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# *COME THEN, AND BE GRAFTED: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH AND DIVINE REVELATION IN AUGUSTINE'S HERMENEUTIC OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

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Durham University  
Department of Theology and Religion

COME THEN, AND BE GRAFTED: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH AND DIVINE  
REVELATION IN AUGUSTINE'S HERMENEUTIC OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Arts in Theology

By  
Sasha M. Tatasciore

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*For Paul: in memory of his chains.*

## CHAPTER 1

### COME THEN, AND BE GRAFTED

#### Introduction

In *Confessiones*, Augustine reveals how Ambrose's preaching transformed his understanding of the Old Testament. Yet, in Book VI.6 Augustine explains his conflicted experience with the Word before his conversion, writing: "...I restrained my heart from assenting to anything, fearing to fall headlong...And by believing I might have been cured, that so the sight of my soul being cleared, it might in some way be directed towards Thy truth, which abideth always, and faileth naught."<sup>1</sup> Augustine's struggle exposes faith's fundamental role in understanding the content of Scripture by identifying faith as the cure for the heart's inability to perceive truth. Augustine's theology of faith and its hermeneutical outworking find greater articulation in the early 390's in his commentaries on Romans and Galatians as well as his treatise against Faustus. As Augustine defends the integrity and sacral character of the Old Testament, Faustus' resistance forces Augustine to expound the importance of faith in apologetic terms. And as a consequence, Augustine gives numerous examples of how the assent of faith corresponds to divine revelation, developing a hermeneutic shaped by his theological reading of Paul's letters. His exposition of faith and grace as it relates to the Old Testament becomes a lens through which Augustine's own use of Scripture in later works can be read. Thus, in this dissertation I will argue that Augustine's theology of faith is constitutive to his hermeneutic of the Old Testament because faith creates the capacity to perceive the mystery of God revealed therein and receive the grace of God that effects transformation in the soul. In the final chapter I conclude by arguing that Augustine exemplifies an imagination profoundly converted by Paul's texts, and in turn, provides insight into reading Paul's texts anew.

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *Confessiones* VI.6 (trans. Joseph Green Pilkington; New York: Liveright Pub., 1943), 96-97.



Structurally this paper is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter I argue that faith is constitutive to Augustine's hermeneutic because faith reveals God's gracious action in history, culminating in the person of Christ. In Augustine's exegesis of Rom 11, he argues that faith reveals God's grace in the Old Testament as Christ in the root, which ultimately refers to how the story of Abraham pre-preaches the gospel of faith and blessing for all nations. Through Augustine's intertextual argumentation throughout *Contra Faustum*, Augustine argues that the Old and New Testament function as a mutually interpreting dialectic that clarifies the mystery. Faith is thus constitutive to reading the Old Testament because faith reveals God's righteousness and provides categories for reading Scripture and understanding the mystery of God communicated through divine revelation.

In the second chapter, I argue that Scripture is the locus for God's gracious action in the soul because faith predisposes the soul to the grace of God communicated through Scripture. Arguing that Scripture is part of God's larger design to heal the soul of pride and concupiscence, I conclude that through faith in Christ, the believer participates in Christ's righteousness and therefore fulfills the Law in grace and truth. An example of polyvalent imagery demonstrates how both the temporal and spiritual dimensions of Scripture facilitate the soul's growth in righteousness and testify to the efficacy of God's Word in communicating and effecting the mystery of divine revelation.

In the third chapter I argue that Augustine's hermeneutic of faith shares similarities with Paul's hermeneutic as assessed by Richard B. Hays. Given their formal and theological likeness, I show how Augustine and Paul share a similar reading of the Abraham story, and thus operate within the hermeneutical categories of Promise and Fulfillment. Their conviction that Scripture is a narrative that continues to remain relevant to the church invites intertextual readings that speak to their present situation, while always advancing the fundamental truth of God's righteousness. I conclude with reflections on how Augustine exemplifies an imagination profoundly converted by Paul's texts, and in turn provides insight into reading Paul's own texts anew.

### **This Study in Context**

I would like to begin by locating this present study within the context of a much broader discourse on the nature and function of Scripture in the fourth-century. In his book *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, Lewis Ayres argues that two integral aspects of pro-Nicene culture involved the shaping of the Christian

imagination through Scripture and consequently an increasingly robust account of the soul's purification in God.<sup>2</sup> These two dimensions of Christian culture constitute part of what Ayres describes as the *habitus* of Christian life, which stems from faith in Christ and thus participation in the life of the Triune God. While Ayres' work on the emergence and development of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism provides density to what might be referred to as "the mystery of God," his assessment of Augustine's mature biblical exegesis illumines themes in Augustine's hermeneutic from previous years. To be sure, Augustine's theological hermeneutic during his debate with the Manicheans, for instance, does not exemplify the nuances of pro-Nicene theology as do his latter works; however, as Michael Cameron has argued, Augustine's work against Faustus reveals a shift in Augustine's biblical hermeneutic that points toward the incarnation of God as the paradigm for understanding the sacramental character of signs precisely because the Word was made flesh.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore the aim of this study to first show how pro-Nicene dimensions of faith, spiritual transformation and the mystery of God are vital dynamics in Augustine's hermeneutic of the Old Testament, and secondly, to assess how these dimensions provide points of conversation between Patristic hermeneutics and New Testament studies on Paul's hermeneutic of the Old Testament.

### **Romans 11: The Olive Tree**

Among the many things Rom 11 treats, Augustine argues that it metaphorically illustrates the relationship between Christians and Jews in Christ. It demonstrates that participation in Christ through faith is the only intelligible way to account for the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, and thus reveals how faith guides biblical interpretation in its multiple senses. Augustine's figural exegesis of the Olive Tree appears in Book IX of *Contra Faustum*, and reveals three dimensions of Augustine's theology of faith as it pertains to reading the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> In response to Faustus' misinterpretation of Paul's metaphorical language, Augustine explains that faith is the only

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<sup>2</sup> For a definition of pro-Nicene, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6,167-8, 236-40.

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Cameron, "The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis," in *Augustine and the Bible* (ed. Pamela Bright) (South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 1999), 76-103.

<sup>4</sup> Ayres helpfully delineates between grammatical and figural exegesis, noting that figural exegesis for Patristics was a technique used to read different levels the 'plain sense' and was still considered to be governed by 'the way the words run' in the text. Ayres writes: "The words and flow of the text shape and police figural readings," thus providing the symbolic language with which one can speak of divine realities. For a fuller explanation of figural exegesis see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 34-38.

means of grafting into Christianity for both Jew and Gentile and both peoples are grafted into one stock in which Christ was preached; consequently, faith transforms the believer's vision to see and experience the grace and revelation of God communicated through the Old Covenant. To misconstrue the centrality of faith in Christ for Jew and Gentile is to preach a different gospel message, as faith in Christ witnesses to God's oneness and testifies to the inner continuity between the Old and New Covenant.<sup>5</sup> Retrospectively, Paul finds warrant for this in Israel's Scriptures, and based on Paul's authority Augustine insists on the singularity and fittingness of the Old Testament in pre-preaching the gospel.

### **Faustus' Critique**

Faustus argues that his rejection of the Old Testament rests on Paul's interpretation of the Law in light of Christ. He raises three critiques against the reception of the Israel's Scriptures, utilizing a metaphor of two separate trees to defend his position. He writes:

...if it was allowable for the apostles, who were born under it, to abandon it, much more may I, who was not born under it, be excused for not thrusting myself into it. We Gentiles are not born Jews, nor Christians either. Out of the same Gentile world some are induced by the Old Testament to become Jews, and some by the New Testament to become Christians. It is as if two trees, a sweet and a bitter, drew from one soil the sap which each assimilates to its own nature. The apostle passed from the bitter to the sweet; it would be madness in me to change from the sweet to the bitter.<sup>6</sup>

Augustine responds to Faustus' objections by emphasizing the substance of continuity between the two Testaments, i.e. Christ. Faustus' rejection of Israel's Scriptures appears to preclude the possibility that Christ can be identified with the God of the Old Testament, prompting Augustine to clarify the relationship between Christ and the Law.

The three critiques Faustus raises are different dimensions of a similar point: Judaism and Christianity are antithetical in nature. First, in arguing that the apostles set the precedent in abandoning the Law Faustus assumes that Manicheans are acting in accord with the authority of the New Testament. The Manichean's position, however, suggests that the Law is insignificant to the Christian life, and that the Old and New Covenants are irreconcilable.

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<sup>5</sup> Whether Augustine reads faith in Romans as Christ's faithfulness or the believer's participation therein is not addressed in this text. While Augustine does not argue for Christ's faithfulness based in the Greek syntax, the question of Jesus' faithfulness as the basis of Christian faithfulness would have been undisputed since fulfillment of the Law only happens through believers' participation in Christ's fulfillment.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manicheum* IX.1 (trans. Richard Stothert; ed. Philip Schaff; Vol. 20 in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4.*: Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), 175-76.

Second, Faustus argues that Judaism and Christianity are two separate trees, thus two separate entities. His statements advance his theory that the Old and New Testaments are irreconcilable by excluding the possibility for Augustine to argue for any form of continuity. In Faustus' mind, Judaism and Christianity are two separate religions without any point of contact, which raises the question whether the same God participates in each Covenant. Third, Faustus discloses his aversion to Judaism when he states that Paul transitioned from the bitterness of Judaism to the sweetness of Christianity. By suggesting that the Jews are in the bitter tree Faustus creates a scenario where Jews are on par with pagans, who are without faith or morality.

### **Augustine's Response**

Faustus' critique requires Augustine to give a theological explanation of how Judaism and Christianity find continuity in the person and mission of Christ. In an attempt to correct Faustus' theology, Augustine turns to Paul's Olive Tree metaphor in Rom 11. Augustine's defense of Paul's figural language rests on his understanding of theological categories Paul develops throughout Romans. His exegesis of the Olive Tree flags an implicit theological argument made throughout *Contra Faustum*: faith is the only fully adequate stance before divine revelation because the God of the Old and New Testament are one and the same God fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Consequently, this faith enables one to participate in Christ's grace, which fulfills the Law and creates the capacity to recognize how the Old Testament reveals the mystery of God.<sup>7</sup>

Augustine refutes Faustus by directing him to the written words of Rom 11, stating: "the apostle himself says that the Jews, who would not believe in Christ, were branches broken off, and that the Gentiles, a wild Olive Tree, were grafted into the good olive, that is, the holy stock of the Hebrews, that they might partake of the fatness of the olive."<sup>8</sup> In directing Faustus to the text and highlighting the details of Paul's image, Augustine shows Faustus that Paul does not speak of two separate trees in terms of Judaism and Christianity, but writes of one good tree into which two peoples are grafted and broken off. The fact that the disbelieving Jews are broken branches from their own tree signifies that, in rejecting

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<sup>7</sup> In the present chapter of *c. Faust*. Augustine does not define what he means by faith in Christ. Instead he assumes a definition that he develops throughout *c. Faust*., but can simply be summed as "the faith which is taught in the Church of Christ." This point is central for Augustine. The sureness of faith in Christ relies on the fact that the Church preaches the one true Christ, whose identity and person can be known and verified on the authority of the Old and New Testaments. See, for instance, *c. Faust*. XVI.25.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust*. IX.2 (Stohtert, 176).

Christ, they alienate themselves from their own Covenant. For Jews, grafting through Christ meant a radical reassessment of their reading of their Scriptures, and for Christians faith in Christ meant a radical reconfiguration of their historical imagination through the appropriation of Israel's Scriptures to their own lives. Augustine affirms three very important points: there is one tree; two peoples are grafted through faith in Christ; and the tree's stock – the holy stock of the Hebrews – preached Christ in its root.

The Manicheans' selective doctrine of Christ and their mixing of Christian teaching with pagan mythology prompt Augustine to identify them as "remaining in the bitterness of the wild olive."<sup>9</sup> Augustine argues that insisting on their own conception of Christ prevents the Manicheans from experiencing the fruitfulness and freedom associated with being grafted through faith. This is the substantive point on which Augustine's entire argument rests. He writes: "You are none the less in the wild olive of the Gentiles because you... worship... a false Christ, the fabrication not of your hands, but of your perverse hearts."<sup>10</sup> Augustine explains that Paul does not rejoice over his rejection of Judaism, but rather rejoices in the freedom of Christ's grace. Augustine's exhortation strikes at the heart of Faustus' presupposition: "Come, then, and be grafted into the root of the olive tree, in his return to which the Apostle rejoices, after by unbelief he had been among the broken branches."<sup>11</sup> Paul, when zealous for the traditions of his forefathers without also having faith in Christ was among those branches broken off. In being grafted, Paul was restored to the fatness of the olive and was able to see how "Christ was always preached in that root."<sup>12</sup> Paul's image of the Olive Tree suggests that through faith in Christ he was grafted in again, and in returning to the holy stock, he was able to recognize Christ as the point of continuity between Torah and the gospel. Faith in Christ versus rejection of Christ marks a return for the Jews to their Covenant, people, and history, while those Gentiles who believe in this Hebrew Christ are grafted into a graced Covenant that the Jews historically held exclusively. The Manicheans' rejection of the Old Testament and their refusal to be grafted ultimately rests with their rejection of the Christ that both the Old and New Testament preaches.

In Book XXII, Augustine uses grafting language again in reference to Paul, when arguing that the God of Moses is the same God who called Paul. In this text, which is the only other mention of grafting language in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine relates the figural

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IX.2. (Stohtert, 176).

<sup>10</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IX.2. (Stohtert, 176).

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IX.2. (Stohtert, 176).

