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COVENANT AND IDENTITY FORMATION
IN THE SECOND CENTURY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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by
Zachary Thomas Hedges
December 2023

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COVENANT AND IDENTITY FORMATION

IN THE SECOND CENTURY

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For Rachel, my covenant partner

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acts Pet.	Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
A.J.	*Antiquitates judaicae*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Ceveland Coxe, and Allan Menzies. 9 vols. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885–1897
Ap. John	Apocryphon of John
Apoc. Adam	Apocalypse of Adam
Apoc. Pet	Apocalypse of Peter
Apol.	Aristides of Athens, *Apologia*
1 Apol.	*First Apology*
2 Apol.	*Second Apology*
Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas
Barnard	Justin Martyr. *The First and Second Apologies*. Translated by Leslie William Barnard. Ancient Christian Writers 56. New York: Paulist, 1997
Behr	Irenaeus of Lyons. *On the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics 17. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bindley	Tertullian of Carthage. *De praescriptione haereticorum*. Translated by T. H. Bindley. London: SPCK, 1914
B.J.	*Bellum judaicum*

Butterworth	Clement of Alexandria. *Clement of Alexandria*. Translated by G. W. Butterworth. Loeb Classical Library 92. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
Catech.	Augustine of Hippo, *De catechizandis rudibus*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
Cher.	Philo, *De cherubim*
Congr.	Philo, *De congress eruditionis gratia*
Det.	Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*
Dial.	*Dialogue with Trypho*
Diog.	*Epistle of Diognetus*
Dunn	Tertullian of Carthage. *Adversus Iudaeos*. In *Tertullian*, translated by Geoffrey D. Dunn. Early Church Fathers. London: Routledge, 2004
ECF	Early Church Fathers
Elliott	Elliott, J. K., ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993
Epid.	Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epideixis* (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*)
Evans	Tertullian. *Adversus Marcionem*. Translated by Ernest Evans. 2 vols. Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972
Evans	Tertullian. *Adversus Praxean Liber: Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*. Translated by Ernest Evans. London: SPCK, 1948
Falls	Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Edited by Michael Slusser and Thomas P. Halton. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003
Ferguson	Clement of Alexandria. *Stromateis: Books One to Three*. Translated by John Ferguson. Fathers of the Church 85. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991
Gos. Eg.	Gospel of the Egyptians

Gos. Phil.	Gospel of Philip
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
Gos. Truth	Gospel of Truth
Haer.	Irenaeus of Lyons. *Adversus haereses* (*Against Heresies*)
Harris	Aristides. *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians: From a Syriac Ms. Preserved on Mount Sinai*. Translated by J. Rendel Harris and J. Armitage Robinson. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004
Her.	Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*
Hist. Eccl.	Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*
Holmes	Holmes, Michael W., ed. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
Hyp. Arch.	Hypostasis of the Archons
Iud.	Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Iudaeos*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTISup	Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplements
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KP	Kerygma Petri
LAB	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)
Leg.	Philo, *Legum allegoriae*
Legat.	Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*
LXX	The Septuagint
Marc.	Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Marcionem*
Mars	Marsanes

Martínez	*The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Translated by Florentino García Martínez. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1996
Meecham	*The Epistle to Diognetus: The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Translated by Henry G. Meecham. Theological Series 7. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949
Mut.	Philo, *De mutatione nominum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2
On Bap. A	On Baptism A
On Euch. A	On the Eucharist A
On Euch. B	On the Eucharist B
Orig. World	On the Origin of the World
Opif.	Philo, *De opificio mundi*
Paed.	Clement of Alexandria, *Paedogogus* (*Christ the Educator*). Translated by Simon P. Wood. Fathers of the Church 23. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954
Pan.	Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*
Paraph. Shem	Paraphrase of Shem
Pasch.	Melito of Sardis, *De pascha*
Praescr.	Tertullian of Carthage, *De praescriptione haereticorum*
Prax.	Tertullian of Carthage, *Adversus Praxean*
Prot.	Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*
Quaest. Hept.	Augustine of Hippo, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*
Robinson	Robinson, James M., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. 4th ed. Leiden: Brill, 1996
Sacr.	Philo, *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Somn.	Philo, *De somniis*

Spec.	Philo, *De specialibus legibus*
Steely	Adolf von Harnack. *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*. Translated by John E. Steely and Lyle D. Biersma. 1990. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007
Stewart	Melito of Sardis. *De pascha*. Translated by Alistair C. Stewart. 2nd ed. Popular Patristics 55. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016
Strom.	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromily. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
Testim. Truth	Testimony of Truth
Thom. Cont.	Book of Thomas the Contender
Treat. Res.	Treatise on the Resurrection
Treat. Seth	Second Treatise of the Great Seth
Trim. Prot.	Trimorphic Protennoia
Tri. Trac.	Tripartite Tractate
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
Unger	Irenaeus of Lyons. *Adversus haereses* (*Against Heresies*). Book 1, translated by Dominic J. Unger. Ancient Christian Writers 55. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1992; Book 2, translated by Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon. Ancient Christian Writers 64. New York: Paulist, 2012; Book 3, translated by Matthew C. Steenberg and Dominic J. Unger. Ancient Christian Writers 65. New York: Paulist, 2012
UNT	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
Vir.	Jerome of Stridon, *De viris illustribus*
Virg.	Tertullian of Carthage, *De virginibus velandis*
Whiston	*The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Translated by William Whiston. Upd. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1980

Williams	Epiphanius of Salamis. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*. Translated by Frank Williams. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1984–1987
Wood	Clement of Alexandria. *Stromateis*. Translated by Simon P. Wood. Fathers of the Church 23. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
Yonge	Philo. *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*. Translated by C. D. Yonge. Upd. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
Zost.	Zostrianos

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PREFACE

I have heard it said that the product of a doctoral degree program is not so much a project (the dissertation that it requires) as a person (the scholar that it forms). If this is true (and I think it is), then the most important contributing factors along the way are not so much the books read, seminars completed, and exams passed, but the experiences gained, lessons learned, and, above all, the relationships formed. It is to these relationships—without which this project would have been impossible and, worse, insignificant—that I dedicate this preface.

First, and most broadly, there are the many friends and colleagues (Winston Hottman, Perry Garrett, Jared Lee, Paul Carby, Wynnette Taylor, Mary Beth Latham, Hannah Downing, Jonathan Ahlgren, John Baker, Tom Holsteen, Roberto Carrera, Tyler McNally, and Rodrigo Sanchez, to name a few) whose paths I have been blessed to cross over the course of this program, who have supported, encouraged, and enriched me during my time at three different institutions (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Trinity College of Florida) during the course of this program. These friends (and many others) have brought laughter, insight, and profound meaning to this long and otherwise lonely journey.

Second, there are the many faculty (David Puckett, Madison Grace, Gregg Allison, John Wilsey) and administrators (Timothy Paul Jones, Greg Wills, Eric Bargerhuff, Steve Best) who have served me so well as faithful models of Christian character and service, and wise mentors in Christian scholarship. Deserving special mention here are the members of my committee: Tom Schreiner, whose combination of breadth of knowledge and gracious humility has astounded me since I first studied under

him in the MDiv program, and Michael Haykin, who introduced me to the church fathers and taught me the importance of close study of primary sources as my ThM supervisor. Beyond them all, I would need many more pages to begin to summarize my debt, gratitude, and immense appreciation to my supervisor, Stephen Presley, for his unparalleled investment in me these past five years, as a better teacher, mentor, role model, and friend than I could ever have dared to ask. Of course, responsibility for any long and over-complicated sentences that remain in this manuscript despite his valiant efforts is mine alone.

Third, and finally, there is my family, whose unwavering love and support not only made this journey possible in the first place, but sustained it to completion. This project belongs to them as much as it does to me, in keeping with the equal, and even greater, sacrifices that they have made to see it through. Above all, I thank my parents, Lois and Mitch Mascotti, in whom, more than anyone else, I have glimpsed something of the endless generosity of God himself, in these years and beyond.

And finally, of course, outshining them all, is my wife, Rachel, whose truly heroic patience, joy, and steadfast love have sustained me every step of the way without a word of complaint (well, maybe a justified one or two). She is God's greatest gift to me, and, as my own covenant partner, I dedicate this work to her.

Zachary T. Hedges

Trinity, Florida

December 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Early in the second century, the unknown writer of the Epistle of Barnabas contrasted the broken covenant between God and Israel with the "covenant of the beloved Jesus,"[1] later described as "the implanted gift of his covenant,"[2] which Christians, as a "new people,"[3] have received in becoming "heirs of the covenant of the Lord."[4] A few decades later, the apologist Justin Martyr spoke of a "new law" and "new covenant" declared in the biblical prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, which he directly identified with Jesus Christ in five instances.[5] In the middle of the century, Irenaeus of Lyons, who was described by his contemporaries as "zealous for the covenant of Christ,"[6] demonstrated this zeal by endeavoring to show "why several covenants were made with the human race" and "what the real nature of each of the covenants was,"[7] explaining, against Gnostic understandings, that there were four universal covenants which culminated in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ.[8] In his own polemical works, Tertullian of Carthage expounded upon the "new law" and "new covenant" that are

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[1] Barn. 4:8 (Holmes, 389). Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are taken from Holmes.

[2] Barn. 9:9 (Holmes, 409).

[3] Barn. 5:7 (Holmes, 393).

[4] Barn. 6:19 (Holmes, 401).

[5] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2, 43.1, 51.3, 118.3, 122.6.

[6] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.4.2 (*NPNF*[2]).

[7] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.10.3 (Unger, 50).

[8] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 56); cf. *Epid.* 90 (Behr).

“found to exist in Christ,”[9] through which Gentiles had “been made God’s people”[10] and accepted into “the holy place of his own covenant.”[11] Finally, at the close of the century, Clement of Alexandria depicted Christians as a “new people” on the basis of their membership in the “new covenant,”[12] which fulfilled the anticipations of both the Jewish law and the Greek philosophers by uniting them to Christ, the true Law and true Word (Logos).[13] Clearly, then, the concept of covenant—though articulated in a variety of ways—was a widespread and significant category of collective self-understanding for Christians in the second century.

The abundant references to Christians as members of a new covenant community (of which these are merely a sampling) should assume a renewed relevance in light of recent scholarly discussions of early Christian identity formation. In the past three decades, specialists in early Christian studies have become increasingly interested in exploring the ideas, strategies, and structures that enabled early Christians to develop a unique self-understanding within their broader Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts.[14] Building upon the insights of anthropologists and others who have described collective identity formation in terms of socially-constructed processes, they have applied these insights to the study of identity formation in the ancient world.[15] Focusing primarily on the ways in which early Christian individuals and communities cultivated and maintained their identities through the production and dissemination of texts, such studies have often

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[9] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 3.20 (Evans, 234).

[10] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.13 (Dunn, 75).

[11] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.13–14 (Evans, 321).

[12] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.4.19 (Wood, 20).

[13] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.26.169 (*ANF*).

[14] See “Summary of Research” below for a survey of the most significant recent contributions to this discussion.

[15] See, for example, Fredrik Barth, ed., introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1998).

provided necessary corrections to older historical works, which simply sought to reconstruct, in the Rankean sense, "the way things really were" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) on the basis of the data contained in, or deduced from, these texts. Karen L. King summarizes this new approach:

> One of the most promising new approaches is the analysis of identity formation . . . . It aims to understand the discursive strategies and processes by which early Christians developed notions of themselves as distinct from others within the Mediterranean world (and were recognized as such by others), including the multiple ways in which Christians produced various constructions of what it meant to be Christian. Methodologically, it is oriented toward the critical analysis of practices, such as producing texts; constructing shared history through memory, selective appropriation, negotiation, and invention of tradition; developing ritual performances such as baptism and meals; writing and selectively privileging certain theological forms (e.g. creeds) and canon; forming bodies and gender; making place and marking time; assigning nomenclature and establishing categories; defining "others"; and so on.[16]

What has been lacking in many such studies, however, is a conceptual framework that can (1) actually serve to unify and integrate the most significant components of identity formation, and (2) do so in a manner that aligns with the commitments—particularly, the theological priorities—expressed by the ancient writers themselves. This latter point is all the more crucial in light of a growing scholarly realization that analysis of identity formation must not only impose categories from the outside, but should also account for the "group identification" that members of groups ascribe to themselves.[17]

On the first count, while scholars have begun to analyze the "construction" of a Christian identity from certain perspectives, by uncovering the social dynamics, power plays, and rhetorical strategies that either lay hidden behind these texts or were intended

[16] Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?," in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74.

[17] See, for example, Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2008), 23. Applying the work of Barth to the study of ethnicity and related concepts, Jenkins asserts that "ethnicity depends on ascription from both sides of the boundary . . . group identification and social categorization. The first occurs inside and across the ethnic boundary, the second outside and across it."

to result from them,[18] they generally have not sought to present a holistic picture of Christian identity that includes all its most formative aspects. These aspects are classically delineated by the religious anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who identifies the three key elements of religious identity as (1) "world view," or metaphysical beliefs, (2) "rituals," or symbolic practices, and (3) "ethos," or ethical systems, noting the organic interdependence and interconnectedness of these three phenomena in the formation of distinct religious cultures.[19] As Geertz suggests, religion is "never merely metaphysics," nor is it "merely ethics either"—rather, these are dual aspects of an integrated view of reality which, in turn, finds visible and tangible expression in the sacred symbols, or rituals, that "relate an ontology and cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality" and weave them into an "ordered whole" that has ethical implications.[20] Thus, a conceptual framework for describing early Christian identity formation should be capable of integrating all three of these identity-forming dimensions.[21]

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[18] The key text advancing the discussion from the "essentialism" of Bauer to a focus on the "discursive" or "rhetorical" nature of "heresy" is Alain Le Boulluec, *La Notion d'Hérésie dans la Littérature Grecque, IIe-IIIe Siècles* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985), which has now been translated into English as Alain Le Boulluec, *The Notion of Heresy in Greek Literature in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. David Lincicum and Nicholas Moore, trans. A. K. M. Adam et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). A helpful overview of this development is provided by Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin, who note,

> Pierre Bordieu and Michael Foucault number among those theorists to whom scholars of late antique religions have turned for new perspectives on the historical categories of heresy and orthodoxy. As a result, the theological perspective on Christian Origins and the rise of orthodoxy, heavily influential until the 1970s, is being gradually displaced by sociological, textual, and historical approaches, marked by a strong emphasis on local diversity. . . . This shift is perhaps clear from the newly-developed vocabulary found in recent works, which includes terms such as "heresiological representations," "discourse," "insider/outsider," "identity formation," "ethnicity," "gender," "sexuality," "dissension," "exclusion," and "territoriality."

Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin, "Making Selves and Making Others: Identity and Late Antique Heresiologies," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 7.

[19] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 87–125; 126–41.

[20] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 127.

[21] This is also in contrast to some evangelical scholars who have too sharply divided these components. A recent statement of Michael J. Kruger is representative: "Unlike many other religions in the Greco-Roman world, Christianity was not centred so much on cult or ritual, but on a message. . . . What

On the second count, it must be asked whether it is possible to apply such insights to the study of early Christian identity formation in a way that preserves and supports their own expressed theological commitments. I argue below that this is indeed possible, through the recovery of an often-overlooked theological category of self-understanding to which they make frequent appeal—the notion of the Christian church as the people of the new covenant. Not only does this self-conceptualization inform and organically integrate the three aspects of religious identity that Geertz describes (belief, ritual, and ethical practice), but it does so by grounding them in a notion that is biblically-derived and theologically-developed—and then rhetorically deployed and socially applied—by early Christian writers themselves. That is to say, the use of the new covenant concept by Christian writers of the second century provides a vivid example of the way in which essential theological convictions profoundly shaped a collective Christian identity, as it was actually constructed in literary texts and refined in social contexts.[22]

Thesis

To put this argument more concretely: I suggest that over the course of the second century, leading Christian writers such as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage, and Clement of Alexandria

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made Christians distinctive was not so much what they did but what they *believed*." Michael J. Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 108. A major concern of this study insists that to dichotomize these elements in such a way is a modern inclination that does not reflect the assumptions of early Christians themselves.

[22] While scholars debate the extent to which various early Christian writings should be considered either historically descriptive or rhetorically descriptive of the communities they address, my approach in this study is to dismiss the dichotomy as a false one, recognizing that early Christian writers make reference to what they understand to be pre-existing realities and identities, while at the same time seeking to reinforce and further inscribe them through the textual worlds that they construct. It is in this multifaceted sense that I employ the term "identity formation" throughout. Where my use of this term differs from other terminology in the scholarship—such as Judith Lieu's preferred phrase "identity construction"—is in the insistence that identity-forming concepts have both their initial grounding and subsequent effects in the real world—that is, in a historically, socially, and theologically definable community—and are thus not *merely* the rhetorical or discursive inventions of the authors.

developed and sought to instill the biblical-theological motif of the new covenant in the three cultural domains where Christians were most intensely laboring to cultivate a distinct identity: (1) in their ongoing dialogue with Judaism, (2) in their engagement with secular Hellenistic thought of Greco-Roman culture, and (3) in their struggle with Christian heterodox movements and sects. Having derived the covenant concept itself, like their Jewish contemporaries, from their scriptural texts, Christian writers nevertheless reached distinctive interpretive conclusions about its nature and implications for collective Christian identity, as a result of their fundamentally christological doctrinal assumptions. In brief, because they defined and described the new covenant community in terms of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, they characterized the members of that covenantal community in terms of distinctly christological and pneumatological doctrinal, ritual, and ethical features.

Doctrinally, the covenant provided an overarching historical-theological metanarrative that described the origin of the community, as well as its final destination in an eschatological hope. Developments within this narrative were deeply intertwined with the community's *regula fidei*, which posited that one and the same God who created the cosmos had also revealed himself salvifically in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the covenant served as a structuring device for the redemptive economy as a whole, unfolding in a progressive sequence that culminated in the new covenant work of Christ and the reception of his Spirit by the new community that it ushered into being.

Ritually, the covenant found visible and tangible expression in the two liturgical ceremonies that distinguished members of the community from non-members, baptism and the Eucharist. In addition to their boundary-marking function, these two rituals of the new covenant displayed and reinforced key theological convictions from the theological metanarrative regarding the community's identity and character, such as its creation by the one true God, incorporation into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and reception and empowerment of the Holy Spirit as a new and unified people.

Ethically, the covenant provided a moral framework that reflected these theological commitments and ritual practices and flowed directly from them, guiding and shaping community members to live and act in ways that were consistent with the identity inscribed there. The ancient tradition of the Two Ways of life and death, tending toward eternal blessing or curse, were understood by Christians to correspond to covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking, respectively.[23] In the new covenant era these realities mapped over themes of liberty, the new law of Christ, and the Pauline dichotomy between law and Spirit, with recognition of the new phenomenon of the internalization of the covenant law through the Spirit's indwelling as its leading characteristic. The moral effects of this anthropological renovation extended also to relations within the community itself, in which the transcending of ethnic and social divisions in Christ became a powerful apologetic for this "third race" and "new people."

Though rooted in the scriptural world of the Old Testament texts inherited from Judaism, covenantal identity was, for second-century Christians, far from a mere literary or rhetorical construct. Rather, by organically unifying and integrating these three key dimensions of identity in doctrine, ritual, and ethical practice, it helped to support, clarify, and defend a self-understanding that members of these communities already possessed—solidifying it for their own formation internally while also introducing and advancing it for apologetic purposes externally.

Thus, by examining the use of the new covenant concept in the second century, I draw attention to a particular case in which essential theological convictions guided the interpretation of scriptural texts to yield an integrative identity-forming concept that was then refined and expressed across multiple cultural contexts during this most formative

[23] A helpful analysis of this motif, which will be engaged further below, is M. Jack Suggs, "The Christian Two Ways Tradition: Its Antiquity, Form, and Function," in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren*, ed. David Edward Aune (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 60–74.

period in the church's history.[24]

Methodology

Methodologically, the argument advances in four steps:

First, I situate the thesis within the landscape of the scholarly discourses to which it aims to make a contribution (chapter 1), including both the broader level of the discussion of early Christian identity formation, and the narrower level of the use of the covenant concept during the second century.

Second, I survey the historical and cultural contexts that form the backdrop for the emergence and usage of the covenant concept among second-century Christians, by examining the use, lack of use, or misuse (from the perspective of orthodox writers) of this concept and related ideas within Judaism (chapter 2) and Greco-Roman culture and Christian heterodox movements (chapter 3), so that orthodox Christian usages may be compared and contrasted.

Third, I analyze the use and development of the covenant concept by orthodox writers of the second century in each of these three cultural domains (chapters 4–6), focusing on primary sources that treat the covenant theme extensively and represent geographically-distributed streams of Christian thought, such as the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and Tertullian of Carthage's *Against the Jews* in relation to Judaism (chapter 4); Justin's *Apologies*, Aristides of Athens's *Apology*, and Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks* in relation to Greco-Roman culture (chapter 5); and Irenaeus of Lyons's *Against Heresies* and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Clement's *Christ the Educator* and *Miscellanies*, and Tertullian's *Against Marcion* and *Against Praxeaes* in relation to heterodox sects (chapter 6).

[24] Kruger has recently described the second century as a period of sociological, ecclesiological, doctrinal-theological, and textual-canonical transition in the emergence of the Christian movement. Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads*, 1–8.

Fourth, I synthesize the findings of this survey (chapter 7) by summarizing the key features of the early Christian covenant concept as it pertains to the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and ethical practice, noting their broadly christological and pneumatological character, considering the distinct modes of self-understanding that they generated over against competing sources of identity formation and reviewing the progression that can be discerned in the development of this concept across the course of the second century as a result of its use and refinement in these controversies.

Summary of Research

The broadest level on which this study aims to contribute is the discussion of early Christian identity formation, which has generated an abundance of scholarly interest from a wide range of ideologies and methodologies in recent decades.[25] One influential example is the work of Judith M. Lieu, who has pioneered the notion of "identity construction" as a lens for analyzing the literary and rhetorical strategies of ancient texts as they impose value systems and, in the process, demonize, marginalize, or exclude the "Other."[26] The works of Wayne Meeks, Rodney Stark, Daniel Boyarin, Denise Kimber Buell, Philip Harland and Terrence Donaldson also illustrate this socially-oriented approach (with varying emphases),[27] contributing to a shift away from primarily doctrinal

[25] See the useful survey provided in Bengt Holmberg, ed., *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, WUNT 226 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–27. Holmberg identifies five major approaches to discussion of early Christian identity formation in the scholarship of the last several decades, with the leading representatives of each: (1) Christian identity as textual reality (Judith Lieu, Denise Kimber Buell, Miriam S. Taylor); (2) Christian identity as post-factum ideological construct (F. C. Baur, Walter Bauer, James D. G. Dunn, Bart D. Ehrman); (3) Christian identity as entrepreneurial construction accepted by recipients (Philip F. Esler, William S. Campbell, David Horrell); (4) Christian identity as the autonomous inner structure of the semiotic system (Gerd Theissen); and (5) Christian identity as evolving, feedback-shaped self-understanding of the movement itself (Ben F. Meyer).

[26] Judith M. Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christian Identity*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 4, 27; see also Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[27] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late*

and theological interpretations toward what may be broadly described as "socio-narrative" models.[28] These approaches, which incline toward literary, rhetorical, social, ethnic, racial, and gender-based analyses, often stand in conscious opposition to earlier models, such as the unilateral (and Hellenizing) imposition of "dogma" portrayed by Adolf von Harnack,[29] the original diversity postulated by Walter Bauer,[30] or even the "parting[s] of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity described by James D. G. Dunn and others[31]—which all operate, in the view of more postmodern historiographies, with archaic, overly-rigid definitions and dichotomies in their "totalizing" and "essentializing" notions of "Judaism," "Christianity," "orthodoxy," "heresy," and other concepts.[32]

Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 65–85; Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, Gender, Theory, and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Terence L. Donaldson, *Gentile Christian Identity from Cornelius to Constantine: The Nations, the Parting of the Ways, and Roman Imperial Ideology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).

[28] Coleman A. Baker, "Early Christian Identity Formation: From Ethnicity and Theology to Socio-Narrative Criticism," *Currents in Biblical Research* 9, no. 2 (2011): 228–37. Baker offers a four-part taxonomy of scholarly approaches that roughly corresponds (by using broader categories) to the five-part scheme of Holmberg noted above, but arranged as a linear historical progression. It includes (1) identity as ethnicity (F. C. Baur); (2) identity as theology (Walter Bauer, James Robinson and Helmut Koester, and James D. G. Dunn); (3) identity as result of social process (E. A. Judge, H. C. Kee, Jack Sanders, Philip Esler, Matthew Marohl, Minna Shkul): and (4) identity as narrative construction (Warren Carter, Judith Lieu). Baker advocates for an integration of the third and fourth approaches in a "socio-narrative criticism" that "takes seriously both the social context and the role of narratives" (Baker, 235).

[29] Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. (New York: Dover, 1961).

[30] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (London: SCM, 1971).

[31] James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991); Dunn, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A. D. 70 to 135*, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); see also Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians, 70–170 C. E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). As Lieu, explains, the problem with these descriptions is that Christianity "appears as a self-contained phenomenon, subject, no doubt, to influence from the ideas of the time, and frequently engaged in resistance to them, and even ultimately victim of, or beneficiary of, external political movements, but still to be analysed as if fundamentally isolable and explicable in its own terms. There are here the seeds – or perhaps the fruit – of an essentialism that anyone with a theological commitment to Christianity may not be totally able to avoid." Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 3.

[32] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*, 31–39.

What may now be recognized, however, is the opening (or re-opening) that these recent critiques have created for theologically-oriented analyses, insofar as these studies aim to identify the underlying assumptions and intentions that early Christian texts reflect, the social situations and concerns that they address, and the identities that they cultivate through the values that they seek to instill.[33] It is in this connection that a new examination of the use of the covenant concept, as a theological motif that holistically integrates key elements of identity formation—the doctrinal, the ritual, and ethical dimensions—can prove valuable.[34]

The covenant concept itself has been discussed in the scholarly contexts of both biblical studies and historical theology. Within biblical studies, historical-critical interpreters have studied its historical roots in Israelite religion and parallels in other ancient Near Eastern cultures,[35] while Old Testament scholars have debated its theological centrality to that corpus.[36] Since the rise of the biblical theology movement in the mid-twentieth century, more theologically-inclined commentators—including evangelicals—have identified the biblical covenants as a source of unity within the

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[33] However, even recent studies that remain theologically-oriented in describing early Christian identity formation have not given due attention to the covenant concept. See, for example, Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016). Hurtado does not treat the covenant idea in exploring various aspects of the "distinctive group identity" that early Christians developed.

[34] Though not addressing the covenant concept in particular, T. J. Lang makes a similar point in his work on the emergence of a Christian historical self-consciousness in the second century: "The analysis of early Christian theology need not be subsidiary to the task of reconstructing early Christian history. As it persisted as an identifiable social entity that claimed to be the true (or new) people of God, the movement that came to be called 'Christianity' naturally generated distinguishable ideas, along with new plausibility structures and conceptual schemes within which to understand and defend them." T. J. Lang, *Mystery and the Making of a Christian Historical Consciousness: From Paul to the Second Century*, BZNW 219 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 251.

[35] Annie Jaubert, *La Notion d'Alliance dans le Judaïsme aux abords de l'Ère Chrétienne*, Patristica Sorboniensia 6 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963); Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

[36] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, rev. ed. (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013).

biblical canon, structuring its metanarrative, facilitating a progressive revelation, and explaining the continuities and discontinuities between its two testaments.[37] Finally, since the 1970s, the revaluation of Second Temple Judaism popularized by E. P. Sanders under the rubric of "covenantal nomism" has fostered reflection on potential Jewish backgrounds for the use of the covenant motif in Paul and other New Testament authors, particularly in the writings of N. T. Wright.[38] Extending this work, Matthew J. Thomas has recently sought to confirm the New Perspective's insights through a new reading of the Christian writers of the second century.[39]

Historical theologians, for their part, have noted that the covenants were used to structure the biblical narrative long before the modern biblical theology movement, tracing, for example, the emergence of federal or covenant theology within sixteenth-century Protestantism and beyond.[40] Historical interest in the post-Reformation period can be partly attributed to the ongoing vitality of covenant theology (as distinguished from dispensationalism) as a theological system within contemporary Reformed

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[37] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975); O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Baker, 1993); Steven L. McKenzie, *Covenant* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000); Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenant Theologies* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God's Purposes for the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

[38] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, 40th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017); James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed., WUNT 185 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Ellen Juhl Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers*, AGJU 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

[39] Matthew J. Thomas, *Paul's "Works of the Law" in the Perspective of Second-Century Reception* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

[40] David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012).

dogmatics.[41] However, historical surveys focusing specifically upon the development of covenantal theology in earlier periods, including the patristic era, have been rare.[42] Where scholars in early Christian studies have considered its use in particular writers, it has most often been from the perspectives described above (as an element of their biblical theology, exegetical method, canonical consciousness, or literary/rhetorical strategy), rather than in connection with the question of identity formation.[43] Meanwhile, broader surveys of early Christian theology have often subsumed the covenant idea under brief discussions of law or hermeneutics, without considering it in its own right or in relation to identity formation.[44]

A significant exception to these trends, which shows affinity with the task undertaken here, is the work of Petrus Gräbe, who does offer a helpful preliminary exploration of the new covenant concept in connection with Christian identity.[45] Gräbe's

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[41] Geerhardus Vos, *The Covenant in Reformed Theology* (Philadelphia: K. M. Campbell, 1971); Mark W. Karlberg, *Covenant Theology in Reformed Perspective: Collected Essays and Book Reviews in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000); Michael Scott Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002); Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether, eds., *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

[42] J. Ligon Duncan III, "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995); Steven J. McMichael, "The Covenant in Patristic and Medieval Theology," in *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian Identity in the Presence of the Other*, ed. Eugene Korn and John Pawlikowski, Bernardin Center (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

[43] W. C. Van Unnik, *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik*, part 2, *1 Peter, Canon, Corpus Hellenisticum Generalia*, Novum Testamentum Supplements 30 (Leuven: Brill, 1980), 157–71; Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 1, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, Early Church at Work and Worship 1 (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 173–200; Susan L. Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant': Irenaeus and the Covenants of Israel" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001); Graham, "Irenaeus and the Covenants: 'Immortal Diamond,'" in *Liturgia et Cultus, Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica, Nachleben, First Two Centuries*, ed. Frances M. Young, M. J. Edwards, and P. M. Parvis, Studia Patristica 40 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 393–98; Stephen O. Presley, "Biblical Theology and the Unity of Scripture in Irenaeus of Lyons," *Criswell Theological Review* 16, no. 2 (2019): 3; Benjamin Blackwell, "The Covenant of Promise: Abraham in Irenaeus," in *Irenaeus and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

[44] An example is the cursory discussion of "new law" as an aspect of second-century Christian ethics in Eric Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 204–7.

[45] Petrus J. Gräbe, *Der Neue Bund in der Frühchristlichen Literatur: Unter Berücksichtigung der Alttestamentlich-Jüdischen Voraussetzungen*, Forschung zur Bibel 96 (Würzburg, Germany: Echter Verlag, 2001); Gräbe, *New Covenant, New Community: The Significance of Biblical and Patristic Covenant Theology for Contemporary Understanding* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2006).

approach, differs, however, in that he conducts more comparative analysis with biblical material of both the Old and New Testaments, and also surveys the patristic writings with an eye toward construction of a contemporary covenant theology. By contrast, in what follows, I maintain focus primarily upon second-century texts, and supply the additional dimension of considering the ways that different rhetorical contexts influence the development and application of the covenant concept for particular purposes.

Thus, while considerable scholarly research has been dedicated to both the discussion of early Christian identity formation and to the concept of the covenant (in both biblical and historical studies), the intersection of these domains in the thought of ancient Christian writers has not yet been fully explored.

Significance

In pursuing this study, then, I aim to show how the covenant concept provides an oft-overlooked answer to the question, "How did Christians of the century immediately following the New Testament period further refine, articulate, and instill a sense of distinct Christian identity?"[46] I undertake the task (not previously attempted at this length) of thoroughly surveying the strategies by which second-century writers deployed the biblical and theological concept of covenant toward this end. Thus, the study is an attempt to demonstrate how essential theological convictions (regarding the christological and pneumatological nature of the new covenant and its community) shaped the reading of scripture, the discerning adaptation of cultural resources, and engagement with alternative communities in the areas of belief, ritual, and practice—the major components of identity formation. While I focus primarily on compiling and

[46] Already, this framing of the question presupposes that (1) an "essential" Christian identity can be identified and described, and that (2) second-century writings from diverse contexts can be shown to attest to it with some level of ideological or conceptual consistency. These assumptions stand in conflict with contemporary streams of literature that continue to reflect the influence of the Bauer thesis of original diversity, as well as more critical studies that reject "essentializing" discourses and limit their analysis to social dynamics and rhetorical strategies.

assessing the textual data that illustrate the nature and usage of this covenant concept, without directly entering into all of the related scholarly discussions in biblical and historical studies surveyed above, the study does hold significant potential applications for those biblical, theological, and historical discussions, and I briefly sketch these in the conclusion.

Argument

The main thesis—that Christian writers of the second century developed a broadly consistent theological concept of the new covenant community which they instilled in each of the major social contexts related to identity formation—unfolds in five movements.

First, in the survey of literature in chapter 1, I review the most significant scholarly works of the last three decades related to early Christian identity formation—represented by the works of Judith Lieu, Denise Kimber Buell, Terence Donaldson, and others—noting that, by shifting attention to the rhetorical and literary dimensions of texts and their sociological implications, these studies have provided some useful correctives to the earlier works of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which often explained the creation of orthodox identity in terms of mere "Hellenization," or the imposition of norms through authoritative hierarchies.[47] However, I also observe the surprising omission of the covenant theme as a significant category for the analysis of Christian identity in these studies—an omission that is no doubt due partly to a prevailing assumption that theological concepts cannot or should not be serious factors in historical, literary, and social analysis. I note that this omission is particularly surprising not only because of the covenant concept's direct relevance to such key aspects of Christian identity formation as belief, ritual, and practice, but also because this relevance has been

[47] Von Harnack, *History of Dogma*; Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*.

clearly demonstrated and widely acknowledged with respect to Jewish identity formation during the same period, in the revaluation of Judaism initiated by the work of E. P. Sanders.[48] Moreover, the potential of the covenant concept to contribute to an integrated and holistic account of identity formation squares well with the desire of many recent scholars to avoid reducing notions of identity to particular doctrinal or theological commitments without attention to broader social, cultural, and political dynamics.[49]

Chapters 2 and 3 then provide preliminary sketches of pre-existing notions and uses of covenant (and related ideas) in three domains where Christians worked to develop a distinct identity. First, in chapter 2, with respect to Judaism, I survey the extensive use of the covenant idea in the Old Testament, the writings of Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament. By contrast, in chapter 3, I consider the covenant concept's general absence from Greco-Roman culture (despite some superficially similar institutions), which instead emphasized citizenship, living in accordance with logos, and other forms of religious and social collective identity. I also examine its lack of use, or misuse, from the perspective of orthodox writers, within various heterodox sects (especially Gnostics and Marcionites), which posited a sharp disjunction between old and new covenants, in keeping with their radical dualisms. These two introductory chapters establish the contextual backgrounds for Christian use of the covenant concept across the three cultural domains, making it possible to identify the areas in which the Christian usage is distinct or shows development from existing forms.

