THE OLD TESTAMENT IN EASTERN ORTHODOX TRADITION

EUGEN J. PENTIUC

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To Flora, Daniel, and Cristina

If the faithful are keeping vigil in the church,
David is first, middle, and last.
If at dawn anyone wishes to sing hymns,
David is first, middle, and last.
In the holy monasteries, among the ranks of the heavenly warriors,
David is first, middle, and last.
In the convents of virgins, who are imitators of Mary,
David is first, middle, and last.
In the deserts, where men hold converse with God,
David is first, middle, and last.

PSEUDO-CHRYSOSTOM, *De poenitentia*

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it
labor in vain.
Ps 126[127]:1

THE PURPOSE OF this book is to provide a general overview and a succinct analysis of the primary modes in which the Old Testament has been received, interpreted and conveyed within Eastern Orthodox tradition.

There exists a common assumption, not only among non-Orthodox, that the Eastern Orthodox use the Septuagint text exclusively, following closely the patristic interpretations of the Scripture as the only abiding authority, leaving almost no room for other text-witnesses and hermeneutical ventures. This faulty assumption arises from the dearth of Eastern Orthodox literature regarding the topic of this book.

Among the few works on this topic authored or edited by Orthodox scholars, one may mention first Georges Florovsky's *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Nordland Press, 1972). In this collection, consisting of seven of Florovsky's previously printed articles, the Russian theologian argues for a return to the Gospels, Chalcedon, and church fathers, a common Christian desideratum going beyond the great schism between East and West. In *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective* (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), Theodore G. Stylianopoulos offers a synthesis of traditional Orthodox biblical exegesis as represented by church fathers and modern biblical scholarship, reassessing the need for a balanced use of ancient and modern modes of interpretation. A special contribution of this work is the treatment of biblical hermeneutics as a multilevel endeavor (exegetical, interpretive and transformative) within today's ecumenical context. Stylianopoulos also edited a collection of essays authored by Orthodox biblical scholars, *Sacred Text*

and Interpretation: Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Studies (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006), on a broad array of topics from text-critical analysis to biblical theology and hermeneutics pertaining to the Old and New Testaments. This collection and the international Orthodox biblical studies conference, held on the campus of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, MA) in the fall of 2003, demonstrate the need for a more articulate and critical examination of the Old Testament's place in Eastern Orthodox tradition. This topic finds a thorough and in-depth analysis in John Breck's *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), which surveys the patristic views on Scripture as compartment of Tradition. The first part of the book—the only section which pertains substantively to Scripture—offers a fresh look at the way Eastern patristic writers used Scripture in elaborating what would become the body of Orthodox doctrine. This part deals with aims and methods of biblical interpretation as they were developed by the Greek church fathers.

The scarcity of information on this topic is even more evident at the level of recent reference works. Less than ten pages are allocated to the interpretation of the Scripture in Eastern Orthodoxy in post-Byzantine times in the following three titles: David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1992); Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1993); and John H. Hayes, *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Abingdon, 1999). It is my conviction that the absence of any comparable work on this topic as well as the ongoing interest in the history of the interpretation will make both Orthodox and non-Orthodox readers benefit from this current book.

I dare say this project began a long time ago, in 1968, when the Romanian Orthodox Biblical Institute in Bucharest published the *Fourth Synodal Bible*. A mere 100,000 copies of the 1968 edition were printed for an Orthodox population of almost 20 million. I was 13 years old at that time. That was my first encounter with the printed Word of God, an experience I will never forget. In communist Romania, reading and disseminating the Bible was nearly considered a crime. Except for Leviticus, Numbers, and a few other books, I surreptitiously read the entire Bible within one week. Visualizations from my own readings were interweaving with images from frescoes and portable icons I would often see in my local church. Words heard during Orthros and Liturgy were mingling with printed words from the Bible. Everything became quite familiar, as something that had always been with me, but now—for the first time—I

came to realize the majestic pervasiveness of Scripture in my tiny Eastern Orthodox universe. A desire was born to share with others the sheer joy of rediscovering the Word of God in liturgy and the biblical stories embedded in hymns and icons. The genius of Eastern Orthodox liturgy lies in its fascinating interplay of sounds, texts, and images.

Years later and worlds apart, during my doctoral studies at Harvard I was a teaching assistant to James Kugel. In his large, wonderful class of nearly 1,000 undergraduate students, questions arose regarding the Orthodox stance on various biblical issues—from canon to text witnesses and hermeneutics. Then, I felt there was a need for an introduction to the Old Testament written from an Eastern Orthodox perspective. Later, during a conversation with Michael D. Coogan, the idea of writing a survey reached maturity—a survey aiming to underscore the specificity of Eastern Orthodox Church in approaching and integrating the Old Testament into her doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual tapestry. Historical surveys of ancient Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Bible are not new. What is new is a survey of Eastern Orthodox reception and interpretation of the Old Testament.

The term "Old Testament" in this book's title refers primarily to the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Jewish Bible, attested by fourth and fifth century Christian manuscripts. However, as will be seen throughout this work, the Eastern Orthodox Church has never closed the door to other text-witnesses, nor suppressed interpreters' efforts to dig into the unfamiliar text of the Hebrew Bible for key terms or reading variants.

While the notion of tradition is discussed amply in the first part of this book, a few remarks regarding the second part of the title, "Eastern Orthodox tradition," are warranted.

The term "orthodox" was used for the first time in the fifth century to distinguish authentic from heretical doctrine. In the sixth century, under the rule of the Emperor Justinian, Orthodox Christianity achieved its definitive character as the dominant religion of the Eastern Roman Empire. After the construction of Hagia Sophia (532–37 C.E.), Constantinople became the center of Chalcedonian Byzantine Orthodoxy. However, "Orthodox" as a term referring to the Eastern Orthodox Church was not employed until the ninth century.