<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IX.2. (Stohtert, 176).

language of grafting to God's call, Paul's response to God, and Paul's transformed service to God:

He who afterwards, by His angel, called Moses on Mount Sinai...was the same who, by the call addressed from heaven to Saul when persecuting the Church, humbled him, raised him up, and animated him; or in figural words, by this stroke He cut off the branch, grafted it, and made it fruitful. For the fierce energy of Paul, when in his zeal for hereditary traditions he persecuted the Church, thinking that he was doing God service, was like a crop of weeds showing great signs of productiveness.<sup>13</sup>

Interpreting Paul's disposition before and after the call Augustine explains:

...the trespass originated not in inveterate cruelty, but in a hasty zeal which admitted of correction...there was resentment against injury, accompanied...by love, though still carnal, of the Lord. Here was evil to be subdued or rooted out; but the heart with such capacities needed only, like good soil, to be cultivated to make it fruitful in virtue.<sup>14</sup>

Augustine's emphasis on Paul's call, Paul's lack of understanding before the grace of faith, and Paul's determined but misdirected will gestures towards the theological complexity behind the figural language of grafting. Augustine states that the same God who called Moses called Paul, humbled him, raised him up, and animated him. In both texts, Augustine writes of fruitfulness when grafted in faith, and here he defines fruitful in terms of virtue. He explains that Paul's heart was cultivated in his response of faith, predisposing him to God's activity in him. Grafting allows for transformed understanding of the Old Covenant and a reorientation of one's life and actions in the New, which belongs to the realm of grace.

In Augustine's defense of Paul's metaphorical language, faith in Christ emerges as a constitutive feature of Augustine's hermeneutic of the Old Testament because faith grafts one into the tree in which Christ was preached, revealing that Christ was always preached in the root. Faith in Christ therefore reveals the continuity of the two Testaments and results in fruitfulness attributed to God's activity in the soul. But it remains unclear in Book IX how Christ was preached in the root and in which way Christ constitutes continuity.

Augustine's theology of faith as he reads it in Romans and Galatians clarifies his exegesis of the Olive Tree, as he looks to Abraham as plain prophetic proof of faith and the

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<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.70 (Stoother, 299).

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.70 (Stoother, 299).

pre-preaching of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

To further explore how Augustine envisions Christ as the substantive continuity between the Old and New Testaments, I will turn to a passage in Book XII, where Augustine defends the church's reception of the Old Testament by again arguing from Rom 9-11. In this passage, Augustine's intertextual argument culminates in two points. First, Augustine argues that Christ marks continuity with the Law because the Law reveals Christ, and Christ reveals the glory and *telos* of the Law. Law and gospel function as a mutually interpreting dialectic when approached in faith, and one without the other is an insufficient account of God's action in the world, leaving room for erroneous conceptions of God. Second, Augustine argues that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and through him all live under grace, and manifest the righteousness of God. The grace of God in Christ removes the veil from the Law, and the Law is both understood and fulfilled by those who participate in him through faith. Both the content of Augustine's argument and his intertextual methods of arguing from Scripture will be assessed.

### **Law and Gospel: A Mutually Interpretive Dialectic**

Augustine's defense of Paul's Olive Tree metaphor presupposes a coherent reading of the first eight chapters of Romans, as Rom 9-11 focuses intensely on the question of Israel's status vis-à-vis God's action in Christ. As Paul roots much of his argument in his reading of Abraham in Rom 4, Augustine claims that faith in Christ marks continuity between the Old and New Covenant because, in retrospect, the story of Abraham reveals that Jews are descendants of the Promise and are reckoned righteous by faith as was their father Abraham. But Augustine's explication of this point comes at the end of an intricate argument from Scripture that treats the status of the Law and the Prophets in the church. In Book XII, Faustus denies that the prophets predicted Christ, claiming that it is a weak faith that needs

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<sup>15</sup> It should be understood that faith in this context is not meant to denote the creed as articulated at the Council of Nicaea. As Ayres has noted, professing the Christian faith took a variety of forms and cultural expressions before the council definitively defined it, but had certain core principles that were affirmed and recognized to be intrinsic to the Christian faith. For the purpose of this study, it is important to note how Augustine attempts to show that the continuity of faith provides the precedent and terms for moving between the Two Testaments without detriment to the uniqueness and integrity of each text. This faith, he argues, only reveals the multiplicity of meanings and senses otherwise latent, but inaccessible without the full revelation of God in Christ.

proof and testimonies. Christ bore witness to himself, Faustus writes, and God testifies to the Son in the gospels on several occasions.

Augustine begins his extensive proofs that the Old Testament is a fitting testimony to Christ by citing Rom 1:3. He argues that Paul identifies himself and his mission in light of the Christ who was promised by the prophets and was a descendent of David by the flesh.

Augustine follows by quoting Rom 9:1-5:

I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.<sup>16</sup>

Using this text to address the status of Israel's Scriptures, Augustine argues that Paul commends the prophetic witness by rooting his preaching of the gospel in prophetic context. Augustine carefully shapes Faustus' reception of his argument by defining Paul's terms from other Pauline texts. He clarifies that the adoption of which Paul speaks in Rom 1:3 is the adoption through the Son of God, and he cites Gal 4:4-5 where Paul writes that God sent his Son under the Law to redeem those under the Law, so that they might receive adoption as children of God. Augustine freely moves between Romans and Galatians, presupposing that Paul's language and meaning is consistent between texts.

To define the glory of which Paul speaks, Augustine cites Rom 3:12, writing that Paul references the glory of the oracles of God, i.e. the Scriptures: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God."<sup>17</sup> Lastly, on this point Augustine clarifies that the Covenants are said to belong to Israel because both the Old and New Testament were given to them insofar as the New was prefigured in the Old. Augustine writes that the Manicheans reject the Law because they do not realize that God wishes all people to be under grace instead of the Law. In defining these three terms Augustine argues that adoption in Christ, the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, and both the Old and New Covenant pertain to Israel. Augustine then moves out of the Pauline corpus to show how having faith in the Old

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<sup>16</sup> Rom 9:1-5.

<sup>17</sup> Rom 3:1-2.



Testament correlates to faith in Christ. He cites Jesus' words from the Gospels of John and Luke, segueing into a discourse on the importance of putting one's faith in the true Christ in order to see the revelation of the mystery of God in the Old Testament.

Augustine cites Jn 5:46: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me."<sup>18</sup> He argues that because the Manicheans preach a false Christ, they are analogously like the unbelieving Jews of whom Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians: "...whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed."<sup>19</sup>

Augustine explains the correlation between the Corinthians and Manicheans: "Neither will this veil which keeps them from understanding Moses be taken away from them until they turn to Christ; not a Christ of their own making, but the Christ of the Hebrew prophets."<sup>20</sup>

Augustine's last reference to Moses in this section addresses the Manichean's rejection of the resurrection by citing Lk 16:31: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."<sup>21</sup> Augustine's discourse interestingly highlights that belief in Moses predisposes belief in Christ, and conversely, belief in Christ removes the veil to see the glory of the Old Testament. His final citation from Lk 16:31 suggests that the witness of the Old and New Testaments are a mutually interpreting dialectic that provides density and clarity to the mystery of God in Scripture. Within the context of the Manichean debate, the Old and New Testament read together reveal the mystery of Christ's person that is authentic and true. Without the Law and Prophets the person of Christ could be easily falsified, and without Christ the telos of the Law remains unclear.

Before Augustine begins his exegesis of the story of Abraham as plain prophetic proof of Christ, he addresses the issue of God's righteousness, and the righteousness cultivated in the person who has faith in Christ. Righteousness in this context is defined as the fulfillment of the Law through grace. Commending the way in which the apostles utilize the Law and Prophets to preach the true Christ, Augustine cites Rom 3:21: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it." He expounds this point with allusions to Romans and 2 Corinthians: "Paul tells me that the giving of the law pertained to the Israelites. He also tells me that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for anyone that believeth. He also tells me that all the

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<sup>18</sup> Jn 5:46.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Cor 3:15-16.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XII.4 (Stohtert, 185).

<sup>21</sup> Lk 16:31.

promises of God are in Christ yea.”<sup>22</sup> Augustine’s intertextual weaving summarizes the various points of his argument: God’s righteousness is grace for all in Christ Jesus and it is manifested apart from the Law, though not without the testimony of the Law and Prophets. The true Christ witnessed by the Law and Prophets and preached by the apostles is the fulfillment of the Law, and thus participation in Christ through faith will lead to a life of righteousness and grace.

To summarize, Augustine argues that Paul places his ministry and preaching in the context of the Law and Prophets, and Augustine utilizes Paul’s texts to define Paul’s terms and meaning. To further define the complementarity of Law and gospel, Augustine argues that belief in Moses and Christ act as a mutually interpretive dialectic that reveals the *telos* and glory of the Old Testament and the true mystery of Christ’s person. Citing Paul, Augustine argues that Christ is the manifestation of God’s righteousness, and by participation in Christ through faith the end of the Law for righteousness is fulfilled in the believer.

### **The Continuity of Faith**

Augustine’s intertextual weaving and hermeneutical freedom manifests his conviction that the Old and New Testaments are one witness to God’s righteousness. Faith in Christ removes the veil and allows for a hermeneutic that witnesses to God’s faithfulness throughout history. As Augustine illustrates the many ways Christ is prefigured in the Old Testament, the story of Abraham takes precedent because it is the plainest proof that Christ was preached in the root. In the following section of Book XII, Augustine presents an intricate reading of Abraham by citing Rom 9:6-8 and elucidating it with Gal 3:16:

The Apostle...says: "The word of God cannot fail. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of promise are counted for the seed."...At the time when the apostle gave the following exposition of this promise, "To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He saith not, To seed, as of many, but as of one, To thy seed, which is Christ," a doubt on this point might then have been less inexcusable, for at that time all nations had not yet believed in Christ, who is preached as of the seed of Abraham. But now that we see the fulfillment of what we read in the ancient prophecy,--now that all nations are actually blessed in the [one!] seed of Abraham, to whom it was said thousands of years ago, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed, "--it is mere obstinate folly to try to bring in another Christ, not of the seed of Abraham, or to hold that there are no

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<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XII.5 (Stoithert, 185).

predictions of Christ in the prophetic books of the children of Abraham.<sup>23</sup>

In Augustine's citations of Scripture, he again assumes consistency of meaning signified through Paul's terms. Assuming that Paul intends the seed to be Christ in both Romans and Galatians, Augustine writes that through Isaac the seed is called, and anyone who participates in the seed of Abraham and Isaac are children of the Promise. The children of the Promise constitute the true Israel and uphold the word of God, i.e., witness to God's faithfulness to the Promise. Both Gentiles and Jews are therefore children of the Promise by virtue of participation in the one seed, Christ. Participation in Christ through faith upholds the Law, testifies to the righteousness of God, and fulfills that which is latent in the Law in prophetic terms. Second, Augustine argues that if there is any doubt on these points, one has only to look to the fulfillment of God's Promise in the church. God's action in Scripture and in the church are on the same continuum, and just as one text of Paul reveals the meaning of another, the life of the church manifests the plain sense of prophetic texts because the same Spirit that animated the biblical writers animates the church. Fulfillment of the prophetic text lies not only in Christological reading, but also in readings that reveals the mystery of God's action in the individual lives and corporate life of God's people.

The hermeneutical strategy of linking Abraham's faith in the Promise with faith in Christ occurs often in Augustine's work without defense. He assumes that if one participates in the seed, it is through faith like Abraham. For instance, in a passing remark in *Contra Faustum* XVI.<sup>24</sup> Augustine cites Gal 3:8: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.'"<sup>24</sup> He uses this text to argue that Christ did not intend to turn the Jews away from God, but that the God of Abraham is one and the same God of whom Christ speaks. As an aside, Augustine sweepingly remarks: "It is implied [in the text] that those who are blessed in the seed of Abraham shall imitate the faith of Abraham."<sup>25</sup> Without further explanation, Augustine advances his argument against Faustus, leaving that which is "implied" to carry the burden of his argument. Both the pre-preaching of the gospel and the paradigm of faith are rooted in the story of Abraham, but in Augustine's mind, the two are so entirely bound together that one assumes the other.

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<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XII.6 (Stothen, 185).

<sup>24</sup> Gal 3:8. All biblical citations are taken from the RSV unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XVI.24 (Stothen, 229).

In his commentary on Galatians, however, Augustine shows that he not only takes Paul's reading on authority but also understands the logic of Paul's exegesis of Gen 15. In identifying the story of Abraham as the paradigm for faith in God's Promise, Augustine argues that the Mosaic covenant cannot nullify the Abrahamic Covenant, and advances a step further by stating that all the righteous men and women of old were justified by faith:

...so the unchangeableness of God's promise serves to ratify the inheritance of Abraham, whose faith was counted as righteousness. And therefore the Apostle says that the seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made is Christ, that is, all Christians who imitate Abraham by faith. He interprets seed as singular by pointing out what is not said: not and to seeds, but to your seed, because the faith is one and it is not possible for those who live carnally by works of the law to be justified in the same way as those who live spiritually by faith. He brings forward the irrefutable argument, moreover, that the law had not yet been given and could not be given after so many years in such a way as to annul the ancient promises made to Abraham. For if the law justifies, then Abraham, who lived long before the law, was not justified...And it also forces us to realize that all those who were justified in ancient times were justified by the same faith.<sup>26</sup>

In this text Augustine argues that Jew and Gentile are justified by faith by addressing the question of *when* Abraham was justified (before giving of the Law). Arguing that the gift of the Law does not annul God's Promise to Abraham, Augustine finds support for his argument that Jews and Gentiles (and thus Manicheans) are descendents of Abraham through one faith in Christ Jesus. Augustine grasps Paul's logic in treating the story of Abraham as the linchpin to his argument in his letter to the Romans. If Abraham was reckoned righteous before the Law was given, Jews are descendents by virtue of the Promise and cannot claim justification apart from participation in the promised seed of Abraham. The Law itself prophetically preaches the good news of the gospel, and thus Christ himself is preached in the root.