The next three chapters (chapters 4–6), which form the core of the study, survey Christian responses to these Jewish, secular, and heterodox concepts of covenant, outlining the distinctive features of its use within orthodox Christian writings that address

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[48] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism.*

[49] Buell, for example, briefly acknowledges in the closing pages of her final chapter that contemporary rabbinical views of identity utilized a "covenantal" paradigm, and that "emerging Christians also deploy something like" it, but she does not develop this concept further, despite its apparent relevance to her argument. Buell, *Why This New Race*, 163–64.

each of these audiences. Each chapter analyzes texts in chronological sequence to chart trends and progressions in the development of the concept covenant in the domain under consideration.

First, in relation to Judaism, chapter 4 suggests that the primary sources for the covenant concept utilized by second-century Christians were many of the same scriptural texts (Gen 12–17; Exod 19–24; Deut 28–30; Isa 42; 49; Jer 31; Ezek 34; 36) employed in Jewish thought, which had *already* used them extensively to articulate a well-developed covenant theology that included the identity-forming elements of theological narration, liturgical markers, and ethical prescriptions.[50] Thus, in the earliest phase of their efforts to cultivate a distinctly Christian understanding of the covenant, second-century writers did not begin with a blank slate, but assumed an existing scriptural covenantal structure and logic, which they transposed and reconfigured with christological content on the basis of the conviction that Jesus Christ himself was the messianic "new law" and "new covenant" predicted by the prophets.[51] This process of identification and application is evident in an early text like the Epistle of Barnabas, which closely follows (but christologically redefines) the three elements of covenantal identity listed above in expounding its own theological narrative,[52] liturgical markers,[53] and ethical obligations and consequences.[54] Slightly later, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* presents an

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[50] Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*.

[51] Though often described in terms of supersessionism or "appropriation," as for example in Wilson, *Related Strangers*; Lieu, *Image and Reality*; Terence Donaldson, "Supersessionism and Early Christian Self-Definition," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting*, no. 3 (2016): 1–32; and Michael Kok, "The True Covenant People: Ethnic Reasoning in the Epistle of Barnabas," *Studies in Religion* 40, no. 1 (March 2011): 81–97. I will argue, more positively, for a form of theological resourcing.

[52] Barn. 5–7.

[53] Barn. 11.

[54] Barn. 18–21. Here I engage with the works of James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); James N. Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas and the Deuteronomic Tradition: Polemics, Paraenesis, and the Legacy of the Golden-Calf Incident*, WUNT188 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

extended response to an assumed Jewish critique of Christians' non-observance of the Mosaic law and lack of distinction from the broader culture,[55] which it answers by directly identifying the new covenant with Christ himself[56] and expounding the distinguishing markers of his new covenant community in terms of the Christian virtues of honesty, integrity, and purity.[57] Finally, as the end of the century approached and the Jewish and Christian communities grew farther apart, later writers like Tertullian of Carthage further developed the scriptural networks introduced in earlier texts to argue for Christ's fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the new covenant, the messianic kingdom, and the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God.[58] In all these ways, Christian writers used the covenant concept to demonstrate both continuities and discontinuities with Jewish thought and covenantal identity, differentiating the key features of Christian identity for both Jewish and Christian audiences.

Second, in chapter 5, I show that in the context of their interactions with Greco-Roman culture, which lacked familiarity with Judaism's already well-established notion of covenantal identity, apologetically-oriented Christian writers re-purposed covenantal arguments while retaining their basic structure—for example, by applying a parallel logic to their engagements with Greco-Roman religious and philosophical traditions, which had long associated the notions of logos and *nomos*.[59] Based on their

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[55] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 10.3.

[56] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2, 43.1, 51.3, 118.3, 122.6.

[57] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 12.3, 14.1, 15.1–7. I critique the recent conclusions of Yuji Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant: Justin Martyr's Interpretation of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31.31–32" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2012).

[58] Tertullian of Carthage, *Jud.* 3.13, 6.2, 12.1–2. See especially the work of Dunn: Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, ECF (London: Routledge, 2004); Dunn, "Tertullian's Scriptural Exegesis in De Praescriptione Haereticorum," *JECS* 14, no. 2 (2006): 141–55; Dunn, *Tertullian's Aduersus Iudaeos: A Rhetorical Analysis*, Patristic Monograph 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008); Dunn, "Tertullian, Paul, and the Nation of Israel," in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 79–97; see also Eric Francis Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[59] Here I interact with the work of Carl Andresen, and varying responses to it, in Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum*, Arbeiten zur

conviction that Christ was the Logos incarnate, who had both inspired and been attested by the greatest representatives of Hellenistic literary culture, and had now drawn to himself a historically new and philosophically distinctive community embodying its precepts, Justin Martyr,[60] Clement of Alexandria,[61] and others follow the precedents of early second-century texts like the The Preaching of Peter[62] and Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* in identifying the Logos-Nomos with the new covenant inaugurated by Christ on the basis of prophecies such as Isaiah 2:3.[63] Clement in particular conceptualizes the new covenant community as a "new people" and "third race,"[64] living in accordance with the Logos in a "new way" and bringing fulfillment to the ancient frameworks attested in both the Mosaic law (among the Jews) and classical philosophy (among the Greeks).[65] In addition to forming a key component of the "argument from antiquity" that helped to

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Kirchengeschichte 30 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1955); Willy Rordorf, "Christus als Logos und Nomos: Das Kerygma Petrou in seinem Verhältnis zu Justin," in *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den Geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolf Martin Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 424–34; Basil Studer, "Der Apologetische Ansatz zur Logos-Christologie Justins des Märtyrers," in Ritter, *Kerygma und Logos*, 435–48; Gary T. Burke, "Celsus and Justin: Carl Andresen Revisited," *ZNW* 76, nos. 1–2 (1985): 107–16; see also Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der Frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 29 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996).

[60] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 39, 46; *2 Apol.* 8.

[61] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.59; 3.12.93; *Prot.* 1, 10–11; *Strom.* 1.29.182, 6.7.58.

[62] As quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.29.182, 2.15.68, and 6.5.41.

[63] "For out of Zion shall go forth a law, and a word shall go forth from Jerusalem," as cited, e.g., in Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.*1–2. See also M. J. Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *JECS* 3, no. 3 (1995): 261–80; Michel Cambe, ed., *Kerygma Petri: Textus et Commentarius*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Wilhelm Pratscher, "Scripture and Christology in the Preaching of Peter (Kerygma Petri)," in *Studies on the Text of the New Testament: Essays in Honour of Michael W. Holmes*, ed. Daniel Gurtner, Juan Hernandez Jr., and Paul Foster, New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 555–77. Cf. also *Pasch.* 4–9: "For the law was a word, and the old was new, going out from Zion and Jerusalem . . . He is all things. He is law, in that he judges. He is word, in that he teaches." Melito of Sardis, *Pasch.* 4–9 (Stewart, 51–52).

[64] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.4.19, 1.7.59. See also the discussion of this phrase in David M. Olster, "Classical Ethnography and Early Christianity," in *The Formulation of Christianity by Conflict through the Ages*, ed. Katharine B. Free, Symposium 34 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1995), 9–31. Olster, along with Buell (*Why This New Race*), critiques the classic treatment of Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt, 2 vols. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1972).

[65] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.5.28; see also Gräbe, *New Covenant, New Community*, 167–70.

establish the validity of the Christians according to the conventions of the ancient world, this strategy of self-definition also sought to clarify the points of both continuity and discontinuity between members of the new covenant community and their Greco-Roman cultural context.

Third, in chapter 6, I demonstrate that, looking internally, heresiological writers employed the covenant concept to combat the erroneous or heterodox expressions of the faith (and the false Christian identities associated with them) that emerged within the church itself. From the perspective of the heresiologists, these movements either lacked (in the case of Gnosticism)[66] or misused (in the case of Marcionites)[67] covenantal schemes in shaping their own beliefs, rituals, and ethical practices—including their theological narratives concerning the creation of the world, the relationship between God and humanity, the connection between the Old and New Testaments, their views of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and their ethical asceticism or libertinism. Thus, Irenaeus of Lyons demonstrates at length, against Gnostic sects, that Christ unifies the biblical covenants in a single redemptive-historical scheme[68] which, in addition to establishing an overarching metanarrative for the new covenant community, also provides the basis for its distinctive ethic, characterized by grace and liberty in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.[69] Tertullian of Carthage argues in a similar vein against

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[66] As indicated by the references compiled in Craig A. Evans, Robert L. Webb, and Richard A. Wiebe, eds., *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index*, New Testament Tools and Studies 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

[67] As reconstructed in Tertullian's anti-Marcionite writings; see Tertullian, *Marc.* (Evans).

[68] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.10.3; 3.11.8.

[69] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.9.1; 4.16.4; 4.34.34; *Epid.* 89–96. John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth, 1948); Philippe Bacq, *De l'Ancienne à la Nouvelle Alliance selon S. Irénée: Unité du Livre IV de l'Adversus Haereses*, Le Sycomore: Série Horizon (Paris: Lethielleux, 1978); Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1997); Graham, "Zealous for the Covenant"; John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*; Presley, "Biblical Theology and Unity in Irenaeus"; Blackwell, "Covenant of Promise."

Marcionites,[70] while also insisting, against the modalistic monarchians associated with Praxeas, that the advent of Christ in the new covenant provides the proper framework for articulating an orthodox trinitarian theology within the bounds of the rule of faith.[71] On this front, orthodox writers used the covenant concept to expose and combat theological errors that threatened to compromise the received identity of the Christian community by distorting its belief (theological metanarrative), ritual, and/or ethical practice.

I synthesize the findings in chapter 7 to summarize the leading features of the second-century new covenant concept in the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and ethics, noting their consistently christological and pneumatological character. With respect to belief, these include its connection to the theological metanarrative of the rule of faith, which identifies the Creator of the Old Testament with the Father of Jesus Christ; the unity of the one redemptive economy in which one and the same God is at work across all biblical covenants, culminating in the new covenant work of Christ; and an eschatological expectation of eternal blessings or curses for those who keep or break the covenant. With respect to ritual, there is a consistent emphasis on the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as the distinguishing liturgical markers of the new covenant community, in keeping with the biblical association of baptism (in which the theological metanarrative is confessed) with the Holy Spirit (whose outpouring seals the new covenant), and the description of the eucharistic elements as the "new covenant"—both conceived in terms of incorporation into Christ by his Spirit. With respect to ethics, the covenant idea provides the framework for a Christian appropriation of the Two Ways tradition, distinguishing the way of life from the way of death; it aligns

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[70] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.20–22; 3.20; 4.9–14; 5.17; see also Osborn, *Tertullian*, 9–21; Dunn, *Tertullian*.

[71] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 11; 30–31; see also L. William Countryman, "Tertullian and the Regula Fidei," *Second Century* 2, no. 4 (1982): 208–27; Everett Ferguson, "Tertullian, Scripture, and the Rule of Faith," in Still and Wilhite, *Tertullian and Paul*, 22–33; Andrew B. McGowan, "God in Christ: Tertullian, Paul, and Christology," in Still and Wilhite, *Tertullian and Paul*, 1–15.

these two ways with the Pauline dichotomy between the Spirit's empowerment and the internalization of the law upon the heart; this in turn produces an observable new moral orientation of holiness, purity, and love for God, fellow covenant members, and neighbors that constitute Christians as a "third race" and "new people." I also briefly narrate a progressive clarification of the early Christian doctrine of covenant over the course of the second century, and allude to the trajectories that it established for developments in later centuries.

Lastly, the conclusion offers brief reflections on the relevance of these findings for contemporary scholarly discussions of biblical theology, the "Parting of the Ways," the New Perspective on Paul, and early Christian identity formation, in that they attest to an aspect of the emerging second-century Christian identity that is scripturally derived, theologically (christologically) developed, culturally engaged, and consistently applied across a variety of cultural and geographical settings. I close by suggesting some avenues for further research, including the further tracing of this important theme through the later patristic and medieval periods to its further development in the Reformation.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUNDS: COVENANT AND IDENTITY IN JUDAISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Before examining the ways that Christian writers themselves utilized the covenant concept to craft a distinctive identity, it will first be necessary to survey the major sources of identity that prevailed in the three social spheres where which they did so: Judaism, Greco-Roman culture, and the movements of Christian heterodoxy. This chapter and the next will consider how writers of texts in each domain constructed notions of identity by making use (or not making use) of the covenant concept and conceptual parallels to it, particularly in the central areas of belief, ritual, and practice.

Covenant and Identity in Judaism

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the extensive use of the covenant motif for identity formation and distinction in Jewish texts, including the Old Testament, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature of the Second Temple period, and Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as New Testament authors. I also consider trends in the scholarly treatment of this theme in modern biblical studies (represented by Wellhausen, Eichrodt, and others), which have gradually come to recognize the multilayered significance of this concept for Israelite identity, along with the ongoing discussions around the "Parting of the Ways" and the New Perspective on Paul in the last four decades. Thus, this chapter, dealing with covenant and identity in Judaism, will be more focused on extensive and explicit uses of the covenant motif than the following chapter, which will examine identity formation in Greco-Roman culture more broadly, and the less consistent and explicit uses of the covenant motif among major heterodox movements, such as Gnostics and Marcionites.

Covenant in the Old Testament

The biblical texts of the Old Testament make explicit references to divine covenants with Noah (Gen 9:8–17), Abraham (inherited by Isaac and Jacob; Gen 15:18; 17:1–22), Israel (Exod 19:1–6; 24:3–8; Deut 5:1–3; 29:1–30:20), David (2 Sam 7:8–16; 23:5), and, with the "house of Israel and the house of Judah," a prophesied new covenant (Jer 31:31–34), in addition to many other individual or personal covenants.[1] The prevalence of the term "covenant" (בְּרִית) and the related motifs of election, promise, law, nationhood, peoplehood, and, above all, relationship with God throughout the Old Testament canon has resulted in a proliferation of scholarly works analyzing its historical origins, literary presentation, and theological significance, from both Jewish and Christian perspectives.[2] The resulting definitions, which have only multiplied since the pioneering lexical study of Richard Kraetzschmar,[3] have included "an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction";[4] a "commitment undertaken by two parties, each toward the other, to perform a certain deed (positive in nature) or to follow a particular course of action (positive in nature)";[5] the "solemn

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all English biblical quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV). Divine covenants that feature less prominently than those mentioned above include God's covenants with Phinehas (Num 25:12–13), also described as a covenant with Levi (Num 18:19; Mal 2:5). Covenants with God initiated by human parties include the covenants made by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:3). Covenants between human parties include the covenants between Abraham and Abimilech (Gen 21:22–32); Isaac and Abimilech (Gen 26:26–31); Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:44–54); Joshua and the Israelites (Josh 24:25); David and Jonathan (1 Sam 20:14–17); David and the elders (2 Sam 5:3); (Zedekiah and the Israelites (Jer 34:8).

[2] According to one standard lexicon, בְּרִית occurs 285 times in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. See the entry in Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 136–37. See the recent overview of Gert Kwakkel, "Berith and Covenants in the Old Testament: A Contribution to a Fruitful Cooperation of Exegesis and Systematic Theology," in *Covenant: A Vital Element of Reformed Theology: Biblical, Historical and Systematic-Theological Perspectives*, ed. Hans Burger, Gert Kwakkel, and M. C. Mulder, Studies in Reformed Theology 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[3] Richard Kraetzschmar, *Die Bundesvorstellung im Alten Testament in Ihrer Geschichtlichen Entwickelung* (Marburg, Germany: N. G. Elwert, 1896).

[4] Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 171.

[5] Menahem Haran, "The Bĕrît 'Covenant': Its Nature and Ceremonial Background," in *Tehillah Le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 205.

ratification of an existing elective relationship involving promises or obligations that are sealed with an oath";[6] and many others. In addition, differences in methodologies and theological assumptions have led to vigorous debate about when the covenant concept became a significant element in the Jewish consciousness (ranging from the time of Moses to the post-exilic period). While it is not possible to review the biblical scholarship in full, a cursory overview can identify the major developments, which have culminated, most recently, in a fuller recognition of the multidimensional character of the covenant concept.

The rise of the historical-critical method and the History of Religions approach biblical texts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fostered a developmental view of Israelite religion. In conjunction with his documentary hypothesis regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, Julius Wellhausen suggested that the covenant developed as a feature of Israelite religion only in the post-exilic prophetic literature, exemplifying the religion's generally evolutionary character.[7] As one reviewer effectively summarized,

> According to Wellhausen, it is only the prophetic movement with its 'ethical monotheism' which developed a sense of covenant suitable to a higher religion, namely, the idea that union with God is not a matter of natural relationship nor magical rite but an affair of morality. Israel is the special friend, the covenant partner of God, because and only so long as she keeps his law. Wellhausen sees here a great and important development in the history of religion. The original, crude, materialistic concept of the family of Yahweh has become a higher religion in which morality is all.[8]

Wellhausen's judgment set the terms of the debate through the first half of the

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[6] Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 43.

[7] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994).

[8] Dennis J. McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry," *CBQ* 27, no. 3 (1965): 217.

twentieth century, both for those who upheld it[9] and those who sought to refute it.[10] Among the latter, Martin Noth advanced beyond Wellhausen's thesis in arguing for a unified Deuteronomistic History, in which the covenant idea becomes the basis for the judgment and exile of Israel described in the historical books.[11] Following the sociological approach to the covenant introduced by Max Weber,[12] Noth explored Greek amphictyony as a social context for the covenant relationship of the pre-monarchic twelve tribes of Israel, and "established the view that the covenant is not to be understood as a theological *idea*, as Wellhausen and others had maintained, but was an *institution* with a definable function in ancient Israelite society and religion." [13]

In the mid-twentieth century, the burgeoning interest in literary and form-critical studies fueled a further critique of Wellhausen by drawing attention to formal parallels between the Israelite covenants and the ancient suzerain-vassal treaties of other ancient Near Eastern civilizations. Thus, George Mendenhall argued for the early composition of both the Decalogue texts (Exod 20; Deut 5) and the covenant narrative of Joshua 24 on the basis of structural similarities (including a preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, divine witnesses, and blessings and curses) with thirteenth-century Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties.[14] These established a relationship of mutual support, but

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[9] For example, Kraetzschmar, *Die Bundesvorstellung im Alten Testament*.

[10] On whom see below. The following discussion is indebted to the helpful surveys provided in McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament"; Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); John Barton, "Covenant in Old Testament Theology," in *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson*, ed. A. D. H. Mayes and Robert B. Salters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23–38.

[11] Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1981).

[12] On which see A. D. H. Mayes, "Max Weber and Historical Understanding," in Mayes and Salters, *Covenant as Context*, 285–310.

[13] Nicholson, *God and His People*, 33.

[14] George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: Biblical Colloquium, 1955), 28–35.

one in which the interests of the sovereign had primacy.[15] Mendenhall followed Victor Korosec in identifying the constituent elements as the preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, provision for public deposit/reading, divine witnesses, and pronouncement of blessings and curses.[16] He also contended—against Wellhausen—that from the earliest historical date, the covenant functioned as a source of legal union for Israel's tribes:

> Israelite traditions regarded the covenant at Sinai as the event which brought into existence Israel as a distinct religious community. That view of Israelite origins was rejected by Wellhausen, who regarded the religious community rather as the product of very gradual growth. On the contrary, we now know that covenant relationships were the very foundations of relations between originally separate groups, and the formation of a new legal community, as well as the undertaking of new legal responsibilities, took place most naturally by covenant. . . . The present writer believes that the federation of tribes can be understood and explained only on the assumption that it is a conscious continuation and re-adaptation of an earlier tradition which goes back to the time of Moses. The covenant at Sinai was the formal means by which the semi-nomadic clans, recently emerged from state slavery in Egypt, were bound together in a religious and political community.[17]

Other scholars, such as H. J. Kraus and J. J. Stamm, also acknowledged the Sinai Covenant's similarities with ancient Near Eastern forms, but warned against pressing them too far, due to the inexact correspondence.[18]

In the next decade, additional literary studies of the "covenant formula" (the programmatic assertion that Yahweh will be Israel's God, and Israel will be Yahweh's people) appeared, first of all in the work of Rudolf Smend.[19] He was followed by Klaus Baltzer, who defined the covenant in terms of its "constituent elements" of "proclamation of the law, ratification of the covenant, [and] blessings and curses."[20] Baltzer also

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[15] Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and ANE*, 30.

[16] Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and ANE*, 32–34; Viktor Korošec, *Hethitische Staatsverträge*, Leipziger Rechtswissenschaftliche Studien 60 (Leipzig: Weicher, 1931).

[17] Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and ANE*, 5.

[18] As noted by McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament," 225.

[19] Rudolf Smend, *Die Bundesformel*, Theologische Studien, Heft 68 (Zürich: E. V. Z. Verlag, 1963).

[20] Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 7.

suggested an early and primarily liturgical context for the recitation of the covenant formula, noting that its "use in worship could explain the stability of the literary type."[21] Significantly, he also extended the object of his study beyond the Old Testament corpus to include selected writings of the Second Temple period (Jub.; T.12 Patr.), Qumran documents (the Manual of Discipline and 4QD[a]), and early Christian texts (Col 1:9–21; 1 Pet 2:21–25; Rev 3:1–6; Barn., Did.; and 2 Clem.), tracing the presence of dogmatic, ethical, and eschatological (blessings and curses) sections in each instance.[22]

After Baltzer, Dennis McCarthy explored additional literary parallels in the treaties of Assyrian and other later ancient Near Eastern peoples.[23] Delbert Hillers demonstrated the regular use of the idea, if not the terminology, of the covenant in the earlier prophetic literature, connecting it with the punishments threatened in ancient treaties to show that "throughout her early history up to the exile, Israel shared with her neighbors a common legal form, the treaty, and that this form was adopted as a basic element in Israel's religion."[24]

Other twentieth-century scholars critiqued Wellhausen by defending the theological significance of the covenant concept, often in conjunction with the emerging biblical theology movement.[25] Here the most prominent voice is Walther Eichrodt, who argued for the centrality of the covenant theme to the whole of Old Testament theology. Eichrodt's approach represents a mid-century "revival in biblical theology that reacted against the scientific rationalism and developmental view of theological understanding

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[21] Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 167.

[22] Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 176.

[23] Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, Anelecta Biblica 21 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963).

[24] Delbert R. Hillers, "Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets," in *Poets before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 188. Hillers notes that even the earlier prophets "often used the traditional threats associated with the covenant when pronouncing doom on the people."

[25] As also noted by McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament," 232–39.

that characterized it."[26] Indeed, his entire first volume is dedicated to the notion of "God and the People," as expressed in the motif of the covenant (particularly, the Sinai Covenant), as the single most unifying idea for Old Testament texts.[27] Eichrodt unequivocally asserts that "the concept in which Israelite thought gave definite expression to the binding of the people to God and by means of which they established firmly from the start the particularity of their knowledge of him was the Covenant."[28]

In the same biblical-theological stream, but with a quite distinct methodology, Gerhard von Rad eschews the quest to identify the covenant as the center of Old Testament theology; nevertheless, he reserves an important role for the covenants in structuring the biblical *Heilsgeschichte*, dividing it into distinct dispensations for the various acts of God which were the basis for the theological reconstructions of the biblical authors and redactors.[29]

Later scholars sought to avoid the pitfalls of both Eichrodt (overplaying their centrality) and von Rad (downplaying their coherence) in describing the covenants' place in Old Testament theology. Meredith Kline suggested that Deuteronomy as a whole may share the literary structure of a suzerain-vassal treaty, though composed at an early date (maintaining Mosaic authorship).[30] Walter Kaiser sought to correct an overemphasis on the Sinai Covenant by illustrating the importance of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, and their promissory (rather than legal) character—though he mirrored

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[26] Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 32.

[27] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

[28] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 36.

[29] Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper, 1962).

[30] Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Meredith G. Kline, "Law Covenant," *Westminster Theological Journal* 27 (1964): 1–20.

Eichrodt's error in doing so rather "one-sidedly," as Gerhard Hasel observed.[31]

Most recently, Rolf Rendtorff has sought to integrate the literary/form-critical and theological insights of these twentieth-century studies, even subordinating the former to the latter in pursuing a theological reading of the covenant formula, constructed on the basis of a thorough exegetical study.[32] He concludes that, as an integrative element, "the covenant formula contributes essentially to the expression and differentiation of the thematic field which may be summarily termed 'covenant theology.'"[33]

Others have applied social analysis to the concept, as in the case of Frank Moore Cross's argument grounding the covenant idea in Semitic notions of kinship.[34] Refusing to limit the covenant to a single dimension, this work helpfully recognized, "The covenant bears all these aspects [legal, ethical, cultic, and political] because it is an extension of the family relationship, and the extended family, the *bet'ab*, was the central framework for the legal, religious, and political activities of ancient Semitic society."[35] Meanwhile, the social implications of the ritual aspects of the covenant ceremony have been considered by Menahem Haran.[36]

The Wellhausian thesis has persisted, however. The landmark lexical studies of Lothar Perlitt and Ernst Kutsch continued to argue for the historical lateness of the theological (Deuteronomistic) use of the Hebrew בְּרִית—understood as a unilateral

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[31] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 54.

[32] Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula*, 10.

[33] Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula*, 92.

[34] Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3–20.

[35] Scott Hahn, "Covenant in the Old and New Testaments: Some Recent Research (1994–2004)," *Currents in Biblical Research* 3, no. 2 (2005): 265.

[36] Haran, "The Bĕrît 'Covenant.'"

“decree” or “obligation,” rather than a reciprocal agreement.[37] Other recent contributors, such as Ernest W. Nicholson, have also maintained this view.[38] Nicholson echoes Wellhausen in suggesting that “covenant-language served as the focal point for that desacralization of a religious society of which the prophets were the chief agents.”[39]

Thus, while disagreement concerning the origins, development, and uses of the concept continues, its prominence and multidimensional character have now been widely recognized. Scott Hahn helpfully synthesizes the current state of the debate:

> Most scholars contributing to the field recognize that the covenant always involves mutuality and relationship; indeed, even when the terms only express obligations for one party, there seems to be the assumption of reciprocal loyalty on both sides. Covenants have not only legal but social, ethical, familial and cultic-liturgical aspects. In the Scriptures the influence of covenant thought cannot be limited only to passages where the terms ברית or διαθηκη occur. Covenant is a multifaceted theme encompassing a variety of phrases, terms and concepts (e.g. the “covenant formula”), and is tied to other important biblical themes such as creation, wisdom and the eschaton.[40]

Covenant in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Jewish intertestamental literature attests to the continuing importance of the covenant concept during the Second Temple period (from the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BC to the Roman conquest of Judea in the first century AD). Among the Apocrypha, some texts contain no references to the covenant, or merely vague or incidental ones (Jdt 9:13; Pr Azar 1:11). In those considered below, however, it features prominently, or even centrally, as a locus of Jewish self-understanding—particularly in the developing encounter with Hellenism to which many of these texts bear witness. It

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[37] Lothar Perlitt, “Bundestheologie im Alten Testament” (PhD diss., Neukirchen Vluyn, 1969); Ernst Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum Sogenannten Bund im Alten Testament*, *ZAW* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973).

[38] Nicholson, *God and His People*. Hahn observes that Nicholson “may have attempted to bring scholarship on the covenant ‘full circle’, that is, back to the minimalism of Wellhausen, but this has not taken place.” Hahn, “Covenant in Old and New Testaments,” 285.

[39] Nicholson, introduction to *God and His People*, vii.

[40] Hahn, “Covenant in Old and New Testaments,” 285.

will be seen that the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants appear regularly, the new covenant prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel does not.

Wisdom of Ben Sira. In the Greek text of the Wisdom of Ben Sira (one of the older apocryphal works), the covenant (διαθήκη) receives mention at least nineteen times.[41] The earlier references are exclusively to the Sinai Covenant, understood as the basis for the relationship between God and Israel and the resulting relationship between Israelites and other peoples (Sir 17:14; 28:7).[42] This "eternal covenant" (17:12), first revealed in "the law which Moses commanded," continues to function as the community's primary source of wisdom and instruction (24:23–29). Moreover, in keeping with the Deuteronomistic view of Israel's history, it also threatens judgment for faithlessness upon those who break it (16:22–23; 42:1–2).

Beginning with the Praise of the Fathers unit (44–51), however, the broader range of the covenant concept beyond the Mosaic law becomes apparent. Noting that Israelite leaders were faithful to "stand by the covenants" they received, this poetic rehearsal of the biblical narrative utilizes its most prominent covenants as a structuring device to demonstrate its overarching claim, that "the Lord apportioned to them great glory" (44:2).[43] It begins with the "everlasting covenants" with Noah, that humanity should not be destroyed by flood again (44:17–18).[44] This is followed by the description of Abraham, who "kept the law of the Most High and was taken into covenant with him," and the rite of circumcision, by which "he established the covenant in his flesh" (44:20).

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[41] Sir 11:20; 16:22; 17:12; 24:23; 28:7; 39:8; 41:19; 42:2; 44:12; 44:17–18; 44:19; 44:22; 44:23; 45:5; 45:6–7; 45:15; 45:23–24; 45:25; 47:11.

[42] An exception is Sir 11:20, which refers to the steadfast duty or commitment of a human being.

[43] For a full discussion see Otto Kaiser, "Covenant and Law in Ben Sira," in Mayes and Salters, *Covenant as Context*, 234–60.

[44] There is no reference to a covenant with Adam.

The Lord swore an oath to bless the nations through his offspring, who would inherit the world (44:21). Isaac and Jacob inherited this "blessing of all men and the covenant" (44:23). Next the Lord raised up Moses to lead the nation, through whom he gave "the law of life and knowledge, to teach Jacob the covenant, and Israel his judgments" (45:5). Alongside Moses, God made an "everlasting covenant" with his brother Aaron (45:7), bestowing the priesthood upon him and his descendants for "all the days of heaven" (45:15). Phinehas, the descendant of Aaron by his son Eleazar, inherited this priestly "covenant of peace" on account of his zeal, "that he and his descendants should have the dignity of the priesthood forever" (45:23–25). In parallel, a royal "covenant of kings" (47:11) was established with David, declaring that "the heritage of the king is from son to son only"—a hereditary office like the priesthood (45:25).

What is lacking in this scheme is any reference to the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, the "everlasting covenant" of Isaiah 24, or the covenant mediated by the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42 and 49. Nevertheless, the first two chapters of the hymn are tightly organized around the succession of biblical covenants,[45] which provide a theological-narratival framework for the remaining history in Sirach 46–51 (the conquest of Canaan, establishment of the monarchy, judgment of exile, and prophetic hope for restoration)—all setting the stage for the climactic encomium of the high priest Simon and his restoration of the temple cultus (50:1–21). The text reflects the ongoing vitality of a covenantal theology for the preservation of a distinct Jewish identity just prior to the

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[45] Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Ben Sira 44:19–23—The Patriarchs: Text, Tradition, Theology," in *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira: Papers of the Third International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shime'on Centre, Pápa, Hungary, 18–20 May, 2006*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 219. As Beentjes states, "The history of Israel as presented in the first part of the *Laus Patrum* (Sir 44:1–44:5d) is described as a continuous chain of covenants, which will culminate in the High Priestly covenant with Aaron (45:15) and Phinehas (45:24). God's covenant with David is transferred to the High Priestly dynasty."

This is contrary to Otto Mulder, who argues that "the covenant is not the all-embracing and dynamic theological category of the Praise of the Fathers but rather the Torah in relation to the fear of YHWH and wisdom." Otto Mulder, *Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50: An Exegetical Study of the Significance of Simon the High Priest as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers in Ben Sira's Concept of the History of Israel*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 218.

Hasmonean period through the construction of a historical-theological narrative.

Baruch. Unsurprisingly, the text of Baruch also features the covenant concept (though not described as "new"), in keeping with the larger prophetic work of Jeremiah with which it shares a literary context. Set in the aftermath of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, Baruch 2:28–35 interprets this calamity as divine judgment upon the sin of Israel and Judah. Like the oracles of Jeremiah, however, it anticipates a future restoration in which God himself provides the spiritual capacity (a new heart and "ears to hear") for obedience to his law (Bar 2:31). His people will be restored to the land in an "everlasting covenant [διαθήκην αἰώνιον]" which is presented as the fulfillment of the covenantal oath sworn to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:34–35).

1–4 Maccabees. In the historical works describing the confrontation between Judaism and Hellenism in the second century BC, the covenant functions as a significant line of political, theological, and social demarcation. In 1 Maccabees in particular, it frames the narrative from the outset, as the author introduces some "lawless" Israelites who "abandoned the covenant" (1 Macc 1:15) by covenanting with Antiochus Epiphanes and "the Gentiles" instead (1:11). Forfeiting the traditions of their people, they united with a foreign king, who condemned to death any who retained possession of "the book of the covenant" and adhered to its laws (1:57). The narrator draws a sharp contrast between these compromising Israelites and a faithful remnant who choose to die rather than "profane the holy covenant" (1:63). The writer characterizes the Maccabean line in terms of its faithfulness to the covenant. Mattathias and his five sons vow to "live by the covenant of our fathers" (2:20) rather than obey the king, and Mattathias appeals to zeal for the covenant as a rallying point for Jews who refused to make pagan sacrifice (2:23), invoking the similar zeal of Phinehas (2:26). In the transition of leadership to his sons, Mattathias charges them to maintain such zeal, and to "give your lives for the covenant of

our fathers" (2:50). A speech of Judah recalls this theme in exhorting his soldiers to remember God's covenant with the fathers and be hopeful of victory (4:10).