Territorially, the Eastern Orthodox Church comprises the churches from the East that follow the Byzantine rite developed in Constantinople between the fourth and tenth centuries. These churches include the Greek-Byzantine Rite (Patriarchate of Constantinople, Church of Greece, Church

of Cyprus), Arabic Byzantine Rite (Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Sinai), Georgian-Byzantine Rite (Churches of the Caucasus Range, subsequently absorbed by the Russian Church and forced in the nineteenth and twentieth century to employ the Slavonic Liturgy), Slavonic-Byzantine Rite (Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian Churches), and Romanian-Byzantine Rite (Romanian Church). Nevertheless, due to this geographic, linguistic and ethnic variety, oversimplifications and generalizations are unavoidable.

Chronologically, the Eastern Orthodox tradition extends from early Christian "orthodoxy" to modern Orthodoxy. Well-defined tenets of Eastern Orthodoxy can be detected already in the early phases of "orthodoxy." The uniqueness of Eastern Orthodoxy stems from its blending of ancient and modern sources into a harmonious whole. Thus, John Chrysostom's homilies can be found side-by-side with Georges Florovsky's works in any Orthodox theological discourse. Still, Eastern Orthodoxy is not a mere linearity commencing with the apostolic phase, climaxing in the patristic, and continuing with the "postpatristic" period. Rather, it is best represented by a circle, reflecting church life, with boundaries flexible enough to accommodate further soundings, reflections, and working conclusions.

Given the holistic and all embracing character of the Eastern Orthodox ethos, this book cannot be a neutral survey of how the Eastern Orthodox dealt with the Scripture in the past, much less an entirely dispassionate analysis of various ways of interpretation. As an Orthodox theologian and biblical scholar, I am part of this unfolding Eastern Orthodox tradition. Therefore, my analysis of occurrences past and present within my own faith tradition informs my own inquiry into various issues pertaining to the appropriation and interpretation of the Old Testament.

This special emphasis on Eastern Orthodox tradition distinguishes my book from a recent volume, *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, edited by Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (Dumbarton Oaks, 2010). The latter work seeks to examine the interrelation between the Old Testament and Byzantium at societal, cultural, and political levels. Historically and culturally Byzantium put an indelible mark on the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, the more general designation "Byzantine" cannot be identified with the much more specific reality of "Eastern Orthodox tradition," which comprises the subject of the present text.

This book addresses Orthodox seminarians and educated lay readers in an effort to articulate the characteristics of Eastern Orthodox reception and interpretation of the Old Testament, while increasing awareness of

the importance of the Old Testament for their own tradition. It also fills a vacuum in scholarly literature dealing with the history of interpretation by showing to non-Orthodox readers the various ways in which Eastern Orthodoxy used the Old Testament throughout its history.

This dual audience and purpose constrains the present book to the status of a modest, initial research, while diminishing considerably its "objective" character, assuming that the notion of objectivity is applicable. For this reason, my work can merely scratch the surface of a profoundly fascinating topic. The study offers a concise yet thorough examination of the reception and interpretation of the Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox tradition. I do not offer a *vademecum* of this topic. Nor am I providing a perfect and errorless investigation. I would like my readers, however, to find in these pages a useful introduction to a topic that has never been broached as thoroughly.

The book is divided in two parts. Part I (Reception) deals with issues pertaining to the reception of the Old Testament by the early Christian and Eastern Orthodox Church. Chapter 1 (One Bible, Two Covenants) discusses the paradox that the Christian Bible hosts the "Scripture" of a different religion—that of Judaism. The unity in diversity of the Christian Bible is examined by means of the works of the church fathers. Chapter 2 (Text) emphasizes the flexible way of coping with biblical texts in Eastern Orthodoxy. While considering the Septuagint the default Bible of the Church, the Eastern Orthodox are also cognizant of the value of other text-witnesses such as the Hebrew text. Chapter 3 (Canon) underscores the peculiarity of the Eastern Orthodox Church with respect to the open-endedness of the biblical canon. Chapter 4 (Tradition) takes on a much debated topic—the relationship between Scripture and Tradition—while seeking to redeem the centrality of the former within the interpretive and operative context of the towering Tradition. Part II (Interpretation) offers the reader a rich repertoire of pertinent sources, from the literary to the visual and aural. Chapter 5 (Discursive) examines the discursive mode of interpretation—the patristic exegesis. Chapter 6 (Aural) handles the most important part of Tradition, the liturgy and the specific way to read and interpret the Old Testament—liturgical exegesis—under a wide variety of genres (e.g., scriptural lessons, psalmody, hymns, homilies, *synaxaria*). Chapter 7 (Visual) oversees the visual mode of scriptural interpretation, as reflected through church iconography (e.g., portable icons, mosaics, frescoes, manuscript illuminations).

This book has been a long time in the making.

A good portion of the writing of this book occurred during my sabbatical year 2009–2010, when I won concomitantly two fellowships: the Lilly Faculty Fellowship and the Fulbright Scholar Fellowship at the University of Athens in Greece. These fellowships provided me both with time to write and a sense of my project's importance. Special recognition is owed to the Association of Theological Schools and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which administer these fellowships, for their support.

I am in debt to the following colleagues who carefully read various drafts and offered substantive comments and suggestions: John Behr, Michael D. Coogan, Allan Emery, Christopher Frechette, Matthias Henze, Stefka Kancheva, Demetrios Katos, Jon D. Levenson, Maximos of Simonopetra, Carey C. Newman, Stephen Ryan, Theodore G. Stilianopoulos, and Olivier-Thomas Venard.

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To my dear wife Flora, and our beloved children, Daniel and Cristina, thank you for your love. To you I dedicate this book as a token of deep appreciation.

Glory to the long-suffering Bridegroom of the Church (*Nymphios tēs Ekklēsias*) who has always guided, strengthened, and surprised me with his unexpected and gratuitous gifts.