Augustine's reading of Abraham introduces an historical perspective ordered by hermeneutical categories of Promise and Fulfillment. The faithful, both Israel and the church, are therefore part of the overall narrative to which Scripture witnesses, tending toward fulfillment in God in the complete eschatological sense. The Old Testament is thus revelation for both Israel and the church. In light of God's fulfillment of the Promise, Augustine argues that signs in the Old Testament should be read as prophetic of that which is fulfilled in Christ. These principles are fundamental to interpreting God's actions in history because they flow

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<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *Epistulae ad Galatas Expositio* XXII.2-XXIV.5 (trans. Eric Antone Plumer; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 164-165.

from the logic of faith in Christ. Faith thus acts as a guide in Augustine's defense of the Old Testament by indicating how one might treat thorny texts whose meaning is not easily perceived. Augustine implicitly appeals to these basic principles time and again to correct Faustus and explain the function and meaning of the Old Testament in the life of the church. The tendency to assume that fulfillment means a downgrading in the revelatory function of the Law, however, is a gravely inadequate account of signs in Augustine's conception of divine revelation. To prevent Faustus from wrongly concluding that the signs and figures of the Old Testament can be disregarded, Augustine defends the fittingness of particular signs to revelation by providing a dense account of prophecy and delineating between the spiritual and temporal dimensions of the sign. Both dimensions play a crucial role in the cultivation of righteousness in the soul.

### **The Faith of the Patriarchs: Grace in the Root**

Reflecting on the significance of Abraham's faith and the divine blessing invites Augustine to articulate a nuanced theology of sign and mystery in the Old Testament. In the above citation from his commentary on Galatians, Augustine does not condemn Jewish Law observance as a negative thing. He writes that those who live carnally by works of the Law are not justified as those who live by faith. This can be seen as further defining what Augustine meant when he wrote of believing Moses. Augustine describes Old Testament signs in terms of prophetic language, delineating between their temporal and spiritual dimensions. The temporal and spiritual signification correlates to temporal and eternal realities, and both dimensions have a precise function in God's self-revelation and the soul's increasing capacity to contemplate the mystery of God. Augustine's historical perspective, guided by the hermeneutical categories of Promise and Fulfillment, can be traced in the way he reasons through whether the saints of the Old Covenant were justified by faith.

Given his reading of Abraham and the Promise, Augustine argues that the Patriarchs and Prophets were justified by faith because they responded to the Law in both flesh and spirit. Their fleshly observance of the Law shaped their lives to be prophetic witnesses to all that would be fulfilled in Christ. Those who lived by faith and preformed the prophetic sacraments were in essence a spiritual people, but they had a rightful duty to perform the Mosaic Law in the flesh. He writes:

Our hope, therefore, rests not on the promise of temporal things. Nor do we believe that the holy and spiritual men of these times - - the patriarchs and

prophets -- were taken up with earthly things. For they understood, by the revelation of the Spirit of God, what was suitable for that time, and how God appointed all these sayings and actions as types and predictions of the future. Their great desire was for the New Testament; but they had a personal duty to perform in those predictions, by which the new things of the future were foretold. So the life as well as the tongue of these men was prophetic. The carnal people, indeed, thought only of present blessings, though even in connection with the people there were prophecies of the future.<sup>27</sup>

In this passage, Augustine holds together three concepts. He acknowledges the prophetic nature of the Old Testament, advances his argument that the Patriarchs and Prophets had faith in the spiritual dimension of the Word for the purpose of righteousness, and introduces the idea that faith and fleshly observance in the prophetic Word resulted in the shaping of individual lives and the communal life of Israel. Through the Spirit of God, Augustine argues that all the holy men and women were able to discern their prophetic role in the divine narrative insofar as they realized the promises of God were yet unfulfilled.

For Augustine, the temporal character of signs and promises in the Old Testament corresponded to the prophetic nature of divine revelation. He writes that the Patriarchs and Prophets desired the New Testament, which is to say that their desires were ordered towards God instead of earthly gain. Augustine understands the Law to be an extension of God's Covenant with Israel, and though the signs were temporal in character they communicated the mystery and grace of the divine reality. Through full revelation in Christ, the *telos* and glory of the mystery could be fully perceived. But Augustine insists that, though the mystery was not fully perceived, the efficacy of the Old Testament signs and figures lie in their intimate relation to the unchanging mystery communicated by the Spirit. To argue that the Old and New Testaments communicate the same mystery, Augustine likens them to different verb forms that convey the same action, albeit in different tenses:

...how greatly they mistake who conclude, from the change in signs and sacraments, that there must be a difference in the things which were prefigured in the rites of a prophetic dispensation, and which are declared to be accomplished in the rites of the gospel; or those, on the other hand, who think that as the things are the same, the sacraments which announce their accomplishment should not differ from the sacraments which foretold that accomplishment. For if in language the form of the verb changes in the number of letters and syllables according to the tense, as done signifies the past, and to be done the future, why should not the symbols which declare Christ's death and resurrection to be accomplished, differ from those which predicted their accomplishment, as we see a difference in the form and sound

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IV.2 (Stoother, 163).

of the words, past and future, suffered and to suffer, risen and to rise? For material symbols are nothing else than visible speech, which, though sacred, is changeable and transitory... The actions and sounds pass away, but their efficacy remains the same, and the spiritual gift thus communicated is eternal.<sup>28</sup>

Augustine explains that the transition was by degrees and happened gradually to prevent the misconception that the Old laws were condemned. In their gradual abolition, it shows that prophetic actions were no longer needed in view of the fulfilled reality to which they prophesied.<sup>29</sup> The substitution of new sacraments were “greater in efficacy, more beneficial in their use, easier in performance, and fewer in number,” but the change in sacraments corresponds to the change in the times, i.e. the era of prophecy versus fulfillment.<sup>30</sup> But, in defending the spiritual dimension of the Law in which the saints had faith, Augustine wedged himself into a difficult position. Arguing for the continuity of faith created an opportunity for Augustine to expound the spiritual dimension of the Old Testament to the seeming detriment of their temporal expression. His account of temporal signs and symbols appear diminished or trivialized as he emphasizes the universality of the eternal mystery communicated through the particularities of the Jewish Law.

Notwithstanding, Augustine’s hermeneutic techniques implicitly argue for the integral character of the temporal sign to the mystery communicated. The prophetic observance is no longer enacted because of Christ’s fulfillment of the prophetic, but the signs and symbols of the Old Testament uniquely speak to Israel and the church. For example, Augustine elaborates how the sign of circumcision is not discarded even though the sacramental laws are reinterpreted in the New Covenant. In Book IV of *Contra Faustum*, Faustus suggests that the inheritance of the Old Testament is a poor, fleshly thing without any spiritual blessing and argues that Christians should disregard the texts because laws such as circumcision and Sabbath are not binding on Christians. Augustine responds by affirming the temporal character of the Law, while clarifying the spiritual dimensions within.<sup>31</sup>

Augustine begins by identifying the New Testament’s reception of the Old, asserting that the Old Testament contains temporal promises of future things. These temporal signs and figures are useful to the church as Paul suggests to the Corinthians: “These things happened

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<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XIX.16 (Stoother, 244).

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XIX.17.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XIX.13 (Stoother, 245).

<sup>31</sup> For an interesting study on Augustine’s increasingly positive view of Israel’s fleshly observance of the Law, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 213-219.

to them for an example, and they are written for us on whom the ends of the ages are come."<sup>32</sup> The impetus for receiving the Old Testament lies in understanding the grace of the Old for those participating in the New Covenant. Augustine explains: "We receive the Old Testament, therefore, not in order to obtain the fulfillment of these promises, but to see in them predictions of the New Testament; for the Old bears witness to the New."<sup>33</sup> In the church, Augustine argues that the Old Testament signs and figures are an example and witness to the New Testament. As the prophetic Word shaped the lives of the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Old Testament transforms readers in the church through figural engagement with the text. The difference lies in the fact that the church witnesses to the fulfillment of God's promises, while fleshly observance foretells the fulfillment of the promise as a future event.

In facing Faustus, Augustine has to carefully account for the abolition of certain Jewish practices in the church while maintaining their revelatory function and sacral character. Despite confirming the value of Old Testament signs and figures before the coming of Christ, the cessation of certain practices that necessarily ensues with 'fulfillment' appears to wash the Jewishness out of the Law by suggesting that a universal moralism can be neatly extracted for all its particularity. This conundrum exposes the fundamental difficulty Paul faced in arguing for the continuity of faith between the Testaments, and at the other extreme, the crisis Augustine faces in defending the Old Testament against Faustus' critique. In each instance, Paul and Augustine are challenged to show how faith in Christ upholds the Law, lest their exhortation to faith appears to overthrow it.

Augustine's argument for continuity sufficiently shows that faith is the divinely appointed response to divine revelation; however, the admittedly positive account of the pedagogic role of the Old Testament in the church does not entirely account for how the signs and figures communicate the grace and mystery of God. Further, given Augustine's analogy between the prophetic and fulfilled, it is difficult to discern whether signs are intrinsically related to the mystery they signify. Is the shaping of Christian lives through engagement with the Old Testament text a merely cognitive transformation? The manner in which the grace of God transformed the lives of the Patriarchs suggests a more robust account of signs and figures and their relationship to the divine mystery. As argued in the next chapter, the way Augustine's conceives of righteousness and the righteousness of the Law fulfilled in the

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor 10:11.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IV.2 (Stohtert, 161).



believer helps expound and defend the efficacious character of the Old Testament.

### Summary

In this chapter, I argue that faith is constitutive to Augustine's hermeneutic because faith reveals God's gracious action in history, culminating in the person of Christ. Against Faustus, Augustine argues that faith is the singular response to the gospel message for both Jew and Gentile because Christ was always preached in the root of the Olive Tree. In defending the witness of the Law and Prophets, Augustine argues that Paul places his ministry and preaching in the context of the Law and Prophets, utilizing Paul's texts to shape Faustus' reception of his argument. Augustine argues that Law and gospel function as a mutually interpretive dialectic that reveals the *telos* and glory of the Old Testament and the true mystery of Christ's person. Citing Paul, Augustine argues that Christ is the manifestation of God's righteousness, and by participation in Christ through faith the end of the Law for righteousness is fulfilled in the believer.

The metaphorical language of grafting is substantiated in Augustine's exegesis of Abraham, read under Paul's direction in his letters to the Romans and Galatians. Paul's argument that the Jews are cut off from the Olive Tree because of their unbelief develops a theological reading of Abraham, most notably in Augustine's commentary on Gal 3. Paul contends that Abraham is the forefather of the Jews by virtue of the Promise, thus Jews as well as Gentiles are therefore called to participate in the New Covenant through faith. Augustine follows Paul's reading of Abraham closely, arguing that the Promise made to Abraham was ratified in Jesus' death because Jesus is Abraham's seed in whom the nations bless themselves. Thus a hermeneutic of faith allows readers to see how Christ was preached in the root, shaping a historical perspective and manifesting itself in the hermeneutical categories of Promise and Fulfillment. In light of the prophetic nature of the Old Testament, Augustine argues that all the saints of the Old Testament were justified by faith. Augustine's account of Scripture's efficacy, however, leaves the temporal status of prophetic signs and figures ambiguous. Augustine's hermeneutic of faith as it pertains to signs and sanctification is therefore addressed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### Grace in the Root

For Augustine, exhorting Faustus to come and be grafted was not for the purpose of a merely cognitive conversion. Recognizing the continuity of God's actions between the Old and New Testaments indeed results from a hermeneutic of faith, but it is not the *telos* of a hermeneutic of faith. Reading Scripture is part of God's larger design to heal and renew creation, and Augustine's hermeneutic of faith is intimately bound with the cultivation of righteousness in the soul. In "The Soul and the Reading of Scripture, a note on Henri De Lubac" Ayres summarizes De Lubac's notion of the soul, highlighting the multidimensional aspects of the imagination:

The soul is the seat of our activities of attention, imagination, judgment and contemplation...The soul's activity constitutes the fundamental desire in and with which we image the divine life of rational, creative and productive love. Thus the character of human desire and the process of imagination (understood as an activity interwoven with the character of human desire) are inseparable from the fundamental orientation or attention of the soul.<sup>34</sup>

The orientation of the soul and the process of imagination constitute dimensions of the person that extend beyond their cognitive world. Imagination is interwoven with the character of human desire and also pertains to volitional acts. The shaping of the imagination through Scripture, then, has the power to reorder human life in all its various dimensions if the Scripture communicates the grace of God. In this chapter I argue that faith is constitutive to Augustine's hermeneutic of the Old Testament because faith correlates to the grace of divine mystery in Scripture. Approaching the Word in faith not only reveals the *telos* of the Law, i.e. Christ and the mystery of God, but also fulfills the Law through participation in Christ's grace.

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<sup>34</sup> Lewis Ayres, "The Soul and the Reading of Scripture: A Note on Henri De Lubac" in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61.02 (2008), 180-181.

## **Righteousness in *Contra Faustum***

In the first chapter I showed how Augustine argues that Christ is the end of the Law for one who believes. In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine uses righteousness language to describe God's action in Abraham, God's definitive action in the person of Christ, and God's action in the soul of those who put their faith in Christ. In the case of Abraham and the Christian, Augustine notes that both Abraham and the Christian are reckoned righteous for belief in God's Word. Faith in the Word bears fruit in a life that is virtuous and holy, and the righteousness of the saints of the Old Covenant was manifested in the way they enacted the prophetic precepts. Augustine writes:

And if the righteous men of old, who saw in the sacraments of their time the promise of a future revelation of faith, which even then their piety enabled them to discern in the dim light of prophecy, and by which they lived, for the just can live only by faith; if, then, these righteous men of old were ready to suffer...how much more should a Christian in our day be ready to suffer all things for Christ's baptism, for Christ's Eucharist, for Christ's sacred sign, since these are proofs of the accomplishment of what the former sacraments only pointed forward to in the future!<sup>35</sup>

The faith of the Old Covenant saints translated into action that was pious and righteous, suffering and bearing witness to God's righteousness in prophetic form. Similarly, in the New Covenant, Augustine argues that faith in Christ brings about righteousness that bears fruit in obedience to the Law, which is summed as faith working through love. He interchanges the language of righteousness with fulfillment, defining fulfillment as a twofold phenomenon that correlates to the intellect and will, both of which can be described as dimensions of the soul or imagination. The fluidity of righteousness/fulfillment language can be seen in Book XIX.14:

So here also He [Jesus] adds, "For I say unto you, unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" that is, Unless you shall both do and teach what they teach without doing, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. This law, therefore, which the Pharisees taught without keeping it, Christ says He came not to destroy, but to fulfill...<sup>36</sup>

Here, Augustine defines fulfillment of the Law as doing and teaching (i.e. understanding) the Law. The Pharisees' inability to fulfill the Law in word and action

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<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XIX.14 (Stoother, 244).