The writer of 2 Maccabees takes a similar approach, greeting a Jewish audience with the blessing, "May God do good to you, and may he remember his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, his faithful servants" (2 Macc 1:1–2). Most dramatically, the covenant theme appears in the narrative of the seven martyrs, who, along with their mother, insist on obeying the "command of the law that was given to our fathers through Moses" in defiance of Antiochus's order to consume unclean meats (7:30). Through the words of the youngest brother, the author juxtaposes the eternal blessings of the covenant with the temporary pains of torture: "For our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of ever-flowing life under God's covenant; but you, by the judgment of God, will receive just judgment for your arrogance" (7:36). The blessings that accompany covenant faithfulness are thus contrasted with the curses of judgment that befall covenant breakers, evoking the Two Ways tradition.

In 3 and 4 Maccabees, the covenant concept is not as explicitly prominent, though it still comprises an important element of the literary and theological context as a dividing line between Jews and other peoples. As the author of 3 Maccabees summarizes concerning the Jewish population of Alexandria under the rule of Ptolemy IV Philopator,

> The Jews, however, continued to maintain good will and unswerving loyalty toward the dynasty; but because they worshiped God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason they appeared hateful to some; but since they adorned their style of life with the good deeds of upright people, they were established in good repute among all men. Nevertheless those of other races paid no heed to their good service to their nation, which was common talk among all; instead they gossiped about the differences in worship and foods, alleging that these people were loyal neither to the king nor to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his government. So they attached no ordinary reproach to them. (3 Macc 3:3–7)

Meanwhile, in the Hellenistic philosophical text of 4 Maccabees, the writer explores the relation between the law, "by which we learn divine matters reverently" (4 Macc 1:17), and reason, "the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom" (1:15). Thus

subjection of the passions through the rational exercise of conformity to the law draws cultural distinction between Jews and Gentiles: “Therefore when we crave seafood and fowl and animals and all sorts of foods that are forbidden to us by the law, we abstain because of domination by reason. For the emotions of the appetites are restrained, checked by the temperate mind, and all the impulses of the body are bridled by reason” (1:34). The separation is not only ritual but also ethical, since observance of the law, as a supreme expression of reason, cultivates the four classical virtues of temperance, justice, courage, and fortitude (1:6; 1:18; 2:23; 11:5).

Jubilees. While the covenant theme is not prominent in the pseudepigraphal literature, the book of Jubilees, which likely dates to the first half of the second century BC, is a significant exception. Relating the “divisions of the times of the law and of the testimony” as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, the author frames this material as an anticipation of Israel’s ultimate failure to maintain the “covenant festivals” of sabbath-keeping and the jubilee cycle as a result of hardness of heart (Jub. 1:10–25). An angel explains that God established these institutions as markers of the covenant community to distinguish them from other nations (2:19–31) and, after summarizing the history of God’s faithful covenantal dealings with their ancestors, including Noah (6:10), Abraham (14:18; 15:4), Isaac (15:21), Jacob (22:30; 24:11), and Israel (6:11; 15:28), commands Moses to warn the Israelites not to transgress them (30:21). Nevertheless, writing from a post-exilic vantage point, the author characterizes God as foretelling that Israel will fail to keep these covenant signs, becoming like the nations and provoking divine wrath (15:34).

One commentator suggests that through a technique of “retrojection,” the author of Jubilees reads the election of Israel and the promise of the land back into the “cosmic narratives” of Genesis 1–11, depicting Noah, in particular, as “a kind of cosmic

forefather who, like the later patriarchs in Jubilees, adheres to the Sinai Covenant."[46] The effect is to universalize the claims to the land, so that the later patriarchal narratives describe a return to it rather than an initial inheritance of it. In this way the writer is "attempting to extend the perimeters of biblical covenantal history to encompass the years after the return from Babylonian exile. In order to attribute covenantal significance to the post-exilic period, he must free the covenant from the Land-tied context of the biblical narrative."[47]

Expanding on this, Jacques Van Ruiten recognizes that the text presents the covenants in a single, unified narrative, starting with the Noahic Covenant as "the beginning and prototype for all other covenants."[48] The culmination is the Sinai Covenant, to which the audience is summoned to be faithful. Thus, "the covenant of Moses and the accompanying prescriptions are presented as a recurrence and imitation of the covenant and prescriptions of Noah. Moses is renewing what Noah has done before."[49] In Jubilees 6.1–14, the two covenants are presented as parallel to each other with respect to the time (the third month), location (a mountain), and primary condition (abstaining from consuming blood) of their ratification.[50] Indeed, the Festival of Weeks functions as an enduring sign of the covenant, observed by Noah after the flood (6:18), providing the occasion for the establishment of all later patriarchal covenants, and then enshrined within the law of Moses as a means for covenant renewal.[51] What the text

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[46] Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1994), 25–26.

[47] Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible*, 53–54.

[48] Jacques Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah in Jubilees 6.1–38," in *The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jacqueline C. R. De Roo, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 167.

[49] Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah," 171.

[50] Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah," 178.

[51] Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah," 185.

describes as the "covenant festival" (1:10) even transcends the signs of individual covenants, such as the rainbow, circumcision, and sabbath-keeping, demonstrating the importance of Israel's religious calendar for distinguishing them from other peoples.[52] As Van Ruiten concludes, the presentations of all the biblical covenant narratives, "the ultimate goal of Jubilees is to show that there is only a single covenant."[53]

Psalms of Solomon. Only one of the hymns comprising the collection known as the Psalms of Solomon makes explicit references to covenants: Psalm 9 recalls the promises to Abraham and his descendants, the "covenant with our ancestors concerning us" (Pss. Sol. 9:9–10). Given the Solomonic persona of the psalmist and the messianic themes that occur in some hymns (above all, Ps 17), it is not surprising that, as R. B. Wright notes, the Davidic covenant is "central in his thought."[54] Though the term covenant itself does not appear, references to the divine promise that David and his descendants would rule over Israel (17:4) clearly recall the biblical covenant of 2 Samuel 7, while the Israelites themselves are described as "the children of the covenant" (17:15). The covenants with both David and with Israel are united in the psalmist's prayer for a messianic king, "the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel" (17:21), who will "gather a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness" (17:26).

Pseudo-Philo. The first-century *Biblical Antiquities* (transmitted with the works of Philo of Alexandria, though no longer accepted as authentic) also makes extensive use of the covenant theme, which its most recent translator suggests is "at the

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[52] Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah," 189. As Van Ruiten comments, "If the Israelites follow a different calendar, then the festival cannot be celebrated on the same day. Then they 'walk in the festival of the nations' (6.35) and fail to keep their own identity."

[53] Van Ruiten, "The Covenant of Noah," 190.

[54] R. B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 2:645.

basis of Pseudo-Philo's views on God and humanity."[55] The text provides a midrashic retelling of the whole biblical narrative from creation through the reign of David, including the covenants with Noah (LAB 3:11–12), Abraham (8:3) and the other forefathers (9:4; 13:10), and Israel (11:1–3). The Deuteronomic principle of history informs the view of covenant blessings as resulting from obedience (21:10)—particularly in the description of the covenant ratified between Joshua and the Israelites after the conquest of Canaan (23:1–2), which effectively recapitulates the prior patriarchal and Sinai covenants and concludes with a "renewal ceremony" (23:4–14).[56] Meanwhile, the promises to the patriarchs guarantee Israel's future deliverance following the judgment of exile for unfaithfulness to the covenant obligations (19:2–3). They are frequently described as an "eternal" covenant, which cannot be permanently broken.[57] As Betsy Halpern-Amaru notes, Pseudo-Philo follows Jubilees in expanding the scope of Israel's covenantal history, and "introduces the patriarchal covenant in a prepatriarchal setting, uses Noah as a point of reference in relating Israel's history, and frequently describes Israel's election from a cosmic perspective."[58] While Pseudo-Philo does not advance far beyond the biblical narratives, it demonstrates that covenant continued to function as an important Jewish historiographical principle through the first century.

Conclusion. Apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writers frequently conceive of Israel's redemptive history—the theological narrative that has given rise to the

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[55] D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation and Introduction," in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:301.

[56] Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," 2:301.

[57] Frederick James Murphy, "The Eternal Covenant in Pseudo-Philo," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 3 (1988): 45. Murphy summarizes, "At the beginning of the *Biblical Antiquities* the reader learns that Abraham's covenant will never be broken, and that his seed will be everlasting. In reading the text, the reader witnesses numerous occasions where God saves the people from danger or extinction, not because of their merits or faithfulness but because of the promises made to the fathers. The force of the text, therefore, is consolation and encouragement in the face of the threat of extinction."

[58] Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible*, 69.

community and its relationship with its God—in covenantal terms, beginning with the Noahic covenant. They regard the Abrahamic covenant, or the promises to the forefathers, as the basis for Israel's future hope. This is due, no doubt, to the historical situation of foreign rule, perceived as the continuing judgment of exile, according to the Deuteronomistic historiography, for Israel's violation of the Sinai covenant. Nevertheless, scrupulous adherence to the requirements of the Sinai covenant—both ritually, in receiving circumcision and abstaining from unclean foods, and ethically, in obeying the decalogue—continued to function as powerful and necessary distinguishing markers of Jewish identity in the midst of pagan occupation. Indeed, apocryphal writers sometimes present the commitment to covenant obligations, in keeping with the moral tradition of the Two Ways, as a noble preference for the way of life rather than the way of death, leading to blessings rather than curses. Despite employing the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants in constructing a unified covenantal history, none of these texts incorporate the prophetic new covenant of Jeremiah (or everlasting covenant of Isaiah) into this scheme.

Covenant in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1946, scholars have recognized the centrality of the covenant as an organizing principle for the Qumran communities that they likely represent.[59] At a major conference dedicated to their study, Shemarhyahu Talmon even suggested "the Community of the Renewed Covenant" as an appropriate

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[59] In recent work, see Bilhah Nitzan, "The Concept of the Covenant in Qumran Literature," in *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. David Goodblatt, Avital Pinnick, and Daniel R Schwartz, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 37 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 85–104; Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant in the Qumran Scrolls and Rabbinic Literature," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 257–78; Jintae Kim, "The Concept of Atonement in the Qumran Literature and the New Covenant," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 7 (2010): 98–111.

label for the movement.[60] There is no question that a covenantal theology shapes the outlook of the texts and fragments, especially those which are most representative of the community's identity in their references to belief (theological narration), ritual (liturgy), and/or practice (ethical instruction). In distinction from the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature, these texts dedicate significant attention to the new covenant as a primary basis for communal identity. A number of scholars have explored these covenantal dimensions in recent years.

Lawrence Schiffman surveys the Qumran texts' engagement with the major biblical covenants, contrasting their interpretations with those of later rabbinic readings and finding "a large degree of incongruity" in ideological background and exegetical framework.[61] Schiffman observes that the Noahic covenant receives scattered references in a few Qumran fragments.[62] They make greater use of the Abrahamic covenant, especially its promise regarding the inheritance of the land of Israel and the example of Abraham's obedience, though also, to a lesser degree, its institution of circumcision.[63] The Temple Scroll places special focus on a distinct covenant with Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:10–22), the "House of God" being understood as a precursor to the Jerusalem temple.[64] By far the most frequent references are to the Sinai covenant, however, which is variously described as being mediated by Moses, signified by sabbath-keeping, revealed through divine vision, expressed in laws and precepts, and constituting the basis for

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[60] Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Community of the Renewed Covenant: Between Judaism and Christianity," in *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Eugene Ulrich and James C. VanderKam, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 3–24.

[61] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 276.

[62] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 258.

[63] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 259–60.

[64] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 263–64.

God's relationship with Israel.[65] The covenant with Levi establishes a permanent priesthood, personified in the high priest Aaron and his descendants, the Zadokites, responsible for facilitating the regular renewal of the Sinai covenant.[66] Finally, references to Jeremiah's "new (or better 'renewed') covenant" demonstrate that the community viewed itself as the true biblical Israel, maintaining faithfulness to the Sinai covenant through adherence to the principles set forth by the Teacher of Righteousness.[67]

Stephen Hultgren sheds additional light on this dynamic in perhaps the most thorough recent study of Qumran covenantal theology, focusing in particular on the origins and uses of the phrase "the new covenant" in the Damascus Document, where it appears four times (CD VI,19; VIII,21; XIX,33–34; XX,12) in conjunction with the phrase "in the land of Damascus."[68] Hultgren argues that "the new covenant was the parent movement from which the Qumran community arose."[69] This "new covenant," exegetically grounded in Jeremiah 31:31–34, was understood as "the covenant that the steadfast in the exile, in the 'land of the north,' entered, in order to seek the LORD with the whole heart and with the whole soul and to seek the hidden things of the law. They entered this 'new covenant' in anticipation of the return to and repossession of the land, which would be the result of their seeking God."[70] Moreover, in connection with the return from exile (seen, in Deuteronomic terms, as the judgment for covenant faithlessness), Hultgren suggests that the new covenant is best understood as a renewal of the Mosaic covenant:

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[65] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 265–66.

[66] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 269–70.

[67] Schiffman, "The Concept of Covenant," 275.

[68] Stephen Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant to the Covenant of the Community: Literary, Historical, and Theological Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 77.

[69] Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant*, 76.

[70] Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant*, 105.

> From a post-exilic perspective, when God made the covenant with Moses and with Israel, he also made the new covenant of Jeremiah. The covenant of the law of Moses *includes* the new covenant within itself insofar as the arrangements that govern the covenant of God include within themselves the promise of restoration of the covenant (Deut 4:29–31; 30:1–5), a restoration that will be a new covenant (Jer 31; cf. Deut 29–30). Thus Jeremiah's new covenant is subsumed under the covenant of the law of Moses. . . . The content of the "new covenant" is essentially the same as the "covenant"—that is, it is the law of Moses *correctly* interpreted. And correct interpretation of the law requires searching the law and seeking God with whole heart and with whole soul.

Another helpful survey is provided by Craig A. Evans, who observes that the term בְּרִית occurs over 200 times in the extant texts.[71] Like Hultgren, Evans regards the Mosaic covenant as the primary referent, unless otherwise specified: "It is primarily the Sinai Covenant that is in view, and its renewal constitute[s] the Qumran community's very *raison d'etre*. Interest in the Covenant, in obeying it as perfectly as possible, provides the *rationale* for the formation of the community, the *guidance* for community development, and the *hermeneutic* for interpretation of the Scriptures."[72] Examining the two great organizing rules, the Damascus Document and the Community Rule, Evans observes that the former emphasizes the hope for covenant renewal, grounded in the divine promises to the patriarchs, while the latter presupposes a renewed covenant in regulating the ongoing life of the community (a more developed—but not "significantly different"—stage of the community's self-understanding). In each case, the document begins with a preamble that rehearses the community's history, beginning with a faithful remnant's wholehearted return to the stipulations of the Mosaic law after the judgment of Israel's exile, facilitated by the inspired leadership of the Teacher of Righteousness. New converts joined its ranks through an induction ceremony of repentance and cleansing and pledged themselves to live in accordance with the Teacher's scriptural expositions.[73]

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[71] Craig A. Evans, "Covenant in the Qumran Literature," in Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*, 55. Over ninety occurrences appear in the Damascus Document and Community Rule, with ten or more occurrences also appearing in 1QSa, the Hoyadot, the War Scroll, and the Pesharim.

[72] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 55–56.

[73] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 56–65.

Turning to other texts, Evans shows that the Rule of the Congregation (1QSa) envisions the men of the community faithfully instructing their children in "the statutes of the Covenant," rejecting the "way of the people"—the corrupt Jerusalem establishment.[74] A well-defined program for living according to the covenant was provided by the community's liturgical prayers, which feature "the familiar pattern of confession of sin and apostasy, followed by thanksgiving to God for his mercy, in remembering and renewing the Covenant"—a process revolving around meditation on Scripture through the Spirit-inspired guidance of the Teacher.[75] Recognition of God's faithfulness in upholding the covenant motivates the Thanksgiving Hymns (*Hodayot*), which reflect on the dualistic opposition between the righteous and the wicked, and anticipate the final victory of the former over the latter, despite the present experience of persecution.[76] Such a climactic final victory is described vividly in the War Scroll and other apocalyptically-oriented texts, which depict the eschatological confrontation between the Sons of Light (the faithful covenant community) and the Sons of Darkness (covenant-breaking Israelites and pagan Gentile nations in the service of Belial). This scroll regards the defeat of evil forces by God's power as the vindication of his promises, ushering in the fullness of his covenant blessings.[77] In this way, the community's regular invocations of blessings and curses in other fragments, receive their final resolution.[78]

On the basis of this survey, Evans identifies six leading features of the covenant concept as developed in the Qumran texts:[79] (1) The "new covenant" that they describe is the same covenant that God established with Israel at Sinai. (2) Renewal of

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[74] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 66.

[75] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 67–68.

[76] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 68–72.

[77] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 74.

[78] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 77–79.

[79] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 79–80.

this covenant is necessary on account of Israel's apostasy and the corruption of the Jerusalem priesthood. (3) This covenant renewal is scripturally prophesied and eschatologically fulfilled. (4) God preserves the faithful remnant of the Qumran community on the basis of his promises to the patriarchs. (5) Israelites may repent and renew the covenant for themselves by choosing to join the Qumran community. (6) All who reject the renewed covenant will be judged by the Messiah in a climactic eschatological confrontation.

Though Evans himself does not draw attention to it, it is noteworthy that the scripturally-derived covenant concept (here understood to refer primarily to the Mosaic covenant) shaped the self-understanding of the Qumran community in all three of the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and practice.

With respect to belief, the texts contain key elements of a theological metanarrative, describing God's acts in relation to the community to frame its existence and explain its significance. Charter texts like the Damascus Document and the Community Rule portray the sectarians, retrospectively, as the true inheritors of the patriarchal promises and the Sinai covenant, originating as a distinct community through their collective renewal of that covenant, physical removal to the desert, and faithful adherence to the founding principles of the Teacher of Righteousness. The Genizah version of the Damascus Document recounts this founding, when God, in the midst of Israel's exile, "remembered the covenant of the very first" and "saved a remnant for Israel and did not deliver them up to destruction . . . and God appraised their deeds because they sought him with a perfect heart and raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness, in order to direct them in the path of his heart."[80] The author presents this history to the one who is preparing to enter the covenant as motivation to "make binding

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[80] CD-A 1, 1–11 (Martínez, 33). English translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are taken from Martínez.

upon [his] soul to return to the law of Moses."[81] Such a reading is supported by the work of Philip Davies, who confirms the earlier suggestion of Baltzer that the text possesses a covenantal literary structure.[82] On the other hand, the War Scroll and other apocalyptic fragments look forward to the conclusion of this metanarrative, when God grants victory to his people (the "sons of light") over their enemies (the "sons of darkness," also identified as the "[wicked] of the covenant") at the end of time in fulfillment of his covenant promises.[83] Songs of praise in the aftermath of this battle celebrate the victory as the culmination of God's covenant faithfulness:

> Blessed be your name, God of gods,
> For you have made [your people] great [in order to work] wonders.
> From of old you have kept us for your covenant.
> You have opened for us many times the gates of salvation.
> By reason of your covenant [you have removed] our unhappiness
> In your goodness toward us.[84]

Thus, the scrolls depict both the initial establishment and the final vindication of the Qumran community as the temporal outworkings of an overarching divine covenant faithfulness, incorporated as pivotal episodes of a theological narrative that contextualizes the community's identity.

With respect to ritual, Qumran texts illustrate that covenant membership was initiated, recognized, and sustained through the observance of communal symbols and liturgies. The Community Rule attests that the verbal metaphor of "entering" or "crossing over" into the covenant (in scriptural terms reminiscent of Israel's conquest of Canaan, as Evans notes) described the ceremonies for induction into the community (water baptism,

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[81] CD-A XVI, 1–2 (Martínez, 39).

[82] See discussion in Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document,"* JSOTSup 25 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1982), 50–53. As Davies concludes, "The document not only exhibits the general form of a covenant formulary, but is also *about* a covenant" (53).

[83] 1QM 1, 1 (Martínez, 95).

[84] 1QM 18, 7–8 (Martínez, 113).

symbolizing purification from sin and the presence of the Holy Spirit) and annual renewal of the covenant pledge (a "third month" ceremony that may correspond to the Festival of Weeks).[85] In the baptismal liturgy, new converts received blessings celebrating their atonement and cleansing from impurity "in the truth of your covenant."[86] Each year thereafter, they publicly reaffirmed their commitment to the "community of truth" in a covenant renewal ceremony led by the priests.[87] In addition, liturgical prayers structured the community's life of worship. Daily prayers, like the one reflected in 4Q503, were offered as regular blessings "at the rising of the [sun]" by "the sons of your covenant."[88] Festival prayers, such as the prayer for the Day of Atonement, rejoice that God has "remembered the covenant" and "renewed [his] covenant."[89] Likewise, the Words of the Luminaries expresses confidence in future forgiveness of sin, despite the present experience of exile, on the basis of past covenant faithfulness: "you took pity on them in your love for them, and on account of your covenant."[90] Although the members have failed to uphold the stipulations of the covenant perfectly, they "have not despised them to the point of breaking [the] covenant, in spite of all the anguish of our soul."[91] Because of their election "from the womb" to "keep your covenant and walk on all (your paths)," they frequently give thanks in the hymns of the *Hodayot* for preservation from divine wrath—in contrast to the wicked, who are "predestined for the day of annihilation," "walk on paths that are not good," and "reject your covenant."[92] A

[85] Evans, "Covenant in Qumran Literature," 62–65.

[86] 4Q414 2 I, 1–3; 2 II, 3–4 (Martínez, 439).

[87] 1QS II, 18–25 (Martínez, 5).

[88] 4Q503 1–6 III, 1; 7–9 IV, 3 (Martínez, 407).

[89] 1Q34 3 II, 5–6 (Martínez, 411).

[90] 4Q504 1–2 II, 8–9 (Martínez, 414).

[91] 4Q504 1–2 VI, 6–8 (Martínez, 415).

[92] 1QH^{a} VII, 19–22 (Martínez, 323).

sacred communal meal is also central to the community's self-understanding, as indicated by the years of instruction required before access to it was granted (and the revoking of access as a means of discipline.[93]

Finally, with respect to ethical practice, the Qumran texts emphasize the moral implications of covenant membership—patterns of behavior that distinguish the community, socially, from both the Jerusalem establishment and Gentile nations. A charter document like the Rule of the Congregation clarifies the responsibility of each member to live in compliance with the law of Moses, and to "swear by the covenant to be segregated from all the men of sin who walk along the path of irreverence. For they are not included in his covenant since they have neither sought nor examined his decrees in order to learn the hidden matters in which they err."[94] Fathers should instruct their children in the "regulations" and "precepts" of the covenant until they formally join it themselves as adults.[95] The emphasis on cultic purity also has a clearly moral character (and these two categories should not be sharply separated).[96] Halakhic material provides prescriptions for maintaining cultic purity in matters of sabbath-keeping, sacrifices, and purification rites and, in keeping with the Two Ways motif,[97] outlines the blessings that

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[93] Per Bilde, "The Common Meal in the Qumran-Essene Communities," in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, ed. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Nielsen, 2nd ed., Aarhus Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2001), 145–66. Commenting on the Community Rule, Bilde writes: "The expression 'the Congregation' is synonymous with the terms 'the Community' and 'the Covenant'. They all refer to the complete community of the Qumran-Essenes. It seems obvious that 'the pure meal of the Congregation' belongs to the same level as 'the property of the Congregation,' and both seem to symbolize the *partly* belonging to and membership of the community which is realized after one year plus a test" (150). He continues, "Full membership is symbolized by the 'Drink of the Congregation', by the complete transfer of the candidate's belongings to the community and by his full participation in 'the pure meal,' and this is first realized after two years of preparation."

[94] 1QS V, 7–11 (Martínez, 8).

[95] 1Q28a I, 4–13 (Martínez, 126).

[96] See, for example, the Halakhic Letter in 4Q394 (Martínez, 77–85); the Temple Scroll in 11Q19 (Martínez, 154–79); and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice in 4Q400 (Martínez, 419–24).

[97] See John J. Collins, "Covenant and Dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Scriptures and Sectarianism: Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eardmans, 2016), 179–94.

await those who adhere to the path of righteousness, and the curses in store for those who do not, in specifically covenantal terms:

> Words of blessing
> Of the instructor.
> To bless those who fear [God, do] his will, keep his commandments, remain constant in his holy covenant and walk with perfection [on all the paths of] his truth, those he has chosen for an eternal covenant, which endures for ever.[98]
>
> [And cursed be] all who carry out [their ev]il [designs], and those who implant wickedness [in their hearts, to plot against the covenant of] God and to . . . alter the precepts.[99]

In sum, the Qumran texts are replete with references to the covenant as a scripturally-derived ground for communal self-understanding in the identity-forming areas of belief (theological metanarrative), ritual (ceremonies and liturgies), and practice (cultic and ethical obligations), all of which distinguished members from non-members.

Covenant in Hellenistic Judaism

Though it is now widely recognized that the distinction between "Hellenistic" Judaism and other forms must not be pressed too far,[100] it is nevertheless helpful to group together the Jewish authors of the late Second Temple period who make the most extensive use of Greco-Roman philosophical and literary conventions, in order to identify changes or differences in their particular uses of the covenant concept. The covenant concept is conspicuous by its absence from these texts, which generally prefer to describe Jewish identity and history in classical philosophical and cosmic terms.

Wisdom of Solomon. A key precursor in this context is the Wisdom of

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[98] 1Q28b I, 1–3 (Martínez, 432).

[99] 4Q286 7 II, 11 (Martínez, 435).

[100] See, for example, Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?*, Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

Solomon, an apocryphal text, likely from the first century BC, which makes scattered references to the covenants (Wis 1:16; 12:21; 18:22). The first metaphorically describes the "covenant" with death made by the ungodly (1:16)—set in contrast, in keeping with the Two Ways tradition, with an implied covenant with wisdom leading to life. The latter references allude more generically to the patriarchal "oaths and covenants," as the basis for Moses's appeal for deliverance of the Israelites from bondage (18:22) and framework for interpreting Israel's present experience of exile as a form of divine discipline (12:21). Randall D. Chesnutt observes that in the historical summary section (10–19), such traditional biblical themes suggest "an identity deeply rooted in God's covenantal relationship with Israel."[101] Where other scholars have found merely a "universalizing tendency," with foundations in the Hellenistic (particularly, Stoic) ideals of natural law, cosmic (rather than national) salvation, and righteousness as living in harmony with reason, Chesnutt insists that the author avoids subordinating one tradition to the other, and rather develops a "creative and unique . . . synthesis," coherently integrating "covenantal convictions" with "Hellenistic metaphysics."[102]

Philo of Alexandria. The first-century Jewish exegete Philo of Alexandria employs the covenant motif in a variety of ways, which are far from consistent. The index to his works compiled by Borgen, Fuglseth, and Karsten identifies twenty-three occurrences of διαθήκη and two occurrences of συνθήκη.[103] A few of the most significant

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[101] Randall D. Chesnutt, "Covenant and Cosmos in Wisdom of Solomon 10–19," in Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*, 226.

[102] Chesnutt, "Covenant and Cosmos," 245.

[103] Peder Borgen, Kåre Fuglseth, and Roald Skarsten, *The Philo Index: A Complete Greek Word Index to the Writings of Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 86, 322. The occurrences of διαθήκη include *Leg.* 3.83, 85; *Sacr.* 57 (twice); *Det.* 67, 68; *Her.* 313; *Mut.* 51, 52 (three times), 53, 57, 58 (three times), 263; *Somn.* 2.223 (twice), 224 (twice), 237; *Spec.* 2.16. The occurrences of συνθήκη include *Congr.* 78; *Legat.* 37.

instances of διαθήκη have been further documented by Lester L. Grabbe.[104] As he notes, Philo comes closest to defining the term in *De mutatione nominum*:

> Covenants are drawn up for the benefit of those who are worthy of the gift, and thus a covenant is a symbol of the grace which God has set between Himself Who proffers it and man who receives . . . there are very many kinds of covenant, assuring bounties and gifts to the worthy, but the highest form of covenant is "I myself" . . . . For to some God is wont to extend His benefactions by other means, earth, water, air, sun, moon, heaven, and other agencies not material, but to others by Himself alone, making Himself the portion of those who receive Him.[105]

Philo thus conceives of the covenant primarily in terms of the bestowal of divine gifts—chiefly, the self-giving of God himself. Grabbe notes that he elsewhere connects such divine gifts with the *Logos* concept, which is far more prevalent throughout his corpus, describing the covenant as "the highest law and principle" implanted within the human soul. In this way Philo "seems to say . . . that the covenant is to be equated with the law and word of God."[106] This identification draws on a well-established tradition in which the "Hebrew *hokma* was equated with the Greek *Sophia*, and *sophia* with both Torah and Logos," such that "Torah-logos were already intertwined with each other."[107] Beyond this, however, the majority of Philo's references to the covenant occur in his expositions of biblical narratives (as in the *Questions on Genesis*), where he allegorically interprets it to mean wisdom, virtue, justice, or other divine gifts that facilitate participation in God. This leads Grabbe to conclude that "the covenant is not a major concern of Philo's . . . . When he finds the word 'covenant' in the text before him, he incorporates it into his discussion, but on his own terms . . . by making it a symbol for something else."[108]

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[104] Lester L. Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike? 'Covenant' in Philo and Josephus in the Context of Second Temple Judaic Religion," in Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*, 251–66.

[105] Philo of Alexandria, *Mut.* 51–59, as quoted in Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike?", 252–53.

[106] Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike?," 254.

[107] Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 98–99.

[108] Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike?," 257.

Josephus. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus makes little use of covenant as a theological concept in his three extant writings, the *Antiquities of the Jews*, *The Jewish War*, and *Against Apion*. Grabbe observes that even in his summaries of the biblical narratives in the *Antiquities*, where the covenants would naturally arise for discussion, Josephus "avoids them all," using the terms διαθήκη and συνθήκη only in their more mundane senses to refer to wills or agreements between individuals, such as the covenant between David and Jonathan (e.g., *A.J.* 6.11.8; 6.12.4).[109] The closest approximation to a definition that Josephus provides seems to have this meaning in view, when it affirms, in a speech of Herod, that "observation of covenants takes place among the bitterest enemies, but among friends is absolutely necessary" (*A.J.* 15.5.3). In keeping with this understanding, the *Jewish War* also uses "covenant" only a handful of times to describe political alliances (*B.J.* 1.19.4; 2.16.4), while in the polemical work *Against Apion*, it does not appear at all. Grabbe attributes this tendency to Josephus's desire to accommodate a primarily Greco-Roman audience, for whom "covenant" would be an unfamiliar concept.[110] Halpern-Amaru concurs, observing that, like many Second Temple pseudepigraphal texts, Josephus downplays both the covenant-making dialogues themselves and the connections between covenant and land within the divine promises of the biblical narratives, re-writing these themes in the more general terms of "prediction of the future, God as caretaker and ally, and assurances of great population growth."[111] Halpern-Amaru also attributes this reluctance to Josephus's concern for his primarily Roman audience, though she explains it less in terms of his accounting for their unfamiliarity with Jewish religious terms, and more as a strategic avoidance of association with "Davidic messianism, with its revolutionary implications in his own

[109] Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike?," 257.

[110] Grabbe, "Did All Jews Think Alike?," 257, 266.

[111] Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible*, 101.

day."[112]

Conclusion. Jewish writings rooted in Hellenistic contexts tend either to downplay or broaden the scope of the traditional biblical themes associated with the covenant concept, connecting it with universal virtues and cosmic principles such as wisdom and reason, and positioning its demarcating events within a more general scheme of human (rather than redemptive) history. These moves undoubtedly result from the need to account for the situation of exile under Greek and Roman occupation, in which the covenantal promises of land, monarchy, and blessing appeared to be unfulfilled.

Covenant in the "Parting of the Ways" Literature

Since the 1990s, an extensive literature has developed around the question of the "parting(s) of the ways" between the emerging movements of rabbinic Judaism and patristic Christianity during the first and second centuries, seeking to identify the point(s) at which, or means by which, these groups differentiated themselves and, in the process, constructed particular representations of each other to accentuate those differences. A review of this scholarship will demonstrate that theological concepts such as the covenant have been increasingly relegated to the margins of these discussions. It will also provide a transition to consideration of the use of the covenant in the earliest Christian writings, the New Testament.

A leader in this discussion has been the biblical scholar James D. G. Dunn, whose work *The Parting of the Ways* set the terms of the debate (and gave it a name) when first published in 1992. Seeking to re-establish the Jewish context of Jesus and the early Christian movement as a first step in tracing the eventual separation between these movements, Dunn identifies four "pillars of Judaism" which, despite the wide variety in

[112] Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible*, 115.

Second Temple Judaism, can nevertheless provide a "common and unifying core . . . a fourfold foundation on which all these more diverse forms of Judaism built, a common heritage which they all interpreted in their own ways"—monotheism, election, Torah/covenant, and land/temple.[113]

By including covenant in his third "pillar" (inseparable from Torah), Dunn affirms much of the earlier work of E. P. Sanders, whose reassessment of divine election and good works in Second Temple Judaism had coined the term "covenantal nomism" and argued for its gracious, rather than legalistic, character.[114] Against traditional Protestant argumentation dating to the anti-Catholic writings of Luther, Sanders maintained that in the Jewish literature he surveyed—including tannaitic/rabbinic, Dead Sea Scrolls, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal, and Palestinian material—"obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace."[115] The relevance of this work for the "Parting of the Ways," as recognized by Dunn, was to demonstrate how this "pattern of religion" distinguished Israel's identity as God's covenant people—theologically, through a doctrine of election, but also socially, through the "boundary markers" of circumcision, sabbath-keeping, and food laws.[116]

In Dunn's view, it was this ethnically-exclusive covenantal nomism that Paul so vehemently attacked—an understanding of covenant that "insisted on treating the law as a boundary round Israel, marking off Jew from Gentile, with only those inside as heirs of God's promise to Abraham;"—in short, "it was the law abused to which Paul objected, not the law itself."[117] In this Paul undermined one of the four pillars of Jewish self-

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[113] James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 25.

[114] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, 40th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

[115] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 420.

[116] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 37–42.