Eugen J. Pentiuc — Brookline, Massachusetts
April 5, 2013
The Great Lent

Abbreviations

General

b.	born
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
C.E.	Common Era
ca.	circa
cf.	*confer*, compare
d.	died
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by
etc.	et cetera, and the rest
f.	folio
f(f).	and the following one(s)
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
Ibid.	Ibidem
i.e.	*id est*, that is
inter alia	among others
l(l)	line(s)
LXX	Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament)
ms(s).	manuscript(s)
MT	Masoretic Text
NF	Neue Folge (new series)
n(n).	note(s)
no.	number

NT	New Testament
OG	Old Greek (the Greek Old Testament)
OL	Old Latin (the Latin Old Testament)
OT	Old Testament
par.	parallel
r	recto
S	Peshitta (the Syriac Old Testament)
Sam.	Samaritan Pentateuch
sic	*sicut*, thus, just as
Tg(s).	Targum(s)
UBS	United Bible Societies
v	verso
V	Vulgate
v(v).	verse(s).
vol(s).	volume(s).
vs.	versus

Primary Sources

Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1–2 Sam	1–2 Samuel
1–2 Kgdms	1–2 Kingdoms (LXX)
1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings
3–4 Kgdms	3–4 Kingdoms (LXX)
1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra

Neh	Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Job	Job
Ps / Pss	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom	Romans
1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians

Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1–2 Thess	1–2 Thessalonians
1–2 Tim	1–2 Timothy
Titus	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
1–2–3 John	1–2–3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation

Septuagint Additions

Bar	Baruch
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah
Bel	Bel and the Dragon
Sg Three	Song of the Three Young Men
Sus	Susanna
1–2 Esd	1–2 Esdras
Add Esth	Additions to Esther
Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah
Jdt	Judith
1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees
3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees
Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Ps 151	Psalm 151
Sir	Sirach / Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Dead Sea Scrolls

CD	Damascus Document
Q	Qumran
P	Pesher (commentary)
1QpHab	Commentary on Habakkuk
4QpPsalms	Commentary on Psalms
1QIsa^{b}	Isaiah^{b}
4QJer$^{a, b, d}$	Jeremiah$^{a, b, d}$
8ḤevXIIgr	Naḥal Ḥever (Greek translation of the Minor Prophets)

Mishnah, Talmud, and Related Literature

b.	*Talmud Bavli* (Babylonian Talmud)
m.	*Mishnah* (Mishnah)
t.	*Tosefta*
y.	*Talmud Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud)
Meg.	*Megillah*
Nid.	*Niddah*
Pesah.	*Pesahim*
Qidd.	*Qiddushin*
Sanh.	*Sanhedrin*
Shabb.	*Shabbat*
Sof.	*Soferim*
Sot.	*Sotah*
Yad.	*Yadayim*

Secondary Sources

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ACR	*Australasian Catholic Record*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907

BH(K)	*Biblia Hebraica*, ed. R. Kittel
BHQ	*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BIOSCS	*Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
HALOT	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–99
HTR	*Harvard Theological Revue*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUBP	*The Hebrew University Bible Project*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Edited by K. Crim. Nashville, 1976
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KJV	King James Version of the English Bible
NETS	*A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007
NPNF[1]	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1
NPNF[2]	*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Edited by Alexander P. Kazdhan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991

OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–86
PL	Patrologia latina [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–64
RB	*Revue biblique*
RHPhR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*
RQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
SVTQ	*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TEH	*Theologische Existenz Heute*
TLG	*Thesaurus linguae graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*. Edited by L. Berkowitz and K. A. Squitier. Oxford, 1990
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition

PART I

Reception

1

One Bible, Two Covenants

The Law and the Prophets, the Church unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith.

TERTULLIAN, The Prescription Against Heretics 36

An Ancient Icon and Its Ageless Message

The Face with Two Looks

The pilgrim stepping into St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai has the privilege of admiring one of the oldest portable icons that outlived the fury of the iconoclasm of the eighth through ninth centuries. The icon, rendered in encaustic on panel, is known as *Christos Pantokrator*, "Christ Almighty," or simply "The Sinai Christ" (Fig. 1.1). Throughout the centuries, this icon has become the model for all the Pantocrator representations situated in the central domes or on the ceilings over the nave in Eastern Orthodox churches. Unlike the later iconic epigones executed in fresco, mosaic, or other techniques, often depicting a threatening and impassable Lord, however, the Sinai icon represents a quite peculiar Jesus, a Jesus with two different looks: a tolerant human being yet an implacable judge. The right side of his face shows a mild countenance, whereas the left displays a harsher visage, evidenced by a dilated pupil. And the effect of these two different looks is intensified by the position of the hands: while the right hand blesses the viewer, the left clasps tightly a bejeweled book, cross sealed and covered in leather.

Although the artist's original intent will probably never be recovered,[1] the basic meaning of this icon dating from the glorious reign of Justinian

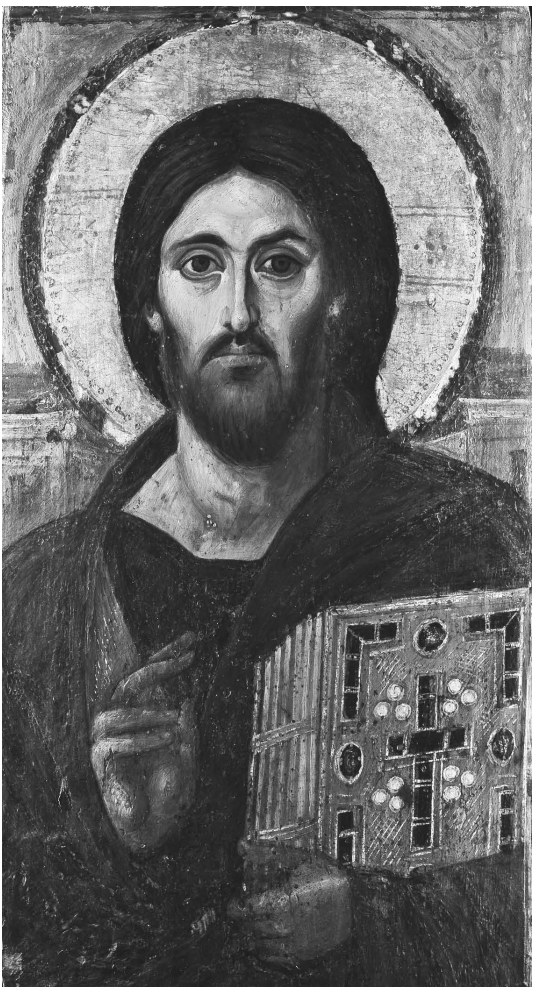

FIGURE 1.1 Christ Pantokrator, portable icon, Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai.
(Photo: By permission of St. Catherine Monastery.)