<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XVII.5 (Stoother, 236).

provides Augustine with the opportunity to further define what he means by fulfillment by weaving together various biblical texts from the New Testament. In the following passage, Augustine defines fulfillment by equating it with the grace and truth found in Christ. In his reading, grace correlates to the will and truth to the intellect; thus, the person who grows in love, i.e. the fulfillment of the Law, manifests God's grace and truth in every dimension of one's personality. Augustine writes:

Faustus does not understand... what it is to fulfill the law... Faustus requires to be told that the law is fulfilled by living as it enjoins. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," as the apostle says. The Lord has vouchsafed both to manifest and to impart this love, by sending the Holy Spirit to His believing people. So it is said by the same apostle: "The love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." ... The law, then, is fulfilled both by the observance of its precepts and by the accomplishment of its prophecies. For "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." ... The law itself, by being fulfilled, becomes grace and truth. Grace is the fulfillment of love, and truth is the accomplishment of the prophecies. And as both grace and truth are by Christ, it follows that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; not by supplying any defects in the law, but by obedience to what is written in the law.<sup>37</sup>

For the Christian, righteousness is a direct result of participating in Christ's fulfillment of the Law. Insofar as Christ fulfilled the Law in perfect obedience, the grace of God cultivates obedience to the Law in the life of the believer. In this passage, the fulfillment of the Law is a Trinitarian work. By participating in Christ, God's love is shed abroad in the heart of the believer and made effective through the work of the Spirit. In both Covenants righteousness is attributed to God's action in the soul, and faith in God's efficacious Word manifests itself in wisdom and obedience to the Law. Retrospectively, Augustine realizes that the Word of Scripture can only be efficacious through the grace of Christ, because all grace flows through him.

### **Reading Scripture: The Efficacy of the Word**

Augustine argues that fulfillment of the Law commences through faith in Christ because through faith one participates in the grace and truth of Christ. Yet, it is unclear whether Scripture has any role in the cultivation of the soul's righteousness. Towards the end of the first chapter, I discussed how Augustine's emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the

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<sup>37</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XVII.6 (Stohtert, 236).

Law appeared to diminish the significance of the temporal expression. Yet, if Scripture only communicated the content of faith it would render God's Word to Abraham ineffective when God reckoned Abraham righteous. Defending the lives and actions of the Patriarchs, Augustine writes that if God reckoned Abraham righteous, then indeed Abraham was made righteous because God's Word is effective in communicating the mystery of which it speaks. Within the context of the Manichean debate, Augustine argues that the Word of Scripture is as true as God's Word to Abraham:

For, as the apostle says, or, as the apostle says, "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith..." Since the righteousness of Abraham's faith is thus set forth as an example to us, that we too, being justified by faith, may have peace with God, we ought to understand his manner of life, without finding fault with it; lest, by a premature separation from mother-Church, we prove abortions, instead of being brought forth in due time, when the conception has arrived at completeness....It is the reply of the babes of our faith, among whom I would reckon myself, inasmuch as I would not find fault with the life of the ancient saints, even if I did not understand its mystical character.<sup>38</sup>

For Augustine, upholding the efficacy of God's Word equates to defending God's righteousness. Elsewhere in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine's hermeneutical methods support his claim that the grace of God communicated through Scripture makes effective the content of faith. Scripture emerges as the locus of God's gracious action in the soul when the Word is met in faith. In order to assess how the content of Scripture is made effective when approached in faith, I will briefly turn to Michael Cameron's work on signs and Christological exegesis. Through a brief review of his article it may be argued that Cameron's study provides helpful hermeneutical categories for assessing Augustine's exegesis in *Contra Faustum*.

### **Incarnational Exegesis**

In "The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis," Cameron accounts for the interrelatedness of sign and mystery in Augustine's thought, while gesturing towards themes that are vital to Augustine's hermeneutic of faith in *Contra Faustum*. Cameron argues that in the 390's Augustine's hermeneutic transitions from a Spiritualist to an Incarnational paradigm, which correlates to a shift in his Christology. He notes that as Augustine explored how Christ's ensouled flesh was the locus of salvation, his perspective on

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<sup>38</sup> Augustine. *c. Faust.* XII.47 (Stohtert, 198-199).

biblical language changed from a disjunctive to conjunctive theory of signs. Cameron writes: “The conceptual conjunction of the temporal and eternal correlatively produced a conjunctive theory of signs which acknowledged a ductility of power for the world of history and language.”<sup>39</sup> In Augustine’s theory of signs under the Spiritualist paradigm, sign and reality are related by likeness. Verbal signs prompt one to seek immediate contact with the thing signified, but understanding is not intrinsically rooted in the expression of the thing.

Within the Incarnational paradigm, a sign points to some reality that is manifested temporally and also may support faith after the sign’s fulfillment (in which case it would act as a disjunctive sign); further, it may indicate and somehow mediate the power of the signified reality. The second feature of the Incarnational paradigm renders the sign permanent to the reality to which it points because the medium is the message, and constitutive to the reality. Cameron argues that the intimate relation between sign and mystery allows the sign to prove the faith as well as interpret it for understanding.<sup>40</sup> Cameron argues that the conjunctive theory of signs directly affected Augustine’s reading of the Old Testament. Though the signs were temporal, and in some cases the laws abolished, the text of Scripture still dispensed the grace of God. The Old Testament not only functioned as a precursor to the New, but it also served as the first book of the New Testament, which is evident in his pastoral and polemical exegesis.<sup>41</sup>

In 394 Cameron argues that Augustine’s exposition of Galatians marks a distinct turning point in the way he understood Christ’s relationship to the Old Testament. Attempting to answer how the saints were justified by Christ before the Incarnation, Augustine explored the notion of mediator in greater depth. The unity of the divine and human nature of Christ in one mediator enabled Augustine to speak of a saving “exchange” between “human weakness and divine strength.”<sup>42</sup> This meant that Christ’s assumption of flesh was more than a pedagogical tool that enlightened the intellect; rather, it was also the remedy, which healed the will. There was not only a demonstration of that which was holy in the Incarnate Christ, but transformation of the human will was effected by Christ’s assumption of the human condition in its entirety. Cameron writes: “But his passion not only revealed the human will, but ‘bent’ it flush with God’s straightedge... Humanity so embraced the divinity of the mediator that the sign of his deed cured the infirmity of all, and the divinity so inhabited his

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<sup>39</sup> Cameron, “The Christological Substructure,” 75.

<sup>40</sup> Cameron, “The Christological Substructure,” 80.

<sup>41</sup> Cameron, “The Christological Substructure,” 75.

<sup>42</sup> Cameron, “The Christological Substructure,” 83.

humanity of the mediator that the same sign bestowed God's strength upon all."<sup>43</sup> If Christ fulfilled the Law, Christians therefore fulfill the Law by their increasing conformity to Christ, and thus God, because Word and flesh are one in Christ.

With regard to the Old Testament, the second marked change resulting from Augustine's study of Galatians was his increasing conviction that the Old Testament was the bearer of New Testament grace because the signs communicated the mystery of God. The rites, prophets and angels were seen as mediators acting in the stead of the mediator to come. Those who believed in the Old Testament were justified by a "prophetic faith" because God was acting in them, never withdrawing "from the process of dispensing the truth."<sup>44</sup> Though the sign was obsolete in the Spiritualist paradigm, it was intrinsically related to the reality that it signified in the Incarnational paradigm. Cameron writes that the conjunctive theory of signs places such an intimate relation between sign and reality that the effective communication of the reality was not independent of the sign, but in fact rested on the particular sign.<sup>45</sup>

Cameron further notes that in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine labored to show the dramatic inner unity between the two Testaments, paying special attention to the contradictions and incongruities therein. Prophecy and fulfillment emerged in Augustine's thought as the "primary design of revelation," and while *De Doctrina* focused on extratextual reasoning, *Contra Faustum* placed its emphasis on intratextual "correspondence between dissimilar constellations of meaning."<sup>46</sup> Intratextual reading thus marks a turn in Augustine's mode of exegesis and communication of theological realities through biblical language. But intrabiblical reasoning became a powerful mode of theologizing because of a growing sense of the intrinsic relationship between biblical signs and the divine reality to which they pointed.

In several ways Cameron's work supports and advances the argument of the present study. First Cameron highlights how Augustine's theology and hermeneutical methods were interrelated, bringing to the foreground the influence of Christology on Augustine's theory of signs. Christ's equality with God locates Christ at the center point of revelation and most importantly gestures towards the unity of God as the source of continuity between the Testaments. By placing faith in the divine Lawgiver, one receives the grace of God and

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<sup>43</sup> Cameron, "The Christological Substructure," 85.

<sup>44</sup> Cameron, "The Christological Substructure," 86.

<sup>45</sup> Cameron, "The Christological Substructure," 87.

<sup>46</sup> Cameron, "The Christological Substructure," 95.

fulfills the Law in and through Christ. It is because God is one, manifested in the particularity of Christ, that faith in Christ is constitutive to reading the Old Testament. Augustine explains that only through Christ can anyone know the mind of God, and penetrate the meaning of divine speech:

So some err by denying Christ's humanity, while they allow His divinity. Others, again, assert His humanity, but deny His divinity...in our apostolic doctrine, Christ is not only God in whom we may safely trust, but the Mediator between God and man--the man Jesus...He is man, for "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And who shall know Him? For "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"...And the person is none other but He who says, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' So that our trust is not in man, to be under the curse of the prophet, but in God-man, that is, in the Son of God, the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man. In the form of a servant the Father is greater than He; in the form of God He is equal with the Father.<sup>47</sup>

In Christ's condescension, the Word became the remedy for the soul's infirmity. Cameron notes that Christ's flesh was the locus of salvation, and through Christ's flesh God bent human will flush with the divine will. Christ's role as mediator invited an expanded theory of signs that accounted for the effectiveness of God's Word through temporal reality. The conjunctive theory of signs allows for a description of Scripture as the locus of God's gracious action and healing grace when approached with faith. Divine mysteries are communicated in human language, and cultivate righteousness in the soul through the process of faithful engagement with the text.

Second, under a conjunctive theory of signs, Cameron argues that the sign not only demonstrates the faith but also acts as interpreter for understanding. The Word, when approached in faith can therefore convey the content of faith as well as interpret the mystery to effect growth in wisdom. It is thus more than a pedagogic tool for proof of the New Testament. Third, Cameron argues that Augustine's conjunctive theory of signs led to an intrabiblical mode of reasoning. Intratextual readings therefore served as the matrix and context for engagement of the mystery because Scripture was as one voice. On this point Augustine argues that the God of the Old and New Testaments are one and the same, and thus are in perfect harmony despite apparent discrepancies:

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<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XIII.8 (Stohtert, 203). For other instances of mediator language see *c. Faust.* XVI.15; XIX.14; XXII.17.



If our foolish opponents are surprised at the difference between the precepts given by God to the ministers of the Old Testament, at a time when the grace of the New was still undisclosed, and those given to the preachers of the New Testament, now that the obscurity of the Old is removed, they will find Christ Himself saying one thing at one time, and another at another. . . . If the Manichaeans found passages in the Old and New Testaments differing in this way, they would proclaim it as a proof that the Testaments are opposed to each other. But here the difference is in the utterances of one and the same person. . . . Does not this show how, without any inconsistency, precepts and counsels and permissions may be changed, as different times require different arrangements? If it is said that there was a symbolical meaning in the command to take a scrip and purse, and to buy a sword, why may there not be a symbolical meaning in the fact, that one and the same God commanded the prophets in old times to make war, and forbade the apostles?<sup>48</sup>

Augustine links Christ with the God of the Old Testament, claiming that Christ's voice can be heard in the Old Testament commandments. The Trinitarian character of the mystery of God in the Old Covenant finds articulation with reference to Christ as mediator, but also in Augustine's assertion that Christ (as God) gave the Old Testament Law. The language of mediator allows Augustine to speak of the oneness of God between the Testaments, and thus defend the Old Testament on the basis of Christ as Word, one with the Father. Christ's role as mediator also allows the Old Testament to speak to the church, because Christ mediates God's revelation of mystery and fulfills the meaning of Scripture in the life of the ecclesia. The mystery of God continuously conveyed between the Old and New Testament allows Augustine to freely move between the Testaments, both theologically and linguistically.

For the purpose of exegesis and preaching, Augustine's use of imagery is an example of how a hermeneutic of faith combined with a conjunctive theory of signs can allow various texts to be read together for the purpose of strengthening and interpreting the faith. Methodologically, Augustine uses images such as milk and bread as hook words to other texts to define and explicate the mystery, while shaping his audience's reception of the Word. An example taken from *Contra Faustum* serves to show how the text can speak both of the mystery of God and the mystery of God's efficacious action in the soul.

### **Polyvalent Imagery**

The centrality of Christ's grace communicated through the Old Testament does not mean, however, that a hermeneutic of faith only allows for Christological readings in the

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<sup>48</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.77 (Stoother, 302).

narrow sense. It is the contrary. Augustine believes the Old Testament reveals God's actions as Father, Son and Spirit but is only fully grasped through the revelation of God in Christ. It is the grace of Christ, that is the grace bestowed by Christ that reveals God because God is Christ and Christ is God. Thus, 'Christological' readings of the Old Testament are not circumscribed to prophetic readings of Christ's life, death and resurrection in the narrow sense, but God's action in the church on the whole. Old Testament texts serve as divine speech meant to illumine human existence, the life of the church and the truth of the cosmos in light of its right relationship to the Triune God. Ayres explains how David Dawson's description of figural readings of the Old Testament helps elucidate aspects of the Incarnate Word's mission:

For early Christian readers the process of purification or sanctification that constitutes Christian life is intrinsically connected to the life, activity and purpose of Christ, the incarnate Word. The mystery of the incarnation includes the mystery by which members of the community are united to the person of Christ and purified toward the vision of God. Using a text from the Old Testament to illustrate the course and struggle of this mystery is of a piece with using the Old Testament to illustrate Christ's actions and life.<sup>49</sup>

Figural readings of the Old Testament encompass all aspects of new creation in Christ and are not narrowly defined as Christological readings of the text because Christ's activity cannot be separated from the activity of the Triune God and the life of the faithful who are animated by the Spirit of God. The text of the Old Testament reveals the mystery of God, speaking to and describing the Christian life, and aiding in the moral transformation of the Christian.