[117] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 182.

identity and thus directly contributed to the "parting of the ways," though the full reconfiguration of all four pillars within Christianity was completed only "over a lengthy period, at different times and places."[118] Dunn places the ultimate "parting" in the aftermath of the Bar Kochba revolt (AD 132–135), when a truly rabbinic Judaism asserted itself as normative over against the remnants of competing sects (including Christians), and "the separation of the main bodies of Christianity and Judaism was clear-cut and final, whatever interaction there continued to be at the margins."[119]

The initial publication of Dunn's work in 1992 did not settle the debate in subsequent years, however, as evidenced by the title of the collection of essays edited by Adam H. Becker and Annette Y. Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*.[120] In this volume and elsewhere, scholars pushed back on the "Parting" model—the idea of "an early and absolute split between Judaism and Christianity, but also the 'master narrative' about Jewish and Christian history that pivots on this notion"—as insufficiently accounting for the complex dynamics of interaction in Jewish-Christian relations well beyond the early second century. The editors argue for a less dichotomous reading, which can "illuminate the broad range of regional and cultural variation in the encounters between different biblically-based religious groups."[121] They contend that in fact the ways never fully and definitively parted, but continued to evolve and define themselves in reference to each other throughout Late Antiquity and into the Middle Ages.[122]

Among the contributors, the most vociferous critiques come from Paula Frederiksen, Daniel Boyarin, and Adam H. Becker. Frederiksen reassesses the Christian

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[118] Dunn, introduction to *The Partings of the Ways*, xxiii-xxiv.

[119] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 312.

[120] Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[121] Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, 3–4.

[122] Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, 23.

contra Judaeos tradition through an analysis of the urban lived experience of an ancient Mediterranean city, arguing that the frequency of interaction between Jews and Gentiles, the permeability of the Jewish community, and the lack of actual persecution of Christians by Jews all attest that "the ways were *not* separating, certainly not fast enough and consistently enough to please the ideologues."[123] Boyarin rejects the "Parting" model's underlying presupposition that Judaism is to be understood, empirically, as Christianity's parent religion, drawing attention to the "border" spaces that demarcate one group from another in the construction of identity, and the linguistic techniques—such as terms like "Judaism" and "Christianity"—by which these were produced and socially enforced.[124] Becker expands the scope of inquiry beyond the Western/Roman imperial context to include consideration of the "Parting" (or lack thereof) between Jews and Christians in the Eastern churches of Mesopotamia through the sixth century, concluding that while the conventional "Parting of the Ways" may partially describe the situation in one particular setting, this limited applicability drastically reduces its usefulness as an explanatory model.[125] What is worth noting in these responses to Dunn and others, however, is that they do not engage his claims on the theological level (which was the perspective from which he asserted that the concept of the covenant functioned, alongside the Torah, as one of the four pillars of Judaism). Rather, they apply social, critical, and postcolonial methodologies to challenge the assumed notion of "religion" itself, not seriously attending to the role and effects of theological commitments.

An exception to this tendency is the work of Stephen G. Wilson, who, despite also rejecting Dunn's overly-schematized argument, does make a serious effort to

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[123] Paula Frederiksen, "What Parting of the Ways?" in Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, 61.

[124] Daniel Boyarin, "Semantic Differences; or, 'Judaism'/'Christianity,'" in Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, 65–66.

[125] Adam H. Becker, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal Lines," in Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*, 373–92.

describe their social separation at least partly in terms of their theological argumentation over the issues that Dunn identifies as central, such as law, temple, and covenant.[126] In his analysis of Hebrews and Barnabas, where these themes are prominent, however, Wilson reduces this argumentation to a flat "supersessionism," stoked by fear of a reconstructed temple, which he describes as their "overriding obsession."[127] Moreover, a reluctance to make specific characterizations of Jewish-Christian relations—beyond the simple affirmation of "considerable complexity"—limits his persuasive force.[128]

Also reflecting this pattern of subordinating theological dynamics to their social or rhetorical functions has been the influential work of Judith M. Lieu, who dedicated a full-length study to exploring the construction of Judaism in the second-century Christian writings of Asia Minor.[129] Lieu describes the ways in which the ongoing interactions between Jews and Christians (the "reality") were depicted, in literary form (the "image"), for the purposes of Christian self-definition.[130] The theological dimensions of such dialogues are, in her view, "peripheral to the task of exploring 'presentations' of Jews and Judaism" in Christian writings—though she acknowledges that to exclude these dimensions totally is impossible in practice.[131] However, in light of her quite accurate assessment that Jews and Christians employed "similar texts, similar exegetical techniques, diverging sharply in conclusion only because of the divergence between their initial presuppositions," it is especially curious

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[126] Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians, 70–170 C. E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 285.

[127] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 110.

[128] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 301. He argues, "Reducing the story to a single issue, trend, or cause not only misleads, but also hides the rich and subtle variations to which the evidence points. And this is perhaps the only overarching conclusion we can draw."

[129] Judith M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

[130] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 12.

[131] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 2.

that Lieu does not find it worthwhile to analyze these presuppositions, which are indisputably theological in nature, and which undoubtedly contribute to the motivation for the rhetorical "presentations" she describes. Regardless, in her subsequent work on early Christian identity formation, Lieu reiterates her critique of the "essentialism" espoused by scholars who utilize such "developmental descriptions" as the "parting of the ways" model, in which Christianity

> appears as a self-contained phenomenon, subject, no doubt, to influence from the ideas of the time, and frequently engaged in resistance to them, and even ultimately victim of, or beneficiary of, external political movements, but still to be analysed as if fundamentally isolable and explicable in its own terms. There are here the seeds—or perhaps the fruit—of an essentialism that anyone with a theological commitment to Christianity may not be totally able to avoid.[132]

Lieu later explains that to avoid this pitfall, focus must be placed on the function of ideas, rather than their content—her own work is "not a study of the 'theologies' of early Christian texts," but an exploration of "the ways that texts construct readers and 'reality' through acts of power, by silence and marginalization, as well as by unarticulated assumptions, by the values and hierarchies engendered, and by the authoritative voice claimed."[133] Once again, however, it remains unclear why phenomena like assumptions, values, hierarchies, and authorities cannot or should not be analyzed in theological terms.

In a similar vein, Daniel Boyarin expands the argument of his earlier essay into a full-length monograph, further developing his notion of "border lines" to reveal that both Jewish and Christian leaders constructed and imposed particular identities upon each other through discourses of "orthodoxy" and "heresy," construing each other as adherents to a heretical "religion," differentiated as "other."[134] Though he acknowledges that "theological discourse" was the primary instrument for this difference-making, Boyarin

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[132] Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

[133] Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 25.

[134] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 2.

limits his attention to the doctrine of the Logos, which, in his view, was a widespread notion of pre-Christian Judaism before being co-opted by the framers of "orthodoxy" (on both sides) as a core tenet to be affirmed or denied. Boyarin concludes that prior to these forceful separations, there was nothing like a "parting of the ways"—indeed, comparing the works of Philo with the Gospel of John, he finds that "in the doctrine of God there is no essential and crucial difference between Judaism and Christianity."[135] Thus, despite offering a kind of doctrinal analysis, Boyarin's study smooths over what are actually significant theological differences to highlight their pragmatic uses in the exercise of social power.

Conclusion. Although James Dunn, an early framer of the "Parting of the Ways" discussion, suggested that the theological elements of law and covenant played significant roles in the process of separation between Judaism and Christianity, the tide of more recent scholarship has turned away from approaches of this kind in favor of social and rhetorical analyses. While still often acknowledging the importance of underlying assumptions and presuppositions as factors, they have just as often proceeded as though these phenomena were non-theological (or at least conceptually separable from theological commitments) in nature.

Covenant in the New Perspective on Paul

Dunn's discussion of the "Parting of the Ways" also provides a point of departure for considering an additional aspect of covenant and Judaism in relation to emerging Christianity, the so-called "New Perspective on Paul"—which is more properly a new perspective on Judaism, with implications for the interpretation of Paul. Though approaching it from various angles, the scholars associated, broadly, with this "new

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[135] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 127.

perspective" have collectively maintained that the covenant theme is vital for an updated portrait of Jewish religion, and thus for accurately understanding Pauline Christianity.

As noted above, the pioneering and paradigm-shifting work of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, coined the term "covenantal nomism" to advance beyond the traditional "Lutheran" depiction of Judaism as a "religion of legalistic works righteousness," seeking to earn salvation through meticulous observance of Torah, participation in the temple cultus, and adherence to the "works of the law."[136] In place of this Judaism, which Sanders dismissed as an invention of modern Christian scholarship influenced by Reformation-era theological assumptions,[137] Sanders elucidated a "pattern of religion" in early rabbinic, Qumran, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal, and Palestinian Jewish texts in which "God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and . . . the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression."[138] Often summarized as the difference between "getting in" and "staying in," covenantal nomism describes obedience to the law as maintaining a privileged status already granted by divine grace. God's initiative in electing Israel to a covenant relationship is the governing presupposition, in Sanders's view, for the structure of the nation's whole religious life, including the blessings and curses that follow upon obedience or disobedience to the revealed commands, and the provision of forgiveness by means of sacrifices in the case of the

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[136] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 36–37. As Sanders notes, he was not the first to propose a revaluation of Christian scholarship on Judaism; see, e.g., the earlier overtures of George Foot Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *HTR* 14, no. 3 (July 1921): 197–254; Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56, no. 3 (1963): 199–215.

[137] Sanders asserts that in traditional readings, Jewish texts "are understood not as the Rabbis meant them, but according to preconceived theological categories, according to which any nomistic religion must be legalistic in the negative sense. It is this entire interpretive framework which is wrong." Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 233.

[138] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75.

latter.[139] In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Sanders notes such differences as the Qumran community's emphasis on the covenantal election of individuals, rather than the nation as a whole (as in rabbinic writings), since this implies the personal exercise of the free will for belief and repentance (as opposed to a passively inherited birthright).[140] Nevertheless, across all varieties of Second Temple Judaism, the same general "pattern of religion" obtains: "the place of obedience in the overall scheme is always the same: it is the *consequence* of being in the covenant and the *requirement for remaining* in the covenant."[141] Apart from a few exceptions,[142] Sanders concludes that the understanding of the covenant as gracious divine election, and obedience as "appropriate behaviour" (rather than earning favor), did not deteriorate, even by the time of early rabbinic Judaism, and that this concept was so "fundamental" as to be simply "presupposed" in many contexts, even when not explicitly named.[143]

In a variety of published works (many collected in a 2008 volume), James D. G. Dunn expands upon the revised portrait of Judaism introduced by Sanders, and, in a 1982 lecture, coined the term by which it came to be known when applied to the interpretation of Paul: the "new perspective."[144] Though appreciative of Sanders's formula, Dunn suggests that "covenantal nomism" may overplay the "covenantal" side of the equation.[145] Indeed, in applying these insights to the interpretation of Paul's

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[139] "The centrality of the covenant concept . . . is in part shown by the assumption which lies behind the discussions of atonement. Atonement implies the restoration to a pre-existing relationship, and that relationship can best be called covenantal." Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 236–37.

[140] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 270.

[141] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 320.

[142] Such as 4 Ezra, in which "covenantal nomism has collapsed" and truly given way to "legalistic perfectionism." Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 409.

[143] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 420–21.

[144] James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed., WUNT 185 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[145] Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 62.

discussion of the "works of the law" (where he exhibits more substantial disagreement with Sanders), Dunn focuses mainly on their social and ethnic dimensions, as sources of division between Jews and Gentiles in the emerging Christian movement. For Dunn, it was only in this exclusionary sense that Paul rejected the notion of the Israelite covenant—otherwise, he embraces and employs it (particularly, the Abrahamic Covenant, which he sees renewed or made effective in the new covenant) as a source of Jewish identity in which Gentiles are invited to participate through Christ. Dunn also proposed a new understanding of Paul's term "righteousness of God [δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ]," noting its relational aspects and defining it in terms of God's "covenant faithfulness."[146]

N. T. Wright returned a central focus to the covenant concept. Maintaining Dunn's interpretation of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in terms of covenant faithfulness,[147] he explores how Paul's gospel receives and transforms established Jewish categories of thought, such as monotheism and election, and develops them, through a covenantal scriptural storyline, to find their "climax," in the advent of Jesus the Messiah.[148] Exegetically tracing the construction of Paul's covenant theology in such texts as Galatians 3:10–14, which describes the promise of blessing and the threat of curse in the covenantal terms of Genesis 15 and Deuteronomy 27–28, respectively, Wright concludes that, for Paul, "in the cross of Jesus, the Messiah, the curse of exile itself reached its height, and was dealt with once and for all, so that the blessing of covenant renewal might flow out the other side, as God always intended."[149] Importantly, Wright insists that Paul's reading arises from the scriptural texts themselves, rather than being imposed from an external source:

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[146] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 340. For a significant recent challenge to this reading, see Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation*, WUNT 2/386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

[147] N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 194–216.

[148] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 258.

[149] Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 141.

"Scripture is where the promises, the foundations of the covenant whose terms are the point at issue, are to be found."[150] In all these ways, Wright critiques the point frequently made by Sanders that Paul conceives of the doctrine of justification by thinking "from solution to plight" (from the starting point of his own experience of salvation through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ, to a deduced original situation of sinfulness requiring such salvation). On the contrary, the "problem" was intrinsic to the covenantal narratives of the scriptural texts themselves, which emphasize Israel's inability to keep Torah so as to avoid (or end) the judgment of exile and inherit the Abrahamic blessings.

In sum, scholars associated with the "New Perspective" have continued to recognize the importance of the covenant to Jewish thought through the second century and beyond. For Sanders, the covenant is absolutely central to Jewish self-understanding, as the foundation for Israel's doctrines of election, atonement, and blessings and curses. In further contributions, Dunn points to the social implications of these convictions, in an ethnically exclusionary belief in God's covenant faithfulness (demanding observance of the boundary-marking "works of the law" that evoke Paul's criticism), and Wright sets out the well-established biblical themes and narratives of covenant from the Old Testament as the raw material for Paul's distinctive christological transformations. Because these studies are concerned with reconstruction of first-century Judaism for the sake of interpretation of Paul, they can also introduce an examination of the use of the covenant concept in the Christian writings of the New Testament.

Covenant in the New Testament

While it is notoriously perilous to equate biblical words with biblical concepts in a direct or reductionistic manner,[151] a survey of occurrences of διαθήκη in the New

[150] Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," 2:144.

[151] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

Testament can nevertheless provide a starting point for considering their theological significance within that corpus. The entry in *TDNT* notes that, following the consistent rendering of בְּרִית in the LXX (where it occurs 270 times), New Testament writers employ διαθήκη primarily to refer to the theological notion of a covenant, rather than the legal notion of "last will or testament" which was its classical and secular meaning (with a few exceptions).[152] The word appears thirty-three times in total (seven being citations from the Old Testament).[153] Since the theological significance of the concept in any one of these texts could occupy a full-length monograph (and has, in some cases), this survey is limited to the most rudimentary features.[154] Broadly speaking, the most important development to note is the central position and importance now accorded to the new covenant, as the culmination and fulfillment, in Christ, of the previous biblical covenants, as described by Paul, the Gospel writers, and the author of Hebrews.

Paul

In the earliest occurrences, the Pauline letters refer to the covenants in Romans (9:4; 11:27), the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6, 14), Galatians (3:15, 17; 4:24), and Ephesians (2:12). In Romans, Paul pairs the covenants (plural) with the "glory," "law," "temple service," and "promises" belonging to ethnic Jews by virtue of their election as the people of God, in which Gentiles participate through Christ, as the remainder of Romans 9–11 explains (9:4). In Galatians, Paul emphasizes the permanent nature of even a human covenant (3:15) as an illustration of the irrevocable nature of the covenant promise made to Abraham (3:17), despite the imposition of a later law at

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[152] Gottfried Quell and Johannes Behm, "Διαθήκη," *TDNT*, 2:124.

[153] Quell and Behm, *TDNT*, 2:124. These are found in Hebrews (17), the Pauline corpus (9), the Gospels (4), Acts (2), and Revelation (1). The reference in Rev 11:19 is to the ark of the covenant as a visionary element and will not be considered below.

[154] For a useful overview of recent biblical scholarship related to the covenants (to which this survey is also indebted), see Hahn, "Covenant in Old and New Testaments."

Sinai.[155] He also introduces the "allegory" of Sarah and Hagar to exemplify the "two covenants," one corresponding to the slavery of the flesh in the Jerusalem below, the other to the freedom of the Spirit in the Jerusalem above (4:24). The general reference to the "covenants of promise" in Ephesians describes the privileges of "the commonwealth of Israel" now available to Gentiles who believe in Christ (Eph 2:12). In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul draws out this contrast further (2 Cor 3:1–18), juxtaposing the "old covenant," which was "carved in letters on stone" with the "new covenant," which is "not of the letter but of the Spirit." With its opening reference to the Corinthians themselves as a letter of recommendation "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (3:2–3), this unit unmistakably alludes to the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah, with its prediction of a law written upon the hearts of the people of God (Jer 31:33). Meanwhile, in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul invokes a very early tradition ("received from the Lord") containing the eucharistic words of institution, in the phrase, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"[156] (1 Cor 11:25).

In light of the discussion around the New Perspective, the literature on covenant in Paul is now expansive. In addition to the works of Sanders, Dunn, and Wright already mentioned,[157] a new generation of scholars have advanced these readings further, as in the case of Dunn's student Ellen Christiansen, who studies Paul's use of the baptism ritual to redefine covenantal identity in christological and pneumatological terms

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[155] In his lexical study, Porter regards the occurrences in Gal 3:15 and 17 as denoting a testament or will and thus non-theological. Stanley E. Porter, "The Concept of Covenant in Paul," in Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*, 279.

[156] The social character of the Lord's Supper as a community-defining meal is appreciated by Dennis E. Smith, though he severely neglects the covenantal theology that undergirds it in both Paul and the synoptic Gospel accounts. Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); see also Geert Hallbäck, "Sacred Meal and Social Meeting: Paul's Argument in 1 Cor. 11.17–34," in Nielsen and Nielsen, *Meals in a Social Context*, 167–76.

[157] See also James D. G. Dunn, "Did Paul Have a Covenant Theology? Reflections on Romans 9.4 and 11.27," in Porter and De Roo, *Concept of the Covenant*, 287–307; N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 21–39.

and construct new social boundary markers in relation to Judaism.[158] Others, such as A. Andrew Das, have contested New Perspective readings, disputing the applicability of the "covenantal nomism" paradigm to Paul and suggesting Jewish apocalyptic as a more fruitful background for interpreting the covenantal thought of his letters.[159] However, the number of works in this latter category has remained relatively small, in part, as Stanley Porter explains, because the New Perspective "tends to emphasize continuity between the old and the new, almost above all else," and the traditional view—that he uses the device of the new covenant to emphasize discontinuity—may now appear "antiquated."[160]

Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Like Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:25, each of the synoptic gospels mentions the covenant in its account of the Last Supper (with some variation in phrasing). Each evangelist connects the covenant with the element of the wine and the blood symbolized by it. In the Gospel of Matthew, the injunction to drink the cup is grounded with the assertion "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). Both the precise wording ("blood of the covenant," lacking the descriptor "new") and the association with the atonement, or the forgiveness of sins, suggest an allusion to the "blood of the covenant" sprinkled upon the people by Moses at the inauguration of the Sinai Covenant (Exod 24:8). The description in the Gospel of Mark is identical, except that it omits the explanatory phrase "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 14:24). The Gospel of Luke shows the closest affinity with the Pauline formula, though also incorporating the language of "poured out" from the Matthean and Markan versions, in its statement, "This cup that is poured out for you is

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[158] Ellen Juhl Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers*, AGJU 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 290.

[159] A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

[160] Porter, "Concept of Covenant in Paul," 270–71.

the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). In its companion work of Acts, both occurrences of "covenant" refer to the Abrahamic, and appear in speeches rehearsing Israel's history to Jewish audiences (Acts 3:25; 7:8). Unfortunately, as Scott Hahn notes, very little scholarly work has explored the use of the covenant theme in the Gospels in depth.[161]

Hebrews

The most developed covenantal theology in the New Testament appears in Hebrews, where διαθήκη occurs seventeen times, and several extended arguments depend on a specifically covenantal logic.[162] Of the occurrences, which are concentrated in Hebrews 7–10, five are drawn from quotations of Jeremiah 31:31 (the new covenant) and Exodus 24:8 (the Sinai covenant), both crucial to the typological comparison between the old and new covenants (Heb 8:8–10; 9:20; 10:16). The remaining instances support the argument that the new and "better covenant" prophesied by Jeremiah has been inaugurated in the coming of Christ, its priestly guarantor (7:22), mediator (8:6; 12:24), testator (9:16, 17), and sacrifice (10:29; 13:20). The priests and sacrifices of the Sinai covenant served as "a copy and a shadow" of these spiritual realities, and Christ's ministry is "as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (8:5–6). The first covenant is now "obsolete [παλαιούμενον]," "growing old [γηράσκον]," and "ready to vanish away [ἀφανισμοῦ]"

[161] Hahn, "Covenant in Old and New Testaments," 281. The exception that Hahn notes is Tom Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). However, this work seeks to reconstruct the attitudes toward covenant of the historical Jesus, rather than analyzing the theological usage of the evangelists.

[162] On covenant in Hebrews, see especially Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews*, JSNTSup 44 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1990); John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews*, Society for New Testament Studies 75 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der Frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 29 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996). Lehne rightly insists that a thorough study of the theme must not be limited to these explicit occurrences, since the author "associates a whole symbolic universe with the idea, a particular relationship between God and his people." Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 11.

(Heb 8:13). As Susanne Lehne summarizes, the author balances dual emphases on continuity and discontinuity between Israelite history and Christian experience by "creatively reinterpreting the category of *covenant* . . . to depict the Christ event in *continuity* with and as the perfect fulfillment of the cultic heritage of Israel"; at the same time, however, in "stressing the elements of *newness* and drawing a *contrast* to the former system, he succeeds in presenting Christ as the permanent, definitive, *superior* replacement of that same heritage."[163]

Conclusion

From its earliest stages, the covenant concept played a central role in the formation of Jewish identity (though the precise nature of that role has been enthusiastically debated among biblical scholars), as attested throughout the writings of the Old Testament. This centrality only continued, and perhaps even intensified, in the Jewish encounter with Hellenism during the Second Temple period, and perhaps reached its most comprehensive form in the Qumran community of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Scholars have come to recognize that in all these contexts, the covenant idea encompassed more than a mere theological doctrine, but rather implied a whole set of interconnected beliefs, rituals, and ethical codes which formed the basis for a corporate identity.

The earliest Christian writers inherited the framework of a covenantal history from the same biblical texts as their Jewish counterparts. This history began with God's promises to Noah and Abraham and continued in his covenant with Israel. Where Christian descriptions diverged was in explaining the relationship between these Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants: for Paul, the Abrahamic covenant communicated a unilateral promise that the later imposition of a legal arrangement in the Sinai covenant

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[163] Lehne, *New Covenant in Hebrews*, 119.

could not nullify, despite Israel's failure to maintain it and the judgment of exile.[164] Moreover, the development of a doctrine of the new covenant, as both a novel stage and the final culmination of the covenantal history, further distinguished Christian writers, who, finding this idea in the prophecies of Jeremiah, connected it with the advent of Jesus Christ. For Paul, the new covenant consists of the spiritual realities of forgiveness of sin and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting from Christ's work—which the old covenant typologically foreshadowed, as the author of Hebrews contends. These associations had been recognized, earliest of all, in the eucharistic tradition represented in both Paul and the synoptic Gospels, which placed them at the forefront of the church's liturgical life by recording the "new covenant in my blood" in Christ's words of institution. New Testament writers thus received a scriptural concept and reinterpreted it on the basis of christological convictions, redeploying it as the foundation for the Christian community's belief (theological narration), liturgy (the eucharistic ritual), and ethic (reception of the Holy Spirit as superior to possession of the written law).

[164] As Hahn puts it, "Paul and his fellow Jews differed over which covenant was primary and thus constituted the people of God. Paul gave historical priority and theological primacy to the Abrahamic covenant as ratified in Gen. 22.16–18—a 'covenant of divine commitment'. His opponents gave primacy to the Mosaic covenant at Sinai—a 'covenant of human obligation'." Hahn, "Covenant in Old and New Testaments," 284.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUNDS: COVENANT AND IDENTITY IN GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE AND HETERODOXY

In distinction from the last chapter's tracing of a well-developed covenantal theology across the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament, the present chapter will note the opposite situation in the Greco-Roman culture that forms the backdrop for early Christian church of the second century: the absence of a covenant concept, or any true parallel to it, in the religious and social spheres. The chapter will also explore how the sects of Christian heterodoxy that inhabited this culture—especially Gnostics and Marcionites—utilized, or did not utilize, the covenant concept. This chapter thus treats the second and third cultural domains in which the orthodox Christian usage of the covenant concept developed (in addition to Judaism). Where the previous chapter revealed extensive usage of the concept for identity formation within Judaism, the two major sections of this chapter will reveal a corresponding lack of use (in the case of Greco-Roman culture) and misuse (in the case of heterodox movements), from the perspective of the orthodox Christian writers whose writings rhetorically address these groups. However, an examination of the concepts and processes of identity formation in which members of these groups did engage will allow the distinct features of the Christian approach to stand in sharper relief.[1]

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[1] Nevertheless, methodologically, this study seeks to remain mindful of Jonathan Z. Smith's warnings against constructing arguments for an absolutizing "uniqueness" that "forbids comparison by virtue of its very assertion." Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 116. Instead, it aims for "distinction," which "invites the comparative enterprise" by specifying differences in relation to particular characteristics or relations.

Covenant and Identity Formation in Greco-Roman Culture

Use of the Greek term διαθήκη far predates, and also significantly varies from, the LXX translators' use of it to render the Hebrew בְּרִית (which the writers of the New Testament generally follow). The entry in *TDNT* establishes that its most common sense in the Hellenistic period was the legal one of a "last will and testament."[2] Metaphorically, this meaning could extend to a personal legacy, or what is left behind after death as one's "last orders, sayings, or admonitions." Second, in a political sense, it could signify an "agreement" or "treaty" between two parties, possibly recorded in writing and sealed with an oath.[3] Third, in an administrative or organizational sense, it could refer to a general "ordinance" or "disposition," describing a statute or order by which something is arranged or enacted.[4] In Moulton and Milligan's view, the legal sense of "will" or "testament" represents a specific instance of this more general meaning (which nevertheless tends to appear in religious contexts).[5] Similarly, the lexicon of Liddell, Scott, and Jones lists a "disposition of property by will, testament" as the primary sense, with secondary meanings of "deposit" (in Dinarchus), and "compact, covenant."[6] Most recently, the *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* distinguishes five possibilities: (1) "state, condition"; (2) "document disposing of a deceased person's estate, will"; (3) "deposits"; (4) "agreement, covenant (between individuals)"; and (5) "decree or covenant (of God)."[7] This latter usage is restricted to the New Testament. These works agree in identifying the

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[2] Gottfried Quell and Johannes Behm, "Διαθήκη," *TDNT*, 2:124–26. The earliest examples come from the writings of Aristophanes, Plato, and Epictetus.

[3] Quell and Behm, *TDNT*, 2:125. Aristophanes also uses the term in this sense.

[4] Quell and Behm, *TDNT*, 2:125. The sole indisputable example here comes from Dinarchus.

[5] James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914).

[6] Henry George Liddell et al., eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), s.v. "Διαθήκη." Here, with one exception, all the examples cited are from biblical literature.

[7] James Diggle, ed., *Cambridge Greek Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), s.v. "Διαθήκη."

general notion of disposition (ordering of affairs), and the specific notion of a will or testament, as the dominant ones in secular Greek usage, with the theological concept of "covenant" being peculiar to the LXX and New Testament.

In addition, a number of full-length lexical studies on διαθήκη were published in the early twentieth century. Frederick Norton's work includes a concordance of occurrences in ancient Greek literature.[8] He argues that, in keeping with the verbal form διατίθημι, the noun διαθήκη always denotes an "arrangement or disposition . . . together with some idea of mutuality."[9] It is a fairly uncommon term (occurring in just nine of 212 ancient writers examined), reserved for "a solemn transaction originally connected with religious rites and obligations."[10] This, in part, is what distinguishes it from συνθήκη, "an ordinary bargain or contract."[11] While the most frequent meaning is that of a will or testament, it can also signify "a disposition or settlement of relations between two parties, wherein one party lays down the conditions, and the other accepts them and binds himself by an oath or solemn promise to keep them."[12] The second section of Norton's study is historical, tracing the origins and development of Greek will-making, including the religious adoption ceremony by which a son-in-law was designated the heir of a family estate through marriage to the daughter in a "solemn covenant."[13] When recorded in writing, this agreement became binding, upon the signature of the heir, and thus διαθήκη came to denote either the act or the document.[14] By the third century BC, however, the

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[8] Frederick Owen Norton, *A Lexicographical and Historical Study of Diatheke: From the Earliest Times to the End of the Classical Period*, Historical and Linguistic Studies in Literature Related to the New Testament 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908).

[9] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 30.

[10] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 30.

[11] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 31.

[12] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 413.

[13] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 51.

[14] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 53.

connection with adoption was lost, and it came simply to describe a will or testament.[15]

Johannes Behm likewise surveys the classical background but also includes biblical literature, concluding that the primary sense, beginning with the LXX, is "disposition" or "arrangement," rather than "testament" or "covenant."[16] Thus, Behm posits a semantic disjunction between the Hebrew בְּרִית of the Old Testament and the Greek διαθήκη of the LXX and New Testament, representing, in his view, an evolution in the theological meaning from contractual/bilateral to gracious/unilateral.[17]

Jacobus de Vuyst, in a study of Hebrews, concurred with Norton that διαθήκη originally connoted a legal adoption to preserve a family line (*adoptio inter vivos*), which involved assigning an inheritance to an heir, and that this aspect—the "testament"—eventually became dominant, as evidenced even by certain instances in the New Testament.[18] At the composition of the LXX, however, this transition had not yet occurred, and the word still retained the older meaning of a unilateral adoption.[19]

Thus, while scholarship on the secular or pre-Christian usage of διαθήκη has espoused a variety of views, it has generally agreed that the term originated in the religious-legal realm (spheres not sharply distinguished in classical Greek culture, as reflected in the use of religious ceremonies to solemnize legal transactions like adoption and inheritance). It eventually came to refer simply to a will or testament. Beyond this, the reasons and methods for the term's adoption by the LXX translators and New

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[15] Norton, *Lexicographical Study of Diatheke*, 55.

[16] Johannes Behm, "Der Begriff Diatheke im Neuen Testament" (PhD diss., Naumburg, G. Pätz'sche Buchdruckerei Lippert, 1912).

[17] Ernst Lohmeyer followed Behm in emphasizing this unilateral characteristic of the LXX and New Testament usage, in distinction from the mutuality implied by the rendering "covenant." Ernst Lohmeyer, *Diatheke: Ein Beitrag zur Erkltirung des Neutestamentlichen Begriffs*, UNT (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913).

[18] Jacobus De Vuyst, *"Oud En Nieuw Verbond" in de Brief Aan de Hebreeën* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1964).

[19] James Swetnam, "'Diathēkē' in the Septuagint Account of Sinai: A Suggestion," *Biblica* 47, no. 3 (1966): 441.

Testament writers are historically and theologically complex and have evoked considerable debate, though the usage shows significant development in these contexts.

If, then, the biblical and theological sense of διαθήκη as covenant was not in use outside Jewish and Christian communities, were there alternative notions of religious collective identity that functioned in parallel, or as a substitute, in Greco-Roman culture? A brief survey of some related identity-forming concepts derived from the religious and social realms will allow for a comparison with the Christian covenant idea.

Religious Identity

An article by Charles King can helpfully frame the discussion below by distilling the leading characteristics of corporate identity in Greek and Roman patterns of religion, many of which will be illustrated in the survey below.[20] Pushing back against the over-generalized assertion that Roman religion lacked any definable concept of "belief," King argues that the fundamental difference between Christian and pagan religion consists not in the complete absence of beliefs (which are prevalent in both contexts), but in the organization of beliefs, and in the systems for mitigating various beliefs. In contrast to Christianity, which employs the notion of orthodoxy to assemble a core set of non-negotiable beliefs ("dogma"), adherence to which becomes the primary criterion for determining group membership, Roman paganism allowed for the co-existence of overlapping (and potentially contradictory) sets of beliefs.[21] To mitigate the differences, practitioners used three mechanisms: (1) polymorphism (the belief that particular gods can possess or manifest many, or even infinite, forms or aspects); (2) orthopraxy (a stronger emphasis on the proper performance of ritual, such as prayer and sacrifice, than the proper affirmation of doctrine, as in orthodoxy); and (3) *pietas* (a

[20] Charles King, "The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," *Classical Antiquity* 22, no. 2 (2003): 275–312.

[21] King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 282–84.

dynamic of reciprocal obligation applied to the divine-human relationship, which ensured the faithful performance of ritual without precluding a diverse range of belief).[22] The result was a primarily ritually-focused religious identity that could be expressed either individually or collectively, and which was understood as permanent (enduring as long as the relationships with the gods themselves), non-exclusive (permitting the worship of multiple gods for different reasons), and hierarchical (allowing for greater dedication to some gods than others).[23]

King's summary helps to establish at the outset some key points of both similarity and difference between Greco-Roman pagan religious identity (in its various expressions of *polis* religion, mystery cults, and emperor worship), and the divine-human relationship engendered through the Christian concept of the covenant. The three dimensions of religion that he describes correspond generally to the three aspects of identity formation entailed by the covenant concept (belief, ritual, and ethics). Other parallels include a notion of reciprocity or mutual obligation (resulting in blessings or curses) in the divine-human relationship and the expression and reinforcement of identity through the regular practice of ritual. Nevertheless, significant differences are also apparent. These include especially the non-exclusive and assimilative nature of paganism, its local character (being concentrated around the patron god or gods of a particular city, region, or empire), its emphasis on ritual over doctrine (or even apart from it), and its lack of a clearly-defined moral code in connection with the worship of particular deities.

Though scholars now rightly caution against the imprecision of speaking too generically of "paganism" or even "Greco-Roman religion" as monolithic entities,[24] it will be necessary to make some generalizations regarding the prevalent streams of

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[22] King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 292.

[23] King, "Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs," 302–6.

[24] D. Cohn-Sherbok and J. M. Court, eds., *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship*, Biblical Seminar 79 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

religious practice that contributed to the broader religious milieu of Christianity in the second century. Among these, the so-called "*polis* religion," the mystery religions, the imperial cult provide the most promising avenues for identifying potential precursors or parallels to the Christian concept of covenant membership. In each case, however, it will be seen that superficial similarities to aspects of the covenant concept give way to more fundamental differences.

