect of the holiness required of Christians. He ties the language here to a command of Moses and a prayer of David, both of which call believers to be “blameless” (*teleios*; Deut. 18:13; 2 Sam. 22:4, 26). A similar command is made at the end of Solomon’s prayer dedicating the Temple: “Let your heart therefore be *wholly true*” (*teleiai*; 1 Kings 8:61). Welch notes that the word used in Matthew bears rich liturgical connotations of ritual purity, consecration, and standing without blemish before God (see Exod. 12:5; 29:22–34 Lev. 8:22–33).

Welch is surprisingly uninterested in exploring the connections between the sermon’s Temple imagery and the wider Davidic typologies and Kingdom restora-

tion themes in Matthew. While scattered insights are offered throughout the work, in general he exhibits a remarkable tone-deafness to the Davidic and Solomonic implications of the Temple imagery he uncovers and discusses. That said, scholars pursuing these implications will find much to profit from in his work. Welch also overlooks the implicit Temple pilgrimage motifs in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' treatment of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (Matt. 6:2–17) are precisely what pilgrims practice as they travel towards the Temple. Likewise the triad of asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7) suggests a pilgrim sequence. What Jesus is doing at the climax of the sermon is pointing to two alternative temples, one that is earthly, the other that is heavenly. There are two ways—one is easy and many find it; one is hard and few they are that find it. One pilgrimage is going to be easy because everybody has been doing it; the other is going to be hard because it is much more of an interior ascent. Such observations would only reinforce Welch's findings in this fine book.



Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll

The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering
 Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 142
 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007)

Stephen Ahearne-Kroll seeks to advance a contemporary reinterpretation of the Davidic typology in Mark. He tries this through an exegesis of Mark's passion narrative that concentrates on Mark's use of four so-called psalms of individual lament (Pss. 22; 41; 42–43; 69). In New Testament times, David was widely believed to be the composer of the Psalms. This is decisive for Ahearne-Kroll's rereading. He contends that in depicting Jesus' passion, Mark wants to "align Jesus with the suffering, lamenting figure of David who cried out to God in various desperate situations."

He sets up his argument by noticing that Mark's Davidic imagery intensifies as Jesus enters Jerusalem for his final Passover. He discusses four passages—the encounter with the blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52); the entry into Jerusalem and the conflict in the Temple (Mark 11:1–25); the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1–12); and the dispute over the interpretation of Psalm 110 (Mark 12:35–37). Ahearne-Kroll sees a deliberate theological agenda being played out in these passages. At the same time he is presenting Jesus in ever more royal, Davidic, eschatological, and messianic terms, Mark is defying and undermining popular messianic hopes for a Davidic "warrior king" come to liberate Jerusalem and Israel by "earthly, militaristic" means.

Ahearne-Kroll repeats words like “militaristic,” “military,” “military violence,” “military ruler,” so often in his exegesis, that the reader suspects it may be Ahearne-Kroll and not Mark who is working out the agenda in these passages. There are two basic problems with his argument: First, he assumes a monolithic set of expectations for the Davidic Messiah—as if everyone at the time of Jesus was expecting some kind of violent revolutionary royal figure to come and overthrow Rome. In fact, there were varieties of messianic expectation in the Judaism of the time. His notes indicate an inadequate familiarity with scholarship in this area. Nor does he take seriously that Mark’s use of Isaiah’s “suffering servant” imagery in his passion narrative might reflect a strain of authentic messianic hope. Curiously, one of his scholarly goals is to downplay the significance of this imagery in Mark. The second problem is a neglect of passages that might qualify or contradict his interpretation. While perhaps not “militaristic,” Jesus’ condemnation of the scribes, his withering of the cursed fig tree (an ancient symbol for Israel), his confrontation with the Temple establishment, and his predictions of the Temple’s destruction, all add a nuance to Mark’s portrait that is not reflected in Ahearne-Kroll’s rereading.