In Book XII of *Contra Faustum* Augustine describes simple faith as nourishing milk of apostolic and prophetic teaching. He refers to simple faith that the church preaches as the milk on which babes suckle and are nourished before growing in their ability to discern the mystery of God. In this text, imagery serves to illustrate Christ's humanity and the spiritual growth of the believer as they are nourished on the content of faith through the Scriptures. It is worth quoting in full to show the intricate way Augustine uses imagery to expound his point:

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the Christian mind must first be nourished in simple faith, in order that it may become capable of understanding things heavenly and eternal. Thus it is said by the prophet: "Unless ye believe, you shall not understand." Simple faith is that by which,

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<sup>49</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 37.

before we attain to the height of the knowledge of the love of Christ, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God, we believe that not without reason was the dispensation of Christ's humiliation, in which He was born and suffered as man, foretold so long before by the prophets through a prophetic race, a prophetic people, a prophetic kingdom. This faith teaches us, that in the foolishness which is wiser than men, and in the weakness which is stronger than men, is contained the hidden means of our justification and glorification. There are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which are opened to no one who despises the nourishment transmitted through the breast of his mother that is, the milk of apostolic and prophetic instruction; or who, thinking himself too old for infantile nourishment, devours heretical poison instead of the food of wisdom, for which he rashly thought himself prepared. To require simple faith is quite consistent with requiring faith in the prophets. The very use of simple faith is to believe the prophets at the outset, while the understanding of the person who speaks in the prophets is attained after the mind has been purified and strengthened.<sup>50</sup>

Augustine makes passing reference in the above text to 1 Cor 3:1-3: "And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh...". Utilizing one word from Paul's text, Augustine builds his argument in such a way that remains within the bounds and constraints of Paul's substantive point. The apostolic teaching is the teaching in which one must put simple faith, and nourished with the milk of faith one can grow in strength and wisdom to understand the mystery of God. Even further, Augustine shows sensitivity to the context of Paul's use of milk imagery. Augustine here argues that the Manicheans foolishly place their faith in foul teachings that are not congruent with apostolic teaching. So too, in 1 Cor 3, Paul castigates the Corinthians for their divided faith, communal division, and carnal behavior. Augustine's deployment of the milk image from 1 Cor 3 brings a network of theological ideas, evoking the context of Paul's argument, and thus shaping Faustus to receive his critique in a way that metaphorically identifies him with the Corinthians.

Elsewhere in Book XII, Augustine uses the imagery of milk to describe Christ's descent to nourish the carnal on milk since they cannot yet understand spiritual realities.<sup>51</sup> In Book XV, Augustine again refers to the milk of infancy when chastising the Manicheans for boasting to be the chaste bride of Christ. Augustine reminds them that they espouse an unorthodox gospel, and that the Apostle warned against being seduced by novel doctrines. Recounting his time with the Manicheans, Augustine uses the milk image as a way of

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<sup>50</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XII.46 (Stohtert, 198).

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XII.26.

describing the nourishment that comes from the faith preached by the church. Note the way Augustine links faith with the real substance of Christianity. He writes that heretics have the name, but not the substance they claim to have. The imagery of milk provides a means for Augustine to speak of how faith imparts the substance of the mystery to which faith points.

Be not misled by the name of truth. The truth is in thine [the church's] own milk, and in thine own bread. They have the name only, and not the thing. Thy full-grown children, indeed, are secure; but I speak to thy babes, my brothers, and sons, and masters, whom thou, the virgin mother, fertile as pure, dost cherish into life under thine anxious wings, or dost nourish with the milk of infancy. I call upon these, thy tender offspring, not to be seduced by noisy vanities, but rather to pronounce accursed any one that preaches to them another gospel than that which they have received in thee. I call upon these not to leave the true and truthful Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; not to forsake the abundance of His goodness which He has laid up for them that fear Him, and has wrought for them that trust in Him. How can they expect to find truthful words in one who preaches an untruthful Christ?<sup>52</sup>

Milk, which nourishes the faithful, denotes the substance of a truthful Christ in whom the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie. Again Augustine's reference to wisdom alludes to the context of Paul's image and the overall theme of wisdom in 1 Corinthians. Milk is a fitting image by which Augustine engages the Manicheans, who notoriously assert their wisdom over the logic and wisdom of Scriptures.

Lastly, Augustine uses milk imagery in Book XII.42, in a thoroughly Christological exegesis of Gen 49:2-12. Augustine writes that the plain example of the phrase "his eyes are bright with wine, and his teeth whiter than milk," is to assure that the babes needing milk are not forgotten despite the fact that some members of the church contemplate the wine of God's divinity. While Augustine's overall reading of this text cannot be assessed at present, suffice it to say that his figural use of the milk image is tied to the plain meaning in 1 Cor 3:1-3. Augustine uses the milk/wine imagery to argue for the two natures in Christ, which through faith imparts wisdom and understanding. Whether nourished on the milk of Christ's humanity or the wine of his divinity, both the infants and mature believers are nourished on the same Christ who cultivates wisdom in the soul. This association of spiritual meanings rooted in the plain meaning of the text illustrates the polyvalence of imagery in Augustine's exegesis. Augustine can move between texts and images by word association because the fundamental meaning of the sign is rooted in reality, but has various levels of meaning.

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<sup>52</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XV.3 (Stohtert, 213).

A few theological and methodological observations are in order. In the example of polyvalent imagery, Augustine shows great agility as he moves between texts, presupposing God's continuous action throughout the Old and New Testament texts. Through imagery, Augustine attempts to guide the reception of the Old Testament by referencing texts in the New Testament that utilize similar language and imagery. The content of Scripture in this example also appears to activate growth in the believer's soul, as the milk of Christ's humanity strengthens the soul to contemplate the bread/wine of Christ's divinity. Scripture emerges as the locus of divine revelation where the faithful and God meet. Both the content of Scripture and Augustine's use of intertextual imagery appear to effect the transformation of which the milk imagery signifies.

### **Biblical Rhetoric & Moral Transformation**

The way Christ's flesh effectively offered God to the world was paradigmatic for Augustine's theory of signs. The spiritual and temporal realms were so interrelated that grace could be said to inhabit the sign. As Cameron summarizes, "If Christ as the *res significans* of God had acted within history, and was not merely witnessed by history, then in principle every historical sign was open to bearing something of its *res*, either before or after his advent. This revision made the Old Testament into a bearer of New Testament grace, and opened prophecy to sacramental interpretation."<sup>53</sup> In his book *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*, Robert Dodaro describes the way in which faith correlates to grace and mystery, cultivating moral transformation in the believer. It is particularly with regard to the soul that this transformation takes place:

Against the weight of ignorance and weakness, he (Augustine) says, reason cannot arrive at particular moral judgments with the aid of examples alone. God uses sacraments and mysteries as divine figures of speech in order to draw believers through the language of Scripture into hidden aspects of wisdom and justice.<sup>54</sup>

Dodaro defines the hidden aspects of wisdom and justice that are communicated through the Scriptures in terms of grace, and argues that Augustine understands human language and divine authorship to communicate the wisdom of God to the soul when Scripture is

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<sup>53</sup> Cameron, "The Christological Substructure," 96.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116.

approached in faith. The fitting response of faith to divine revelation reveals a distinction between acquiring natural knowledge and receiving the gift of wisdom.

In Scripture, tension exists between God's self-revelation and hiddenness; thus, in cooperation with faith, grace works on the mind through biblical language and examples to communicate the mystery of God. Mystery, which Augustine views as the divine presence, cannot be known directly, but only in an indirect illumination of the soul. Dodaro writes that, "The Christian who attempts to unravel all possible interpretations of the biblical sacraments and reach the hidden meaning of the text relives analogously the experience of the Patriarch who is caught up in the vision of the theophany."<sup>55</sup> There is a real encounter with God, and as with the Patriarchs, the encounter has a transfiguring effect on the person addressed. Scripture, then, has a status of its own because it does something that pagan literature cannot; it provides grace-filled examples (sacrament) not simply a mere description of virtuous action. To a certain degree, Scripture teaches through linguistic signs and concepts, but knowledge of Scripture is only partial. God mediates in the form of mystery, which can never be fully grasped by the believer, but can be embodied in the transfigured life of the Christian.

The rhetorical style of Scripture is instrumental in the believer's reception of mystery because the act of interpreting signs and figures aids in purifying concupiscence and pride. In discerning the divine intention behind contradictions in the text, Augustine believes that a coherent picture of truth emerges without collapsing the distinct details of the passages and the eternal truths that are conveyed through them.<sup>56</sup> Faith and grace correlate to Scripture's rhetorical strategy and train the heart to live a moral and holy life, instead of providing mere guidelines for conduct. This, in essence, is the gift and conferral of wisdom. Scripture communicates the eternal Word according to human capacity and historical contingency, and as Dodaro writes, "the inherent interpretive problem provides the requisite preparation" of the heart.<sup>57</sup> This, he terms, rhetorical indirection and describes it as the remedy to moral blindness by freeing "fixed and erroneous patterns of thought" and drawing one deeper into the wisdom and mystery of God.<sup>58</sup> On the point of Scripture's indirect communication of mystery, Dodaro writes:

The theophany (in the Old Testament) thus constitutes a symbol or sacrament of God's indirect self-communication in mystery...In this context faith

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<sup>55</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 135.

<sup>56</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 135.

<sup>58</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 135.

functions ‘grammatically’ by teaching the soul how to distinguish the signs which communicate knowledge of God...Like any grammar, faith teaches how to read - in this case how to read the mystery of God.<sup>59</sup>

By providing a grammar to distinguish between the signs of the Old Testament, Dodaro describes how faith can act as a rule for determining figurative readings.<sup>60</sup> An example of Augustine distinguishing between signs in the Old Testament can be taken from his reading of the recorded sins in the Old Covenant. In these texts Augustine finds warnings in the actions of the Patriarchs, utilizing the moral Law as a gauge for interpreting how particular Old Testament texts speak to the church. As previously argued, Augustine believes that both the life and words of the Patriarchs and Prophets were prophetic even in their imperfections. The Old Testament remains relevant to the church because of the continuity of grace between the Old and New Testament and also because the content has the power to shape the pattern of Christian life. On deciphering the meaning of troublesome passages, Augustine looks closely at the way the words run in order to reflect on its appropriation in the life of the Christian. He writes:

...if we find these saints described as sinning, we may if possible discover the true reason for keeping these sins in memory by putting them on record. Again, if we find things recorded which, though they are not sins, appear so to the foolish and the malevolent, and in fact do not exhibit any virtues, here also we have to see why these things are put into the Scriptures which we believe to contain wholesome doctrine as a guide in the present life, and a title to the inheritance of the future.<sup>61</sup>

Stating that there are many depictions of sinful people and wrongful acts in Scripture, Augustine argues that that which is sinful in historical time has the power to shape righteous behavior when read in light of the grace of faith. Understanding the difference between the sin and the prophetic sign exemplifies the discerning reader whose understanding of the biblical text has been transformed into wisdom. When Augustine describes this process, he places emphasis on God’s action in this event:

But a pleasure which all must feel is obtained from this narrative so faithfully recorded in the Holy Scriptures, when we examine into the prophetic character of the action, and knock with pious faith and diligence at the door of the mystery, that the Lord may open, and show us who was prefigured in the ancient personage...<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 135.

<sup>60</sup> On Augustine’s use of the rule of faith in *c. Faust.*, see Lewis Ayres, “Augustine on the Rule of Faith” in *Augustinian Studies* 36.1 (ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald and O.s.a.: 2005), 33-49.

<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.26 (Stoother, 283).

<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.38 (Stoother, 287).

The transformative power of Scripture is effected in the process of wrestling with the biblical text, and as the believer wrestles with the text, God acts in the soul. God's purpose in using these texts as a means of divine revelation and radical transformation remains the ultimate point. By including such narratives that are wrought with difficulties, the reader's conscience and habits of thinking are shaped according to divine revelation. Dodaro refers to this as the grammar of Scripture disciplining the intellect, and this transformation effected is the medicaments of faith of which Augustine speaks in *Confessiones* VI.4-8. Faith works with grace, creating the capacity to perceive truth and cultivate understanding. In this sense, reading the Old Testament in faith brings natural reason into accord with divine revelation; it helps one to think in accord with divine truth, thus fashioning a Christian ethic in the lives of believers because the Word is full of grace. As Augustine writes, it is "pious discernment, which bows to divine authority, and at the same time judges correctly of human conduct."<sup>63</sup> While knowledge itself does not transform lives, the grace of God does, communicated through the act of reading Scripture.

### Summary

Asserting that all the saints of the Old Covenant were justified by faith, Augustine is pressed to give a multidimensional view of the Law, which again finds hermeneutical outworking in a view of history shaped by Promise and Fulfillment. As I have argued in this chapter, faith is constitutive to Augustine's hermeneutic of the Old Testament because faith correlates to the grace of the divine mystery in Scripture. Approaching the Word in faith not only reveals the *telos* of the Law, i.e. Christ and the mystery of God, but also fulfills the Law through participation in Christ's grace.

Arguing that Scripture is part of God's larger design to heal the soul of pride and concupiscence, I concluded that through faith in Christ, the believer participates in Christ's righteousness and therefore fulfills the Law in grace and truth. More specifically, I argued that Scripture is the locus for God's gracious action in the soul because faith predisposes the soul to the grace of God communicated through Scripture since the content and efficacy of God's Word is one and the same.

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<sup>63</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* XXII.66 (Stoother, 297).