***Polis* religion.** Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood suggested "*polis* religion" as a paradigm for Greek religion of the Classical period, noting that "the polis anchored, legitimated, and mediated all religious activity."[25] By participating in the religious activity of a *polis*, Greek citizens expressed belonging to a local community, yet also participated in a broader Panhellenic culture.[26] Worship of the *polis* god was therefore a civic duty, since the welfare of the community depended on it through a sort of contractual relationship: "It is the relationship of the polis with its gods that ultimately guarantees its existence, that in the origins of the polis there is often (explicitly or implicitly) located a form of "guarantee" by the gods, of a finite and relative protection, which the cultic relationships of the polis with the gods—above all with its principal deity—strives to maintain."[27]

This depiction suggests at least an apparent affinity with the biblical motif of a national covenant. Sourvinou-Inwood's model has not gone unchallenged, however. Julia Kindt expands focus "beyond the *polis*" by noting the wider diversity in the experiential, political, magical, and other dimensions of Greek religion.[28] While she affirms that the

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[25] Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "What Is Polis Religion?," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, ed. Richard Buxton, Oxford Readings in Classical Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15.

[26] Sourvinou-Inwood, "What Is Polis Religion?," 16–18.

[27] Sourvinou-Inwood, "What Is Polis Religion?," 23.

[28] Julia Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

polis is an important "structuring principle," Kindt notes the Durkheimian conception of religion on which it is founded—a structuralist approach that identifies the common language and practices that comprise a "symbolic system" in the formation of a moral community.[29] Her work is concerned to demonstrate, in correction, that "there is plenty of evidence for religious practices unmediated by and with no obvious link to the polis."[30] Moreover, in Kindt's view, the construct of "*polis* religion" itself assumes more coherence than the actual diversity of practice warrants.[31] Nevertheless, Kindt observes that the conventional view of the *polis*, or city-state, as collapsing abruptly under the hegemony of Philip of Macedon in the fourth century BC has been challenged by scholars who now argue persuasively that these entities, if understood as "self-governing" rather than politically "independent," actually persisted well into the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[32] Thus, while perhaps not as all-encompassing, neatly-structured, or closely-aligned with the covenant idea as Sourvinou-Inwood's model seemed to indicate, a modified concept of *polis* religion still remains relevant as a point of departure for the study of Greco-Roman religious identity into the second century AD.[33]

Mystery religions. In older scholarship, the so-called "mystery" religions received attention as early examples of the forms of religious practice that came to full expression with the rise of Christianity. This conventional account, framed in terms of a

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[29] Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 15.

[30] Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 17.

[31] Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 20.

[32] Kindt points especially to the work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre, as published in Mogens Herman Hansen and Thomas Heine Nielsen, eds., *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 29.

[33] Speaking of the New Testament period, for example, Hurtado notes that "participation in the honoring of the tutelary deities of one's city in sacrifice, processions, and other rituals was an important expression of solidarity at that level." Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 54.

declension narrative, described the gradual erosion of traditional paganism, which was collective and localized in the *polis*, in favor of the politically-unifying imperial cult, on the one hand, and the individualistic and experientially-focused mystery religions, on the other.[34] While aspects of this description have now been questioned, many scholars still regard the mystery religions as a significant contextual resource for analyzing early Christianity.[35] The discussion below will not conduct an exhaustive comparison, but will limit focus to the notions of collective identity that developed within these movements, since participation in a mystery cult was recognized as a means of identification with a particular deity, with whom the initiation ceremony created a relationship.[36] Unlike the biblical covenants, however, these relationships were often conceived as resource-dependent, temporary, and individualistic.

In a classic study, Walter Burkert defines the mysteries as "initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred."[37] Noting their non-exclusive character, Burkert cautions against assuming that they were concerned, like Judaism and Christianity, with any "conscious emphasis on self-definition and on demarcating one religion as against the other"; rather, Burkert explains, "They appear as varying forms, trends, or options within the one disparate yet continuous conglomerate of ancient religion."[38]

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[34] For an excellent overview of these developments, see James B. Rives, "Graeco-Roman Religion in the Roman Empire: Old Assumptions and New Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 8, no. 2 (2010): 240–99.

[35] An early and influential advocate of this view was Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance*, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph 15 (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick, 1978).

[36] As Antonia Tripolitis notes, "Membership depended upon the participation of the initiate in a personal ritual that resulted in the individual's identification or close relationship with the deity of the cult." Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 16.

[37] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 11.

[38] Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 4.

Antonia Tripolitis further elucidates three essential characteristics of Burkert's "conglomerate": (1) a purification rite for initiation; (2) a sense of personal relationship/communion with the cult's deity; and (3) the hope of a blessed afterlife.[39] Thus, both ritual and some semblance of a theological narrative are important elements in the process of identity formation that the cults facilitated.

Building further upon Burkert's work (though challenging it at points), Jan Bremmer helpfully surveys the predominant Hellenistic mysteries (the Eleusinian, Orphic, Isis, and Mithras cults) to describe their rituals of initiation.[40] Bremmer observes that the popular Eleusinian mysteries celebrating Demeter were theoretically accessible—though not necessarily affordable, due to the time and money required—to all people. Involving a procession to the sanctuary and a day of animal sacrifice followed by two nights of rituals, they culminated in the *epopteia* ceremony centered around an ear of corn, reflecting their nature as a "fertility ritual."[41] The Orphic mysteries, which had incorporated elements of the Dionysian (Bacchic) rituals as early as the fifth century BC, emphasized an auditory rather than visual experience, featuring ecstatic rituals and teachings on reincarnation that attracted upper-class adherents.[42] In the Hellenistic period, initiates in the cult of Isis were clothed in new robes in a ritual symbolizing their passage to the underworld by her power.[43] The very ancient worship of the Persian god Mithras also spread rapidly through Roman lands in the first and second centuries, in mysteries that took place in designated caves where adherents (in this case, restricted to men, and mostly of the middle of the classes) commemorated the god's primordial slaughter of a

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[39] Tripolitis, *Religions of Hellenistic-Roman Age*, 17.

[40] Jan N. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, Münchner Vorlesungen zu Antiken Welten 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

[41] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 18.

[42] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 70–80.

[43] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 110–25.

bull and advanced through seven hierarchical "grades" or ranks.[44]

Though these (and other) mystery cults varied widely, Bremmer notes some general tendencies. Many cults were universally accessible, at least in principle, to participants of any socioeconomic status, gender, or nationality, though in practice the resources required were prohibitive for people of lesser means.[45] Most required purification rites (often baths) as an element of initiation.[46] The emphasis, especially in later centuries, was on individual rather than collective participation.[47] Finally, although dedication to particular cults was devout, it was not exclusivistic, in the sense of preventing belief or worship of other gods or participation in Greco-Roman civic religion more broadly.[48] Bremmer concludes that, despite scholarly recognition of some common terminology and imagery, "all efforts to derive earliest Christianity from the ancient Mysteries have been unsuccessful."[49] Historically, in his view, "these cults had virtually no impact on the emergence of Christianity."[50]

The identities instilled by the mystery cults can thus be described as resource-dependent, non-exclusive, private, and individualistic.[51] Though they revolved around

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[44] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 125–38.

[45] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 138.

[46] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 104. Burkert cautions against describing these as baptisms, insisting that "there is hardly any evidence for baptism in pagan mysteries, though this has often been claimed . . . there are various forms of purification, of sprinkling or washing with water, as in almost all other cults as well. But such procedures should not be confused with baptism proper—immersion into a river or basin as a symbol of starting a new life." Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 101.

[47] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 138.

[48] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 139; Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 85–87.

[49] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 154.

[50] Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries*, 164.

[51] See also Tripolitis, *Religions of Hellenistic-Roman Age*, 36. She explains that the popularity of the cults was "due to the fact that they were international and universal. With the exception of Mithraism, membership was open to all regardless of sex, nationality, or race . . . They were individualistic, addressing the spiritual needs of the individual, and they also provided the devotees with meaningful fellowship with individuals who possessed the same knowledge of salvation." She concludes, "Lastly, they provided a personal, closer relationship to the divine, protection from the adversities of this life, and the hope of some sort of blissful world after death."

particular mythological narratives and rituals, these lacked clearly-specified doctrinal or theological content, and no distinctive ethical orientation was implied or required by them. While they were understood to establish an intimate individual relationship between the initiate and the cult's deity, there was no corporate dimension to this relationship. In brief, nothing like a covenant concept (either unilateral divine blessing, or structured relationship involving mutual obligations) characterizes the relation between gods and cult members in these popular traditions of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Imperial cult. Another contemporary context for the construal of the divine-human relationship in the Greco-Roman world is the imperial cult, or emperor worship, as developed across the first two centuries of the Roman *imperium*. Though practiced in a wide variety of ways, a few of the leading features that helped to constitute emperor worship as a source of collective identity can be identified.[52] The cult emerged with the Senate's ascription of divine (*divus*/*divinus*) honors to Julius Caesar, and continued with the posthumous deification of Augustus and subsequent emperors. Respects paid to the *genius* of the emperor through the offering of incense and sacrifice acknowledged his role as *paterfamilias* of the empire, imagined as a household united under paternal authority. Beyond this emphasis on ritual, however, the cult generally lacked sophisticated doctrinal or ethical dimensions.

In a thorough study, Ittai Gradel notes the precedence of ritual over belief in the imperial cult, which emphasized "not any specific belief, cosmology, reasoning, or philosophy, but simply an action: sacrifice"; indeed, it was through the ritual of sacrifice that practitioners engaged in "constructing, and not merely reflecting, theology, the

[52] As Hurtado notes, "Emperor cults were translocal and transethnic expressions of religious identity. Despite the differences . . . they all served to link people in various parts of the empire through the various kinds of reference offered to or for the emperor. In this sense, the imperial cults and the emergence of the cult of *Dea Roma* are examples of religious identity beyond what was entailed in someone's native locale or ethnic membership." Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 82.

world, and its social order."[53] Gradel argues that divinity, in the Roman model, is more properly understood as a rank or degree of honor conferred upon the divine by the worshiper, than a distinct essence or nature, as in the Christian view.[54] Thus, the same "honours-for-benefaction" model that characterized the relationships between masters and slaves, or between patrons and clients, also characterized the relationship between humans and their gods—and therefore also between citizens and their emperors, once the latter began to receive the honorific accolades traditionally ascribed to the divine pantheon.[55] In this sense, the cult of the emperor differed little from the worship of other gods, being "cultivated likewise for the sake of their enormous power over the worshippers, not because divine nature gave them any claim a priori to such honours."[56] This joint worship of a commonly-acknowledged figure of power produced a collective identity among worshipers, who participated in it as a "social unit, a *familia*, or a *collegium*"—as Gradel explains, "This unit was held together and defined only as consisting of people who were all under the authority, *patria potestas*, of a single man, the *paterfamilias*, or bound to him by *fides*. Only his continued existence and ability to produce an heir, the future *paterfamilias*, ensured the continued existence of the unit."[57]

Thus, the human-divine relationship envisioned by participants in the imperial cult was similar in form to traditional Greco-Roman *polis* religion, in postulating a contractual obligation for the greater party to bestow blessing or favor upon the lesser party in return for the prescribed activities of worship, prayer, and sacrifice. As Gradel concludes, the Roman emperors embraced the status of divinity ascribed to them by

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[53] Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 1–4.

[54] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 26.

[55] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 26.

[56] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 30.

[57] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 44.

fulfilling these obligations: "by receiving such honours, the emperor was morally obliged to return benefactions, that is, to rule well. If he did so, he could eventually attain the ultimate honour: state divinity after death. Alternatively, if he broke the contract, his honours would be withdrawn and his memory condemned."[58]

Like other forms of Greco-Roman religion, then, the imperial cult prioritized ritual over other aspects of religious identity formation, such as doctrine and ethics. As Gradel maintains, no particular metaphysical definition of the divine nature underpinned the rather pragmatic attribution of divinity to the emperor, and apart from the general obligation to honor him, no particular ethical implications were implied by it.

Social Identity: Voluntary Associations

In the social realm (which, in the Greco-Roman context, should not be sharply distinguished from the religious), another important source of collective identity was the voluntary association (known variously as the *collegium*, *secta*, *factio*, θίασος, ἔρανος, or *κοινόν*).[59] In these private, urban, and locally-organized groups, membership was chosen or pursued, rather than by default (as in the institutions of the family, city, and state).[60] Though they have been classified in numerous ways, the proposal of John Kloppenborg has been most influential, in categorizing the associations according to membership, rather than function.[61] This approach yields three primary types: the domestic (organized around households), the professional (guilds for practitioners of a common occupation), and the religious (cults of particular deities). Summarizing the motivations for joining

[58] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 369.

[59] For a helpful orientation to the recent literature, see Richard S. Ascough, "What Are They Now Saying about Christ Groups and Associations?" *Currents in Biblical Research* 13, no. 2 (February 2015): 235.

[60] Stephen G. Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.

[61] John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy, and Membership," in Kloppenborg and Wilson, *Voluntary Associations*, 23–26.

these associations, Kloppenborg observes,

> It might be said that voluntary associations compensated for the demise of the importance of the polis by imitating civic structures. The association afforded each member a say in who joined the group and how the group was run, fellowship and conviviality, and perhaps the opportunity to become an officer or magistrate—in short, to participate in a *cursus honorum* to which he or she could never aspire outside of the association.

In this reading, the decline of the *polis* as the traditional Greek civic structure created a vacuum that the voluntary associations quickly filled—a role on the social front that is similar to the one proposed for the mystery cults on the religious front, as discussed above. However, it is not necessary to accept all aspects of the *polis* decline paradigm to appreciate the basic insight that the associations provided social contexts in which members could cultivate a distinct collective identity and thus enjoy certain privileges, experiences, and opportunities that were not available elsewhere.

Scholars of early Christianity have often seen parallels between the voluntary associations and the emerging Christian assemblies or churches, with various degrees of correspondence. In his influential "social description" of Pauline Christianity, Wayne Meeks considers the association as one of four Greco-Roman social structures that may have informed both the self-understanding and the external perception of the earliest Christian churches (alongside the household, the synagogue, and the philosophical school), but concludes that none of these organizations "captures the whole of the Pauline *ekklesia*, although all offer significant analogies."[62] Suggesting that the primary purpose of the associations was mere "conviviality" or social fellowship, Meeks draws attention to the ideological exclusivism, social diversity, distinct terminology, and trans-local orientation that distinguished churches from voluntary associations.[63]

Nevertheless, scholars have agreed that to pagan observers, the associations,

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[62] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 84.

[63] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 77–78.

with their religious expressions, probably provided the closest point of reference for categorizing the emerging phenomenon of Christian churches, as Robert Wilken contends:

> Like these other associations, the Christian society met regularly for a common meal; it had its own ritual of initiation, rules, and standards for members; when the group came together, the members heard speeches and celebrated a religious rite involving offerings of wine, prayers, and hymns; and certain members of the group were elected to serve as officers and administrators of the association. It also had a common chest drawn from the contributions of members, looked out for the needs of its members, provided for a decent burial, and in some cities had its own burial grounds.[64]

The fundamentally religious character of the associations—even those whose primary purpose was not the worship of a deity—has been highlighted by Philip Harland. Against Meeks, he rightly insists that, while the associations did promote the social good of conviviality, it is equally important to recognize that "the modern compartmentalization of life into the political, economic, social, and religious does not apply to the ancient context, where 'religion' was very much embedded within various dimensions of the daily life of individuals, whose identities were inextricably bound up within social groupings or communities."[65] Thus, even associations that were not primarily "religious" in function, such as occupational and ethnic societies, still helped to shape identities for their members that were deeply informed by religious beliefs and practices, such as hymns, prayers, sacrifices, libations, ritual re-enactments, and communal meals.[66] It is in this sense that they serve as useful, though limited, "social analogues" for both Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which indeed "*were associations* in important respects."[67]

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[64] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 44.

[65] Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 61.

[66] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 73–74.

[67] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 3.

While there is no evidence to suggest that voluntary associations ever used διαθήκη in its covenantal sense (which is unique to the Septuagint and New Testament) to describe their relationships with each other or with their patron deities, there are certain parallels between the covenant idea and the religiously-informed voluntary associations. These include the commitment to a common purpose that (in most cases) transcended ethnic boundaries, communal worship practices (ritual sacrifices and meals), and efforts to engage with the broader civic culture where possible. In these ways, both kinds of groups provided members with a "sense of belonging and community"—a source of identity that was collectively-established, religiously-grounded, and socially-expressed.[68] Recent scholarship has noted these "many similarities."[69]

In light of this emerging consensus, it is likely that Meeks overstates the case in his effort to emphasize the distinctive character of Christian assemblies over against contemporary voluntary associations, insofar as he locates these differences in such features as their self-descriptive terminology, socioeconomic composition, and organizational structure. As Harland has shown, even the communal practice of religious ceremonies cannot be regarded as entirely unique. How then should these movements be distinguished? I suggest that the mistake made on both ends of this debate is to fixate on external phenomena (demographics, membership and leadership structures, geographic

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[68] Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 87. Contrary to the traditional view that the associations were politically subversive threats to social stability, Harland argues that they were means by which "group identity could be expressed within a broader civic and imperial context, less in terms of conflict or opposition than in terms of integration and participation."

[69] Ascough, "What Are They Now Saying?," 235. Summarizing the conclusions of recent scholarship, Ascough asserts, "Early Christian writings in the New Testament and beyond resonate with the language and practices of associations. There is extensive use of fictive kinship language such as 'father' and 'brother' alongside an emphasis on friendship and shared property. Although the writings bear the rhetoric of egalitarianism and shared responsibilities, it is also clear that in many Christ groups there is a hierarchical leadership structure, especially from the second century onwards." He continues, "Christ groups note a reliance on patronage, and seem to hold meetings in private residences, although occasionally can be found in public spaces (e.g., the temple forecourt in Jerusalem or by a riverside). Christ groups look and sound like associations in structure and organization, including similar cult practices (particularly ritual meals) and regulations. They are technically illicit but generally tolerated as insignificant (with a few localized exceptions) and by the second century and beyond even self-describe as associations."

distribution, use of ritual practices, etc.) at the expense of a thorough consideration of the underlying ideological presuppositions that grounded, informed, and provided the internal substance of these features. For Christian communities, the basis for the social relationships and collective identity formed among members was the scripturally-described prior relationship between God and his people—that is, the covenant—which implied not only a particular metaphysical understanding of reality (including nature, history, and the future), affirmed and expressed in particular ritual acts, but also a particular ethical orientation, identifiable to the observing world. It is on this level of presuppositions—rather than in the use of social conventions—that the distinctive nature of Christian assemblies as expressions of a covenant community comes into view.

The groundwork for this argument has been laid in relation to both of the identity-shaping domains of Greco-Roman culture surveyed above: religious and social groups. In each case, certain external parallels between the structures and practices of secular and Christian groups have been identified. Scholars have often utilized these parallels to argue for the non-distinctive character of Christianity, seeking to render it intelligible by analyzing it against the backdrop of its cultural context. While cultural backgrounds do provide valuable frameworks for situating early Christian practice, however, they cannot sustain the weight placed upon them as exhaustive explanatory resources—unless it is assumed *a priori* that ideas and beliefs are not capable of transcending the devices of their own original cultural milieus. If they can, however, then the task is to discern how the essential convictions informing the content and motivating the practical uses of these phenomena differed from one community to another.

Covenant and Heterodox Identities

Comprising a final significant context for the analysis of notions of covenant identity in the second century are the texts regarded as heretical or heterodox by the

"proto-orthodox"[70] church—primarily those representing Gnostic and Marcionite movements. By examining the extent to which the covenant concept contributed (or did not contribute) to the collective identities of these groups, it will be possible to determine how and whether the orthodox usage differed from them. It will be seen below that in the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and practice, the groups traditionally labeled "Gnostic" made little use of the covenant concept, while the followers of Marcion employed it extensively—though in ways that proved unacceptable to the orthodox perspective. Chapter 6 of this study will later demonstrate how this perceived lack of use (or misuse) of covenantal theology prompted orthodox leaders to develop clarified formulations of the relations between biblical covenants and their implications for the self-understanding of the covenantal people.

Covenant and Identity Formation in Gnosticism?

Any discussion of "Gnosticism" must begin, as the quotation marks imply, by acknowledging that the traditional notion of a monolithic religious phenomenon bearing this name has been severely challenged in recent decades. Beginning with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945, which contained an abundance of previously unattested manuscripts, it became possible to assess the historical accuracy of the portraits of "Gnostic" communities provided by second- and third-century heresiologists.[71] These writings had largely informed historical scholarship on Gnosticism through the early twentieth century—culminating in the treatments of Hans

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[70] I use this term here to acknowledge the ongoing debate, originating with the work of Walter Bauer and continuing to the present, surrounding the definitions of the terms *orthodoxy* and *heresy*, the question of original diversity in the early Christian movement, and the assumptions that inform the use of such terms. Throughout this study, however, I use the terms *orthodox* and *heretical* (or *heterodox*) to refer to the movements that they have traditionally identified, while acknowledging that they do indeed assume the vantage point of the "proto-orthodox" leaders and writers of the "Great Church."

[71] On the discovery and process of publication, see James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story from the Discovery to the Publication*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

Jonas, who depicted it in the philosophical terms of existentialism (but still lacked full access to the edited and translated Nag Hammadi texts), and Kurt Rudolph, who more systematically analyzed Gnostic history, mythology, theology, ritual, ethics, and social dynamics (with the benefit of the published texts).[72]

In the last two decades, however, critiques of both the ancient heresiological consensus and of the scholarly works constructed on that basis have multiplied, as specialists have called for greater recognition of the diversity and fluidity of the religious movements of the early Roman Empire. Michael Williams challenged the term "Gnosticism" itself as inadequate to encompass the wide array of texts and traditions that have often been lumped into this category.[73] Inverting claims made by Rudolph and prior scholars regarding the leading features of "Gnostic" thought (such as "protest exegesis," parasitism, an anti-social orientation, determinism, and an extreme ethical dichotomy of ascetism or libertinism), Williams labored to rehabilitate the popular (and scholarly) image, suggesting "biblical demiurgical traditions" as a more accurate label.[74] This task has been continued by Elaine Pagels, who argues that the spiritually vibrant and socially diverse groups represented by such writings as the Gospel of Thomas were marginalized and eventually extinguished by the intolerant and hierarchical "orthodox" party, and Karen L. King, whose consideration of the secondary literature on "Gnosticism" exposes the essentially heresiological and polemical (i.e., colonialist) assumptions behind the construction of this category and its typologies in Western scholarship.[75]

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[72] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1963); Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).

[73] Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

[74] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 51.

[75] See especially Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979); Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

While the very feasibility of speaking of Gnosticism as a coherent or identifiable entity has thus been undermined (with some justification), it remains pragmatically necessary to do so, to discuss the Nag Hammadi texts and the movements that they represent. However, in what follows, the generic use of the term "Gnostic" should not be taken as diminishing the wide variety in the mythologies, beliefs, and practices of the disparate sects of the Valentinians, Sethians, and other groups—on the contrary, this survey intends to underscore such differences, particularly as they appear in the identity-forming domains of belief, ritual, and ethical practice (including views of the law).

Covenant. With regard to explicit use of the covenant concept within the Nag Hammadi corpus, what is most striking is its absence, in terms of both references to scriptural texts related to the covenants and of independent occurrences of the term or concept. The clear impression, as Ferguson observes, is that "the covenant was not a significant category for them."[76] Tellingly, a standard index of biblical references in the Nag Hammadi writings does not include a single entry for scriptural passages that make explicit reference to the prominent biblical covenants (the Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinai, Davidic, and new covenants).[77]

Indeed, the Coptic ⲆⲒⲀⲐⲎⲔⲎ (a loanword from the Greek διαθήκη), occurs, at most, twice among all eleven codices.[78] In both cases, the context is the introduction to an apocryphal or apocalyptic account narrated by Peter. First, in the fragmentary

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[76] Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 1, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, Early Church at Work and Worship 1 (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 182.

[77] Craig A. Evans, Robert L. Webb, and Richard A. Wiebe, eds., *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index*, New Testament Tools and Studies 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1993). These would include such biblical texts as Gen 9; 12; 15; 26; and 35; Exod 19–24; Deut 29; Josh 23–24; 2 Sam 7; Jer 31; 2 Cor 3; and Heb 7–9 and 12–13.

[78] For the complete editions see James M. Robinson, ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

introduction to the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, Peter relates in the opening lines that the apostles had "made a covenant with each other" to fulfill the ministry to which Jesus had appointed them.[79] Second, and much less certainly, in the visionary Apocalypse of Peter, the first sentence states that Jesus was (as proposed by the translation of James Brashler), "sitting in the temple in the three hundredth (year) of the covenant and the agreement of the tenth pillar."[80] However, the phrase "in the three hundredth (year) of the covenant" represents Brashler's suggested emendation to an obscure portion of the text, which other translations have not followed.[81]

These are the lone occurrences of the term in both texts, and neither elaborates the meaning or develops the theme further (indeed, the occurrence in the Apocalypse of Peter is so obscure as to be nearly unintelligible). Apart from these passing and doubtful references, covenant terminology is entirely absent from the Nag Hammadi corpus. Thus, it must instead be asked what major themes and ideas *do* feature prominently in the concepts of identity that these texts construct, with attention to the three key areas of belief, ritual, and ethical practice. On account of the extensive number of texts surveyed, this section will be organized thematically according to these three dimensions.

Belief. In keeping with Geertz's threefold conception of identity formation, belief is defined here in terms of the essential doctrinal, theological, and metaphysical convictions and commitments that comprise the vision of reality for a particular individual, text, or group, often embedded within metanarratives or implied by them. If a covenantal relationship with the Creator God did not provide the framework for locating

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[79] Acts Pet. 1.14 (Robinson, 289). Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of Nag Hammadi texts below are taken from Robinson.

[80] Apoc. Pet. 70.14–17 (Robinson, 373).

[81] See the discussion in Gerard P. Luitikhuizen, "The Suffering Jesus and the Invulnerable Christ in the Gnostic Apocalypse of Peter," in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, ed. J. N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz, Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 190.

the self and the community in relation to the divine for Gnostic movements, then what concepts and/or narratives did?

In many texts, Gnostic writers, like their Jewish and orthodox Christian contemporaries, derive ontological and cosmological commitments from the biblical narrative of the Old Testament—especially, the creation account of Genesis 1–3, the most frequently-referenced scriptural passage within the Nag Hammadi corpus.[82] While it is not possible or necessary to examine every text that quotes or alludes to the Genesis narrative here, the most extensive examples will suffice to demonstrate how it provided material for metaphysical reflection. While some of the texts discussed below post-date the second century, they nevertheless reflect traditions and motifs that characterized some Gnostic worldviews from the earlier period.

The second, third, and fourth Nag Hammadi codices (along with the Berlin Codex) each preserve portions (and two distinct versions) of the Apocryphon of John, indicating its significance and widespread use among at least one stream of Gnostic thought. It was known in some form to Irenaeus of Lyons, and thus dates at least to the early second century.[83] Framed as a secret revelation of Christ to John, the text posits an eternal and transcendent Father presiding over numerous emanations, including the aeon Sophia, who independently produces an imperfect and ignorant offspring, Yaldabaoth. Connecting this mythology to the Genesis account, the author relates that when this fallen archon was exiled from the pleroma, he created the material cosmos (with the help of his 365 subordinate angels) as the domain of his jealous rule. Breathing life into the first man Adam, he unknowingly imparted the latent spiritual power of Sophia, supplemented by a "helper," Epinoia, sent by the Father. Christ explains that the serpent also shared this

[82] Birger A. Pearson, "Gnostic Interpretation of the Old Testament in the 'Testimony of Truth' (NHC IX, 3)," *HTR* 73, nos. 1/2 (1980): 311.

[83] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.29–30.

light and thus instructed Adam to eat of the tree to gain the power of knowledge over Yaldabaoth. In turn, Yaldabaoth seduces Eve, producing the archons Cain and Abel, while Adam fathered Seth, inaugurating a race on whom the Spirit of life could descend, enabling liberation from the flesh and restoration to the pleroma. The author explains that a second group of humans, drawn to evil, will receive eventual purification and salvation, while a third group, which rejects knowledge, loses the opportunity for repentance and receives eternal punishment. Yaldabaoth resolved to destroy his creation through the flood, which Noah, possessing the divine light as a member of the "immovable race," escaped through the ark. Following this, the Creator enslaved humanity in the darkness and "forgetfulness," from which Christ came to offer deliverance.[84]

A somewhat later (perhaps third-century) text, the Hypostasis of the Archons represents a similar re-working of earlier materials, including a more developed reading of Genesis 1–6, in depicting a fallen chief archon Samael/Yaldabaoth (the offspring of Sophia) who oversees the material creation of the world and humanity. Once again, the first man is enlivened by a divine spirit from the transcendent Father, associated with both the woman and the serpent. By eating of the forbidden tree, they gain access to divine knowledge, which enables those who possess it to "ascend into the limitless light, where this sown element belongs."[85] A fuller eschatological vision of the eternal destiny of these "children of light," restored to the Father in the pleroma, concludes this account.[86]

The even later text On the Origin of the World (which, in its current form, may date to the fourth century) illustrates a fully-developed Gnostic world view that, while dependent in some respects on the traditions represented in the Hypostasis of the

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[84] See the composite text of Ap. John (Robinson, 105–23).

[85] Hyp. Arch. 86 (Robinson, 162).

[86] Hyp. Arch. 86–97 (Robinson, 162–69).

Archons, also integrates other materials in its own re-telling of the Genesis account (here limited to Gen 1–3). With added complexity, the text portrays matter emerging from the chaos through the defective offspring of Sophia, Yaldabaoth. The first man is created through the addition of the divine principle of light, and the serpent reveals that the tree of knowledge (*gnosis*) is the key to realizing their true identities ("the difference between the light and the darkness") and escaping the rule of the archon. Three classes of humanity (the spirit-endowed, the soul-endowed, and the earthly) co-exist until the consummation of the age, which is marked by the appearance of the "true man," the savior. The text closes with a preview of the apocalyptic conflagration of the cosmos and deliverance of the perfect to eternal light.[87]

Variations on these themes are present in other Nag Hammadi texts. The Apocalypse of Adam, for example, is presented as a firsthand recounting of the Genesis narrative from Adam to Seth, who in turn passed it down to his "seed." It introduces three divine figures who reveal knowledge of the future cataclysmic events of the flood, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and final judgment of the cosmos—events from which "those who reflect upon the knowledge of the eternal God" will be delivered by the "illuminator of knowledge." This redeemer figure is said to establish a people for redemption through knowledge of the truth, gathering his chosen "seed" for eternal communion.[88] The same tripartite schema of judgments (the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and coming of the redeemer) appears in the Paraphrase of Shem, which reveals that the blessed "race"— who "possess the particle of the mind and the thought of the light of the Spirit"—will be delivered from the powers of Darkness, unlike "many in the race of Nature."[89] The Testimony of Truth focuses on the serpent motif, interpreting

[87] Orig. World 97–127 (Robinson, 171–89).

[88] Apoc. Adam 64–85 (Robinson, 277–86).

[89] Paraph. Shem 35.1–9 (Robinson, 356).

the “temptation” of Eve in Genesis 3 in light of later positive biblical references to serpents (Exod 7:8–12; Num 21:9) to conclude that “this is Christ.”[90] In the Second Treatise of the Great Seth, the narrator, Jesus Christ, describes biblical protagonists as “laughingstocks” deceived by the Hebdomad (seven archons subordinate to Yaldabaoth), concluding that “from Adam to Moses and John the Baptist, none of them knew me or my brothers.”[91]

Despite this great variety of readings of biblical material (particularly Gen 1–3),[92] there are some broadly consistent elements, which form the basis for the worldviews that these texts construct. These include the creation of the material world by a lesser divine being on the understanding that “the world came about through a mistake,”[93] the potential for humanity to be reunited in the pleroma through realization of a divine spark of knowledge, and the use of biblical narratives, including the temptation of the serpent, Noah’s Flood, and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to argue that Yahweh is antagonistic toward humanity. Alongside this metanarrative is a dualistic cosmology, in which the material realm is inherently corrupt, temporary, and subordinate to the spiritual realm, so that “salvation” consists of escape from it, prior to the final conflagration.

Ritual. Though undoubtedly for polemical purposes, orthodox heresiological writers make much of the secretive practices that they claim Gnostic groups observed, including the attendance of idolatrous pagan festivals,[94] the sexual “mystery of conjunction” or bridal chamber,[95] and the ritual of “redemption” (which amounted, in

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[90] Testim. Truth 49.7 (Robinson, 455).

[91] Treat. Seth 62.28–64.1 (Robinson, 368).

[92] See especially Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*.

[93] Gos. Phil. 75.3 (Robinson, 154).

[94] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.6.3.

[95] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.6.4 (Unger, 38).

Irenaeus's view, to "deny the baptism of rebirth unto God, and to destroy the entire faith").[96] Rudolph helpfully summarizes these wide-ranging practices under the headings of the redemption (*apolytrosis*), unction, the bridal chamber, serpent rituals, orgies, the round dance, prophetic ordinations, and festivals.[97]

With respect to the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, as administered within the orthodox church, the heresiologists offer similar criticisms. Irenaeus criticizes the "redemption" rite as a false substitute for legitimate Christian baptism, dismissing the Gnostic argument that, as a spiritual initiation, it surpasses the merely carnal ordinance of water baptism.[98] Evidently, a great variety of practice surrounded this mystery, which could consist of anointing with some combination of water, oil, and balsam, or could eschew physical elements altogether, and simply consist of *gnosis* "of the unspeakable and invisible power."[99] In some versions, the link between belief and ritual was made explicit, as initiates affirmed the Gnostic theological narrative while receiving the rite, asserting, "I redeem my soul from this world and from all things derived from it."[100] Concerning the Eucharist, Irenaeus ridicules a Marcosian practice in which an invocation over the wine is presented, by optical illusion, as a transformation into the blood of a divine aeon.[101] He also describes the physical markers that some groups adopted as distinguishing features, such as the earlobe branding that the Carpocratians used to

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[96] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.21.1. Cf. 1.14.6 (Unger, 77).

[97] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 243–52.

[98] "For they maintain that the baptism of the visible Jesus was unto the remission of sins; but the redemption of Christ who descended upon Jesus was unto perfection, since they suppose that the former was ensouled but the latter spiritual." Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.21.2 (Unger, 78).

[99] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.21.4 (Unger, 79). "Therefore, the redemption too must be spiritual; for the inner, spiritual man is redeemed by knowledge. And this deeper knowledge of all thing is sufficient for them. And that is the true redemption."

[100] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.21.3 (Unger, 79).