(527–65 C.E.) can be decoded. Jesus is at once a compassionate friend and a stern judge, ready both to bless and to convict. The Sinai Jesus is, to quote Irenaeus (115–202 C.E.), "the Savior of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged" (*Against Heresies*, 3.4.2).[2]

Apparently, the anonymous iconographer who "wrote" the Sinai portrait had grappled with the same question as the modern man, believer or nonbeliever: Who is Jesus? Was he a first-century Galilean rabbi, who met his untimely fate at the hands of cruel Roman authority in Jerusalem? An

itinerant apocalyptic prophet, in perpetual conflict with Jewish authority? An enigmatic Jewish sage, given to offering contradictory wisdom sayings? A former Pharisee who taught and lived his faith in a more tolerant and inclusive way than most of his fellow party members? Or is he the incarnate Lord, the touchable "icon" of the untouchable and holy Lord (Yahweh / *Kyrios*), the Son of God made flesh and dwelling among men?

To put the matter somewhat differently: Was he the Jesus of the New Testament as recorded by the Gospels? If so, which Gospel? Was he the Jesus of the Pauline epistles? Was he the Jesus of a particular Christian tradition? Or was he the one whom biblical scholars seek to "liberate" from the Church's century-long dogmatic monopoly?

The Orthodox Church affirms that her Jesus is the same one spoken of by the Scriptures and known within the living medium of church tradition. The Sinai icon is just one small example of this living tradition. As we will see, this tradition is seasoned with liturgical flavors and choreographed by fathers, councils, and the piety of laypeople. For the Orthodox, Jesus cannot be fragmented—at the very least, a fragmented Jesus has nothing to do with the Jesus known in the church worship. *The* Jesus of Orthodox tradition is a person at once intricate and simple. A life cannot be simplified or reduced to one single facet. Yet too intricate a picture, made of too many facets, would again lead to fragmentation. The Orthodox vision embodies a balanced way between simplicity and intricacy in presenting Jesus's profile.

Just as the Sinai icon bespeaks both Jesus's compassionate humbleness and his forensic lordship, so too the most obvious element of the apostolic preaching (*kērygma*) is the fascinating mixture of weakness and strength in Jesus's persona. This alloy links all the four canonical Gospels in full circle, despite dissimilarities among them. And again, it is about the face with two looks, the hands at once blessing and wielding a cross-sealed book.

Here is Paul speaking of the *kenosis,* or "self-emptying," of the Logos become flesh, in which glory and humility are seen to coexist:

> Though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so

> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
>
> Phil 2:6–11

It is the same mixture of high dignity or power and weakness as in the Sinai icon. Jesus is the high priest who is capable of feeling human weaknesses:

> Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
>
> Heb 4:14–16

How can one depict this indescribable mix of compassion and rigor, which is glimpsed already in the first canonical Gospels? "By two different looks," replies quietly the anonymous "writer" of the Sinai icon.

Nowhere are these antinomies consisting of tensive aspects—weakness and power, humbleness and glory—better recorded than in the Fourth Gospel. Here, Jesus is able to master the natural phenomena (John 6:19) yet also sheds tears at Lazarus's tomb (John 11:35). In the words of Harold W. Attridge, "To reduce these tensive elements to indices of documentary development ignores their conceptual role. . . . The handling of the Son of Man sayings betrays a deliberate appropriation of traditions about Jesus, holding assertions about glory and suffering in an ironic tension that invites the reader or hearer of the gospel to contemplate the significance of the cross."[3]

The polarizing sayings surrounding the messianic title "Son of Man" have the same role as the face with two looks. They invite the reader to take a closer glimpse at Jesus before reducing him to either a mere human being or a strictly divine character. Like the beholder of the Sinai icon, the reader of the Gospels is invited to savor the mysterious aura of the "Son of Man" and, in doing so, to rediscover the sense of wonder a child experiences at the hearing of a fairy tale.

It is not surprising that, faced with this reality, the emerging Church was confronted from the onset with the temptation of "another Jesus"

(2 Cor 11:4) than the one preached by the apostles. The most elusive figure of human history escapes the easy and audacious construals of the human mind. Our terminology is too weak, too narrow to describe the complexity or the irreducible simplicity of Jesus of Nazareth.

In Luke's telling of the story of the Transfiguration, we learn that as Jesus was praying, "the appearance of his face became different (*heteron*)" (Luke 9:29).[4] Perhaps the "different" face is a hint at Jesus's future destiny, the one willing to identify himself with the "least" of his "brothers" (cf. Matt 25:40). Yet what is even more interesting in the Transfiguration pericope are the words conveyed by the heavenly voice: "Listen to him" (Luke 9:35). Listening takes precedence over seeing in matters of faith (Rom 10:17). The "otherness" of Jesus proposed by the Transfiguration narrative becomes a matter of faith, rather than a simple experiment mediated by seeing.

In Eastern Orthodox tradition, this perpetual, ever-puzzling "otherness" of the Lord Jesus lives on in the liturgical setting, where a wealth of media involving all the senses echo a quite intricate profile of Jesus anchored simultaneously in past, present, and future. The Orthodox see Jesus in this holistic way, with special focus on personal and communal relationship with him. Modern distinctions between a Jesus of history, a Jesus of piety, and a Jesus of this or that distinct New Testament text are foreign to Eastern Orthodox tradition and, even today, strange to Orthodox ears.

The Sinai icon is an open-ended invitation to encounter this one Jesus, whose witness is perpetuated from written to colored words. It is a tacit beckoning to plumb the mystery, the bare outlines of which the fathers gathered at Chalcedon in 451 C.E. sought to trace in their fourfold formula: "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably (*asynchytos, atreptos, adiaretos, achoristos*)."