Utilizing Cameron's work on Augustine's Christology and signs, I have argued that Christ's role in linking the Old and New Testament depends entirely on Augustine's belief that in Christ the Word was wedded to flesh and can be known through the Scriptures. From Augustine's perspective, the Law and Prophets speak of Christ, in him and through him because he is God. On the fundamental importance of Christ's person in reading the Old Testament, Joseph Ratzinger poignantly states the paradox between the particularity of Christ and universality of God:

The faith of Israel was directed to universality. Since it is devoted to the one God of all men, it also bore within itself the promise to become the faith of all nations. But the law, in which it was expressed, was particular, quite concretely directed to Israel and its history; it could not be universalized in this form. In the intersection of these paradoxes stands Jesus of Nazareth, who himself as a Jew lived under the law of Israel but knew himself to be at the same time the mediator of the universality of God... Jesus opened up the law quite theologically conscious of, and claiming to be, acting as Son, with the authority of God himself, in innermost unity with God, the Father. Only God himself could fundamentally reinterpret the law and manifest that its broadening transformation and conservation is its actually intended meaning. Jesus' interpretation of the law makes sense only if it is interpretation with divine authority, if God interprets himself. The quarrel between Jesus and the Jewish authorities of his time is finally not a matter of this or that particular infringement of the law but rather of Jesus' claim to act "ex auctoritate divina," indeed, to be this "auctoritas" himself. "I and the Father are one."<sup>64</sup>

Ratzinger's doctrine of Christ correlates to a robust account of divine revelation. As the divinity finds particularity in the person of Christ, divine speech finds particularity in the words of the Law; thus, the Incarnation stands as the paradigm for understanding how sign and reality are inextricably bound. Augustine's exhortation to faith in *Contra Faustum*, can be seen as nothing less than an exhortation to lay aside the insufficiency and inadequacy of human knowing for the wisdom of God. And the Law, which finds its fulfillment in Christ, can equally find fulfillment in those who participate in the Word made flesh, through faith.

This does not mean that creative exegesis has free reign over the text; it is quite the contrary. Instead, the ductility of the Word and the reality that Scripture has the power to communicate the mystery of God provides directives and constraints in exegesis and disciplines figural readings to remain true to the way the words run. In this chapter I further argued that Augustine's use of biblical imagery was taken as an example of how figural

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Israel, The Church, and The World," in *Many Religions – One Covenant: Israel, the Church, and the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 38-39.

exegesis can be used to exegete multiple meanings in the text, and thus an effective tool for preaching the mystery of God revealed through the Scriptures. The polyvalence of biblical imagery segued into Dodaro's description of how Augustine conceives the rhetoric of Scripture to aid in cultivation and transformation of the soul in righteousness. In engaging Scripture in all its difficulties, the soul is thus prepared for wisdom, and in the act of wrestling with the text, God confers wisdom and understanding. This leads towards a shaping of the imagination through grace, ultimately revealing how a hermeneutic of faith allows for Scripture to be the locus of God's work in the soul.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Augustine's Hermeneutic in Conversation**

At the beginning of this study, it was mentioned that Ayres notes how the pro-Nicene fathers viewed Scripture as a means of shaping the imagination. He writes of Gregory of Nyssa, as well as all pro-Nicenes: “one of the central dimensions of Scripture’s speech is to be its condescension to the level of created reality in revealing God and yet its anagogic function in leading the human imagination to see the necessary path beyond those human categories.”<sup>65</sup> What can be said of Nyssa can also be said of Augustine. As argued in the earlier chapters of this study, Augustine’s theology of faith revealed God’s continuous action spanning between the Old and New Testaments. His exhortation to faith, however, was not for the purpose of a merely cognitive enlightenment. Rather, Augustine’s hermeneutic of faith vis-à-vis the Old Testament was always in view of fulfillment of the Law, that is to say, love of neighbor and of God. Faith is thus constitutive to Augustine’s hermeneutic because faith creates the capacity to perceive the mystery of God revealed therein and receive the grace of God that effects transformation in the soul. In this chapter I argue that Augustine’s hermeneutic of faith shares similarities with Paul’s hermeneutic as assessed by Richard B. Hays. In assessing their formal and theological likeness I conclude with reflections on how Augustine exemplifies an imagination profoundly converted by Paul’s texts, and in turn provides insight into reading Paul’s own texts anew.

As Augustine’s hermeneutic of faith was profoundly influenced by Paul’s theology, the notion of the converted imagination is yet one further intersection between Augustinian and Pauline studies. In recent years Richard B. Hays has argued that Paul’s use of Scripture had the effect of epistemologically reconfiguring Israel’s history through the reality of the cross and resurrection. Simultaneously, Paul’s use of Scripture reconfigured Gentile imaginations by narrating Israel’s history as their very own. Hays argues that this conversion of the imagination could only happen by critically confronting their beliefs and practices with the gospel message time and again. Hays assesses how Paul concretely uses Scripture to convert the Corinthians, and in his analysis argues that Paul was attempting to teach the

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<sup>65</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 298.

Corinthians to think eschatologically and reshape their identity as church in light of Israel's Scriptures.<sup>66</sup>

In the final chapter of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Hays exhorts readers to take Paul's intertextual readings as a model for reading Scripture in the church. Instead of arguing that readers imitate specific exegetical methods or reproduce exact readings of certain texts, Hays suggests that Paul can serve as a model and guide in reading Scripture as a word addressed to the church. Through careful study of Paul's material constraints, readers can proceed in figural readings that shape lives and communities to witness to the righteousness of God, and embody the love of God as revealed in Christ. Hays serves as an interesting conversation partner for the present study because his study of Paul is both literary and theological. In reading Paul and Augustine alongside one another, Augustine emerges as a powerful witness to the way Paul's letters can shape and even convert the imagination.

### **Formal and Theological Similarities**

An argument could be advanced that the similarity between Paul and Augustine's hermeneutic is merely cultural given the proximity between the two historical figures. Ayres has noted that ancient readers did not recognize the chasm between their imaginative world and that of the biblical writers. He writes that the "elision or lack of recognition of distinctions between the imaginative universe of reader and writer or text enables patterns in the text to serve as direct descriptors of the reader's world and community."<sup>67</sup> But, cultural similarity does not have the power to explain Augustine's freedom in reading multiple senses in Scripture without any trace of anxiety that his figural reading practices were distorting the plain and historical sense of the text. Given the theological character of their hermeneutic, Augustine owes a greater debt to Paul than cultural influence. At this juncture, the questions Hays poses at the end of *Echoes of Scripture* serve as a helpful guide in assessing the substantive similarities and differences between Augustine and Paul.

While Hays exhorts readers to imitate Paul's hermeneutical practices, he questions the appropriateness of using Paul's specific interpretations, interpretive methods, and theologically substantive constraints as a normative model for exegetes. One of the virtues of Hays' work lies in how he demonstrates the inextricability of Paul's hermeneutic from his

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<sup>66</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2005), 5-6.

<sup>67</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 33.

theology, and vice versa. A word might be said on the normative character of Paul's reading. Hays shows how extracting the content of Paul's theology from his hermeneutical paradigm invalidates the legitimacy of Paul's understanding and proclamation of the gospel. Paul's hermeneutic is normative in the sense that his theology grows from his reading practices; as Hays argues, his use of Scripture is not an embellishment to his message. In the same way that Augustine's theology was born from the Scriptural matrix of the Old and New Testament Paul's apostolic doctrine found its life source from its "generative hermeneutic."<sup>68</sup> His hermeneutic is therefore normative because it is theological; and for this reason, Paul's literary methods can serve to inform modern readers of Scripture.

Sharing Paul's historical and eschatological sensibility transfer to hermeneutical principles, generating new life within the church when readers learn from Paul how to communicate through the ideas, rhetoric and language of Scripture. Hays describes learning from Paul as being trained in "the art of dialectical imitation, bringing Scripture's witness to God's action in the past to bear as a critical principle on the present, and allowing God's present action among us to illumine our understanding of his action in the past."<sup>69</sup> In listing several principles that serve to guide Paul's normative reading, it must be noted that each principle presupposes the thematic unity of Scripture, which Hays describes as the righteousness of God. Scripture is therefore about the faithful, addressed to the faithful, and in service of proclamation because of Scripture's witness to this overarching mystery. Augustine certainly exemplifies these three Pauline principles on the basis that the righteousness of God is God's faithfulness to God's Promises in Christ, "for all the promises of God find their yes in him."<sup>70</sup> As argued in the first chapter, Augustine's hermeneutic of faith argues for God's continuous action in history, and sees the church on the same continuum of God's action.

Augustine conceives of Promise and Fulfillment in a Pauline manner, and the subsequent features of faith, grace and spiritual transformation flow from this central point. The theological elements of Augustine's hermeneutic situate him to use similar hermeneutical methods as Paul, since he can defend his reading as an outworking of Paul's theology. Paul's reading of Abraham and the Law, as exegeted by Hays, demonstrates how hermeneutical similarities can be traced back to a particular construal of the Abraham text.

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<sup>68</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale UP: 1989), 182.

<sup>69</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 183.

<sup>70</sup> 2 Cor 1:20.

## Hermeneutic of Faith

Hays has sufficiently demonstrated how Paul's innovative reading of Abraham shape Paul's vision of the gospel's continuity and discontinuity with Judaism.<sup>71</sup> In *Echoes of Scripture* as well as *The Conversion of the Imagination*, Hays argues that Paul's intertextual allusions in Rom 1-3 led him to treat Abraham as one of the central figures in the narrative of election and Promise.<sup>72</sup> From an intertextual perspective, Paul's argument for both continuity and discontinuity between Law and Gospel rests on whether he can show how the gospel of faith was pre-preached in the story of Abraham.

Hays notes Paul's idiosyncratic reading of the Abraham story in Romans 4, which although free from intertextual allusions, poses difficulty because of the syntax. In *Echoes of Scripture* Hays proposes a translation that treats Rom 4:1 as a rhetorical question: "What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?"<sup>73</sup> Given this translation, Hays argues that Paul believes Jews and Gentiles are children of Abraham according to the Promise and are thus justified in the same manner: faith. The issue of invalidating the Law through faith that is raised in Rom 3 therefore has no grounding because the Law (here read as the entire Hebrew narrative of Promise) is Scriptural warrant for the gospel of faith. Based on this reading, the Law reveals that Abraham is Israel's forefather according to the Promise, not according to the flesh. Gentile inclusion by faith therefore upholds the Law, and the oneness of the God of the Jews and the Gentiles is affirmed. For this reason, Gentile Christians do not need to come under the Law, but instead the Jews are meant to participate in Christ through faith, as they participate in Abraham.

Hays writes that in order to make his case Paul cites Gen 15:6, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." He couples it with Ps 32:1-2, "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and those whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not reckon." Hays argues that using 'reckon' as a link word, Paul reads this psalm as a word directly addressed to his situation, asking in Rom 4:9, "Is this

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<sup>71</sup> For a thorough comparison of Paul's reading of Genesis compared to his contemporaries, see Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 515-16.

<sup>72</sup> In a footnote on Paul's conception of the universal scope and implications of the promise made to Abraham, versus its warrant in the creation narrative, see n. 19 in "Psalm 143 as Testimony," 55.

<sup>73</sup> See also Rom 3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14 for other instances of the expected negative answer to rhetorical questions. Also, for the extended exegetical argument, see Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2005), 61-84.

blessing pronounced on the circumcision [Jews] or uncircumcision [Gentiles]?” Hays shows that the answer to this question is found in the narrative of Gen 15:6 and the issue is no longer how but when Abraham was reckoned righteous, making the crucial point that the issue is not one of faith as opposed to works. Rather, the issue at stake is Abraham as the representative figure, “whose destiny contains the destiny of others” by way of his seed.<sup>74</sup>

Therefore, in mirroring the faith of Abraham and participating in the blessing pronounced on him by being in his seed, Rom 4:13-18 again reaffirms that Abraham’s children reach beyond the bounds of the Jewish people and Torah observers. And, the incorporation of Gentiles “outside the Law is consistent with the Law.”<sup>75</sup> Hays notes that Paul’s treatment of Abraham advances the argument he has held thus far in Romans: “God whose righteousness is shown forth in Jesus Christ is Israel’s God, the God of Abraham, who paradoxically affirms his unwavering faithfulness to his covenant with Israel precisely by electing to embrace Gentiles among his people.”<sup>76</sup> This continuity ultimately is the continuity of grace. God’s election of Israel and inclusion of the Gentiles, God’s speaking through the prophets and through Paul’s Gospel, and God’s oracular decrees and gift of the Spirit are one act of grace dispensed over the course of history. What was once latent is now revealed in full. Whether one agrees with the way Hays exegetes Rom 4, the substance of his theological point is congruent with Augustine’s argument for faith against Faustus, as argued in the first chapter.

Second, in 3:31, when Paul insists that through faith Christians uphold the Law, and supports this claim by appealing to Abraham, he is reading the Law not only as the Shema but the entire Pentateuchal narrative, “construed as a prefiguration of the gospel.”<sup>77</sup> These three points taken together share a common view of the Law as proleptic, “prefiguring the economy of salvation that is revealed in the gospel.”<sup>78</sup> Hays continues by explaining that Paul’s reading of the story of Abraham upholds the Law, “by showing that the gospel of righteousness through faith is prefigured in the Law, that is, in the Genesis narrative.”<sup>79</sup> Hays goes on to explain: “Obviously, such a construal of the Law is possible only in light of a profound narrative shift, which has two important dimensions.”<sup>80</sup> The two dimensions he

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<sup>74</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 56.

<sup>75</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 57.

<sup>76</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 96.

<sup>80</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 96.

outlines are: first, a shift in reading the Law as a set of commandments to reading the Law as a narrative of promise. By moving the Abraham story into the “hermeneutical center of attention,” Paul argues that the Law is first of all the vehicle of God’s covenant promise, a promise that extends to all nations, far beyond the more limited scope of the nation defined by the Sinai covenant.”<sup>81</sup> Secondly, Hays argues that the promise expressed in Scripture’s narrative is addressed to himself and those in the Christian community, as articulated in two hermeneutical maxims: 1 Cor 10:11 and Rom 15:4.