[101] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.13.2.

identify themselves.[102]

The Nag Hammadi discoveries confirmed that Gnostic texts themselves do indeed reflect a variety of opinion on ritual practice—for example, in the differences between what some scholars have labeled Sethian Gnosticism, with pre-Christian Jewish roots, and the later-developing and more thoroughly "Christianized" Valentinianism.[103]

Texts classified as "Sethian" often reference baptism rituals, though without further elaboration.[104] In some cases, the metaphorical mingling of motifs like water, light, and life make the nature of the ritual difficult to determine.[105] These may be combined with the image of "sealing"—particularly, the rite of the "Five Seals," through which the recipient "has stripped off [the] garments of ignorance and put on a shining Light."[106] In other cases, the references are associated with Gnostic mythologies, as in the Apocalypse of Adam, which refers to "Micheu and Michar and Mnesinous, who are over the holy baptism and the living water," and are later identified with "the hidden knowledge of Adam, which he gave to Seth."[107] These cosmic figures reappear in Zostrianos, where the narrator reports receiving baptism multiple times in connection with "those powers which are [upon] living waters, Michar and Micheus," and thus

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[102] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.25.6.

[103] Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 145. This is Pearson's interpretation of the statements of Irenaeus to the effect that Valentinus "adapted" Gnosticism to his own "system."

[104] For an introduction to the Sethian tradition, see John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section Études 6 (Sainte-Foy, Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001).

[105] Ap. John 4.20–25; Trim. Prot. 45.17–20 (Robinson, 519): "And the Baptists will baptize you and you will become gloriously glorious, the way you first were when you were [Light]."

[106] Ap. John 31.23–25 (Robinson, 122); Gos. Eg. 66.2–4 (Robinson, 217); Trim. Prot. 49.26–34 (Robinson, 521).

[107] Apoc. Adam 84.4–7; 85.19–32 (Robinson, 286).

becoming “a holy angel.”[108] The multiple baptisms correspond to dimensions of participation in the divine, including Vitality, Blessedness, Existence, and Life.[109] Upon receiving them, the narrator becomes perfect in spiritual knowledge.[110] Marsanes, a similar text, may also indicate a baptismal ceremony in its fragmentary references to liturgical “washing.”[111]

Texts classified as Valentinian present a more critical view of water baptism as ineffectual or inferior to alternative rites such as the redemption.[112] The Gospel of Philip places baptism at the lowest position in a hierarchy of baptism, redemption, and the bridal chamber ritual.[113] Its association with bodily resurrection made it unappealing to groups who were persuaded that “those who say they will die and then rise are in error.”[114] The Tripartite Tractate affirms a “baptism which exists in the fullest sense, into which the Totalities will descend,” but connects it with the redemption rite, declaring that “there is no other baptism apart from this one alone, which is the redemption into God, Father, and Holy Spirit, when confession is made through faith in those names.”[115] Other texts acknowledge a hierarchy of baptisms, descending in priority from the spiritual to the physical: “there are three baptisms—the first is the spiritual, the second is by fire, the

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[108] Zost. 6.7–10; 7.10–13 (Robinson, 405). See also Gos. Eg. 64.9–20; Trim. Prot. 48.18–21 (Robinson, 520): “I delivered him to the Baptists and they baptized him—Micheus, Michar, and Mn[e]sinous—and they immersed him in the spring of the [Water] of Life.”

[109] Zost. 15.1–25 (Robinson, 408).

[110] Zost. 62.11–17 (Robinson, 419).

[111] Mars 55.18–21; 66.1–10 (Robinson, 470–71).

[112] For introductions to Valentinianism, see Christoph Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur Valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Christoph Markschies and Einar Thomassen, eds., *Valentinianism: New Studies*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[113] Gos. Phil. 69.1–70.4 (Robinson, 151).

[114] Gos. Phil. 73.1–2 (Robinson, 153).

[115] Tri. Tract. 127.25–34 (Robinson, 99).

third is by water."[116] Due to Pauline influence, then, the Valentinians do appear to have made use of water baptism in initiation.[117] The fragmentary liturgical texts appended to the Valentinian Exposition confirm this in referring to a transformative "first baptism," which advances the recipient from the carnal to the spiritual state.[118]

As a physical process, however, immersion in water is regarded in other Nag Hammadi texts as inherently perverse, associated with materiality and thus ignorance:

> And many who wear erring flesh will go down to the harmful waters through the winds and the demons. And they are bound by the water . . . they are deceived by manifold demons, thinking that through baptism with the uncleanness of water, that which is dark, feeble, idle, and disturbing, he will take away their sins. And they do not know that from the water to the water there is bondage, and error and unchastity, envy, murder, adultery, false witness, heresies, robberies, lusts, babblings, wrath, bitterness. . . . And those who take heart from the light of the Spirit will not have dealings with the impure practice.[119]

Most explicitly, the Testimony of Truth criticizes those Christians (perhaps including the Valentinians), "who, upon entering the faith, receive a baptism on the ground that they have [it] as a hope of salvation"—excluding the account of Jesus's baptism from the narrative of his encounter with John the Baptist, and noting that Jesus did not baptize his own followers, the author contends that "the baptism of truth is something else; it is by renunciation of the world that it is found."[120] Water baptism is pictured as "an act of

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[116] Orig. World 122.13–16 (Robinson, 186).

[117] See the reading proposed in Michael S. Domeracki, "The Apocalypse of Paul (NHC V,2) as a Valentinian Baptismal Liturgy of Ascent," *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2017): 212–34. Domeracki suggests that "the Apocalypse of Paul is best understood as an initiatory text for Valentinians, and its purpose was liturgical and used to guide the neophytes through the heavenly realms in the company of Paul" (219–20).

[118] On Bap. A 40.37–38 (Robinson, 488). See Antti Marjanen, "A Salvific Act of Transformation or a Symbol of Defilement? Baptism in Valentinian Liturgical Readings (NHCXI,2) and in the Testimony of Truth (NHC LX,3)," in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, ed. Kevin Corrigan and Tuomas Rasimus (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 251–52.

[119] Paraph. Shem 7.1.36.25–38.9 (Robinson, 356–357). See also Gos. Phil. 64.22–27 (Robinson, 148): "If one go down into the water and come up without having received anything and says, 'I am a Christian,' he has borrowed the name at interest. But if he receive the holy spirit, he has the name as a gift."

[120] Testim. Truth 69.7–24 (Robinson, 457). See Marjanen, "A Salvific Act," 255.

defilement" which lacks the spiritual value of asceticism.[121]

With respect to a "sacred meal" comparable to the Eucharist, Rudolph notes that references are "relatively rare."[122] The two relevant appendices to the Valentinian Exposition are too fragmentary to give a clear indication, apart from the simple fact that a Eucharist was practiced in some sense, with general references to Christ, food, and drink.[123] One of the few Nag Hammadi texts to deal extensively with eucharistic practice, the Gospel of Philip, explains that "when Christ came, the perfect man, he brought bread from heaven in order that man might be nourished with the food of man."[124] In this Valentinian reading, "His flesh is the word, and his blood is the holy spirit," or the knowledge required to inherit eternal life.[125] Thus, the later cryptic statement that "the Eucharist is Jesus" must be understood allegorically, counting the Eucharist among the "mysteries" in which "the Lord did everything," along with baptism, chrism, redemption, and the bridal chamber.[126] As with baptism, the reference to "the bread and the cup and the oil" seems to describe a modified practice that supplemented the physical elements with anointing, signifying revealed knowledge.[127] The author also asserts that the "cup of prayer" which "contains wine and water" is merely a "*type* of the blood for which thanks is given"; its efficacy derives from the fact that it is "full of the holy spirit."[128] Rudolph notes that the third-century Acts of Thomas also depicts a Gnostic eucharistic rite,

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[121] Marjanen, "A Salvific Act," 255–56.

[122] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 230.

[123] On Euch. A 43.20–38; On Euch. B 44.14–37.

[124] Gos. Phil 55.11–14 (Robinson, 143). For a thorough recent treatment, see Herbert Schmid, *Die Eucharistie Ist Jesus: Anfänge einer Theorie des Sakraments im Koptischen Philippusevangelium (NHC LI 3)*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[125] Gos. Phil. 57.6–7 (Robinson, 144).

[126] Gos. Phil. 63.21 (Robinson, 148); Gos. Phil. 67.27–30 (Robinson, 150).

[127] Gos. Phil. 75.1–2 (Robinson, 154). The text proceeds to explain that "there is another one superior to these," possibly referring to the anointing itself, the redemption, or some combination.

[128] Gos. Phil. 75.14–18 (Robinson, 154); emphasis added.

including an invocation-like prayer to "the divine first cause" over the "bread of the blessing," offered on the occasion of "this Eucharist" and "the love-feast."[129]

These points support Rudolph's threefold categorization of Gnostic attitudes toward cultic practices: (1) retention and adaptation of surrounding practices, with "transmutation of ideas"; (2) amplification, improvement, or innovation of ceremonies based on mythological events; and (3) total rejection or spiritualization.[130] Though not all groups carried their views to the extreme third position, Rudolph notes that "in its very conception of the world, [Gnosticism] is really anti-cultic," and where repudiation of the sacraments did occur, it was directed against baptism and the Eucharist as "ecclesiastical institutions" associated with the main church.[131] Though practiced by some groups, baptism and Eucharist were not central to the formation of Gnostic identity, which elevated anointing ceremonies and the redemption to the prime position.[132]

Even more noteworthy, however, is the lack of connection drawn between ritual practice and covenantal motifs within Gnostic writings. The earliest New Testament writings and traditions envision both baptism and the Eucharist as signs of union with Christ in terms that must be understood as covenantal. Thus, Paul describes baptism in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:4–5), closely linked with the new covenant and the accompanying new heart/new spirit in prophetic texts like Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–28. For Paul, baptism reflects not only union with Christ, but union between recipients, who "drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:12–13) in being

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[129] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 242.

[130] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 219.

[131] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 218–19.

[132] Rudolph explains, "Anointing with oil has a greater representation than baptism in Gnosis and in some texts it is even regarded as more significant. In general, however, it is taken closely with the baptismal ceremony—the anointing taking place either before or after the baptism." Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 228. See, for example, Gos. Phil. 69.8–14 (Robinson, 151): "None can see himself either in water or in a mirror without light. . . . For this reason it is fitting to baptize in the two, in the light and the water. Now the light is the chrism." Cf. 74.12–15 (Robinson, 153): "The chrism is superior to baptism for it is from the word 'chrism' that we have been called 'Christians,' certainly not because of the word 'baptism.'"

"baptized into one body," becoming "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27–28). Paul's writings also testify, with the synoptic Gospels, to a very early tradition connecting the Eucharist with the new covenant, as in the words of institution of 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood") and their parallels in Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–26, and Luke 22:17–20—all of which directly identify the blood/cup with the covenant.[133]

By contrast, passages in the Nag Hammadi corpus that address baptism, Eucharist, or even the rites unique to Gnostic sects do not draw connections with the covenantal themes of the New Testament, such as incorporation into Christ, forgiveness of sin, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or the internalization of the law. Rather, the focus is on imagery associated with knowledge and revelation, such as light and life, and spiritual "sealing" as a metaphor for attaining and advancing in it. Gnostic writers found the sacraments of anointing and redemption to be more conducive illustrations or enactments of these emphases than the two rituals embraced by the orthodox church.

Ethics. Clement of Alexandria is typical of heresiological writers in depicting Gnostics as embodying one of two ethical extremes, asceticism or libertinism: "Let us answer them by dividing all the heresies into two groups. Either they teach a way of life which makes no distinction between right and wrong or their hymn is too highly strung and they acclaim asceticism out of a spirit of irreligious quarrelsomeness."[134] More often, the accusation was the former error, pointing out Gnostic participation in gladiatorial games or sexual activities as evidence of carnal indulgence.[135] Irenaeus's description of the exploitative practices of the Marcosians against female disciples provides a lurid

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[133] The Lukan account follows the Pauline version in using the term *new covenant*, whereas the Matthean and Markan versions, which lack the descriptor "new," more closely allude to Exod 24:8 ("This is the blood of the covenant.").

[134] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.5.40 (Ferguson, 280).

[135] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.14.6; 1.6.2–4; 1.29.2.

example.[136] In his view, the same indifference toward the material world that could motivate either libertinism or asceticism could also imply, as in the case of the Carpocratians, a moral relativism, in which "things are indifferent, some good, some bad, according to the view of men, as nothing is bad by nature."[137] Similarly, Clement indicts the followers of Basilides, "who do not lead upright lives, but claiming that they have the authority actually to commit sin because of their perfection, or that they will in any event be saved by nature, even if they do sin, because of their ingrained election."[138]

Early scholars of Gnosticism, such as Hans Jonas and Kurt Rudolph, followed these lines of reasoning in concluding that the Gnostic outlook is "only halfheartedly interested, if at all, in ethical questions," being focused on "the world above" and "individualism, or solipsism, as an expression of the 'unworldly self' revealed by Gnosis."[139] Affirming this polarity, Rudolph contends for both libertinism, corresponding to the pneumatic sense of freedom from the law of a lower god, and asceticism, depending on human rationality's capacity to subdue the passions, as intrinsic tendencies of the Gnostic "revolution on a moralistic plane."[140]

More recent scholarship has taken issue with the exaggerated and oversimplified dichotomy of libertinism versus asceticism.[141] Michael Williams summarizes the heresiological view still propagated in some modern scholarship:

> The general shape of this standard characterization is something like this: Gnosis represents a radically anticosmic dualism according to which one understands one's true identity to have nothing whatsoever to do with the material universe. The

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[136] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.13.1.

[137] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.25.5 (Unger, 89).

[138] Clement of Alexandria*, Strom.* 3.1.3 (Ferguson, 257).

[139] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 252. Rudolph himself quotes Jonas on the impersonal nature of Gnostic ethical systems: "The subject of this ethic is not the actual individual, but only his impersonal, non-mundane nucleus, the 'spark', which is identical in every one."

[140] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 253–58.

[141] See especially the critique of Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism*,*"* 139–88.

> individual's identity and ultimate destiny are indifferent to the material world and everything in it, including therefore the body in which the individual is temporarily stranded. This indifference to the body can be expressed through freedom by abuse, dropping the reins and allowing the body to graze at will or gallop in whatever direction its natural impulses and desires might lead it at any moment. The complete indifference to moral restraints might even take the form of an active program of "breaking every rule in the book" in order to display one's total rejection of the moral order contrived by the inferior archons who rule the cosmos. Or the indifference to the body can be expressed in quite the opposite manner, freedom by nonuse, the active suppression of bodily desires, the refusal to acknowledge and gratify the appetites of this disgusting instrument designed by the archons.[142]

Williams questions this characterization on three grounds: (1) it is reductionistic of a wide variety of attitudes toward the body and human nature; (2) there is little corroborating evidence for the charge of libertinism; and (3) "asceticism" is too narrow a term for the "full spectrum of ethics present in the sources."[143]

With respect to asceticism, Williams notes that the most frequently recurring theme is sexual abstinence, connected with the demiurge's commandment of physical procreation, which could take such forms as monasticism and spiritual (non-sexual) marriages; however, indulgence in wine and foods is also mentioned as contributing to the "sluggishness of the soul."[144] Rather than regarding these "ascetic" practices as expressions of "revolt" against an existing moral order, Williams views them as "a means for the control and transformation of the body, the filtering from it of as much 'defilement' as possible, the optimization of one's humanity."[145] Indeed, he suggests that it was this committed ethical lifestyle that attracted adherents to these movements.[146]

On the charge of libertinism, Williams asserts even more boldly of the heresiological accusations—which include charges of magic, eating meat sacrificed to idols, disobedience to the Law of Moses, attending pagan games, and sexual

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[142] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 139.

[143] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 139.

[144] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 140.

[145] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 144.

[146] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 161.

immorality—that "virtually all of the supposed testimony is either completely unreliable or gravely suspect."[147] This is because (1) the Nag Hammadi texts themselves never advocate a libertine attitude, and (2) the heresiological writers lacked firsthand access to observe or study it.[148] An exception, he notes, is a treatise of Epiphanes *Concerning Righteousness*, quoted in excerpts by Clement.[149] In this text there is "explicit and unambiguous advocacy of sexual license," rejecting monogamy as an unnatural restriction upon the goodness and freedom of the divine creation.[150] However, Williams dismisses Epiphanes as not really "gnostic" at all, given his neglect of biblical texts and the wide divergence of his arguments from Gnostic figures who devalued the material order.[151] Thus, for Williams, the evidence for libertinism fails to persuade just as thoroughly as the evidence for asceticism, confirming that the conventional formula of "the two-pronged Gnostic ethic is completely erroneous."[152] Though a somewhat tendentious over-correction, Williams's interpretation is helpful in redirecting attention away from mere catalogues of external practices, toward deeper consideration of the underlying motivations that gave rise to them. This is suggestive of the close interconnection between ethical practice and identity formation in the ancient world.

While we have seen that Gnostic groups do not utilize the covenant concept to ground this relationship, related ideas emerge in their treatments of the Mosaic law. The fullest extant discussions of the law come in texts outside the Nag Hammadi corpus—Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* and Epiphanes's *On Righteousness*.

The *Letter to Flora* of the second-century Valentinian Ptolemy presents a

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[147] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 164.

[148] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 165.

[149] See Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 3.2.

[150] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 185.

[151] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 187.

[152] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 187.

Gnostic exposition of the Law that illustrates how the Mosaic covenant could be understood in circles that did not reject it outright as the imposition of a malevolent demiurge. Taking a more nuanced position, the letter asserts a tripartite division of the Pentateuchal law according to its three sources: the revelation of the transcendent Father, the human concessions of Moses, and the traditions of Jewish elders.[153] In addition, the first and highest tier, the pure Law of God, subdivides into three categories of moral, civil and ceremonial statutes.[154] Here, the moral law is identified with the "pure legislation unmixed with evil," corresponding to the Decalogue and "fulfilled by Christ." The civil law consists of the legal statutes, represented especially by the *lex talionis*, abolished by Christ. The ceremonial law includes the cultic requirements of Sabbath, circumcision, and other institutions established "in the image of things which are spiritual," requiring allegorical or spiritual interpretation. Based on the retaliatory principle of the *lex talionis* in its second tier, Ptolemy infers that even the so-called Law of God must be the imperfect product of an inferior divine being, who is not inherently good or evil, but characterized by the intermediate quality of "justice."[155]

Notably, the stipulations of the law are not explicitly or implicitly connected by Ptolemy to the covenantal context in which they appear in the biblical texts. As we have seen, Jewish scriptural exegesis consistently regarded the Torah—including both the moral commandments of the Decalogue and the so-called civil and ceremonial statutes—as the non-negotiable requirements and visible expressions of life in the covenant community. Indeed, removal from the community was the consequence for disobedience to the law, understood as "covenant-breaking." Moreover, the law's covenantal framework also implied the community's founding narrative as recorded in its scriptural

[153] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 33.4.1 (Williams, 199).

[154] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 33.5.1–8 (Williams, 200–201).

[155] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 33.7.1–6 (Williams, 203).

texts, which included, most pointedly, the exodus from Egypt and the ratification of the Mosaic covenant at Sinai, along with the earlier covenants with the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The continuous biblical narrative of creation, promise, and redemption from bondage provided the context for Israel's reception of the Mosaic law and resulting formation into the elect people of God.

By contrast, none of these elements feature in the approach to the Law espoused in the *Letter to Flora*. Detached from the biblical narrative, the Law is not subject to any such controlling hermeneutical influence. Though Ptolemy references the Creator in the form of the demiurge, the myth to which he alludes never describes the relationship between this being and humanity positively (much less in terms of covenant-making). The assertion that the majority of the Law's content derives either from a just (but not "good") deity or from human authors who lack divine inspiration (Moses and the Jewish elders) demands that serious hermeneutical (and source-critical) investigations are necessary to identify the portions valid and applicable to the Christian life. Finally, theological motifs related to the new covenant, such as the internalization of the law, its writing upon the heart, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, which feature regularly in New Testament and orthodox second-century treatments of the law, are all absent.

A second text that treats the question of the law, the treatise *On Righteousness* by Epiphanes (allegedly, the son of the Gnostic teacher Carpocrates) is preserved by Clement of Alexandria.[156] For Epiphanes, divine righteousness consists in the *absence* of formalized law—in the "equity" and "commonality" of the natural order.[157] Written laws, by contrast, "actually taught illegal behaviour," since "the individualism allowed by the laws cut damagingly at the roots of the universalism of God's Law."[158] Both the claim to

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[156] First quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.2.6 (Ferguson, 260); see also 3.6.1–9.3.

[157] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.2.6 (Ferguson, 260).

[158] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.2.7 (Ferguson, 260).

private property and the practice of monogamy serve as examples of an individualistic denial of God's common provision for humanity. Epiphanes appeals to innate human tendencies, alongside the prohibitions against fulfilling them, as evidence of the Law's self-contradictory and absurd nature: "The very one who endows human beings with desire to sustain the processes of birth gives orders that it is to be suppressed, though he suppresses it in no other living creature! The words 'for your neighbor's wife' are even more ridiculous since he is forcing public property to become private property."[159] Though brief, these fragments clearly assume and reflect an interpretation of the Genesis account that revolves around some version of the demiurge myth, in which the revealed or written law is antithetical to the community's moral vision, which is naturally or universally inscribed. Like the *Letter to Flora*, *On Righteousness* decouples ethical teaching from the covenantal context of the Mosaic law in the biblical narrative, positing instead an antagonistic relationship between the Creator/Lawgiver and humanity.

Texts from the Nag Hammadi corpus reveal Gnostic attitudes toward the Mosaic law less directly. Rudolph supports his rather unnuanced contention that "Gnosis is a stranger to any legal conception" only by an appeal to the Gospel of Thomas, where some of the sayings prioritize internal or spiritual rather than external and literal obedience to the commandments.[160] More clearly, the Testimony of Truth is framed in its opening lines as an exhortation to "hear not with the ears of the body, but with the ears of the mind"; to do so is to become free of "the old leaven of the Pharisees and the scribes [of] the Law," or the deceptive authority of the demiurge and his subordinate archons.[161] In this dualistic scheme, obedience to the Mosaic law leads to defilement by promoting engagement with the material order, with the chief example being procreation: "The Law

[159] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.2.9 (Ferguson, 262).

[160] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 263.

[161] Testim. Truth 29.6–15 (Robinson, 449–50).

commands (one) to take a husband (or) to take a wife, and to beget, to multiply like the sand of the sea. But passion which is a delight to them constrains the souls of those who are begotten in this place, those who defile and those who are defiled, in order that the Law might be fulfilled through them."[162] Subjecting the physical passions through renunciation becomes the key to redemptive knowledge of God.[163] An inverted reading of the Genesis account again provides the basis for understanding the Law as the revelation of a fallen and vengeful deity, through a series of Pentateuchal allusions illustrating the wisdom and goodness of the serpent, which "is Christ."[164] Though the texts of "the Law" were written to maintain enslavement to the demiurge, they can, with proper interpretation, reveal truth to those who "seek after these mysteries, which were prefigured for our sake."[165]

Clearly, then, Gnostic ethics (in all their variety) cannot be described as covenantal, or even as grounded in the Mosaic law, as in the streams of Judaism surveyed in the previous chapter. Indeed, many Gnostic writers explicitly reject that Law as the basis for righteous living. Moral terms derived from biblical texts are defined differently—sin, for example, may be understood to denote "error" or "ignorance" of concealed knowledge, rather than willful rebellion against an established moral standard.[166] Moreover, the notions of good and evil themselves may be relativized and located along an ambiguous moral continuum, as in the Gospel of Philip: "Light and darkness, life and death, right and left, are brothers of one another. They are inseparable.

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[162] Testim. Truth 30.2–11 (Robinson, 450).

[163] Testim. Truth 41.4–13 (Robinson, 453).

[164] Testim. Truth 45.22–49.10 (Robinson, 454–55).

[165] Testim. Truth 50.4–10 (Robinson, 455). "For [this] is the [way] Moses [writes] in every book. [The book of the] generation of Adam [is written for those] who are in the [generation] of [the Law]. They follow the Law [and] they obey it."

[166] Gos. Truth 32.36–37 (Robinson, 47); see also Gos. Truth 21.14–19 (Robinson, 42): "For he who is ignorant is in need, and what he lacks is great, since he lacks that which will make him perfect."

Because of this neither are the good good, nor the evil evil, nor is life life, nor death death. For this reason each will dissolve into its earliest origin. But those who are exalted above the world are indissoluble, eternal."[167] Within this dualistic framework, the recurring motif of election, or of Gnostic believers as a chosen spiritual seed, has ethical implications, which indeed appear to undermine moral obligation along the lines suggested by the heresiologists. Because they are "filled with the seed of the Father," the chosen exist as "perfect and worthy of his name" apart from moral striving or growth in virtue.[168] An element of determinism is present in texts which declare that this election to redemptive knowledge is "predestined from the beginning" and "cannot be abandoned."[169] In its more developed forms, this is metaphysically inscribed into the tripartite division of humanity into pneumatic, psychic, and hylic classes, with the latter corresponding to the material world and carnal desires: "The spiritual substance is a [single thing] and a single representation. . . . As for the substance of the psychics, its determination is double, since it has the knowledge and confession of the exalted one, and it is not inclined to evil . . . . As for the material substance, its way is different and in many forms, and it was a weakness which existed in many types of inclination."[170] Though the author of the Tripartite Tractate can also affirm that "each of the three essential types is known by fruit,"[171] it is in fact only the middle class, the psychics, that exercise real moral choice (which, in any case, is understood in the intellectualist terms of receiving or rejecting *gnosis*), whereas the moral orientations of the pneumatics and

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[167] Gos. Phil. 53.14–22 (Robinson, 142).

[168] Gos. Truth 43.9–25 (Robinson, 51).

[169] Treat. Res. 46.25–34 (Robinson, 55).

[170] Tri. Tract. 106.6–18 (Robinson, 88).

[171] Tri. Tract. 118.21–23 (Robinson, 94).

hylics are rendered irrelevant, at best, on account of their predetermined fates.[172] This dynamic is not limited to the Valentinian perspective, but also appears in the Sethian anthropology of the Apocryphon of John:

> Those on whom the Spirit of life will descend and (with whom) he will be with the power, they will be saved and will become perfect and be worthy of the greatness and be purified in that place from all wickedness and the involvement in evil. Then they have no other care than the incorruption alone, to which they direct their attention from here on, without anger or envy or jealousy or desire and greed of anything. They are not affected by anything except the state of being in the flesh alone, which they bear while looking expectantly for the time when they will be met by the receivers (of the body).[173]

For the elect, then, the moral outlook does not consist of ongoing struggle against sin, the cultivation of virtue, or the experience of victory over the influence of evil, but in transcending the moral order entirely.

Although Williams is undoubtedly right to question the oversimplified dichotomy of asceticism vs libertinism, the deterministic qualities just mentioned do appear to have fostered an ascetic tendency in some cases. A few examples are discussed by Rudolph, including the call to self-renunciation in the Acts of Peter, and the boast to "have nothing in this world, lest the authority of the world that has come into being should detain us" and to "go about in hunger (and) in thirst . . . not clinging to the things which have come into being" in the Authoritative Teaching.[174] To these could be added the Gospel of the Egyptians, which praises the "renouncing of the world" by the elect seed of Seth;[175] the Testimony of Truth, which prohibits "the defilement of the Law"

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[172] Tri. Tract. 119.16–24 (Robinson, 95) states, "The spiritual race will receive complete salvation in every way. The material will receive destruction in every way, just as one who resists him. The psychic race, since it is in the middle when it is brought forth and also when it is created, is double according to its determination for both good and evil."

[173] Ap. John 25.23–26.1 (Robinson, 119).

[174] See Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 261–62.

[175] Gos. Eg. 63.16–17 (Robinson, 216).

resulting from the commandment to procreate;[176] the Book of Thomas the Contender, which denounces "lust for those visible things that will decay and change" and proclaims woes on those who pursue sexuality and other fleshly desires "in the grip of the powers of your body";[177] and the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, in which arrival at the heavenly city of Lithargoel is possible only for "the one who has forsaken everything that he has and has fasted daily from stage to stage."[178] The presence of ascetic elements in these texts—representing Sethian, Valentinian, and Thomasine streams—demonstrates that they pervaded Gnostic thought, even across its considerable diversity.

What may be most apparent, in conclusion, is the lack of uniformity in Gnostic treatment of ethical themes. Stemming from the absence of a covenantally-structured historical narrative and its accompanying revelation of a moral law, Gnostic moralities are frequently ill-defined—emphasizing the attainment of knowledge over particular modes of behavior. Where ethical norms are discussed at all, they allow for a wide range of attitudes along the spectrum of libertinism to asceticism. So far as their writings can attest, then, these communities did not regard specific ethical orientations or expressions to be distinguishing markers of collective identity or group membership.

Covenant and Identity Formation in Marcionism

It was customary in older scholarship, following the heresiologists, to include the second-century heresiarch Marcion of Sinope in treatments of the various schools of Gnosticism, and perhaps this practice has now been vindicated by the recognition of Gnosticism's wide-ranging diversity and complexity, which may be elastic enough to

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[176] Tes. Truth 29.26–30.11 (Robinson, 450); in 38.27–39.6 (Robinson, 452), the author proceeds to criticize "those who receive . . . to themselves . . . the pleasures which are defiled," saying "God created [members] for our use, for us to [grow in] defilement, in order that [we might] enjoy [ourselves.]."

[177] Thom. Cont. 140.30–144.14 (Robinson, 203–6).

[178] Acts Pet. 5.19–26 (Robinson, 291).

account for him after all. Whether or not Marcion is classified as a “Gnostic,” however, the distinctives of his system and of the churches that formed around them warrant separate consideration, not least because they are deeply concerned with notions of newness, law, gospel, and the proper understanding of the biblical narrative. Since these issues pertain directly to the covenant concept, and because Marcion’s teaching itself provided the occasion for second-century works that further developed this concept in response, his own use of it requires thorough consideration.

Scholarship on covenant in Marcion. Any discussion of Marcion necessarily begins with indebted reference to Harnack, whose classic study still influences portraits of him as a radically reform-minded Paulinist dedicated to the singular ideal of unmerited grace, bestowed by a loving “alien” god upon the earthly captives of a belligerent Creator, and revealed through the teaching of a phantasmic Christ.[179] Many aspects of Harnack’s presentation now have been challenged, but the main contours of his exhaustive biographical and historical research still command respect. Though he follows Tertullian’s polemic in identifying the opposition between law and gospel (a total abandonment of the law of the Creator in light of the radical “newness” of the revelation of the good Father) as the point of departure for Marcion’s theological project, Harnack does not directly address Marcion’s covenantal theology—in part, no doubt, because he views Marcion’s attitude toward the Old Testament as one of straightforward rejection. Harnack does consider Marcion’s use of the new covenant concept in connection with the canon, noting the problem that the main church faced in proclaiming two distinct covenants when, “for the second and more important of these covenants it had no

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[179] Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion, Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der Katholischen Kirche*, TUGAL 45 (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960).

documents!"[180] Among Marcion's many ingenuities, then, was the establishment of a new covenant (or New Testament) canon:

> The first necessity that confronted him, since he rejected the old documents and recognized only *one* covenant, was the production of a *littera scripta* of this same single covenant. He, and no one else, did it! . . . Some have attempted in vain to prove that the conception and creation of a second body of holy writ, the New Testament, had already been achieved in Christianity at large even before Marcion. . . . It is true that in Christianity at large since the time of Paul people had been aware of two testaments, or covenants, but in the form of *Scripture* there was only *one*, the Old Testament, and there was no thought of doubling the number.[181]

It was only in reaction to this innovation, according to Harnack, that the main church likewise collected what may be called a New Testament canon, assembling its own recognized gospels and apostolic writings into a definitive corpus.

This thesis carried weight throughout the twentieth century and informed discussions of New Testament canon formation, which often also followed Harnack in divorcing the question from the theological or social implications of the new covenant concept. An exception is an insightful article by W. C. Van Unnik, who disagrees with Harnack that καινή διαθήκη emerged only late in the second century, as a title for the collected New Testament writings in response to Marcionite and Montanist challenges.[182] Rather, he suggests, this term is rooted in the thought world of the Old Testament, with the occurrences of διαθήκη in the LXX giving rise to a "specific Christian terminology" of "new covenant" (as in Irenaeus) that referred not primarily to a collection of documents, but to "a wonderful reality, an experience of God who fulfilled His promises in a personalistic way."[183] Thus, it was initially by virtue of their clear witness to this preceding spiritual reality that the canonical Gospels and other apostolic writings were

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[180] English translations are taken from *Marcion* (Steely and Biersma), 129.

[181] *Marcion* (Steely and Biersma, 129–30).

[182] W. C. Van Unnik, *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik*, part 2, *1 Peter, Canon, Corpus Hellenisticum Generalia*, Novum Testamentum Supplements 30 (Leuven: Brill, 1980), 160–61.

[183] Van Unnik, *1 Peter, Canon, Corpus*, 171.

recognized by the main church as “books of the καινή διαθήκη”—though the phrase “later lost its dynamic weight and became nothing more than just a title.”[184]

A pivotal role for Marcion was reasserted, however, by Wolfram Kinzig, who, in responding directly to Van Unnik, insisted that his view still did not explain the emergence of διαθήκη as a canonical title.[185] Noting that this usage appears suddenly in the late second and early third centuries in Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen, Kinzig theorizes that it had been introduced first by Marcion to demonstrate the difference in origin between his texts and those inspired by the Creator.[186] Then, on account of its growing popularity, the main church reluctantly adopted the terminology, despite rejecting the oppositional covenantal theology that gave rise to it.[187]

Sebastian Moll disagrees, in turn, with Kinzig’s assessment in one of the fullest recent treatments of Marcion, questioning the likelihood of “such an act of daring ingenuity” on the part of the orthodox, and instead attributing this “idea of temporal development within the divine revelation” to such contemporaries as Justin Martyr.[188] According to Moll, “the concept of the ‘Old’ and ‘New Testament’ as referring to two different covenants was in fact formulated *against* the arch-heretic.”[189] Marcion’s own teaching “shows no signs of a theology of covenant,” revolving more simply around the dualism between a benevolent God and the evil (not just, as in later Marcionite

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[184] Van Unnik, *1 Peter, Canon, Corpus*, 171.

[185] Wolfram Kinzig, “Καινὴ Διαθήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries,” *JTS* 45, no. 2 (1994): 524.

[186] Kinzig, “Καινὴ Διαθήκη,” 542.

[187] Kinzig, “Καινὴ Διαθήκη,” 543. As evidence of its popularity, Kinzig points to Tertullian’s programmatic description of the *Antitheses* as placing one “instrument (or, as it is more usual to say, testament”) in opposition to the other in Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.1 (Evans, 257), as well as his usage of *testamentum* to refer to a collection of documents in his later works.

[188] Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, WUNT 250 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 106.