Ahearne-Kroll’s use of the Psalter material is also problematic. He establishes that Mark employs four psalms of lament in six places in his passion narrative. Three times the language of the psalms is put on the lips of Jesus (Mark 15:23 = Ps. 69:21; Mark 15:24 = Ps. 22:18; Mark 15:29 = Ps. 22:8), and three times the language is used to set the scene and describe the action (Mark 14:18 = Ps. 41:9; Mark 14:34 = Ps. 42:6, 12; 43:5; Mark 15:34 = Ps. 22:1).

Again he detects a deliberate strategy in Mark’s use of these psalms. Here the operative word that Ahearne-Kroll repeats again and again is “challenge.” Mark, he argues, uses the Davidic lamentation psalms to depict a kind of existentialist Jesus who rails against the injustice of his suffering, who questions the “necessity” that the Messiah must die, who feels betrayed and abandoned by God, and “who goes to his death challenging God to answer his cries from the cross.”

With the cry of Jesus from the cross in the voice of David from Psalm [22], David’s outrage becomes Jesus’. He is the one who cries day (on the cross) and night (at Gethsemane), only to hear silence from God (Ps. [22:2]). He is the one who struggles to understand his suffering in light of God’s past relationship with Israel and himself (Ps. [22:3–5, 9–10]). He is the one whose life has become a mockery (Ps. [22:7–9]) and whose enemies take him for dead (Ps. [22:12–15]). In the story of Jesus’ crucifixion, Jesus embodies the suffering David from Psalm [22], not to foreshadow Jesus’ vindication at the resurrection, but to express the outrage of Jesus’ suffering and God’s abandonment in the midst of it. David rages against his abandonment, but not in rebellion against God; rather, he does so in a way that tries both

to understand how and why God would do such a thing and to get God's attention so that God will deliver him from the suffering. He gains neither understanding nor deliverance from suffering in the psalm, and when read with Jesus' crucifixion, the search for understanding and deliverance becomes Jesus' and the audience's.

This is no doubt a forceful reinterpretation, one that focuses our attention on the undeniable mental and physical suffering that Jesus experienced on the cross. However, one does not have draw the extreme conclusions that Ahearne-Kroll draws from his reading of the psalms and Mark. Ahearne-Kroll rejects the idea that Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"—is meant to evoke the psalm's full context. But many believe that Mark intended just that—and presumed his readers would know that this psalm ends, not in despair but in triumph and vindication for the one who felt forsaken. This reading does not diminish the anguish of Jesus on the cross, nor does it deny a sense of isolation and abandonment, but it does suggest that his quotation is not an expression ultimately of desolation and rage, but a cry of faith and hope uttered in the anguish of a suffering love.

Ahearne-Kroll does not buy this reading. In fact, he argues that Psalm 22 itself is originally a kind of angst-driven plea bargain, with the psalmist laboring in vain to "elicit the saving response of God." There is another possible interpretation for this psalm, and in fact for all four of these psalms of lament. While they all describe feelings of abandonment and doubt, these feelings are expressed in the context of the psalmist's praise of God and his thanksgiving for being delivered from death. These so-called laments are sung by believers whose sorrow was turned to joy.

Reading Mark as a whole it is difficult to reconcile Ahearn-Kroll's interpretation of the passion as a "challenge" to the justice and wisdom of God's plan. Elsewhere in Mark, Jesus is depicted explaining to his disciples that he must die, and explaining the reason why—that he had to give his life as a ransom (Mark 8:31–32; 9:31; 10:45). He foretells his rising from the dead (Mark 10:34) and his coming in glory (Mark 14:62). Concluding his parable of the vineyard with a quote from Psalm 118, one could make the case that Jesus knew well that his rejection and death would lead to the Lord's doing something marvelous (Mark 12:1–11).