The hermeneutical principle that emerges from these three texts is that the entirety of the Old Testament serves as a narrative of Promise and Fulfillment, addressed to the present church. Hays explains:

This is the sort of reading at work in the Abraham story. The story is not merely an example of how God deals with human beings; instead it is a word of promise addressed directly to Paul’s readers, who are themselves Abraham’s seed: “Now the words spoken to him were not written for his sake alone, but also for our sake to whom [righteousness] is going to be reckoned, to those who trust in the one who was raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:23-24) Thus the “Law” – the Abraham story – must be read as pointing forward to realities that can be discerned only retrospectively from within the community of faith, the community that the Law always aimed to bring into being. From within the community of faith, the Law qua narrative is seen to prefigure the gospel and the church.<sup>82</sup>

Hays’ view maintains the integrity of the Hebrew Scriptures as revelatory and relevant for the Christian community. Hays highlights this feature: “Paul’s point is not just that Scripture is profitable for doctrinal instruction, as in 2 Tim 3:16-17. Rather he regards Scripture as a living voice speaking directly to the community.”<sup>83</sup> One of the functions of the Law, then, is to confirm the promises of God in calling together Jews and Gentiles in the person of Abraham prefiguratively, and Christ definitely. In this way, Hays writes that, “Readers of the Law who understand that meaning of the Law have truly understood the *τελος* of the Law; readers who do not understand this prefigurative oracular function of the Law remain ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God.”<sup>84</sup> The relationship between Jew and Gentile in the person of Abraham and thus in relation to the Law finds its locus of transformation in Christ, and Hays argues that the righteousness of God culminates in Paul’s affirmation that Jesus is the *telos* of the Law.

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<sup>81</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 97.

<sup>82</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 97-98.

<sup>83</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 97-98.

<sup>84</sup> Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 99.



Augustine and Paul's reading of Abraham situates them to read Scripture as a divine narrative of Promise and Fulfillment. In light of these hermeneutical principles, they both exemplify hermeneutical freedom in their use of Scripture for the purpose of shaping the life of the church. Hays refers to this phenomenon as Paul's eschatological hermeneutic; and while Augustine does not refer to his reading as eschatological, his practices exemplify the belief that the Scriptures are definitively fulfilled in Christ, and continually fulfilled in the life of the church. In both Paul and Augustine's case, their eschatological perspective invites various intertextual methods of reading Scripture.

### **Hermeneutical Freedom: The Converted Imagination**

Hays writes that the eschatological character of Paul's perspective shapes his reading to be dialectical. By dialectical Hays means that an allusion or subtext is "brought into collision so that each [symbolic world] is vulnerable to criticism and interpretation of the other... If the poem succeeds, it presumably achieves a synthesis of the two worlds, but the genius of dialectical imitation is to produce the synthesis within the text of a literary work that sustains the tension between worlds rather than resolving it."<sup>85</sup> Augustine's reading of Scripture exemplifies the textual tensions increasingly as his theory of signs transitions from, what Cameron described as, a disjunctive to conjunctive theory. The harmony of the mystery conveyed through the signs, however, always make sense of the apparent incongruities. As shown in the previous chapter, the apparent disharmony brings about delight as the temporal mode of divine revelation uproots concupiscence and pride, and therefore is part of the divine design for sanctification. Nowhere, is this manifestation of the Scripturally converted imagination more palpable than in Augustine's *Confessiones*.

The Augustine who struggled to accept the Old Testament is a far cry from the man writing *Confessiones*. Augustine explains his transformation in terms of faith, and the recollection of his journey through faith finds articulation in the form of confession to God. This transformation in faith naturally disposed Augustine to read and use Scripture in a way that bespoke his theology of divine revelation, and this hermeneutical freedom manifests itself in numerous passages. In the fifth chapter of *Christ and the Just Society*, Dodaro gives an account of Augustine's view on confession. He writes: "...confession...constitutes the only human speech whose truthfulness can be know with certainty. Understood in this way, confession characterizes the fundamental discourse of the just because it reveals the truth

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<sup>85</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 174.

about themselves. As such it also represents the paradigmatic dialogue between the soul and God.<sup>86</sup> The way Augustine uses Scripture in his *Confessiones* presents itself as a unique insight into how his theology of faith and use of Scripture finds a voice in communication with God. In light of this definition of confession, Augustine's hermeneutic in *Confessiones* is perhaps one of the most privileged uses of Scripture, manifesting most profoundly the inextricability of faith from hermeneutics in Augustinian thought.

### **Scripture in *Confessiones***

In Augustine's work following his conversion in CE 386, the grammar and language of Scripture increasingly seep into his rhetoric, reflecting his deeply Scriptural imagination. While Augustine's Pauline theology does not find explicit defense in *Confessiones*, his articulation of past memories and his perception of the present are cast in biblical terms that betray a deeply Scriptural imagination, and a deeply Pauline hermeneutical sensibility. His freedom in utilizing the language of Scripture to speak about himself and cry out to God implicitly assumes a certain kind of reading of Scripture, and, I would argue, a certain conception of faith. Within this context, the grace of Scripture, its ability to speak to his personal situation, and his assumption that the God of the Old and New Testaments are one and the same, reveal themselves in Augustine's allusions to the Old Testament.

Augustine's Scriptural imagination can be noted in his retrospective narration of his life in *Confessiones* I.5-6. In these sections Augustine alludes to six Old Testament texts within the course of approximately twelve sentences: Ps 35; Job 9; Ps 135; Gen 18; Jer 12; Prov 21. What begins in chapter 5 as a prayer to God, crescendos in confession of sin and the request for deliverance from the sins of others: "Cramped is the dwelling of my soul; expand it, that You may enter in. It is in ruins, restore it. There is that about it which must offend Your eyes; I confess and know it, but who will cleanse it?"<sup>87</sup> Augustine's facility with Scripture becomes apparent when the context of each citation is examined individually and the relationship between biblical citation and Augustine's overall discourse is examined.

The allusions in I.5-6 cluster thematically around the mercy of God and the anguish experienced in awaiting God's saving help. From Ps 35, which begs for salvation from one's enemies, to Augustine's use of Ps 131, which is a psalm of ascent, Augustine's citations follow the development of his prayers and requests to God to deliver him from his own

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<sup>86</sup> Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society*, 172.

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *conf.* I.6 (Pilkington, 5).

iniquities. In the broader schema of *Confessiones*, the cluster of biblical allusions fit into his attempt to work through and understand the mystery of God, which he recognizes can only be done in faith. In I.1, he writes:

You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You...Let me seek You, Lord, in calling on You, and call on You in believing in You; for You have been preached unto us. O Lord, my faith calls on You—that faith which You have imparted to me, which You have breathed into me through the incarnation of Your Son, through the ministry of Your preacher.<sup>88</sup>

Thus taking his cue from Rom 10:14, Augustine confesses that through the preaching of the gospel he was summoned to faith, and his faith calls on God. Augustine believes his act of confession is attributed to his faith; his confession is the outworking of the divine gift of faith, and faith is the human call for God in response to God's mercy. In receiving the gift of faith, and calling to God in faith, Augustine becomes predisposed to cooperate with the grace of God and discern the mystery. In engaging divine revelation from this stance of faith, Augustine has implicitly received the Word of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments as a Word that communicates grace and is directed to him. Augustine's mode of discerning the mysteries of which he speaks is the language of Scripture and discourse of divine revelation itself.

The thematic content of *Confessiones* I.5-6 reinforces the necessity of faith in approaching the mystery of God. As Dodaro writes, the Scriptural language disciplines and directs Augustine's reasoning, and leads to the greater mystery revealed through his engagement of Scripture. A brief review of the themes he addresses in these first four sections, and the Scriptural passages he engages, reveals how deeply Augustine relies on Scripture to discern the mysteries of God. Sections 1-4 discuss four dimensions of the mystery of God before climaxing in Augustine's confession of sin in 5-6. In sections 1-4 he questions: 1) the order of calling, praising and knowing God; 2) the indwelling of God in the believer and the believer in God; 3) God's omnipresence; 4) the majesty of God. The pattern of Augustine's reasoning begins with Augustine's thoughts on the mystery, a citation or allusion to a Scriptural passage that contradicts what Augustine previously stated, and resolution between the seemingly antithetical points in a creative synthesis between the two extremes. A few examples suffice to show how Augustine reasons in faith, and with the language of Scripture.

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<sup>88</sup> Augustine, *conf.* I.I (Pilkington, 2).

In I.2 Augustine questions how he can call upon the Lord and whether any part of him can contain the God who made heaven and earth. Since nothing can exist without God, Augustine queries whether his question is even valid; do not all things contain God insofar as they exist? Citing Romans 11:36, Augustine counters his thinking by asking the question: “Or should I not rather say, that I could not exist unless I were not in You from whom are all things, by whom are all things, in whom are all things?”<sup>89</sup> But even still, trying to hold the tension between God’s omnipresence and God’s indwelling through the Spirit, Augustine returns to his initial question. Alluding to Jer 23:24, he asks whence God comes if he fills the heavens and earth.

Section 3 develops Augustine’s line of thought further by citing Acts 2:18 and asking how it is that God’s Spirit is poured forth into the soul, yet God is not cast down. The believer, he writes is instead lifted up...and in this condescension God is not dissipated, but the church drawn together. This brings Augustine to consider the seeming antitheses that apparently exist in God. Augustine starts in section 3 by asking whether God fills all things with God’s whole self, or merely part, or whether God is wholly everywhere, though nothing contains God in God’s entirety. Segueing into section 4, which is a litany of God’s attributes, Augustine’s final words query whether any person might speak of God in any meaningful way: “Yet, O my God, my life, my holy joy, what is this that I have said? And what says any man when He speaks of You? Yet woe to them that keep silence, seeing that even they who say most are as the dumb.” It is no surprise, then, that this act of faithful questioning turns into confession of sin through the language of Scripture. As Dodaro notes, for Augustine confession constitutes the most authentic form of communication between the soul and God; and Scripture serves as the most apt language with which one can address the mystery of God given that it confers the grace of the mystery. In section 5, Augustine begins by recapitulating the first four sections:

Oh! How shall I find rest in You? Who will send You into my heart to  
inebriate it, so that I may forget my woes, and embrace You my only good?  
What are You to me? Have compassion on me, that I may speak. What am I to  
You that You demand my love, and unless I give it You art angry, and  
threatenest me with great sorrows? Is it, then, a light sorrow not to love You?<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Augustine, *conf.* I.2 (Pilkington, 2).

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *conf.* I.5. (Pilkington, 5).

Augustine's questions culminate to one fundamental point: love of God. Given his particular circumstances, he looks predominantly to the Psalms and books of the Old Testament to articulate his questions and reflection on his spiritual state. In faith, Augustine finds his voice. In sections 5-6, Augustine's scriptural citations rhetorically play off one another, directing Augustine to think through his present situation and past memories. It is worth assessing each citation individually to grasp how these allusions direct the flow of this passage while at the same time evoke something of their original context. For the purpose of assessment, Hays' criteria for hearing echoes of Scripture help discern the function of these citations in Augustine's writing, and reveal the deeper theological point, namely, that God is faithful despite Augustine's struggle and misery. A brief discussion of metalepsis and Hays' criterion for an echo can be found below.

### **Metalepsis and Criterion for an Echo**

Demonstrating how Paul alludes to Old Testament texts without overtly citing or explaining them, Hays argues that Paul's biblical allusions leave much of his argument to be filled out by the imagination. The verbal, thematic, and theological associations of the text loom under the surface of Paul's argument, but for the trained ear, the allusions and implications are perceivable. This technique, which Hays terms metaphorical evocation, shares nuances with metalepsis, which is a rhetorical device Hays adapts from John Hollander's *Figure of an Echo*. Describing how metalepsis functions within a text, Hays writes: "Allusive echo can often function as a diachronic trope to which [John] Hollander applies the name *transumption*, or *metalepsis*. When a literary echo links a text in which it occurs to an earlier text, the figurative effect of the echo can lie in the unstated or suppressed (transumed) points of resonance between the two texts"<sup>91</sup> Interpreting the significance of an echo thus involves consideration of the transumed material. In *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* Hays elucidates the poetic features of Paul's hermeneutic, highlighting Paul's tendency to leave the key elements of his argument to the realm of echo. In fact, Hays explains that Paul's theological argument can be traced through his intertextual strategies, leaving his allusions to contend against him.<sup>92</sup> Metalepsis serves as a helpful tool in deciphering Augustine's use of Scripture in various passages of *Confessiones*.

In the last chapter of *Echoes of Scripture* Hays writes that in Paul's dialectic reading

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<sup>91</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20.

<sup>92</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 1.

of Scripture, “the word of Scripture is not played off as a foil for the gospel, not patronized as a primitive stage of religious development, not regarded merely as a shadow of the good things to come. Paul’s urgent hermeneutical project, rather, is to bring Scripture and gospel into a mutually interpretive relation, in which the righteousness of God is truly disclosed.”<sup>93</sup> Hays argues that the friction between text and subtext and the difference between heuristic and dialectical readings depends on whether the subtext is allowed to “retain its own voice, to answer back, to challenge the poet’s attempts at integration.” He goes on to explain that, “the dialectical strategy, disavowing diachronic resolution, allows the intertextual tension to remain but thereby achieves fuller contemporaneity with the past, for the precursor goes on speaking in the derivative text.” Using Romans his example of how dialectical readings works in Paul’s argument, Hays writes:

Paul’s proclamation needs the blessing of Scripture, and Scripture’s witness to God’s election of Israel stands in judgment of all formulations of the gospel. On the other hand, Scripture’s witness gains its eschatological coherence only in light of the gospel, and the gospel stands in judgment of Israel’s unbelief. The voices contend in counterpoint.<sup>94</sup>

With careful attention to the interplay between text and subtext, the overarching theme of Paul’s letter to the Romans emerges, and his selection of overt Old Testament citations texts appears coherent instead of ad hoc. Among the various ways metalepsis enhances Paul’s argument, two features Hays highlights are particularly relevant to Augustine’s hermeneutic. First, Hays suggests that metalepsis allows the voice of Scripture to be heard in its own right, and thus serve as an active conversation partner in Paul’s argument, and second, the transumed echo provides a directive for the unfolding of Paul’s argument precisely because he understands the internal logic of the text to which he alludes. This does not mean that Paul’s use of Scripture agrees necessarily with the original text’s point. Rather, he uses the Old Testament as a way of explicating the gospel message and conversely as a way of clarifying the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.