[189] Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, 106.

conceptions) Creator.[190] As a result, however, later second-century biblical interpreters of all theological stripes were compelled to grapple with the problem he introduced.[191]

Reflecting an entirely different approach, Judith Lieu assesses the "'constructed' Marcions" that heresiological writers used to create and enforce ideological boundaries between themselves and their polemical opponents, and indeed to construct the archetypal model of "the heretic" itself.[192] In the process, Lieu constructs her own Marcion, a rather moderate adherent to widely-held contemporary ideals of divine transcendence, logical consistency, and subordination of the passions.[193] Covenant themes do not figure prominently in this portrait, either in relation to Kinzig's canonical thesis (which she dismisses) or more generally, since in Lieu's estimation, Marcion

> was not concerned with the character of a complementary or parallel 'old' dispensation but with that of an entirely different one, defined by being under the Creator. His version of Jesus' words over the cup at the Last Supper may have spoken only of a "covenant," without the adjective "new" (*AM* I.40.4; cf. Luke 22.20). It would be anachronistic to assume that Marcion in the mid-second century used these terms in a documentary sense, and there is nothing to support the suggestion that it was he who first offered as a counterpart to a familiar "old testament" an alternative scriptural authority, a "new testament" consisting of his "Gospel" and "*Apostolikon*." At a later date, when the idea of the two testaments was firmly textualised in Christian thought, then only did Marcion come to be accused of pulling apart, or of cutting and pasting, what properly belonged together.[194]

This passing reference to Marcion's omission of the word "new" in the eucharistic formula of Luke 22 is more significant than Lieu here indicates. For now, however, it suffices to observe that the major studies of Marcion's thought since Harnack have not

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[190] Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, 105.

[191] Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, 158. As represented in the hermeneutical procedures of the orthodox Justin, the Valentinian Ptolemy, and Marcion's own disciple Apelles, as Moll demonstrates.

[192] Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8–11.

[193] On these points see, respectively, Lieu, *Marcion*, 331, 356, 394.

[194] Lieu, *Marcion*, 408.

given sustained consideration to the use of covenant themes within his thought, except in connection with the question of his debated role in the adoption of καινή διαθήκη as a title for the New Testament canon. This lack of attention is surprising given that, though many now eschew the theological categories of Law and Gospel that dominated Harnack's interpretation, scholars still broadly acknowledge the dualistic or antithetical character of Marcion's thought, as expressed in the polarity of "old" and "new."

Covenant in Marcion. Turning to primary source material, I begin with the heresiological accounts, on which a reconstruction of Marcion's thought and writings are dependent (though with all due acknowledgement to Lieu of their tendentious, polemical, rhetorical, and constructive character). Though certainly not unbiased reports, these texts bear witness to the ways in which Marcionite thought was perceived and interpreted by contemporary audiences. Thus, I will note what heresiological writers regarded as distinct about Marcion's followers, in terms of their beliefs, rituals, and ethical practices.

A onetime fellow resident of Rome with Marcion, Justin Martyr mentions him twice in his first *Apology*.[195] The first instance is in a polemic against false teachers inspired by demons.[196] Marcion's teaching of "some other god" is his distinguishing feature in Justin's view.[197] Explaining that followers of these false teachers identify as "Christians," yet fail to hold to the corresponding doctrines (and, he implies, the moral code), Justin suggests that their lack of persecution confirms a difference in identity perceptible even to secular authorities.[198] An additional distinctive is Marcion's refusal to acknowledge Christ as the prophetic messiah. He proclaims "another god besides the

[195] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 26, 58. The descriptions of Marcion as "a man of Pontus, who is even at this day alive" and "even now teaching" indicate the recency of Justin's encounters with Marcion personally, or at least with the teaching presented by his followers.

[196] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 26.

[197] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 26 (Barnard, 41).

[198] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 26 (Barnard, 41).

Demiurge of all and likewise another son."[199] Justin associates false doctrine with impropriety of lifestyle, observing that since followers of Marcion lack "a wise prudence and a pure and passionless life, [demonic influences] drive them into ungodliness."[200] In *Dialogue with Trypho*, he offers a similar estimation of those who "call themselves Christians" but whom the orthodox "call . . . by the name of the originator of each false doctrine"—"Marcionites" are counted among those "impious atheists and wicked sinners" who "blaspheme the Creator of the universe, and Christ, whose advent was foretold by him."[201] In both works, then, Justin classifies Marcionites as a group whose false doctrines and unethical practices belie their claim to Christian identity.

Irenaeus of Lyons mentions Marcion and Marcionites frequently in his five books *Against Heresies*.[202] He introduces Marcion near the conclusion of his survey of Gnostic sects in Book I, linked to them by way of Cerdo, "who got his start from the disciples of Simon."[203] Marcion "succeeded Cerdo, and amplified his doctrine,"[204] which consisted of "blasphemy" in four forms: (1) rejection of the God proclaimed by the law and the prophets; (2) manifestation of Christ from the good Father (a "second god") rather than from this Creator;[205] (3) mutilation of the apostolic Gospels and epistles; and

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[199] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 58 (Barnard, 64).

[200] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 58 (Barnard, 64).

[201] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 35.4–6 (Falls, 55).

[202] There are explicit references in Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.27.2–3; 1.28.1; 2.1.1; 2.1.4; 2.3.1; 2.28.6; 2.29.9; 2.31.1; 3.2.1; 3.3.4; 3.4.3; 3.11.2; 3.11.7; 3.11.9; 3.12.5; 3.12.12; 3.13.1; 3.14.3–4; 3.25.3; 4.2.2; 4.6.2; 4.6.4; 4.8.1; 4.13.1; 4.33.1; 4.34.1; 5.26.2.

[203] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.27.1 (Unger, 91). Irenaeus also directly links Marcion with Cerdo at *Haer.* 3.4.3, where the latter's excommunication from the church at Rome is described. Ultimately, despite the fact that they "do not acknowledge the name of their teacher," Irenaeus labors to associate Marcion and his followers with Simon Magus, whom he presents as the arch-heretic and founder of all the various sects he describes. *Haer.* 1.27.4 (Unger, 92).

[204] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.27.2 (Unger, 91).

[205] As, for example, in Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 2.1.2–4 (Unger, 17–18), Irenaeus regularly assimilates Marcion's teaching of the "good God" with the "Father of all" proclaimed by Gnostic teachers. Though he is well aware of the differences in their systems (and bases additional arguments upon those differences), this move is possible because, as he notes in *Haer.* 2.31.1 (Unger, 101), they are united in their tendency to "separates our creation from the Father."

(4) an inverted interpretation of the Old Testament in which the roles of traditional biblical heroes and villains are reversed.[206] Irenaeus accuses Marcion of "depraving the system of truth" received from the apostles.[207] His teachings, which "[bring] to naught God's economy," are not consistent with the "cardinal principles of the Gospel" received by the orthodox church.[208] Yet Irenaeus also grounds Marcion's doctrinal error in his "totally corrupt" moral character.[209] He makes Marcion responsible for the misguided ethical teaching of the Encratites against marriage, procreation, and the consumption of meat.[210] These are, no doubt, examples of the general Marcionite principle that the Mosaic law, as the revelation of an inferior god, was to be rejected *in toto*, replaced by the superior ethical teaching of Christ.[211] Moreover, Irenaeus claims that the absence of martyrdoms among Marcionites and other heretical groups demonstrate their unwillingness to endure persecution for the sake of Christ.[212] Like Justin, he charges heretical figures like Marcion with deceptively adopting the name of Christ "as a kind of incentive . . . disseminating their own teaching by the use of the good Name."[213] Significantly, their fundamental error is that they "do not apply themselves to investigate

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[206] In *Haer.* 4.8.1, Irenaeus alludes to a specific teaching of Marcion that excluded Abraham from salvation, on the assumption that it was the Creator, not the Father of Christ, who promised him an eternal "inheritance."

[207] As illustrated most vividly in the confrontation in Rome between Marcion and Polycarp, who recognized the heretic as "first-born of Satan." Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.3.4 (Unger, 34).

[208] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8–9 (Unger, 56–57).

[209] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.2.1 (Unger, 31).

[210] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.28.1.

[211] Speaking of Jesus's quotations of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount, Irenaeus insists, "For all these do not contain or imply an opposition to and an overturning of the [precepts] of the past, as Marcion's followers do strenuously maintain; but [they exhibit] a fulfilling and an extension of them." Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.13.1.

[212] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.33.9.

[213] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.27.4 (Unger, 92).

the reasons for the difference between the two covenants."[214] It is by recognizing the unity and harmony of the covenants that Christians may perceive the logical impossibilities of Marcionite beliefs (the doctrine of the two gods), rituals (Christ identifying his phantasmic body with created bread and wine), and ethics (forgiveness by the Father of sins actually committed against the Creator).[215]

There are also references to Marcionite thought throughout the *Miscellanies* of Clement of Alexandria.[216] After introducing Marcionites as those who maintain a distinction between the good and just gods,[217] Clement states that they regard marriage and procreation as evil in their worship of "the Strange God." He attributes these views to the influence of Platonist philosophers, who hold to the transmigration of souls—though noting that even they did not disparage physical matter to the same extent.[218] His polemic critiques the christological docetism affirmed by Marcionites.[219] He also criticizes their prohibition of "the use of worldly things because of his antipathy to their creator."[220] In addition to these anti-material beliefs, Clement notes the moral difficulties implied by the teaching that the good Father saves those who are not his own creation.[221] Finally, Clement describes the immoral character of Marcionite teachers.[222]

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[214] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.12 (Unger, 67). This statement echoes Irenaeus's promise in *Haer.* 1.10.3 to "show why it was that more covenants than one were given to mankind; and teach what was the special character of each of these covenants," which he also reiterates here.

[215] These and other difficulties with Marcionite positions are rhetorically collected in Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.33.1.

[216] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.8, 3.3.12–22, 3.4.25, 3.17.102, 4.7–8, 5.1, 7.16–17. Clement does not explicitly mention Marcion or Marcionites in his other extant writings.

[217] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.8.

[218] "Marcion took from Plato the starting point of his 'strange' doctrines, without either grateful acknowledgement or understanding." Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.3.12–13, 19–22 (Ferguson, 269).

[219] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.17.102.

[220] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.4.1 (Ferguson, 271).

[221] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.1.

[222] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.16.

Their failure to "walk in the right way," by falling into the vices of sloth, vainglory, and folly, is what distinguishes those who associate themselves with Marcion's teachings (they "receive their appellation from a [person's] name, as that which is called after Valentinus, and that after Marcion").[223]

Without question, the heresiologist who engages most extensively with Marcion's thought is Tertullian of Carthage. Indeed, it is on the basis of Tertullian's five-volume polemical treatise *Against Marcion* that scholars have reconstructed portions of Marcion's texts, including the *Antitheses* and edited versions of the Gospel of Luke and the Pauline corpus (the *Apostolikon*).[224] Thus, we will consider Tertullian's presentation of Marcionism in all three of the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and ethical practice, which also provide glimpses of Marcion's own underlying teaching.

With respect to belief, Marcion appears in Tertullian as an originally orthodox Christian whose deviation from the true faith stemmed from an unhealthy fixation on theodicy, including a literalistic reading of Old Testament texts appearing to ascribe evil to the Creator (Isa 45:7), the influence of pagan philosophy,[225] and a misreading of Jesus's parable of the two trees bearing fruit according to their kind (Luke 6:43), which became paradigmatic for Marcion's doctrine of the two gods.[226] His major doctrines stem from the stark opposition between the two gods, positing "in Christ as it were a different dispensation of sole and unadulterated benevolence, an opposite character to the

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[223] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.17 (*ANF*, 2: 555).

[224] See most recently Ulrich Schmid, *Marcion und Sein Apostolos: Rekonstruktion und Historische Einordnung der Marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe*, Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung 25 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995); Dieter T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel*, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[225] "At least let Marcion admit that the principal term of his faith is from the school of Epicurus, for to avoid making him an object of fear he introduces a dull sort of god, and puts on loan even with God the Creator matter from the porch of the Stoics when he denies the resurrection of the flesh, which in fact no philosophy admits." Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc*. 5.19 (Evans, 633). English translations are taken from Evans.

[226] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.1–2 (Evans, 3–7).

Creator's."[227] He argues for the existence of two separate messiahs—one predicted by the Creator to establish a political kingdom for Israel, and the other sent suddenly and unannounced by the Father for the salvation of those who believe.[228] He also denies the bodily incarnation and the resurrection of the dead.[229] In sum, "The separation of Law and Gospel is the primary and principal exploit of Marcion . . . For such are Marcion's *Antitheses*, or Contrary Oppositions, which are designed to show the conflict and disagreement of the Gospel and the Law, so that from the diversity of principles between those two documents they may argue further for a diversity of gods."[230] This programmatic statement has been debated at length, with Harnack's interpretation in the Lutheran terms of Law and Gospel now giving way to an understanding that these are more likely Tertullian's terms for the Old and New Testaments.[231] Tertullian frequently appeals to covenantal arguments to counter these Marcionite oppositions—for example, in demonstrating that the Creator himself had prophesied the establishment of a new covenant through his prophets (Jer 31:31).[232] Thus, it is possible to recover aspects of Marcion's own covenantal theology from Tertullian's critique of his reading of Paul. His version of Galatians, forefronted at the head of the collection, excised Paul's defense of the ongoing validity of the promise to Abraham alongside the imposition of the Mosaic law, which did not nullify it and was not contrary to it (Gal 3:15–25).[233] Marcion retained

[227] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.2 (Evans, 7).

[228] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.15 (Evans, 41).

[229] On the denial of the resurrection of the dead, see, for example, Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.10 (Evans, 577): "Marcion entirely refuses to admit the resurrection of the flesh, promising salvation to the soul alone."

[230] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.19 (Evans, 49).

[231] Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion*, 77; Lieu, *Marcion*, 71–73.

[232] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.1 (Evans, 259).

[233] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.3 (Evans, 525). Tertullian's commentary on Marcion's text jumps from Gal 3:13 ("Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree") to 3:26 ("for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith"). See also the reconstruction in Schmid, *Marcion und Sein Apostolos*, 316–17.

Paul's "allegorical" discussion of the two covenants (Gal 4:24–31), though he describes them, Tertullian notes, as "two revelations [*ostensiones*], as I see they have translated it."[234] This rendering eliminates the historical dimension, which might seem to affirm a sequential and interconnected relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the covenant inaugurated by Christ (thus Marcion denies a common source for "both the dispensations" in the same God, as Tertullian proceeds to argue). This effort to sever the historical tether between covenants likely reappeared in a modification of the eucharistic formula of 1 Corinthians 11 (though Tertullian does not provide a quotation to confirm this), which presumably followed Marcion's Gospel in eliminating the word "new" in the reference to the cup as "the new covenant in my blood"[235] (1 Cor 11:25). Lastly, in his treatment of Paul's description of the ministry of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3:1–18, it would appear that Marcion did, surprisingly, retain the descriptor in "new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6), since Tertullian refers to it in this way twice in the course of his argument that "the New Testament will belong to none other than him who made that promise."[236] This was likely with the understanding of two entirely distinct covenants originating with the two separate gods, necessitating Tertullian's rejoinder that both derive from the one Creator.[237] It is not known how Marcion may have interpreted the reference to Gentiles as "strangers to the covenants of promise" in Ephesians 2:12, though he evidently retained both the letter itself (under the title Epistle to the

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[234] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4 (Evans, 531).

[235] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.8 (Evans, 557). Since Tertullian passes quickly over the eucharistic formula in 1 Cor 11, simply noting, "I have already, in discussing the gospel, by the sacrament of the Bread and the Cup, given proof of the verity of our Lord's Body and Blood, as opposed to Marcion's phantasm," it is likely that Marcion's treatment of it did not differ substantially from his discussion of Luke 22:20 (on which see below).

[236] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.11 (Evans, 579).

[237] "Indeed he who had engraved the letter upon the tables of stone is the same who also proclaimed, in reference to the Spirit, 'I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh.'" Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.11 (Evans, 579).

Laodiceans) and this particular phrase.[238]

Certainly, then, Tertullian perceives a gulf of difference between Marcionite beliefs, or doctrines, and those of the orthodox church, rooted in a flawed covenantal theology. Do his presentations of Marcionite ritual and ethical practices indicate that their communities were distinguishable on these fronts as well? With respect to the former, Alistair Stewart-Sykes has argued in the negative, contending that Marcionite liturgies were quite typical.[239] He provides three examples of their "liturgical conservatism" that he suggests are in line with broader second-century practices: (1) the use of milk and honey (with no mention of wine) at the baptismal Eucharist; (2) the presence of catechumens at the Eucharist; and (3) the description of the eucharistic elements as figural (*figura*). Importantly, concerning the Eucharist, Stewart-Sykes acknowledges its covenant-making nature, as a tradition preserved in all three Synoptic Gospels in the reference to a covenant instituted at the Last Supper; however, he is surprisingly dismissive of the most striking aspect of Marcion's apparent modification—the elimination of the modifier "new" (καινή):

> What is interesting in this account is the omission of the word "new" from the statement of the making of a covenant. The rationale for such an omission is obvious, since it avoids any suggestion of continuity between the covenant of Jesus and that of the creator, but perhaps the inclusion of the phrase is significant, indicating that Marcion might see the use of wine as in some way constructing the covenant of believers.[240]

Stewart-Sykes is certainly correct to recognize that Marcion views the eucharistic ceremony as integral to the formation of a covenant community—a conviction shared with many other Christian writers—and in his observation that the omission of "new" is

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[238] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.11 (Evans, 585).

[239] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Bread and Fish, Water and Wine: The Marcionite Menu and the Maintenance of Purity," in *Marcion und Seine Kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung / Marcion and His Impact on Church History: Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, Gehalten vom 15. - 18. August 2001 in Mainz*, ed. Gerhard May, Katharina Greschat, and Martin Meiser, TUGAL 150 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 207.

[240] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.41 (Evans, 495).

likely motivated by a concern that the notion of a "new covenant" too readily implies the existence of an "old" (and thus related) covenant. Yet he seems not to realize that this flies in the face of his broader argument for the conformity of Marcionite practice to established norms, since the decision to eliminate "new" indicates Marcion's intentional dissociation from Christian circles formed around a covenant prophesied by the Creator and inaugurated by Christ. Thus, even if Stewart-Sykes is right that the Marcionite eucharistic ritual shared external features with the orthodox practice, it clearly self-consciously distanced itself by insisting that it was perpetuating a *different* covenant, consisting of different divine and human partners. In any case, Tertullian relishes to point out that the use of the same rite, with its created elements (bread, milk, honey, water, oil, and wine) and corporeal imagery (body and blood) fits poorly within the Marcionite theological framework of anti-cosmic dualism and docetic (or "phantasmic") christology.[241] He levels additional critiques against Marcionite baptismal practice: it signifies the forgiveness of sins by a God whose laws have not been broken, and whose character is in any case not wrathful, and it is restricted to virgins, widows, and the divorced (those undefiled by engagement in sexual acts).[242]

Lastly, on the question of ethics, Tertullian's statement that, logically speaking, Marcionites ought to embrace libertinism (since they do not fear the Creator and his law) would seem to imply that, in actuality, they did not.[243] From Tertullian's engagement with Marcion's Gospel, it is clear that pointing out the intentional violations

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[241] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.14 (Evans, 37).

[242] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.28–29 (Evans, 79–81); see also *Marc.* 4.11 (Evans, 309), where Tertullian explains that Marcion's god "contracts no marriage, refuses baptism except to the celibate or the eunuch, keeping it back until death or divorce." This statement stands in some tension with the later claims of Epiphanius that Marcionites "allow [baptism] to be given even as many as three times and more to anyone who wishes" and "even permit women to give baptism." Epiphanius, *Pan.* 3.42.3,6 and 3.42.4, 5 (Williams, 274–75).

[243] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.27 (Evans, 77). Indeed, Epiphanius, *Pan.* 3.42.1.4 (Williams, 272) characterizes him as initially an "ascetic" and a "hermit," and later in life as teaching celibacy and fasting.

of the Creator's law by Jesus and his disciples (such as sabbath-breaking and touching uncleanness) and a general denigration of the Mosaic law as the basis for Christian ethics were among Marcion's recurring strategies.[244] His text did retain the Lukan version of the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:17–49) as a centerpiece for ethical teaching, though Tertullian suggests that he interpreted the beatitudes along strictly "heavenly" lines.[245] The woes were understood to convey "not so much malediction as admonition."[246] Tertullian also knows of an alternative reading in which Christ refers only to the woes pronounced by the wrathful Creator, invoked in the Sermon "to give greater commendation to his own tolerance previously in the beatitudes."[247] Thus, it appears that Marcion reoriented the early moral tradition of the Two Ways (leading to either blessings or curses) around his radically dualistic theology and cosmology. Along these same lines, his arguments for a sharp disjunction between the Sermon's ethical teaching (to love one's enemies; to turn the other cheek; to practice forbearance) and the *lex talionis* of the Mosaic law undoubtedly lie behind Tertullian's broad rebuttal that "whatever addition Christ made, he caused no destruction of the Creator's rules: for the command he gave was not in opposition but in furtherance of them."[248] The same disjunction was present in Marcion's reading of the ethical teachings of the Pauline epistles.[249] By positioning

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[244] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.14 (Evans, 597). Tertullian alludes to this attitude in his quotation of Rom 7:7: "'What shall we say then? That the law is sin? God forbid.' Shame on you, Marcion. 'God forbid': the apostles expresses abhorrence of complaint against the law."

[245] "Even if you suppose the Creator's promises were earthly, while Christ's are heavenly, it is well enough that until now there is no indication of heaven belonging to any other god but the God to whom earth belongs; it is well enough that the Creator has made promises of even lesser things, because this makes it easy for me to believe him in respect of greater things, rather than one who has not previously on a foundation of lesser things build up his faith in liberality." Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.14 (Evans, 325).

[246] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.15 (Evans, 331).

[247] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.15 (Evans, 331).

[248] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.16 (Evans, 339–41).

[249] "An apostle whom you deny to be the Creator's, whom in fact you represent as hostile to the Creator, has no right to teach anything, to think anything, to intend anything, which accords with the

Galatians first, he signaled that the "abolition" of Jewish moralism was programmatic for Christian ethics.[250] Perhaps most distinctively, following the glimpses of the Marcionites' anti-marital teaching that surface throughout Tertullian's discussion of Marcion's Gospel (as, for example, the claims that they "deny that marriage is any way permitted by Christ" and prohibit access to the sacraments for married couples unless they "have made conspiracy between themselves against the fruit of matrimony, and so against the Creator himself"),[251] a fuller discussion appears with Paul's treatment of marriage in 1 Corinthians, where Tertullian asserts that Marcion "deprives his faithful . . . of cohabitation in any form, demanding divorce even before marriage."[252] It is also noteworthy that the indwelling Holy Spirit, frequently connected with the cultivation of Christian virtue in the Pauline epistles, was, in Marcion's reading, "not the Creator's Spirit," but "some spirit of his god" (Tertullian's rendering).[253] Marcion also regularly excises Pauline allusions and quotations that ground moral teachings in prescriptions or promises of the Mosaic law (as, for example, in Eph 6:2).[254] Lastly, concerning the final judgment as a motivation for ethical behavior, Marcion often eliminates references to its eschatological rewards and punishments, except insofar as those who reject the revelation of the Father in Christ remain subject to the Creator's wrath.[255]

Conclusion. Marcionite communities were recognized and portrayed as a

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Creator, but must from the outset proclaim his other god with no less confidence than that with which he has broken loose from the Creator's law." Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.1 (Evans, 513).

[250] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.2 (Evans, 513).

[251] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.34 (Evans, 451).

[252] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.7 (Evans, 551).

[253] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.15 (Evans, 607).

[254] "Now even though Marcion has cut out, 'For this is the first commandment with a promise,' the law still speaks: 'Honour they father and mother.'" Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.18 (Evans, 627).

[255] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.16 (Evans, 609). "But the heretic has extinguished flame and fire by crossing them out: otherwise he would have made [Christ] into a god like ours."

distinct phenomenon (in a negative sense) by their heresiological contemporaries.[256] Their churches shared some characteristics with their orthodox counterparts, but were understood to exhibit deep-rooted differences in the identity-forming areas of belief, ritual, and ethical practice—differences that their polemical opponents, like Irenaeus and Tertullian, would explain and refute in covenantal terms. Doctrinally, Marcionites contended that the Mosaic covenant and the covenant inaugurated by Christ originated with two separate deities. Ritually, they celebrated a Eucharist that confirmed a different covenant (*not* the "new" covenant, as Marcion's text made clear) than orthodox Christian communities. And ethically, they failed to appreciate that the Creator's new "dispensation" supplemented and transformed (without negating or abrogating) the Mosaic law, which was inspired by the same Spirit—with serious consequences for marital relations, dietary habits, and the motivations for moral behavior as conceived in the Two Ways tradition (even if Marcionites did not always carry their views through to their logical extremes).

Covenant and Identity Formation in Other Heterodox Groups

The heresiologists of the second and later centuries catalogue numerous other heterodox movements whose teachings held implications for the articulation of a covenantal theology. This is evident, for example, in the references of Epiphanius to sects that repudiate the Old Testament and its Law (likely in some connection with the Gnostic forms of thought surveyed above), such as the Cainites, Archontics, and Severians.[257] Others, such as the Cerdonians, likely exhibited affinity with the Marcionites, as the frequent genealogical link between their founders suggests.[258] Unfortunately, the lack of

[256] The account of Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 3.42 has not been considered fully here, owing to its considerably later date and the apparent development of many spurious traditions.

[257] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 3, *anacephalaeosis* (Williams, 209–10).

[258] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 3, *anacephalaeosis* (Williams, 209–10).

extant texts by which to confirm or contest the rather brief and thoroughly polemical descriptions of these groups makes it impossible to include them for analysis here. The most that can be said is that they probably proposed various forms of disjunctive relationships between the revelations of the Creator and the Father of Christ along similar lines to the Gnostic and Marcionite writings already considered. Other heterodox movements, like the Carthaginian monarchian sect associated with Praxeas and addressed by Tertullian, developed distinct teachings on the divine nature and other matters that prompted heresiological writers to articulate a covenantal theology, but since these writings also have not been recovered, discussion must be limited to the responses they received, and will be reserved for a later chapter.[259]

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that, outside the LXX and New Testament documents, theological usage of διαθήκη terminology was not prevalent in the Greco-Roman context of second-century Christian writers, where, despite its religio-political origins, it had become a primarily legal term. In its absence, a number of other concepts sought to explain divine-human relationships and foster a sense of corporate or collective identity, in both the religious realm (in *polis* religion, the mystery cults, and emperor worship) and in the social realm (in voluntary associations). Though these socioreligious identities bear some noteworthy resemblances to the covenant concept, profound differences are just as plentiful.

Secondly, the chapter documented the absence of διαθήκη as both a term and a concept from the wide variety of Gnostic texts that constitute the Nag Hammadi corpus (in which the doctrinal, ritual, and ethical components of identity are found to be formed quite differently).

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[259] See chap. 6 of this dissertation.

Finally, the chapter considered the extensive (though equally theologically problematic) disjunctive use of the covenant idea in the writings of Marcion, as it can be reconstructed from the statements of his literary opponents.

While these competing institutions and sources of identity cannot be made to explain the origins or character of the orthodox Christian covenant concept in themselves, they do represent important contexts, and indeed direct catalysts, for the emergence and further refinement of that Christian concept over the course of the second century, as the following three chapters will contend.

CHAPTER 4

COVENANT AND JUDAISM: THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS, JUSTIN MARTYR, AND TERTULLIAN

The previous two chapters established the primary contextual backgrounds for the Christian use of the covenant concept in articulating a distinct identity in the second century. It will now be possible, in the next three chapters, to examine these articulations, as they appear in the three major contexts of competition between emerging Christian identity and alternate sources of identity: externally, in relation to Judaism and Greco-Roman culture, and internally, in the struggle with Christian heterodox movements. We begin in this chapter with the dialogue with Judaism.

Chapter 2 has already demonstrated that the covenant concept was a key source of identity across diverse streams of Judaism through the Second Temple period, as a result of its prominence within the Old Testament scriptures themselves. Apocryphal and pseudepigraphal texts continued to express Jewishness in covenantal terms, especially in the emerging conflict with Hellenism during the Hasmonean period. For the sectarians represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls, the covenant was, if anything, even more central, since they viewed faithfulness to it as the mark of the true Israel, in contrast to a corrupt Jerusalem establishment. Finally, the New Testament writings bear witness to the continued (but now christologically understood) reflection on covenantal themes among the earliest Christian writers, including those who had Jewish backgrounds themselves (Paul) and those who directly addressed Jewish practice (the author of Hebrews).

This process of receiving and christologically reinterpreting the scriptural notion of covenant membership developed significantly in the early decades of the second century, as the Christian movement grew and its interactions with Jewish

communities multiplied in frequency and scope. Sharing a scriptural heritage and the covenantal history that it described, both groups insisted that they, rather than the other, properly understood and participated in it. Dialogues with Jews and even polemics against some aspects of Jewish practice therefore constitute important evidence for the first of three strategies by which Christian writers employed the covenant concept to cultivate a distinct identity: a christological reception and interpretation of a biblical covenantal structure and logic, yielding a christological notion of the new covenant itself.[1] This chapter will examine three texts that bear witness to this process as it unfolded over the course of the second century, written at its beginning (Barn.), middle (Justin Martyr's *Dial.*) and end (Tertullian's *Iud.*). The second and third strategies—the adaptation of the new covenant idea, externally, to secular Greco-Roman contexts for apologetic purposes, and its application, internally, to the Christian church itself for polemical (heresiological) purposes—could not have taken place apart from this initial foundation.[2]

The Epistle of Barnabas

Since the discovery of its full text with *Codex Sinaiticus* in 1844, major studies of the Epistle of Barnabas have debated the work's provenance and purpose.[3] Many have settled on an Alexandrian origin in the first two decades of the second century as most

[1] I describe this strategy as "first" in a logical, not strictly chronological, sense—that is to say, the christological reinterpretation of the biblical concept of covenant, and the dialogues and debates with Judaism that it prompted, had a logical priority over the application of this covenant concept to the other two contexts, which were apologetic (Greco-Roman culture) and heresiological (distinguishing orthodoxy and heresy within the Christian church). Nevertheless, the first two of the representative texts examined in this chapter (Barn. and *Dial.*) are quite early.

[2] Chaps. 5 and 6 of the dissertation discuss these strategies.

[3] Major recent studies providing introductions to the text and discussions of critical issues include James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); James Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas and the Deuteronomic Tradition: Polemics, Paraenesis, and the Legacy of the Golden-Calf Incident*, WUNT 188 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

probable.[4] In line with the prevailing methodologies of the nineteenth century and the similarities between portions of Barnabas and other texts, such as the Didache, a deconstructive focus on form-critical and source-critical analyses persisted well into the postwar period.[5] Since the final decades of the twentieth century, however, scholars have begun to take a more positive interest in the content of Barnabas, and even to argue for its possible literary coherence. Moreover, despite many lingering questions regarding its authorship and context,[6] some have now noted the text's portrayal of Judaism as a fruitful source for studying the developing relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the second century, particularly in relation to questions of anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, and/or supersessionism.[7]

In light of this recent interest in Barnabas as a site for the interaction of competing Jewish and Christian identities, it is surprising that relatively few scholars have grappled with its use of the covenant concept—an essential category for both groups—in this connection. I will argue below that covenant is the framework that the writer uses to develop and maintain a holistic integration of the basic dimensions of Christian identity—belief, ritual, and ethical practice. This covenantal framework is derived from the scriptural texts of the Pentateuch themselves, which feature (1) a theological narration of God's great redemptive acts (the exodus account); (2) the ritual

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[4] For a discussion of the implications of an Alexandrian context, see Robert S. MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts on Jews and Judaism*, Brown Judaic Studies 194 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 25–43.

[5] Hans Windisch, *Der Barnabasbrief*, Die Apostolischen Väter 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1920); Robert A. Kraft, *Barnabas and the Didache*, Apostolic Fathers 3 (New York: T. Nelson, 1965); Pierre Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le Christianisme Primitif: L'Épître de Barnabé I-XVI et les Sources*, Études Bibliques (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1961); Klaus Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971).

[6] Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006).

[7] William Horbury, "Jewish-Christian Relations in Barnabas and Justin Martyr," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A. D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 315–45; Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus*, Studia Post-Biblica 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

boundary markers that signified (and maintained) membership in the covenant community (circumcision and sabbath-keeping); and (3) prescriptions for the moral norms of that community (the Decalogue), with consequences for keeping or violating them (covenant blessings and curses). In receiving this biblical concept of covenant identity as part of a theological heritage from Judaism, the author of Barnabas retained its fundamental structure and logic while also dramatically transposing them, in light of christological convictions, for the novel context of a distinctly-identifiable new covenant community. In this way the text christologically reappropriates the received covenant structure and logic to depict rhetorically, and thus also shape socially, the ideal new covenant community. This presentation clearly exemplifies the foundation and trajectory upon which later second-century texts would build.

Covenant and Identity in the Epistle of Barnabas

In its twenty-one chapters, Barnabas employs forms of διαθήκη fourteen times.[8] Three occurrences come in direct scriptural quotations (or approximate quotations), but the rest represent original usages.[9] Two of the scriptural quotations, appearing in the parallel passages of Barn. 4:7 and 14:2, are taken from Exodus 34:28 (conflated with other texts) to explain that "Moses was fasting on Mount Sinai forty days and forty nights in order to receive the Lord's covenant with the people," while the third quotation, in Barn. 14:7, comes from the prophecy of Isaiah 42:6–7: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations."[10]

Beyond these direct quotations, Barnabas also makes at least six scriptural

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[8] These occur at Barn. 4:6–8 (twice); 6:19; 9:6; 9:9; 10:2 (verbal form); 13:1; 13:6; 14:1; 14:2; 14:3; 14:5 (twice); and 14:7. Unless otherwise noted, I follow the Greek text and English translation of Holmes.

[9] The occurrences that feature scriptural quotations are Barn. 4:7 (Exod 34:28); Barn. 14:2 (Exod 34:28; 31:18); Barn. 14:7 (Isa 42:6–7).