Again, none of this denies his understandably human feelings of mental anguish and abandonment on the cross. But the reader finds himself wondering: Is it Mark's Jesus who is "challenging his suffering and God's perceived part in it, thus encouraging the reader to challenge understandings of God that allow for divine plans of suffering and shameful death"? Or is the one doing the challenging the author of this sometimes frustrating and unpersuasive book? Ahearne-Kroll has mined a good deal of Old Testament material and has shown the literary-historical

and theological potential for Mark's use of this material. But because he comes at it, not with Mark's agenda, but his own, he misses the deeper implications of the paradox he has uncovered. Why would God appoint Jesus to be the archetypal king when he is the archetypal sufferer? Interestingly, David is person who is called "servant" more than anyone else in the Hebrew Bible; and from the Psalms, we can see that nobody else suffers more than David in the Old Testament. So why did Mark see in David the model for Christ's kingship? Because the manifestation of the Kingdom on earth calls for the first to be last and to embrace a love that suffers. Because the Davidic kingdom realized in eucharistic terms calls for Christ-like martyrdom, Christ-like sacrifice.



Michael F. Bird

Are You the One Who Is to Come?
The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question
 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2009)

Did Jesus think he was the Messiah? This question has preoccupied New Testament researchers for more than a generation, with the scholarly guild long having come to the consensus that Jesus did not, but his followers did. It would be worth studying why and how the guild came to presume such a radical discontinuity between the preaching of Jesus and the proclamation of his early Church. One suspects that more than disinterested scholarship was at work. Michael Bird wisely steers clear of this knotty avenue of inquiry in his excellent and important new book. But such questions are bound to surface in light of Bird's return to the biblical data and his forceful scholarly vindication of the earliest christologies.

Bird agrees that Jesus probably never identified himself as the "Christ," the Messiah expected by Jews of his day. As he shows, the New Testament evidence indicates that Jesus' answers to those who asked were ambiguous at best. But Bird demonstrates convincingly that Jesus spoke and acted in ways that were deliberately designed to evoke messianic expectations and hopes. His words and actions, "could be designated as performatively messianic," Bird writes.

He roots Jesus' messianic self-understanding in the "idealization of the Davidic dynasty" found in the oracle of Nathan (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17) and in the royal psalms (Pss. 2, 72, 89, and 132). "We find here already the convergence of kingship, future hopes, and national restoration," Bird writes. "If this is not messianism, it contains at least the key ingredients for it." Jesus, according to Bird, defined his authority and purpose in terms of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom and the fulfillment of the divine oath sworn to David—that his son would reign

on the throne of the Kingdom for ever. In addition to making claims that could only be considered royal and Davidic, Jesus' healings and exorcisms deliberately evoked traditions associated with figures of David and Solomon. In addition to these Davidic types, Bird makes a strong case for the authenticity of Jesus' self-identification with the messianic Son of Man figure prophesied by Daniel, and for Jesus' appropriation of the attributes of Isaiah's suffering servant.

Bird provides a fine overview of scholarship on the varied strands of messianic hope in the period of the Second Temple. He dismantles the classic arguments against a messianic self-understanding for Jesus with surprising ease—again raising the question of why this viewpoint continues to have such traction in the academy. In this book we witness the triumph of a plain sense reading of the New Testament in continuity with the teachings of the early Church. In this, Bird stands in line with N. T. Wright and Dale Allison, among leading New Testament scholars whose work has challenged the dominant hermeneutic of suspicion and discontinuity.

As Bird recognizes, it has never made much sense that his first followers would proclaim Jesus to be the Christ “with such rigor, with deep commitment, and at grave personal expense,” if their proclamation had no basis in Jesus' own preaching and self-understanding. His understated conclusion makes good sense of the Scriptures and the historical record:

I am convinced that Jesus' own conception of his mission, work, and ministry was indeed formative and constitutive for the primitive christological reflection of the early Church. Question, debate, and reflection on who Jesus was probably started during Jesus' own lifetime with his first disciples, continued in the immediate post-Easter setting, and has indeed continued unabated to this very day. That led to the confession that Jesus is the Christ.

Reading this fine book, one wonders whether there is not a little Marcionism and anti-Judaism at the root of scholarly efforts to separate the christological beliefs of the early Church from the preaching of Jesus. As Bird rightly notes, the designation of Jesus as the Christ provides the hinge between the Law and the Gospel, the Old and New Testaments, and between Israel and the Church.