There is a specific, coherent theological principle guiding Paul’s allusions to Scripture and Paul’s logic. In *Echoes of Scripture*, Hays argues that the echoes behind the text argue for the letter’s theme: the gospel is the fulfillment not the negation of God’s word to Israel. While this might be overtly argued in Rom 4, 9-11, the other chapters of Romans are

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<sup>93</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 1.

<sup>94</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 177.

drenched with allusions and biblical syntax that converge on this main theme. Rhetorically, the surface of Paul's argument often pushes in one direction, while the current of Scriptural allusions flow in the opposite direction. For instance, in the first few chapters of Romans there is a counter-theme of mercy "drifting back against the flow" of Paul's affirmation of the justice and judgment of God.<sup>95</sup> This counterargument makes sense only when one considers the original of the Scriptural allusions. The effect of this countermovement proves God's grace to the ungodly and God's steadfastness to Israel (and thus humanity) regardless of Israel's unfaithfulness. The message is one of reversal brought by grace, and perhaps this is why Paul draws heavily from the prophets of the exilic period, pointing thus to the undergirding structure of the judgment/grace dialectic witnessed in Scripture, and drawing an analogy to Israel's 'apparent' rejection.<sup>96</sup>

Hays' description of Paul's preaching as a means of converting the imagination, and his assessment of Paul's poetic treatment of Old Testament texts presupposes a certain theological configuration of history and certain hermeneutical principles. It can hardly be contested that Paul operated from a hermeneutic of faith, that he understood Christ to be the point of continuity and discontinuity between Torah and gospel. But, the very particular ways in which Paul found warrant for continuity in Scripture and communicated it to the church is shocking. One of the most striking features of Paul's reading of Torah is how he runs readers hard and fast in one direction, only to reveal that the deeper meaning of Scripture is quite the opposite. This tension between the apparent flow of the text and the obscurity of meaning demonstrates how the meaning of Scripture is not always apparent on the surface, requiring faithful engagement that might result in deeply puzzling realizations.

In *Echoes of Scripture* Hays suggests that one must question where the event of an echo takes place. With regard to Paul's texts he identifies five possible options, but these options stand for any text: 1) in the mind of the author, 2) in the original audience, 3) in the text itself, 4) in the act of reading, 4) in a community of interpretation. Instead of adopting one answer, Hays proposes keeping all five options in tension. He acknowledges that, as an individual reader, one is part of a community with a set of specific beliefs that inform one's reading. However, the proposed reading must be justified by the historical data and rhetorical structure of the text.<sup>97</sup> The literary test as to whether or not the echo exists is for Hays very

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<sup>95</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 46.

<sup>96</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 47.

<sup>97</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 28.

much a text oriented procedure, and he lays out seven criteria from which he can test particular texts for echoes of Scripture. The seven criteria are as follows: Availability, Volume, Recurrence, Thematic coherence, Historical plausibility, History of interpretation, Satisfaction.<sup>98</sup>

The first criterion, *Availability*, is in relation to the text from which Paul draws his intertextual material. This needs no extensive explication because the Hebrew Scriptures were available to him, both in the Greek translation as well as the Hebrew text.<sup>99</sup> *Volume* of an echo depends on linguistic and syntactical replication of Paul's text to the former, and will depend on how distinct the original text is. *Recurrence* assesses how often a particular text is used in the epistle, as well as the Pauline corpus at large. *Thematic Coherence* is an extremely important criterion for Hays, as it is the lynchpin to the situation of the echo within Paul's letter and theological argument. The relationship of one echo to another, and the way it should be interpreted falls under the category of *Thematic Coherence*.

*Historical Plausibility* is the most historic in character, as it takes into account the possibility of Paul's intention and the original audience's reception of the echo. *The History of Interpretation*, on the other hand, looks at the reception of the verse in question as it has been historically interpreted. Lastly, *Satisfaction* of the proposed echo is based on the sensibility of the echo and its illuminative function within the text. Though this criterion has the danger of falling into what Hays calls "affective fallacy" the criterion remains important. He writes "it is in fact another way of asking whether the proposed reading offers a good account of the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers."<sup>100</sup> With these criteria in mind, Augustine's use of Scripture in the *Confessiones* can be identified with greater ease. Augustine's Scriptural allusions pass Hays' criteria of *Availability*, *Volume* and *Historical Plausibility*, because of the explicit nature of the citations and the obvious fact that he was working with a version of the Vulgate. Whether Augustine's use of Scripture passes the criterion of *Recurrence*, *Thematic Cohesion*, *History of Interpretation* and *Satisfaction*, however, requires a more in depth study on each allusion and citation. Hays shows how these principles are rooted in textual analysis of Paul's echoes of Scripture in Romans.

In returning to *Confessiones*, Hays' criterion for an echo reveal the Scriptural

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<sup>98</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29-31.

<sup>99</sup> Most scholars conclude that Paul was citing from the LXX, though would have had a working knowledge of the Masoretic texts. See E. E. Ellis, *Paul's use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 11-20 for a general discussion on Paul's Scriptural sources.

<sup>100</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 32.



undercurrents of Augustine's citations, and illumine how Augustine's use of Scripture directs the flow of Augustine's confession. Augustine's first citation of Scripture in I.5 comes from Ps. 35:3: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". The original context of this Psalm is that of a prayer directed to God for the Psalmist's deliverance from one who is pursuing him/her on pain of death. The Psalmist calls to the LORD for deliverance, invoking the LORD to come to aid and contend with those who fight against the Psalmist. Following Augustine's citation of Ps. 35, Augustine cites Job 9:3, after confessing his sin and begging God to expand the dwelling place of his soul: "Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God? Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?" Upon examining Job 9, the shape of Augustine's prayer and plea to God appears to be influenced by the tone and posture Job assumes before God. Job 9:11-17 thematically recollecting all Augustine has just articulated, highlights the notion of inadequacy before God, the inability to know God without God's self-revelation, the need for God's compassion and the overwhelming sense of sin. Job explains:

When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him. If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?' God does not restrain his anger; even the cohorts of Rahab covered at his feet. "How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy. Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason."<sup>101</sup>

The difference, however, is that Augustine was not upright before God as was Job, thus the dissonance between the original text and Augustine's situation only serves to highlight Augustine's confession of sin. His next citation, not surprisingly, alludes to the need for God's mercy on his iniquity. Augustine follows his citation of Job with a citation from Ps. 130:3 (129:3). Switching modes to the Songs of Ascent, Augustine selects a Psalm that yet again invokes God's attentive mercy, the opening of the Psalm beginning: "Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord hear my voice, let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy." Augustine's citation of verse 3 states to the Lord: "if you O Lord should mark our iniquity, who would stand?" which the Psalmist follows with a resolute will to wait on the Lord. Augustine's following line, which begins section 6 is the very opposite of the resolute awaiting of which the Psalmist writes.

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<sup>101</sup> Job 9:11-17.

Instead, as though unable to accept the Psalmist's patience, Augustine begins by referencing Gen 18:27, pleading: Still suffer me to speak before Your mercy— me, "*dust and ashes*." On the heels of the Genesis allusion, which do not seem to resonate beyond verbal similarities, Augustine alludes to Jer 12:15: "Yet perhaps even You deride me; but when You are turned to me You will have compassion on me." Augustine's selection of Jeremiah's text resonates with the thematic pattern of his citation of Scriptural texts elsewhere in this sequence. In Jer 12, the prophet is engaged in dialogue with God, declaring God's righteousness and justice despite God knowing, seeing and testing the prophet. God's response is one of justice indeed, where God declares to uproot Israel, but this proclamation ends in a note of hope and consolation, wherein God promises compassion and restoration. After citing Jeremiah, Augustine reflects on his parents having raised him, and in doing so acknowledges that "right" should come from them. He corrects himself, however, stating that it was instead by them...for all good only comes from God, who is his safety. This last echo of Scripture appears to be from Ps 62:8-9, which identifies God as the Psalmist's safety and exhorts the people to put their trust in God and pour out their hearts, again fitting into the pattern of Scriptural phrases Augustine deploys.

It is helpful to think about how Augustine's echoes of Scripture direct his argument in *Confessiones*. From the excerpt on metalepsis in Romans, Hays argued that Paul's selections of texts converge around the theme of God's faithfulness, and that there is a countermovement between the biblical citations and Paul's prose, illustrating the message of reversal brought about by grace. Further, the use of Ps. 143 was found to not only overtly pertain to Paul's argument in Rom 3, but also to direct the following turn in the argument and resonate a hopeful note to seeming universal condemnation. Paul's Scriptural allusions thus provide coherence to his argument, and work subtly as constraints and directives on his reasoning with Scripture.

In returning to Augustine's use of Scripture in *Confessiones*, similar constraints appear to be at work. For instance, Augustine's rhetoric imitates the tone of Job's prayer, which sounds the themes of God's faithfulness and mercy despite Job's unhappy state. Job was righteous, however, and Augustine states in no uncertain terms his sinfulness before God and others. How are readers to hear the echoes of Job, then, in light of this dissonance? It would seem that Augustine's imitation of Job's reflection on God's character and his own miserable state provides the analogy from which Augustine then departs. Job was righteous, but alas, Augustine found himself guilty before God. Thus, Augustine's use of the Psalms

that directly address unrighteousness and iniquity present themselves as obvious intertextual allusions. In light of Hays' criteria of *Thematic Coherence*, the theme of God's mercy emerges as the consistent voice of the Old Testament, creating a countermovement to Augustine's plea and cry for God's movement towards him in his miserable state. Notes of consolation and faithfulness peek through Augustine's confession of his sin and inadequacies, while the narrative of Job serves as the backdrop against which readers understand Augustine's prayer.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As Hays notes, Paul's fifth hermeneutical principle can be identified as reading Scripture with hermeneutical freedom, which happens when readers recognize the metaphorical relationship between reader and text. The metaphorical character of Scripture aids in preventing Paul's figural readings from being absolutized. Instead of treating Paul's readings as the only possible figuration of specific texts, Hays notes that Christians can integrate Paul's own texts "into the intertextual web, discerning correspondences that did not occur to Paul himself."<sup>102</sup> He further suggests that weaving Paul's texts into the fabric of one's argument actualizes the potential semantic range of the biblical language. With reference to Augustine, his use of imagery comes to mind as an excellent example of how one might explore the semantic possibilities of Paul's language.

On the point of metaphorical readings, Augustine's theory of signs and his use of imagery can even be said to develop Pauline hermeneutics one step further by expressing the fecundity of the word in communicating the mystery and grace of God. The communication of grace through the Word is everywhere expressed in Hays' exegesis of Paul's hermeneutic; but, the communication of mystery and the grace of transformation through Scripture is made ever more explicit in Augustine's work as he develops his theology of grace through Pauline language. In carefully attuning to Paul's language, Augustine then reflects back on Paul to substantiate and clarify dimensions of Paul's writings that only historical distance and theological reflection can afford. As Hays notes, such metaphorical readings and developments can be defended on the grounds of its complementarity to certain overall arguments in Paul's letters. In the case of imagery, it is an outgrowth of a hermeneutic of

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<sup>102</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 187.

faith that recognizes the efficacious character of signs in communicating the mystery they signify.

In conclusion, Hays asks whether one can point to any directives or constraints in a hermeneutic that espouses figural readings and creative freedom. One might question whether adopting Paul's hermeneutic will eventually lead the church amiss by overturning the faith, and transfiguring the church into something no longer identifiable as the living witness to God's righteousness. In response to these concerns, Hays identifies a couple theological constraints stemming from Paul's own hermeneutic. The two constraints Hays identifies are as follows. First, reading Scripture as Paul read Scripture means that the fruit of one's readings will always witness to God's faithfulness to the promises enunciated in Scripture. Thus, interpretive freedom must demonstrate continuity with Israel's story. Second, a Pauline shaped hermeneutic will testify to God's faithfulness as revealed in Christ.

Lastly, Hays adds that in 2 Corinthians Paul explains that those who behold God's glory in Christ are changed into his likeness, from glory to glory. Reading Scripture as Paul read Scripture therefore bears fruit that witnesses to the grace of God in Christ. Hays expounds on this point rather significantly. He writes: "True interpretation of Scripture leads us into unqualified giving of our lives in service within the community whose vocation is to reenact the obedience of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us."<sup>103</sup> Augustine, as reader and imitator of Paul, exemplifies these constraints in his theological readings, and his life and work sketches an image of what it means to give one's life in service by reenacting the obedience of Christ. In studying Augustine's hermeneutic of faith, it becomes apparent that reading Scripture as Paul read Scripture is not a matter of imitating exegetical methods, or attempting to recreate profoundly inverted readings of Israel's texts. Looking to Augustine as an example of an imagination profoundly converted by Paul's texts reveals that the converted imagination is precisely what it claims to be: a conversion. Only through conversion to God in Christ can the efficacy of the Word take root in the soul and fully manifest God's grace

Within the broader discourse on the nature and function of Scripture in the fourth-century, Augustine's hermeneutic of faith and his work against Faustus reflects the intricate dynamic between Scripture and the life of faith. Augustine's hermeneutic of the Old Testament was not the fruit of theorizing ways in which he might develop Paul's hermeneutic

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<sup>103</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 191.

and deduce constraints and directives for reading the Old and New Testaments as a witness to the righteousness of God. Rather, he was engaged in a battle that, if lost meant that God's righteousness would be disfigured and Scripture used to communicate a message antithetical to its true meaning and function. Augustine's argument against Faustus can ultimately be traced back to his exhortation to "come, then, and be grafted," and assent fully to faith in the one God revealed in Christ, proclaimed by the apostles and preached by the church.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Augustine, *c. Faust.* IX.2.

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