A Blessing Hand and a Cross-Sealed Book

But the Sinai icon is not only about Jesus's own mysterious profile, with its divine and human facets. It also shows a close relationship between Jesus and the Book.

If one takes another look, one notices that while Jesus's right hand is blessing, his left hand is holding a closed, cross-sealed book. Later Byzantine iconographers would open the book up and inscribe inside of it words

uttered by Jesus as recorded in the canonical Gospels. When opened, the inscribed verses identify the tome clearly as the gospel book. But in the Sinai icon, the book is closed.

Closed also is one's access to a definitive answer to a pressing, unavoidable question: Is it a gospel book or the entire Bible containing the two testaments? Probably the anonymous artist wanted the focus to fall on the cross marked on the cover, rather than on the book itself. Indeed, the cross functions as a central seal of the book. If one considers that the harsh look of Jesus's face is on the left side, then the cross-sealed book gripped in his left hand might connote the truth that Christ will judge according to the precepts found in the book. Or that he will judge those who resisted the book and its healing sign, the cross.

The blessing hand and the softer look of the side of Jesus's face above it tell us of his openness and willingness to be looked for, approached, and reached in a personal dialogue. The other hand, holding the closed book, speaks of the importance of Scripture in the life of those who would enter into this dialogue.

A blessing hand and a sealed book define Christianity both as religion of the book[5] and religion of a person, centered on a living ongoing dialogue between Jesus and his followers: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). This comes in stark contrast with the earlier cry of 2 Baruch 85:3: "We have left our land, and Zion has been taken away from us, and we have nothing now apart from the Mighty One and his Law."[6]

Christianity has always understood itself as a faith and way of life based on one person's life and sacrifice—that of Christ, and on written records containing the Word of God handed over by prophets and apostles—the books of Old and New Testaments. There is no Scripture without Christ as there is no Christ without Scripture; and this is true for all the historical phases of Christianity. Knowledge of Christ's person and knowledge of the Scriptures are interdependent elements that make up the very fabric of Christian faith.[7]

The raising of the right hand in blessing is a priestly, liturgical gesture, while the other hand is shown gripping tightly the cross-sealed book as if to invite and direct attention toward the precious trove. By this double gesture, the figure with the mysterious two looks suggests that one may approach him in two complementary ways. One may approach him by opening the book and reading its words—never overlooking the cross and the passion signified by it, which is the seal of the entire book, its unifying

element. And one may approach him through the hand raised in priestly blessing: through personal dialogue commenced and fostered within the liturgical setting of communal worship. Two ways of discovering Christ: the written word and the liturgical worship.

The same interplay between the written word and live, personal communication is attested further by the Orthodox Divine Liturgy itself, with its two main parts: the "liturgy of the Word" and the "liturgy of the Eucharist." Like the two hands of the Sinai icon, the two parts of the Divine Liturgy are inseparable. Word and worship are two complementary, intertwining ways toward discovering and rediscovering Christ, and deciphering the enigmatic "code" of his face with its two looks. Worship without word may end up into unwanted magical practices or hollow ritualism. Yet word without worship risks becoming a bookish exercise, with no roots or fruit in reality past or present. It may even turn Christ into a lifeless object of research, disfiguring an irreducible persona into scattered little pieces of an unfinished puzzle.

The scriptural word is able to transform a redundant worship exercise into a unique dialogue, a personal relation that has its starting point in the very self-communication of God. In its turn, worship, especially Eucharistic worship, may vivify the scriptural words, creating a transparent medium between the reader and the reality that lies behind the text: the incarnate Word of God himself.

It is the strong conviction of this author, made clear throughout this work, that Eastern Orthodox tradition has always promoted and embodied, since apostolic times, the understanding that Scripture may be interpreted and transmitted not only by the written or uttered word, but also through various channels of communal worship (i.e., aural, visual, ascetic), often labeled generically as Holy Tradition. The Sinai icon directs one's attention to two channels of testimony regarding Jesus's person: the book sealed with the cross, and the liturgy in its various expressions of ritual, hymn, and icon. The latter medium of witness will be dealt with in the second part of this work. For now, we dwell on the book and its two components, the New and the Old Testaments.

The artist who painted the Sinai icon gives no clue as to the identity of the book Jesus holds in his left hand. At first sight, it is a hefty codex marked with a cross, the arms of which are flanked by four tiny tri-stellar constellations. Apparently, it represents the Christian Bible enclosing the Old and New Testaments.[8] The cross inscribed on the cover may be read as a symbol or a unifying element which keeps the two testaments

together in one book. Jon D. Levenson rightly notices that "the Christian Bible includes within it a book of an alien religion."[9] In what sense, then, does the cross bring together the two books and their two covenants into one? What kind of unity is this? In what follows, we will discuss how the church authorities throughout the centuries have attempted to answer this question regarding the two parts of the Christian Bible and their interrelationship.

The Emergence of the Christian Writings
The Gospel of Salvation

The goal of this section is not to reiterate what may already be found in present scholarly works on the New Testament.[10] Thus, I will not enter here into technical discussions about the various "Christianities" (i.e., Gentilic, Jewish, Johannine) that may have informed the text of the New Testament, or the diverse literary genres that contributed to the differences so obvious between Matthew, Luke, Mark on the one hand, and John on the other, or the so-called synoptic problem and the proposed Q-source. Instead, the aim here is to take a closer look at the way in which ancient church authorities evaluated the emergence of the four canonical Gospels and their status as "Scripture." What were the central events that determined the early Christian communities to have the apostolic witness put into writing? And how did the early Church understand the differences between the resultant writings? Most importantly, how did the Church in these early centuries understand the relationship between these Gospels and the older Jewish Scriptures?

The defining aspects of Jesus's person were initially proclaimed through the apostolic kērygma: "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life . . . we declare (*apangelomen*) to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1, 3). This was the eyewitness testimony of the first generation of Jesus's followers. But what triggered this oral proclamation (kērygma) to be put in writing? First, it was the fact and the testimony of Jesus's "rising up" from the dead.