Jesus as Messiah constituted a fundamental way of connecting the story of the Church to the story of Israel. The messianic christology (tautological as it sounds) of the early Church was the central means through which it related its own claims to be the people of God in continuity with and as the climax to Israel's sacred traditions. The confession that “Jesus is the Messiah” be-

comes shorthand for a whole set of conclusions about promise and fulfillment as this confession relates to eschatology and exegesis and signifies a particular way of reading Scripture.

Bird gives us a balanced and constructive alternative to the minimalist tendencies in recent scholarship. This book is highly recommended for those seeking to understand the historical Jesus in continuity with both Old Testament expectations and the christological proclamation of the New Testament Church.



Michael J. Gorman

*Inhabiting the Cruciform God:
Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology*
(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2009)

St. Paul said he was determined to preach only Christ and Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:22; 2:2). In his new book, Michael Gorman takes Paul at his word. For Gorman the cross and the crucified Christ are the key to Paul's understanding of Christian salvation. Among the latest wave of scholars seeking a "new perspective" on Paul, Gorman has emerged as one of the busiest. This book reprises in more detail and technical language arguments he has made in such recent works as *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2001), *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Eerdmans, 2004), and *Reading Paul* (Cascade, 2008).

Gorman considers Philippians 2:6–11 to be Paul's "master story." In Jesus' humble acceptance of "death on a cross," Gorman finds the full meaning of the incarnation as the self-emptying ("kenosis") of God. This is both a revelation of the nature of God and a summons to believers to imitate God through our own kenosis. This self-emptying in imitation of Christ, Gorman calls "cruciformity." Cruciformity, in turn, is the way to *theosis*, says Gorman, adopting the ancient vocabulary of Eastern Christianity to designate participation in the divine life, or "being like God" (compare 2 Pet. 1:4).

This theological understanding has "countercultural" implications for Christian identity and practice, according to Gorman. He concentrates on the areas of sexuality and politics, and the need for what he calls "holy sex" and "holy politics." He argues that Christians must reject the "god of civil religion," the "god of military power," and indeed any mingling of religion, patriotism, and power.

Nationalistic, military power is not the power of the cross, and such misconstrued notions of divine power have nothing to do with the majesty or holiness of the triune God known in the weakness of the cross. In our time, any “holiness” that fails to see the radical, counter-imperial claims of the Gospel is inadequate at best. ... Participation in a *cruciform* God of holiness also requires a corollary vision of life in the world that rejects domination in personal, public, or political life. ... In our context, this ... will require from Christians a rejection of the normal sequence of piety, war, victory, and peace that pervaded ancient Rome and pervades much early twenty-first-century politics and religion around the world.

Gorman works hard to establish the political and cultural implications of Paul’s own conversion arguing, as he puts it, “for a nonviolent God and a nonviolent apostle.” Some of this material is helpful. But for the most part one feels that Paul and the Gospel are being squeezed into the rather narrow categories of American domestic politics. To wit: “Sentiments like ... ‘Let’s go kill some terrorists’ are remarkably similar to the underlying worldview of ... a preconversion Paul in three ways.”

One wishes Gorman would have stayed on a more productive path of theological inquiry, rather than seeking such facile “applications” for Paul’s teaching. It is astonishing that in a chapter devoted to the “nonviolent” Paul, Gorman does not consider Paul’s own stance toward the Roman state or attempt to reconcile his interpretation with Paul’s own apparent defense of state power, even violence, as “instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1–7). To raise this criticism is not to prejudge the issue. But it is, again, astonishing that the subject does not even come up in the midst of Gorman’s sweeping and categorical political pronouncements.