For Jesus's first followers this very fact and testimony of resurrection functioned as a bridge between the "historical Jesus" and the metahistorical, ever present and eschatological Lord (*Kyrios*). Anyone who confesses

him as Lord and believes that God resurrected him can enter into a living dialogue with him (Rom 10:9). The "good news" (*euangelion*) that Jesus somehow outlived, or returned to life after a violent death placed everything, his former deeds and sayings, into a new interpretive matrix. His persona was now viewed outside the small locative and temporal arena, the first century Palestine, where his short mission unfolded. Jesus was regarded as *ho Kyrios* "*the* Lord," the untouchable, as one may conclude from the postresurrectional account of his encounter with Mary Magdalene early Sunday morning in the tomb's garden (John 20:11–18).

Taking a look at Jesus's life and ministry one may notice that words and deeds denoting the two aspects of his complex personality, divine and human, are wrapped in the mystery of the central act and testimony of his coming back to life (in Greek *anastasis,* "rising up"). The uniqueness of this act and testimony, unwelcome both to Greeks who thought it useless (Acts 17:31–32) and to Jews who were awaiting an end time resurrection (Dan 12:1–4), along with chains of testimonies focusing on his divinity and humble human condition, threw every eyewitness to Jesus into one of two groups: either enthusiastic followers, or cautious Jewish believers unable to accept so many apparent doctrinal detours from their fathers' faith.

The resurrection—as published abroad through the passionate testimonials of those who claimed they encountered the risen Jesus (over five hundred individuals, according to Paul, 1 Cor 15:6, saw Jesus "at once" [*ephapax*])—became the interpretive prism through which Jesus's unique profile came to be reevaluated. Why did Jesus's passion and death have so much influence on his followers when crucifixions were done at that time almost every day? Only because this death was not the last word but was rather followed by his return to life. Neither his teachings, nor his miracles, but rather his passion, death, and resurrection left the central undeniable mark on generations of Christian confession. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, for instance, is entirely silent on Jesus's teachings and miracles. Its focus is rather on the divinity and humanity (and mortality) of Jesus, in direct connection to his glorious past, present, and future endeavors: his resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right of God the Father, coming again to judge the living and dead, and eternally reigning over his kingdom. The message of Jesus's resurrection was so unexpected, so unique, that the first generation of believers wanted it recorded. The Gospels reflect the first impact the event of Jesus's "rising up" from the dead had on the eyewitnesses. They are not sensu stricto biographies

or recordings of Jesus's sayings and actions but rather briefings on the experience of the eyewitnesses to Jesus's resurrection. It is this unfathomable experience of the resurrection that is the main reason for the diversity encountered in the four gospel narratives, as well as their appearance in writings soon to be considered as having the authority of new Scriptures.

Here is Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, pointing to the two capital events that triggered the proclamation (kērygma) of the gospel and its writing down along with its inclusion within a larger corpus of the "Scriptures":

> We have learned of the plan of our salvation from none others than those through whom the gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed perfect knowledge, as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [his gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the gospel of God.
>
> *Against Heresies* 3.1.1–2[11]

Irenaeus speaks of two phases in the transmission of the gospel: the public proclamation and the later inscripturation. The two events that put everything in motion (the apostolic mission and the writing down of new Scriptures) were Jesus's resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at the feast of Pentecost. Those whom Irenaeus mentions as "boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles" are none other than the Gnostics, against whom the bishop of Lyons adduces the argument of the apostles' investiture with "power from on high." It is because of this gift of the Holy Spirit that the apostles, and not the Gnostics, are the carriers of the "perfect knowledge" and the heralds of the "plan of salvation."

Almost a half century earlier, Clement, the third bishop of Rome (95–97 C.E.), underscored the same basic understanding when he noted that the apostles "being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus

Christ and full of faith in the Word of God . . . went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God was about to come" (*1 Clement* 42.3).[12] The use of the "apostolic writings" by Clement of Rome underlines the fact that these writings were already well organized as such into a whole as early as the end of the first century C.E.

In fact, it was Paul who first linked together the faith and apostolic preaching of Christ's resurrection when he stated quite emphatically, "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain" (1 Cor 15:14). The resurrection of Jesus confers on the gospel witness its unity of essence despite all variations in its "distribution," as Tertullian (160–225 C.E.) well underlines:

> A distribution of office, not a diversity of gospel, so that they should severally preach not a different gospel, but (the same), to different persons, Peter to the circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles. Forasmuch, then, as Peter was rebuked because, after he had lived with the Gentiles, he proceeded to separate himself from their company out of respect for persons, the fault surely was one of conversation, not of preaching. For it does not appear from this, that any other God than the Creator, or any other Christ than (the son) of Mary, or any other hope than the resurrection, was (by him) announced.
>
> *The Prescription Against Heretics 23*[13]

While a single gospel (euangelion) as apostolic message (kērygma) centered on Jesus's "rising up," its fourfold variety of distribution is conditioned mainly by the diversity of authors who put that unique "gospel of salvation" in writing.[14] Irenaeus remarks:

> Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.
>
> *Against Heresies 3.1.1*[15]

Speaking of theological differences between the four Gospels, Irenaeus suggests that the four living creatures around God's celestial throne seen by John (Rev 4:6–7) may hint at the four gospel writers and their unique testimonies:

> He who was manifested to men, has given us the gospel under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit. . . . "The first living creature was like a lion," [Rev 4:7] symbolizing his effectual working, his leadership, and royal power; the second [living creature] was like a calf, signifying [his] sacrificial and sacerdotal order; but "the third had, as it were, the face as of a man," an evident description of his advent as a human being; "the fourth was like a flying eagle," pointing out the gift of the Spirit hovering with his wings over the Church.
>
> *Against Heresies 3.11.8*[16]

This same interpretation is found later in the third-century Latin context in the work of Victorinus, bishop of Petau,[17] and would be reflected for centuries not only in Western Christian art, but also in the Byzantine iconography, where each evangelist appears along with his zoological symbol (Matthew: man; Mark: lion; Luke: calf; John: eagle).