What Gorman calls the “soul” of his book is his effort to redirect theological debate concerning justification, or how humanity is restored to right relationship with God. Building his argument on an exegesis of Galatians 2:15–21 and Romans 6:1–7:6, he argues that justification involves participating in Christ’s own act of faithfulness to God’s covenant, a faith manifested in Christ’s acceptance of death on the cross. Our participation is effected by means of what he calls “co-crucifixion,” a term he finds in Paul (translating the Greek verb, *systaurōō*, in Gal. 2:20 and Rom. 6:6). This leads to Gorman’s attempt at a new theological definition:

Justification is the establishment or restoration of right covenantal relations—*fidelity* to God and *love* for neighbor—by means of God’s grace in Christ’s death and our Spirit-enabled co-crucifixion with him. Justification therefore means co-resurrection with Christ to new life within the people of God and the

certain *hope* for acquittal/vindication, and thus resurrection to eternal life, on the day of judgment.

In a short review it is impossible to engage Gorman's creative reconceptualization of Pauline justification. It can be pointed out, however, what is obviously missing from his definition. There is no appreciation of the sacramental and filial dimensions of justification that we find in Paul. Nor can we detect any necessary continuity between the old and new covenants.

A plain reading of Paul would indicate that, for him, justification involves a participation in Christ's death and resurrection that comes about through baptism, in which we receive the spirit of sonship and become children of God, offspring of Abraham, and hence heirs to the promises made to Abraham and his "seed" (Rom. 8:13–17; Gal. 3:29; Titus 3:7). One might add that, for Paul, our *divinization* (or "theosis" in Gorman's terminology) is intimately related to justification, which is the "newness of life," the liberation from sin and death brought about by the resurrection and our filial adoption in the Spirit in baptism (see Rom. 6:4; 4:25). Again, these aspects of our salvation are discussed by Paul in sacramental and liturgical terms, as is our imitation of the kenosis of Christ, which is spoken of in the eucharistic language of offering our bodies as a living sacrifice that is spiritual worship (*logikē latreia*; Rom. 12:1–2). Without this sacramental dimension, we face the potential of a kind of charismatic semi-Pelagianism, in which we work out our own theosis with some help from the Spirit. But for Paul, Jesus is more than an exemplar who gives us the Spirit to make up for what we are lacking. Our filial deification (theosis by kenosis) is humanly impossible apart from the divine power we receive in baptism and the Eucharist. Through the sacraments we have a participation in the very life of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 2:20).

Gorman does acknowledge that baptism is a dimension of Paul's idea of our entrance into the life of Christ (see Rom. 6:3–4). And in the final paragraphs of his book he adds, almost as an afterthought, that salvation for Paul is "the fulfillment of Israel's story." But neither the Old Testament nor the sacraments play a properly integral role in his reconceptualization of Pauline soteriology.



Paula Fredriksen

Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism (New York: Doubleday, 2008)

The world of Christian beginnings was a world of many gods, Paula Fredriksen reminds us at the start of this remarkable book. “In an age of empire, gods bumped up against each other with some frequency, even as their humans did. . . . Religious differences were a normal fact of life. Put differently: A mark of successful empire (the subordination of many different peoples to a larger government) was the variety of gods and the range of traditional practices that it encompassed (since many peoples meant, naturally, many gods).”

The cult of the emperor helped bring about a *pax deorum* (“peace of the gods”) by binding citizens in a common civic worship—with its own temples, priests, feast days, and sacrifices. What distinguished Jews and Christians was not their rejection of the plurality of deities, but their refusal to participate in the imperial cult and their insistence on their exclusive allegiance to the one true God. “For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God,” the prophet Micah wrote eight centuries before Christ (Mic. 4:5). One strain of Jewish thought viewed the “gods of the peoples” as false idols and (in the Greek Septuagint translation), “demons” (see Ps. 95:5). This strain was picked up early on by Christianity. St. Paul would write: “Although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth . . . yet for us there is one God.” (1 Cor. 8:5–6).

Writing at the turn of the fifth century, a generation after Christianity had been established as the state religion, St. Augustine marveled at the historic resilience of the Jewish faith. “The Jewish nation, under foreign monarchs whether pagan or Christian, has never lost the sign of their Law, by which they are distinguished from all other nations and peoples” (*Against Faustus*, Bk. 12, 13).

At the time, situation for Jews living as a religious minority under Christian rule was decidedly mixed, according to Fredriksen. Hostile anti-Jewish rhetoric had long been a staple of popular Christian preaching and theological apologetics, and there were scattered reports from around the empire of synagogues destroyed and forced baptisms and expulsions. On the other hand, Jewish communities were prominent in the heart of major Roman cities, and they must have been confident enough in their position to publicly mock Christ and Christians, because in some cases their antics provoked riots.

It was in this cultural context that Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, articulated a novel understanding of Jews and Judaism, one quite at odds with popular preaching and even the teaching and practice of some of his brother

bishops. Fredriksen studies Augustine's thinking about the Jews in the hopes of gaining insight into the wider questions of anti-Judaism and the formation of Christian identity. If ultimately she cannot answer her own poignant question—"Why and how did relations between Christians and Jews ever become so terrible in the first place?"—she has made a significant contribution to our understanding of ancient Christianity and one with many resonances for our own day.

Fredriksen has a gift for making the characters in her history come alive and for explaining their ideas with force and clarity. The story of Augustine's defense of the Jews is shaped by his theological encounter with Faustus, an exiled Manichaean bishop and author of a powerful manifesto for Manichaeism. As Fredriksen tells it, Faustus is a formidable interlocutor, with an impressive command of the New Testament and the five-century-old tradition of Christian theology and biblical interpretation. She connects Faustus with Marcion, the mid-second-century theologian censured by the Church as a heretic. Both denied any value to the Jewish Scriptures and set up a sharp dialectic between the Old and New Testaments, the Law and the Gospel, the spirit and the flesh, and divine justice and human freedom. Both also tended toward "docetism," the belief that Christ did not really have a fleshly body.

Thus we see that Augustine never set out to write an apologetic for Jews and Judaism. His goal was to defend the truth about the Christian faith against a principled and highly skilled opponent. Yet to defend the true faith, he had to explain the continuity between the promises of redemption made to the Jews and the good news proclaimed by the Church. And he prosecuted his defense through a typological interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures, read in light of the Gospel and the New Testament.

Augustine's interpretive method is built on several assumptions. First that the Old and New Testaments form a single and inseparable master narrative. Second, that Scripture, as the work of the Spirit, must be read both "literally" (*ad litteram*) and "according to the Spirit" (*secundum spiritum*). Read literally, the Scripture reliably "reports things that were done" (*facta narratur*). But the literal events and words were "signs" (*signa*) and "types" (*tipos*) for realities that would find their full meaning in Christ. Finally, Augustine believed that the interpretive key to reading the Scriptures is Christ: "The Bible everywhere speaks of Christ" (*Christus igitur sonant haec omnia; Against Faustus, Bk. 22, 94*).

These interpretive principles, which Fredriksen rightly traces to the New Testament writers, especially St. Paul, had radical implications for Augustine's understanding of Jews and Judaism. The Christian could not, as the Manicheans did, simply discard the Old Testament and belittle the portrait of the God found there. Nor could the Christian spin allegories that denied the plain sense of the text. The literal word of the Old Testament shows God's election and his giving his Law and the sacrificial liturgy to the Jews. Their election and their faithful

obedience to his covenant—including precepts of worship and sacrifice—reflect God’s will, both then and now.

Augustine argues that Christ did not come to abolish the Law and that Jesus and his disciples were pious, observant Jews. In his conflict with Jewish authorities, Jesus never condemned Jewish practices, but only the unfaithfulness and hypocrisy of the Jewish religious establishment. “Christ never tried to turn Israel away from their God, but rather, he charged them with being turned away. . . . He not only never broke one of God’s commands himself, but he found fault with those around him who did, . . . [for] it was God himself who gave these commandments through Moses” (*Against Faustus*, Bk. 16, 24). Augustine goes so far as to argue that Christ rose from the dead on the day after the Sabbath, so that his body would “rest from all its works,” in fulfillment of God’s commandments regarding the Sabbath.

As Fredriksen explains, Augustine’s novel exegetical and theological arguments led to radical and social and political conclusions—notably a robust defense of traditional Jewish practice. Augustine’s theology of Judaism goes far beyond simple tolerance of religious difference. According to his exegesis, the Jews continued to play a part in God’s plan of salvation.