The four canonical Gospels have always been perceived as apostolic in origin, as intimated by the term "memorials" (Greek: *hypomnēmata*; Latin: *acta*) of the apostles found in the mid-fourth-century writing *Acta Pilati* (or, as it was called in the medieval period, *Gospel of Nicodemus*). Here is a fragment from this work, supposedly written by one of Pilate's bodyguards:

> I, Ananias, of the propraetor's bodyguard, being learned in the Law, knowing our Lord Jesus Christ from the Holy Scriptures, coming to him by faith, and counted worthy of the holy baptism, searching also the memorials written at that time of what was done in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Jews had laid up in the time of Pontius Pilate, found these memorials written in Hebrew, and by the favor of God have translated them into Greek for the information of all who call upon the name of our Master Jesus Christ, in the seventeenth year of the reign of our Lord Flavius Theodosius, and the sixth of Flavius Valentinianus, in the ninth indiction.
>
> *Gospel of Nicodemus*: *Part I. The Acts of Pilate. Prologue*[18]

As for the *Sitz im Leben* of these apostolic "memorials," one may adduce the testimony of Justin (100–165 C.E.) that they were read at the weekly gatherings on Sunday (*First Apology* 67). It was in all likelihood this liturgical usage that contributed to the early designation of these apostolic memorials as "Scripture," on analogy with the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings read in the Jewish assembly of worship. Thus, Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4.39) calls the Gospels "Scripture," underscoring that these writings are part of Holy Scripture, and Hegesippus speaks expansively of "the Scripture of the Gospels" (*Commentaries on the Acts of the Church* 1).[19]

The term "Scripture" (*graphē*) in 2 Tim 3:16 designates most likely the Jewish Bible or Old Testament alone. Obviously, "the old covenant" (*tēs palaias diathēkēs*) in 2 Cor 3:14 refers to the first covenant (i.e., the Old Testament). The expression "old covenant" is a calque after the "new covenant" mentioned already in Jer 31:31–34 (MT: *bərît ḥădāšāh*; LXX: *diathēkē kainē*). At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of the blood of the "new covenant" (Matt 26:28: *kainēs diathēkēs*; cf. Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). In 2 Cor 3:6, Paul declares himself a minister of the new covenant. Speaking of Jesus as the "mediator" (*mesitēs*) of the same new covenant, the author of Heb 9:15 introduces the phrase "first covenant" (*prōtē diathēkē*). In the New Testament the phrase "old covenant," which appears only one time (2 Cor 3:14), refers to the reading of the Torah. In contrast, the phrase "new covenant" in the New Testament designates exclusively the religious institution of covenant, not a collection of books; for the latter, the New Testament uses the term "Scripture." The term "covenant" in Greek connotes the idea of communication and bilateralism (as suggested by the particle *dia,* "among, through," in *diathēkē*).

During the late second century, in a letter to a fellow Christian by the name of Onesimus, Melito of Sardis (second century C.E.) calls the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) "the old books" (*palaiōn bibliōn*) or "the books of the old covenant" (*ta tēs palaias diathēkēs biblia*).[20] Almost at the same time, Clement of Alexandria (d. 215 C.E.) uses the phrase *palaia diathēkē,* quoting Prov 19:17 (*Stromata* 3.6.54).[21] In some contrast, for Tertullian, the Scriptures are sources or documents of argument (i.e., evidential documents), hence his nomenclature "old and new document" (*vetus et novum instrumentum*) or "old and new testament" (*vetus et novum testamentum*).[22] Similarly, the Greek term *diathēkē,* "covenant," was rendered by Jerome (347–419 C.E.) in his Vulgate with the Latin term *testamentum*, "will, legal document," following Tertullian's alternate usage of *testamentum* and

instrumentum. Due to the immense popularity of the Vulgate throughout the Middle Ages, this term *testamentum* influenced the translations in vernacular languages. For instance, John Wiclif (1382) renders the Greek term *diathēkē* with the English "testament." The more popular term "testament," with its legal flavoring, came to designate either of the two parts of the Christian Bible.

However, this legal flavoring fails to connote the communicative or dialogical aspect of the Greek *diathēkē*, "covenant," and instead shifts the emphasis from an initial fluid religious institution to a frozen written document. As noted, it was probably due to their liturgical usage that the apostolic writings, that later came to make up the New Testament, were first honored as "Scripture." As Frances M. Young writes, "The earthly life of Jesus was recalled in the context of cultic rites that assumed his divinity. Eventually, though probably beyond our period, the gospel books would be processed with incense in the same kind of way as a pagan idol, and with a similar cultic function, namely, to make the divine present to the worshipper."[23] Much later, the Seventh Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 787 C.E. would confirm this long-standing Christian reverence for the New Testament writings in its teaching that the gospel book was to be venerated equally with the icons, inasmuch as the Gospels constitute together a fourfold verbal icon of Christ. From the outset, Eastern Orthodox tradition has seen in the liturgy a powerful means to link the present, past, and future, and Jesus with his disciples together. The gospel book represents Christ's person, and is thus censed and venerated with all the pomp and reverence befitting a divine figure. The writing down of the apostles' "memorials" did not diminish the initial "astonishment" which they themselves experienced: the liturgy helped in keeping this astonishment always fresh and alive.

Christian Appropriation of the Jewish Scriptures

From the very beginning, the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) was the only Bible of the early Christians and its authority was entirely assumed, with special emphasis on prophetic dimension of the Old Testament pointing to Christ, Spirit, and community.

There have been three basic ways of looking at the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible in the history of Christianity.

First, the early Church, or what we may call the mainstream "orthodox" or "catholic" segment, viewed the Scriptures as "proof-texts" able to

demonstrate the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Second, some heterodox Christian and non-Christian groups rejected (e.g., Marcionites, Manichaeans) or underestimated (e.g., Gnostics) the entire Jewish Bible as having nothing to do with the gospel. Third, there were Jewish Christians known as "Judaizers" who overestimated the value of the first testament to the point of insisting on the observance of specifically Jewish rituals and practices for all Christians.