Augustine’s typology becomes radically innovative. This orientation enabled him to assert not only that the Law itself was good, but also, and much more boldly, that *the Jewish understanding of the Law as enacted by Israel and as described in the Bible was also good*. Ancient Jewish *behavior*, asserted Augustine, with all its purification rituals and blood offerings and food restrictions and pilgrimage holidays and codes of conduct for the Sabbath, was also praiseworthy. Scripture commends Israel for their loyalty to the Law. A plain understanding of the text leads to the conclusion that traditional Jewish practice truly conformed to divine intention. This simple assertion was revolutionary. It stood centuries of traditional anti-Jewish polemic, both orthodox and heterodox, on its head. . . . God in brief, 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 that same Law in the flesh, within historical time*.

In the background of Augustine’s exegesis, we sense the concerns and questions raised in the first century by Paul in Romans 9–11. What is the meaning of Israel and the Jews, now that the Christ has come? What are we to make of their election, their sonship, their covenants, and their worship (Rom. 9:4)? Has God rejected his people or changed his mind (Rom. 11:1, 29)? These questions still hang in the background after 2,000 years. And perhaps there has never been so clear an answer as that given by Augustine.

For him the Jews, in remaining faithful to the practices and precepts of their Scriptures, were doing what God intends them to do as a “a community set apart from the other nations” (*ceterarum gentium communione discreti*; *Against Faustus*, Bk. 12, 13). In their long exile, scattered among the nations, they testify to the truth of God’s plan, as “a guardian of the books for the sake of the Church, bearing the Law and the prophets, and testifying to the doctrine of the Church, so that we honor in the sacrament what they disclose in the letter” (*Against Faustus*, Bk. 12, 23).

After more than a century of scholarly criticisms of Augustine for alleged anti-Semitism it is refreshing to find a Jewish scholar of the New Testament and Augustine restoring the “doctor of grace.” If there is perhaps a weakness in her approach, it is the relatively restricted scope of Augustine’s writings that she draws from. But reading Fredriksen’s masterful account, Augustine’s *Against Faustus* (399) emerges as an overlooked tour de force of biblical theology that, along with his *Answers to Simplicianus* (396), deserves to be read anew by those who would understand the mystery of the Jews and their place in salvation history.



Guy G. Stroumsa

The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformation in Late Antiquity,
trans. Susan Emanuel
(Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009)

In this brilliant little book, Guy Stroumsa focuses on the transformation of religion in the years after Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. This revolution in religious ideas, which extended throughout the Mediterranean and the Near East of late antiquity, defined the contours of European culture and the spiritual roots of Western civilization.

The Christianization of the empire made possible “a new sort of religion”—characterized by the notion of personal identity and concern for the self, by the importance of religious texts and reading, by the spiritualization and interiorization of sacrifice and worship, and by a shift in religious practice from the civic cult of the state to faith communities established voluntarily by individuals around a common set of beliefs.

Stroumsa looks at each of these aspects of the new religiosity in their turn. The key change, it seems, comes with the Christian belief that every soul is judged by God. Stroumsa rightly sees that “individual eschatology” immediately raised the stakes in religion. For the first time, it urgently matters what one believes—whether those beliefs are *true* or not; whether or not those beliefs can lead the soul to salvation.

With this new concern for the fate of the person after death comes a radical “interiorization and subjectivization of religion.” Before the rise of Christianity, religion in the Roman Empire was essentially defined as the public and collective “observance of rites, without belief playing an independent role,” Stroumsa notes. Religion was not a personal matter, but an affair of the empire, which defined what was to be believed and how those beliefs were to be expressed. Stroumsa quotes Cicero: “No one shall have gods to himself, either new gods or alien gods, unless recognized by the state.”

With Christianity, like Judaism before it, the old order is overturned. The locus of the sacred moves from the public to the private realm. True religion becomes a matter of individual conscience. Faith, in the sense of personal decision and voluntary commitment, for the first time becomes a factor in religion.