As we shall see, these differences regarding attitude to the Scriptures of Israel were from the earliest period a key criterion in distinguishing orthodoxy from heresy. In what follows, I will exemplify these three basic attitudes toward the Old Testament using the firsthand testimonies of their representative figures.

Since her very beginning, the catholic or orthodox Church appropriated the Jewish Scriptures, such that gradually, between 150 and 250 C.E., it became self-consciously the Church of the two testaments, old and new. This process of appropriation was a conscious[24] move of the first Christians toward embracing their religious roots in Israel. At the center of this embrace was Jesus, whose Jewishness was at this point fully acknowledged. In addition to the continued use of the Old Testament for moral instruction, as exemplified in the *Didache,* early Christians appropriated the Jewish Scriptures in order to interpret and articulate their Christian faith on three crucial points: first, in the area of Christology, as scriptural evidence supporting Jesus's messiahship and divinity; second, as a validating factor for the emerging Christian Scriptures (Gospels, apostolic epistles); and third, as evidence for the ancestry and authority of Christian doctrine.

In the third century, Origen (184–253 C.E.) mentions one of the hermeneutical maneuvers used by Christian interpreters in his time: "It is our practice, indeed, to make use of the words of the prophets, who demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ predicted by them, and who show from the prophetic writings the events in the Gospels regarding Jesus have been fulfilled" (*Against Celsus* 6:35).[25] The Old Testament, and especially its prophetic portions, was employed by Christians to prove that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) prophesied in Israel. Hence, one of the main reasons why the early Church preserved the Old Testament in their Bible was that it contained "proof-texts" in support of Jesus's messiahship.

The practice Origen speaks of is as old as Jesus's ministry. One may think of that famous conversation the risen Lord had with his two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Trying to downplay the puzzlement of

his disciples triggered by the recent events in Jerusalem, the risen Lord brings forth the prophetic testimony of the ancient Scriptures: "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled' " (Luke 24:44). This was also the practice of the eyewitnesses who proclaimed the gospel of salvation: first, viva voce, then, in writing. Indeed, the entire New Testament is replete with Old Testament citations, having as their main purpose to "prove" Jesus's messiahship.[26]

A useful touchstone in illustrating the particular nature of this subsidiary function of the Old Testament to support or demonstrate (*apodeiknymi*) the veracity of the gospel is underscored by a quite interesting term found in Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (50–117 C.E.). This immediate successor of Evodius of Antioch calls the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible "the archives" (*ta archaia*)—a term close to Tertullian's *instrumentum* in its demonstrative aspect. Ignatius was asked to produce evidence from the "archives" regarding his claims; his answer was Jesus's cross, death, and resurrection are the best "archives." In other words, Jesus embodies the Scriptures of the Jewish Bible in his own life. Here is Ignatius's argument:

> I was doing my part, therefore, as a man set on unity. But God does not dwell where there is division and anger. The Lord, however, forgives all who repent, if in repenting they return to the unity of God and the council of the bishop. I believe in the grace of Jesus Christ, who will free you from every bond. Moreover, I urge you to do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness, but in accordance with the teaching of Christ. For I heard some people say, "If I do not find it in the archives (*ta archaia*), I do not believe it in the gospel." And when I said to them, "It is written," they answered me, "That is precisely the question." But for me, the archives are Jesus Christ, the sacrosanct archives (*ta athikta archaia*) are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be justified. . . . But the gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection. For the beloved prophets preached in anticipation of him [1 Pet 1:10–12], but the gospel is the imperishable finished work. All these things together are good, if you believe with love.
>
> *Letter to Philadelphians 8.1–2, 9.2*[27]

As Frances M. Young notices, Ignatius's phrase, *ta athikta archaia*—the sacrosanct or, indeed, "untouchable" archives or records—contains "a remarkable reminiscence of the Rabbinic definition of sacred books as those which 'defile the hands'," demonstrating "that the gospel of Jesus Christ, not apparently a written gospel but what people have called the 'kerygma', has become equivalent to sacred books, within which, in any case, whatever is to be believed is found written."[28] Yet if Ignatius's main "archives" are the redemptive works of Jesus himself, nevertheless they are such on analogy with the Jewish Scriptures, and the early Church gave close attention to these Scriptures for support in interpreting and confirming those works as truly messianic.

The most important hermeneutical consequence of this missionary maneuver of utilizing the Old Testament as the source of "proof texts" for Jesus's messiahship was the predominant Christocentric typological interpretation of the Jewish Bible. It was this spiritual interpretation that enabled the ancient Scriptures of Israel to retain their status and veneration as Scripture in the Church, in spite of all the Marcionite and neo-Marcionite currents in ancient and modern times.

A second use of the ancient Scriptures of Israel by the early Church was to support the newly emerging Christian Scriptures—primarily, the Gospels and epistles. The emergence of the Gospels—the new Scriptures—determined the early Church to search for a matrix for the new offspring. The Jewish Bible was identified as the appropriate matrix of the emerging Gospels. The ethnic and religious identity between Jesus and his spiritual ancestors, prophets and sages, was the main reason for this scriptural appropriation for validation purposes.[29] By appropriating the ancient Scriptures with no interventions and modifications, the early Church meant to promote a sort of "continuum" understanding of the covenants.

Paul speaks of "covenants" (*diathēkai*) in Romans 9:4. The plural noun could refer to several covenants mentioned in the Old Testament: for instance, with Noah and his descendants (Gen 9:8–17); with Israel on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:5), at Moab (Deut 29:1), at Mount Ebal and Mount Garizim (Josh 8:30–35); with David (2 Sam 23:5), with Josiah (2 Kgs 23:3), and with Nehemiah (Neh 9–10), as well as the "new covenant" announced in Jer 31:31–34. As a distinctive feature of the Christian Church, associated especially with the new covenantal sign of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:25), the "new covenant" stands in some contrast with the "old" (Gal 4:24–26). And yet, according to Paul, *all* these covenants, including the "new covenant,"