Stroumsa believes that “the requirement of truth in religion” was an idea introduced to the world by Israelite monotheism. This requirement of truth takes on central importance in the Christian idea of religion, which declares itself to be the *vera religio*, the one true religion. Throughout his narrative, Stroumsa reminds us of the essential continuity between the new Christian religion and the religion of Israel. “It is with Jewish weapons that Christianity conquered the Roman Empire,” he argues. Too often the story of this period is told as a clash between Christian faith and Hellenistic reason. But without understanding “the Jewish nature of the great Christian concepts,” Stroumsa says, “it remains impossible to explain the greater transformation of anthropological concepts of late antiquity.”

During this period, the idea of the human person broadened beyond the dualistic and rationalistic categories of Greek and Roman philosophy. Two basic beliefs are decisive. First, the Jewish teaching that God creates each person in his image; and second, the Christian belief that the Son of God was incarnated in a human body and resurrected in this body after his death. These beliefs make possible an integrated understanding of the person as a composite of body and soul. They also introduce the idea of salvation as a resurrection from death that involves the whole person, body and soul.

It also contributes to a new ethic. Holiness and wisdom are defined not only individual terms, but in communitarian terms as well. This marks a radical departure from the ethical ideals found in Roman writers such as Plutarch and Seneca. For Jews and Christians, “ethical concern becomes an integral part of religion ... the ethics of the self passes by way of the other. ... the individual cannot, in this context, save himself alone.” Ethics and “care for the other” become the hallmark of the new Christian religion. Out of this religious sensibility comes another unique aspect of the faith: “Women, non-citizens, and slaves find for the first time a significant role in religion.”

A belief that religious truth is mediated through human language and the written word also develops during this period. Christians, more than any other

religion before them, developed a “textual culture,” using the books and tracts to spread the faith. “If I am permitted an anachronistic metaphor, I propose seeing in ancient Christianity more than a ‘religion of the Book’—a ‘religion of the paperback.’”

He roots the rise of private devotional reading in Christianity to Jewish meditation on the Law and recitation of the psalms. His treatment here helps us to appreciate the intense personal focus of the psalms—the drama of the individual believer, the “I” who is the speaker in many of these texts. Christian reading, too, was meant to be transformative—to promote “an exegesis of the soul” and “a hermeneutic of the self.” One reads the Gospel in order to conform one’s life to it. Reading was ordered to the *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ—so that by living according to his teachings and example one might achieve the salvation he promised in the resurrection.

This new understanding of the “religious status of the word” as having “the power of action” is also at work in the Christian reconception of sacrifice. Stroumsa situates this reconception in the context of a broader debate about the value of public sacrifices, especially the bloody offerings associated with various cults. He sees Hellenistic thought moving in the directions already anticipated in Judaism and embraced by Christianity—toward the notion that true sacrifice is an act of spiritual worship, interior intention, and self-denial.

For Stroumsa, the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 a.d., “more than any other singular action ... activated the slow—overly slow—transformation of religion to which we owe, among other things, European culture.” The end of the Temple sacrifices accelerated tendencies already pushing toward an “interiorization and privatization” of Jewish worship. The result for Judaism was “the spiritualization of the liturgy, *leitourgia*, by transforming rites accompanying sacrificial activity, by prayers replacing the daily sacrifices, and by giving ancient prayers a value that they had not previously had.”

Christianity had already left behind the sacrificial system of the Temple even as, in Stroumsa’s words, it “defined itself precisely as a religion centered on sacrifice” ... the reactivation of the sacrifice of the Son of God, performed by the priests.” Stroumsa notes that the Eucharist was defined in sacrificial terms in the earliest liturgies and in the writings of the Church Fathers. He traces this eucharistic-sacrificial understanding in the accounts of the early martyrs, such as Ss. Perpetua and Felicity and Ignatius of Antioch, in which the believer becomes the sacrifice, the offerer becomes the offering.

This is a wise book and an excellent gateway into the study of Christian origins and comparative religion. And it is a work that helps us to better understand the religious transformations going on in the world today