[10] Barn. 4:7 (Holmes, 389); Barn. 14:7 (Holmes, 425).

allusions that either directly invoke or strongly suggest the theme of covenant through the use of particular terms or images.[11] Clearest in this category are the statement in the letter's introduction, "I truly see that the Spirit has been poured out upon you from the riches of the Lord's fountain" and the pivotal assertion in the covenant-themed section of Barn. 4:1–9 that "their covenant was shattered, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart."[12] Along with the later reference to "the one who placed within us the implanted gift of his covenant," these texts weave together conceptual allusions to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28–32/Acts 2:17), the sealing of the covenant in the heart (Ezek 36:26–27; Jer 31:33), and the internal implanting of the covenant (Deut 30:14; Jer 31:33) to develop a contrast between an internally-oriented covenant instituted through Christ and an externally-oriented covenant represented by circumcision.[13]

Finally (with lowest certainty), several features of the text may assume or imply associations with the covenant concept in the use of particular biblical/historical references, terms and images, such those relating to love, calling, and holiness. These create distinctions between members of the writer's own community, who are united in being loved by the Lord and therefore loving each other, and the Jewish community, which serves as a foil to this idealized description. Thus, the initial greetings come "in the name of the Lord who has loved us," and the recipients' goal, as the people of the "covenant of the beloved Jesus," is to "be loved in the age to come" by him.[14] Horizontally, the writer portrays himself as "one of you" who "in a special way loves all

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[11] The allusions are in Barn. 1:3 (Joel 2:28–32/Acts 2:17); Barn. 4:8 (Jer 31:33), 8:4, 9:7, 9:9, and 10:12.

[12] Barn. 1:3 (Holmes, 381); Barn. 4:8 (Holmes, 389).

[13] Barn. 9:9 (Holmes, 409). The writer affirms this in asserting that "Abraham, who first instituted circumcision, looked forward in the Spirit to Jesus when he circumcised" (9:7), and that "the Lord . . . circumcised our ears and hearts for this very purpose, so that we might understand these things" (10:12).

[14] Barn. 1:1 (Holmes, 381); Barn. 4:8 (Holmes, 389); Barn. 4:1 (Holmes, 387).

of you," a "devoted servant of your love," modeling in himself the relation of love that should characterize the community as "children of love."[15] This bond of love is also grounded in the notion of being divinely "called."[16] As a result of their calling, members of the community have been constituted as "a holy people for himself," who "gather and seek out together the common good."[17] By contrast, the writer warns against becoming like "certain people" of the Jewish community, who have become a "wretched people" on account of their rejection of the covenant (first, as mediated by Moses, and ultimately, as mediated by Christ).[18] The picture that emerges is a dualistic opposition between two communities whose identities are defined by their responses to Christ as covenant mediator, and the resulting relations between community members flowing directly from this union (or disunion).

Scholarship on Covenant in Barnabas

In what follows below, I build upon the form-critical work of Klaus Baltzer[19]—not, however, by highlighting correspondences between the structure of Barnabas and the literary type of the "covenant formulary," as he has already done, but rather by accentuating key differences, to show how Barnabas uniquely transforms and re-applies the form for the task of distinctively Christian identity formation. It becomes evident that the underlying notion of a christologically-defined community finds expression in three dimensions of covenant identity: belief, ritual, and practice.

These three dimensions can be mapped, roughly, over Baltzer's tripartite

[15] Barn. 4:6 (Holmes, 389); Barn. 6:5 (Holmes, 397); Barn. 9:7 (Holmes, 409); and Barn. 21:9 (Holmes, 441).

[16] Barn. 4:13–14 (Holmes, 391).

[17] Barn. 14:6 (Holmes, 425); 4:10 (Holmes, 391).

[18] Barn. 4:6 (Holmes, 389); Barn. 16:1 (Holmes, 429); cf. 4:7–8.

[19] See especially Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 123–27.

literary structure of a dogmatic section, an ethical section, and a section of blessings and curses, which he finds "clearly discerned" in Barnabas.[20] Baltzer explains that the first, the "dogmatic section," contains and supplants the traditional preamble and *Vorgeschichte* ("antecedent history") of ancient Hittite treaties and intertestamental Jewish texts, using doctrinally-oriented assertions of creation and providence to characterize God and his prior relationship to the covenant community.[21] This corresponds to Barn. 2–17, which describe creation, the death and suffering of Christ, the patriarchal narratives, the giving of the law through Moses (and Israel's forfeiture of it), and discussions of sabbath and the temple, concluding with the writer's affirmations that he has "not omitted anything of the matters relating to salvation" and that he has not yet written "about things present or things to come."[22] Next comes the "ethical section" represented by the "Two Ways" material in Barn. 18–20, setting forth "the two ways of teaching . . . the way of light and the way of darkness" with their corresponding virtues and vices.[23] Finally, the letter ends with the "blessings and curses" of Barn. 21, which promise the proper "recompense" for following each of the Two Ways: glorification for those who "learn all the Lord's righteous requirements that are written here and . . . walk in them," and "perishing" for those who do not.[24]

While critiquing Baltzer's argument as somewhat over-schematized and "a little tendentious," James Rhodes acknowledges that it supports his own case for the text's Deuteronomic influence:

> Baltzer was intuitively correct in one important respect: Barnabas is concerned to summon his readers to what he sees as covenantal obedience at least as much as he

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[20] Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 123.

[21] See Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary,* 99, 112–14, for examples from the Manual of Discipline and Damascus Document among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[22] Barn. 17:1–2 (Holmes, 433); Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 125.

[23] Barn. 18:1 (Holmes, 433); Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 125.

[24] Barn. 21:1 (Holmes, 439); Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*, 126–27.

> is concerned with denigrating Israel. . . . If we postulate that the author is deeply influenced by the Deuteronomistic tradition, chaps. 1–17 (Baltzer's *Vorgeschichte*) may indeed be read as a rehearsal of Israel's complete failure as God's covenant people. Chapters 18–21 might then be seen as a concluding exhortation that presupposes this failure and urges the audience to covenant fidelity.[25]

Assuming that Baltzer correctly identifies the text's literary structure, and that Rhodes correctly identifies its biblical thematic source, however, it still remains to be seen what specific assumptions and purposes motivate the writer's selection and utilization of these elements.

Studies of Barnabas in the last two decades have recognized the essential place of the covenant idea in its presentations of Judaism and Christianity, though assessing its nature and function in a variety of ways. James Carleton Paget notices a "covenantal interest" which is especially evident in the ethical emphasis of the Two Ways material of Barn. 18–20.[26] After comparing the contents with selections from contemporary Jewish and Christian writings, Carleton Paget concludes that Barnabas "constitutes a mélange of traditions and ideas, brought together and adapted to form a moderately coherent theology"—a "mélange" which includes, but is not limited to, "the covenantalism of the Essenes at Qumran" and "the sacrificial/covenantal theology of Hebrews."[27] For Carleton Paget, the supersessionism of the single-covenant scheme of Barnabas (in which Israel forfeits its covenant status immediately following the golden calf incident) is somewhat eccentric, but not, apparently, aberrant among early Christian views, given the text's widespread veneration (and even canonization in some cases).[28]

Writing just two years later, Reidar Hvalvik makes a significant advance upon Carleton Paget's work by situating Barnabas within its social context, where Judaism

[25] Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 94.

[26] Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 62.

[27] Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 248.

[28] Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 248.

remained a "living and flourishing religion."[29] As his title suggests, Hvalvik specifically locates Jewish-Christian interactions around the locus of a "struggle for scripture and covenant." Hvalvik follows Carleton Paget in noting a single-covenant scheme and a covenantal ethic reflected in the Two Ways material, but explains these features as part of Christianity's "frontal attack on Judaism," which "steals or undermines everything which is important to the Jews: their Scripture, their history, their religious rites and institutions."[30] Hvalvik proposes that the author appropriates Israel's religious heritage in response to competing Christian groups who argued for some form of symbiosis by means of a developing two-covenant theology.[31] Hvalvik marshals evidence for a missionary impulse within contemporary Judaism, arguing that hostility between Jews and Christians was motivated by competition for God-fearing Gentile converts.[32] As a result, Barnabas dispossesses the competitors of their own resources by claiming the scriptural covenant as Christian—an approach that Hvalvik, like Carleton Paget, believes "had no direct followers" and "fortunately . . . was not canonized by the Church."[33]

Most recently, James Rhodes, while maintaining the focus on the covenant concept departs from the conclusions of the preceding studies in asserting a much more fully-developed "salvation history" within Barnabas than the prior discussions of a single-covenant scheme had allowed.[34] Pointing to the writer's citations from later Israelite history, Rhodes argues that the text rhetorically exaggerates the effects of the paradigmatic golden calf incident as the initiation of a series of Israel's rebellious acts,

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[29] Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 14.

[30] Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 132.

[31] Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 165.

[32] Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 321.

[33] Hvalvik, *Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 331.

[34] Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 5–11.

culminating in the rejection of Jesus.[35] Most significant is Rhodes's contention, noted above, that Barnabas conceives of this rebellion in terms of the Deuteronomic pattern of history (in which divine judgment is the consequence for national covenant-breaking).[36] Drawing upon the thematic study of Albrecht Oepeke, who "saw 'covenant' as the central concept of the epistle" and traced this influence to a reading of Deuteronomy, and also the form-critical work of Klaus Baltzer, who demonstrated that the letter generally conforms to the literary structure of a "covenant formulary," like Deuteronomy with its historical narration followed by blessings and curses, Rhodes concludes that the author employs a "radical, Christianized Deuteronomism" to exhort the Christian community to covenant faithfulness.[37] As he summarizes, "Not unlike the Book of Deuteronomy, the epistle summons a new generation—in Barnabas's case, a new people—to a relationship of covenantal obedience in full awareness that a former one had failed."

Thus, recent scholarship has generally recognized Barnabas's substantial use of the covenant concept, though sometimes understanding it in terms of a single-covenant supersessionism or replacement theology (in which Christians simply assume, or appropriate, from Israel the status of God's covenant people).[38] Each of the studies mentioned above offered important new insights that contributed to a fuller picture in noting its ethical dimensions (Carleton Paget), its social context (Hvalvik), and its biblical sources (Rhodes). What has not received such direct attention, however, are the underlying assumptions that motivate, inform, and ultimately shape the writer's ethically-

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[35] Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 17–18.

[36] Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 31.

[37] Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 107, 177; See Albrecht Oepke, *Das Neue Gottesvolk: in Schrifttum, Schauspiel, Bildender Kunst und Weltgestaltung* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1950); Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary*.

[38] For a dissenting opinion see MacLennan, who maintains that the writer "was not against Judaism, and certainly not the Law . . . rather, he was distressed over certain directions some Jews and Christians were taking" and "sought to demonstrate the superiority of his brand of Christianity over the others." MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts*, 46–48.

expressed and socially-situated use of the biblical material—in other words, the assumptions that contribute to what Judith Lieu and other scholars describe as identity construction.[39] Granting that the social context and literary form have been correctly identified, what then can be said about the intentions of its author in composing it?

I suggest that the driving force behind the writer's choices of form, sources, and argumentation is the essential presupposition of the christological nature of the new covenant community. Seeking to cultivate a more firmly-established Christian identity among his readers against competing alternatives (particularly, Judaism), Barnabas offers christologically-patterned expositions of its key dimensions of belief, ritual, and practice. The author develops a model of the new covenant community that includes a theological narration (the proto-creedal assertions related to the Christ event), a ritual boundary marker (the sacrament of baptism into Christ), and a distinctive ethic (the Two Ways tradition as an expression of the new law of Christ). The audience is exhorted to remain faithful to this identity through this rehearsal of its constituent elements.

Belief

First, with respect to "belief," Barnabas provides a theological narration (as Baltzer noted) that situates the covenant community within a particular sequence of historical events, unfolding as precursors to the climactic redemptive act of God in Christ. In this way Israel's history is not so much erased, replaced, or appropriated as reconceived and retold from a new vantage point.

The "righteous acts [δικαιωμάτων]" of God in the letter's opening lines suggest a covenantal character, having constituted the community, through the implanting of grace and outpouring of the Spirit, in the "way of righteousness [δικαιοσύνης]."[40] Further

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[39] Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11–17.

[40] Barn. 1:1–4 (Holmes, 381).

evidence comes from the scriptural quotation of Barn. 10:2: "He says to them in Deuteronomy, 'I will set forth as a covenant to this people my righteous requirements [δικαιώματα].'"[41] By composing the letter, the writer intends to impart a deeper knowledge of, and exhort greater faithfulness to, the "righteous requirements" [δικαιώματα] of the covenant, which consist of the "basic doctrines of the Lord: the hope of life . . . and righteousness . . . and a glad and rejoicing love."[42]

The writer turns to the covenant itself in Barn. 4, warning readers not to become like the Israelites who persisted in sin while claiming "our covenant remains valid," and thus "lost it completely."[43] As Rhodes notes, the golden calf incident dramatically illustrates that "their covenant was shattered, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart."[44] This reference to the covenant inaugurated in Jesus prompts the writer to "hasten to move along" to a discussion of "the reason that the Lord endured the deliverance of his flesh to corruption, so that we might be cleansed of the forgiveness of sins" in chapter 5.[45] Throughout this section the refrain regularly recurs that "the Lord submitted to suffer for our souls," as the writer notes that "he submitted to suffer at the hands of humans"; "he submitted, in order that he might destroy death and demonstrate the reality of the resurrection of the dead"; "he submitted in order that he might redeem the promise to the fathers and—while preparing the new people for himself—prove . . . that after he has brought about the resurrection he will execute judgment"; "he submitted" in order to "complete the full measure of the sins of those who persecuted his prophets to death"; "he renewed us by the forgiveness of sins,

[41] Barn. 10:2 (Holmes, 411). Jefford also notes the connection between righteousness and covenant throughout the letter, pointing to the presence of both themes in Barn. 13.7 and 14.7. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 102–3.

[42] Barn. 2:1 (Holmes, 383); Barn. 1:6 (Holmes, 381–83).

[43] Barn. 4:6 (Holmes, 389).

[44] Barn. 4:8 (Holmes, 389); Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 17.

[45] Barn. 4:9 (Holmes, 389); Barn. 5:1 (Holmes, 391–93).

he made us people of another type"; he who "is destined to judge the living and the dead . . . suffered in order that his wounds might give us life"; he "was destined to suffer"' and he "arose from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven."[46] The proto-creedal themes that recur in these compact expressions, revolving around the basic christological narrative of the passion, death, resurrection, and future judgment of Jesus and explained, theologically, in terms of atonement and forgiveness of sin, function as the core of the letter's "antecedent history," reminding the audience from a variety of perspectives that their communal identity has its basis in the historical acts of the Christ event. Any doubt that the writer intends to draw this connection is dispelled by the explicit statement that, by means of these works, Christ "made us people of another type."[47] After the intervening proof-texts, the writer further identifies this new people as "heirs of the Lord's covenant."[48] Another concise statement appears in the other main section on the covenant; Barn. 14:1–9 asserts,

> The Lord himself gave it to us, so that we might become the people of inheritance, by suffering for us. And he was made manifest in order that they might fill up the measure of their sins and we might receive the covenant through the Lord Jesus who inherited it, who was prepared for this purpose, in order that by appearing in person and redeeming us from darkness in our hearts, which had already been paid over to death and given over to the lawlessness of error, he might establish a covenant in us by his word.[49]

Throughout this passage the writer plays upon the flexibility of κύριος, as employed in the Pentateuchal narratives, to associate the giving of the covenant with Christ. It is "the Lord's covenant . . . inscribed by the finger of the hand of the Lord in the Spirit" in "the tablets of the Lord's covenant," that Moses shattered, and that "the Lord himself gave to

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[46] Barn. 5:5–12 (Holmes, 393–95); Barn. 6:11 (Holmes, 399); Barn. 7:2 (Holmes, 401); Barn. 7:10 (Holmes, 403); Barn. 15:9 (Holmes, 429).

[47] Barn. 6:11 (Holmes, 399).

[48] Barn. 6:19 (Holmes, 401).

[49] Barn. 14:1–5 (Holmes, 425).

us . . . by suffering for us."[50] The association even verges into a direct identification in the application of Isaiah 42:6–7 ("I have given you as a covenant to the people") to Christ himself in Barn. 14:7—an exegetical move with numerous second-century parallels.[51]

The association between the narrative of Christ's suffering and the establishment of a new covenant people could not be made much more directly than it is here. Thus, after brief consideration of the implications of this narrative for the cultic institutions of sabbath and temple (Barn. 15–16), the writer transitions to a new section. The closing statement that "if I should write to you about things present or things to come, you would never understand" again confirms that the preceding material has been concerned with things *past*—it has functioned as the covenantal *Vorgeschichte* whose substantive core is the christological narrative of passion, death, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins.[52] Thus, while Baltzer rightly identified this section as a theological narration, according to literary form, he seemingly did not recognize the significance of the writer's christological reconfiguration of it to reinterpret Israel's history, and thereby lay the foundation for a new, christological concept of covenant identity.

Ritual

In addition to narrative, the author of Barnabas displays a deep interest in ritual as a component of identity, both in critiquing Jewish attitudes toward circumcision and in advocating for the christological ritual of baptism. Circumcision, the writer asserts in Barn. 9, has been "abolished," having never been a "matter of the flesh."[53] Anticipating the objection that it functioned as a (covenantal) "seal," the writer observes that the Jews are not unique in practicing it and that even Abraham, who first instituted it, "looked

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[50] Barn. 14:2–4 (Holmes, 425).

[51] See especially the discussion of Justin Martyr, *Dial.* in the next section.

[52] Barn. 17:1 (Holmes, 433).

[53] Barn. 9:4 (Holmes, 407).

forward to Jesus" in doing so.[54] Appealing to the Deuteronomic tradition (Deut 10:16; in conjunction with Jer 4:4; 9:26), Barnabas repeatedly points to circumcision of the "ears" and "hearts"—not baptism—as the spiritual reality to which physical circumcision pointed.[55] In the writer's view, receptivity to the Word of God (the word concerning Jesus and "the cross . . . destined to convey grace"), as scripturally expressed in the metaphor of hearing, is the product of this true spiritual circumcision: "In short, he circumcised our ears in order that when we hear the word we might believe."[56] The author thus implies that the ritual in which Israel has trusted to demonstrate its covenant identity has in fact never performed this function.

The ritual that Christians practice, by contrast—water baptism—was scripturally "foreshadowed," not by circumcision, but by interlinked prophecies describing streams of water, flowing from a rock into rivers of life that nourish fruit-bearing trees.[57] The writer emphasizes the christological nature of this baptism, which "brings the forgiveness of sins," by demonstrating its connection with Christ and his cross: "the Lord took care to foreshadow the water and the cross"; "he pointed out the water and the cross together"; those who "descend into the water" have also "set their hope on the cross"; and though they "descend into the water laden with sins and dirt," they "rise up bearing fruit in [their] heart and with fear and hope in Jesus in [their] spirits."[58] This last phrase anticipates the third component of covenant identity, a distinct ethical mode of behavior that leads to blessing rather than curse. Indeed, the statement of Barn. 11:8 succinctly summarizes the three-part movement from belief to ritual to

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[54] Barn. 9:6–7 (Holmes, 409).

[55] Barn. 10:12 (Holmes, 415).

[56] Barn. 9:8 (Holmes, 409); Barn. 9:4 (Holmes, 407).

[57] Barn. 11:1–11 (Holmes, 415–17).

[58] Barn. 11:1–11 (Holmes, 415–17).

practice (all christologically-defined) in its eschatological pronouncement: "Blessed are those who, having set their hope upon the cross, descended into the water," since they will receive their due "reward."[59]

Ethics

This reference to eschatological "blessing" for those who hope in the cross and descend into the waters of baptism provides a natural transition to what Baltzer divides into the second and third major components of the covenant formulary: an "ethical section" which describes two competing moral paths, catalogues their characteristic virtues and vices, and then foretells the eschatological consequences of adhering to either one in the language of covenantal blessings and curses.

The concept of blessing is invoked in the opening lines in the writer's reference to "your blessed and glorious spirits," over which he rejoices on account of the "implanted" grace they have received.[60] He grounds the exhortation in his own progress in "the way of righteousness [δικαιοσύνης]," a phrase that both terminologically recalls the "righteous acts [δικαιωμάτων]" by which God has blessed them and united them as "sons and daughters in the name of the Lord," and also anticipates the Two Ways material that concludes the text.[61] Indeed, the introduction finishes with a warning that "we ought to be on our guard and seek out the righteous requirements [δικαιώματα] of the Lord," in the Deuteronomic language of covenantal obligation.[62]

Barnabas then specifies that this obligation consists not of cultic sacrifice,

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[59] Barn. 11:8 (Holmes, 417).

[60] Barn. 1:2 (Holmes, 381).

[61] However, M. Jack Suggs is correct in observing that the motif is not limited to this literary unit; rather, "the author's mind is so thoroughly saturated with by Two Ways ideology that its themes pervade the entire work." M. Jack Suggs, "The Christian Two Ways Tradition: Its Antiquity, Form, and Function" in David Edward Aune (ed.), *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 69.

[62] Barn. 2:1 (Holmes, 383).

which has been "abolished," but rather "the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is free from the yoke of compulsion."[63] It is to this law that the ethical injunctions of the prophets bore witness, addressing "the people whom he had prepared in his beloved . . . in advance" in their commandments against bearing grudges (Zech 8:17) and perpetrating injustice (Isa 58:6–10).[64] The writer urges the covenant people to embrace the new law of Christ, in all its moral dimensions, rather than become "proselytes to their [the Jews'] law" by observing ritual sacrifices.[65] This law of Christ is contrasted with "the works of lawlessness" pursued by "sinners and evil people"—which would appear to describe Gentile/pagan immorality, if not for the subsequent conclusion: "You ought, therefore, to understand . . . do not be like certain people; that is, do not continue to pile up your sins while claiming, 'Our covenant remains valid.'"[66] The writer thus apparently re-classifies a preference for the Mosaic law over the law of Christ with the "works of lawlessness" of Barn. 4:1—an impression later confirmed by his arguments that it stems from the deception of an evil spirit, and that a focus on external forms, such as temple worship, constitutes idolatry, "for they, almost like the heathen, consecrated him by means of the temple."[67] Idolatry is, significantly, the first sin listed in the catalogue of vices comprising "the way of darkness."[68]

Following the golden calf narrative of Barn. 4, which provides the occasion for the Christians' reception of "the covenant of the beloved Jesus," the writer offers preliminary allusions to the Two Ways that are articulated in covenantal terms.[69] While

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[63] Barn. 2:6 (Holmes, 383).

[64] Barn. 2:8 (Holmes, 385); Barn. 3:3–5 (Holmes, 385–87).

[65] Barn. 3:6 (Holmes, 387).

[66] Barn. 4:1–6 (Holmes, 387–89).

[67] Barn. 9:4; 16:1–2 (Holmes, 429).

[68] Barn. 20:1 (Holmes, 439).

[69] Barn. 4:8–12 (Holmes, 389–91).

“woes,” or curses, are pronounced on those who succumb to “the works of the evil way,” the children of God “strive to keep his commandments, so that we may rejoice in his righteous requirements [δικαιώμασιν],” and each group “will receive according to what they have done.” The language of “woe” and “curse” recurs throughout the letter (6:2; 6:7; 10:5) to characterize the consequences of Israel’s rejection of the covenant as sealed in the rejection of Christ (associated with the way of darkness).[70]

Most explicitly, in the next chapter, the writer develops the stark contrast between the “Two Ways” of light and darkness, life and death, righteousness and wickedness, asserting that “people deserve to perish if, having knowledge of the way of righteousness, they ensnare themselves in the way of darkness.”[71] This statement, which may appear to reflect a simple moralistic dualism, occurs in the context of the writer’s christological narrative, where it is explained that the reason for Christ’s suffering was “so that we might be cleansed by the forgiveness of sins, sprinkled by his blood,” and that Christ himself is the one who has “made known” these things.[72] All this suggests that knowing and pursuing the way of righteousness is attributable to the work of Christ. Even the apostles were “sinful beyond measure, lacking righteousness of their own (5:9).[73] In identifying with Christ and his law, however, they participate in a community defined by his precepts: “Associate with those who fear the Lord, with those who meditate in their heart on the special significance of the word that they have received, with those who proclaim and obey the Lord’s righteous requirements [δικαιώματα].”[74] They understand

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[70] Barn. 6:2; 6:7; 10:5.

[71] Barn. 5:3 (Holmes, 393). On the Two Ways tradition generally, see the discussion of Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 88–91.

[72] Barn. 5:1–3 (Holmes, 391–93). This is a clear example of what Suggs describes as “the genre’s function in intensifying in-group/out-group consciousness and its relation to the social myth of the elect community.” Suggs, “The Christian Two Ways Tradition,” 72.

[73] Barn. 5:9 (Holmes, 393).

[74] Barn. 10:11 (Holmes, 413–15).

the obligations of covenant membership "as the Lord intended"—that is, as christologically-revealed ("he circumcised our hearts") and christologically-informed ("rightly understood").[75] Thus they are redeemed from "darkness" by the "light to the nations," who is Christ.[76]

Having interwoven these preliminary teachings concerning the Two Ways, understood in terms of covenantal association with Christ, throughout the letter's theological narration and ritual instruction in Barn. 1–17, the writer finally transitions to "another lesson and teaching" in what is normally identified as the "traditional" Two Ways material of Barn. 18–20.[77] Because it features parallels with the Didache and other early Christian writings, it has often been discounted as unoriginal or redacted. However, the preceding discussion illuminates the christological context in which the material should be understood, as the writer has already established the doctrinal and thematic framework in which the catalogues of virtues and vices are situated: as expressions of holiness and membership in Christ's covenant community (leading to the attendant blessings), or of unholiness and rejection of his covenant (leading to the attendant curses). The "way of light" consists of "works" which flow from the "knowledge . . . that is given to us," beginning with love, fear, and glorification of God and extending to love of neighbor, and recognizing that membership in the Spirit-formed community transcends relationships of other kinds.[78] On the other hand, associating with "those who walk along the way of death" is to be avoided in light of eschatological expectations ("Remember the day of judgment night and day").[79] Their way is "crooked and completely cursed,"

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[75] Barn. 10:12 (Holmes, 415).

[76] Barn. 14:5–8 (Holmes, 425–27).

[77] Barn. 18:1 (Holmes, 433).

[78] Barn. 19:1–7 (Holmes, 435–37).

[79] Barn. 19:2 (Holmes, 435); Barn. 19:10 (Holmes, 437).

leading to "eternal death and punishment."[80] The counterpart to love of God is idolatry, and a host of interpersonal vices take the place of love of neighbor—in brief, they are "utterly sinful."[81] After surveying these Two Ways, the writer concludes the letter with the eschatalogically-oriented exhortation to "learn all the Lord's righteous requirements [δικαιώματα] that are written here and to walk in them," and be glorified in the kingdom of God.[82] Fittingly, this "recompense," like the covenantal narrative, ritual, and ethic, to which it belongs, is christologically-informed: "The Lord, and his reward, is near."[83]

Conclusion

The Epistle of Barnabas derives its basic covenantal structure and logic from Pentateuchal (especially Deuteronomic) material. However, its use of these concepts is radically redefined with christological content. In describing the three key dimensions of identity (beliefs stemming from a theological narrative, rituals establishing boundary markers, and practice expressing a distinctive ethic), the writer inculcates in its readers a self-understanding as members of the new covenant community. The most significant aspects of new covenant identity include the metanarrative of God's redemptive act in Christ through his death, burial, and resurrection, and the incorporation of the believing community into this narrative through water baptism—establishing a "new people" for whom the law of God is internalized, and who thus adhere, ethically, to the "way of righteousness" leading to eternal blessing.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*

Near the middle of the second century, the Christian philosopher and apologist

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[80] Barn. 20:1 (Holmes, 439).

[81] Barn. 20:1–2 (Holmes, 439).

[82] Barn. 21:1 (Holmes, 439).

[83] Barn. 21:2 (Holmes, 441).

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) witnesses to further development of the received covenantal framework expressed in the Epistle of Barnabas.[84] Like Barnabas, the *Dialogue with Trypho* has been recognized as an important site for the rhetorical differentiation of Jewish and Christian identities,[85] whether the primary audience is regarded as Jewish, Christian, pagan, or some combination.[86] Scholars have been right to explore the rich contours of the identity-shaping project that Justin undertakes, and even to question the extent to which the Judaism he presents corresponds to historical reality.[87] Few, however, have attended specifically to the role of the covenant concept in this process. This seems to be a considerable oversight, in light of the significance that the text itself attaches to it. Justin develops the notion of a christological new covenant far more extensively than earlier writings like Barnabas, using a complex intertextual reading of covenantal scriptural passages, as well as the novel interpretive move of directly identifying Christ with the new covenant.

Covenant in *Dialogue with Trypho*

The most striking feature of Justin Martyr's polemic against Judaism in the

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[84] On Justin's biography, in addition to the older work of L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), see Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); and Paul Parvis, "Justin Martyr," in *Early Christian Thinkers: The Lives and Legacies of Twelve Key Figures*, ed. Paul Foster (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 1–14. For a useful overview of his thought, see Eric Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, BHT 47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973).

[85] See representatively, Harold Remus, "Justin Martyr's Argument with Judaism," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 2, *Separation and Polemic*, ed. Peter Richardson, David M. Granskou, and Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier, 1986), 59–80; Graham Stanton, "Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho: Group Boundaries, 'Proselytes' and 'God-Fearers,'" in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Guy G. Stroumsa and Graham Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel Boyarin, "Justin Martyr Invents Judaism," *Church History* 70, no. 3 (2001): 427–61; David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Conflict*, Studia Post-Biblica 33 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982); Susan J. Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self-Definition in Luke-Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr*, NovTSup 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[86] Matthijs den Dulk, *Between Jews and Heretics: Refiguring Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*, Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[87] Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr's Dialogue Reconsidered*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 28 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001); Nina E. Livesey, "Theological Identity Making: Justin's Use of Circumcision to Create Jews and Christians," *JECS* 18, no. 1 (2010): 51–79.

Dialogue with Trypho is his assertion, (first presented in *Dial.* 11.2) that Jesus Christ himself is the new covenant. Such a direct identification is unprecedented in the writings of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, and thus requires some consideration.[88] It received little or no attention in older scholarship.[89] Indeed, even the premier study of Justin's treatment of the Mosaic law neglected to address it in any detail.[90] In recent decades, however, some studies have begun to recognize its uniqueness and importance.[91]

By far the most extensive treatment to date has been the doctoral dissertation of Yuji Tomita, which specifically explores Justin's development and application of the new covenant motif in terms of both early Christian and Jewish backgrounds.[92] Tomita suggests that early Christian (Pauline) liturgical forms (as in 1 Cor 11:25 and Luke 22:20) and, more significantly, contemporary Jewish exegetical traditions can account for Justin's reading of Jeremiah 31:31–32 (including, for example, the metaphor of a "fruitful

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[88] Though see, for example, the reading of Isa 42:6–7 ("I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations") in reference to Christ in Barn. 14:7, as discussed above.

[89] Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough treats Justin's connection of Christ with the New Law, but astonishingly omits any reference to the covenant. See Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena, Germany: Frommann, 1923). In a study of Justin's hermeneutical method, Willis A. Shotwell likewise mentions only his association of Christ with the New Law and its significance for Justin's theology of faith. See Willis A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965).

[90] Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*, Dissertation Series 20 (Cambridge, MA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975). While this work is an important advance toward an understanding of Justin's concept of the Mosaic law, it lacks discussion of the term, concept, and theology of "covenant" within *Dial*.

[91] Osborn correctly perceives the significance of the advent of Christ in Justin's thought as a development that involves both continuity and discontinuity with the Jewish system, though without exploring the role of the covenant concept itself in detail. See Osborn, *Justin Martyr*. Wendel also acknowledges the distinctiveness of the new covenant identification, including its eschatological associations and its identity-marking function. See Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 173–80. Bruce Chilton likewise appreciates the historical character of Justin's covenantal argument. Bruce Chilton, "Early Christian Interpretation: The Case of Justin Martyr," in *Torah Revealed, Torah Fulfilled: Scriptural Laws in Formative Judaism and Earliest Christianity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Bruce Chilton, and Baruch A. Levine (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 38–40. Strikingly, however, T. J. Lang does not even mention the covenant concept in treating Justin's extensive use of a "hidden/revealed mystery schema" to delineate "two concurrent ages with the revelation of Christ as the fulcrum of this chronological division." T. J. Lang, *Mystery and the Making of a Christian Historical Consciousness: From Paul to the Second Century*, BZNW 219 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 163–91.

[92] Yuji Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant: Justin Martyr's Interpretation of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31.31–32" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2012).

tree" for Torah observance, which Justin associates with Christ and his cross).[93] However, these arguments, which are based in many cases upon Justin's merely possible knowledge of variant readings of LXX texts or oral traditions, remain speculative and, in any case, unable to explain the function of the concept within the *Dialogue* as a whole.

While such a dedicated study of Justin's new covenant concept has been long overdue, I believe that Tomita's treatment suffers from three major shortcomings: (1) an insufficient appreciation for the concept's intertextual nature, (2) an overstatement of a somewhat vaguely-defined "Jewish influence," and (3) a lack of attention to the new covenant's theological utility within the *Dialogue*. I will summarize these issues briefly before aiming to address them in my own analysis of the text.

First, a problem is signaled by Tomita's subtitle: "Justin Martyr's Interpretation of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–32." Tomita's focus is restricted to the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31–32 as the scriptural text upon which Justin builds his new covenant concept. Thus, the study's opening chapter consists of a reception history of this text in the New Testament, Apostolic Fathers, and the *Kerygma Petrou*.[94] It concludes that this text exercised little influence on the redemptive-historical views of the New Testament authors (and less on the Apostolic Fathers), with the exception of Hebrews.[95] Tomita then considers Justin's own use of the text (which appears explicitly only once in the *Dial.*, at 11.2, and not at all in the *Apol.*).[96] Later, he compares various textual traditions of Jeremiah 30–31 (Christian and Jewish) that may have been known to Justin in their earlier oral forms, to demonstrate possible "influence."[97] Whatever weight

[93] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 139.

[94] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 30–60.

[95] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 59–60.

[96] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 65–71. Even if Tomita's argument that it appears at *Dial.* 22.6 in conflation with the citation of Jer 7:21–22 is accepted, the quoted portion of the text does not refer to the new covenant, but merely to the exodus event.

[97] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 106–61.

may be assigned to these suggestions, the broader methodological issue is the restriction of scope to Jeremiah 31:31–32 alone. I will suggest that, far from developing his new covenant concept on the basis of this passage alone, Justin weaves a complex web of mutually-interpreting prophetic texts, such that no individual text acquires special prominence, yet all make significant thematic contributions. The Servant Songs of Isaiah, for example, constitute a more substantial portion of this intertextual network than the lone occurrence of Jeremiah 31:31–32, despite its importance in providing the terminology of "new covenant."[98] Thus, Tomita's conclusion—that examination of Christian sources prior to Justin cannot "fully answer the question of why Justin identified the NC with Christ,"[99] and that it is therefore "very helpful to extend our scope to the parallels even in Jewish sources"—is based upon a doubtful premise, that Jeremiah 31:31–32 represents the primary locus for the concept as exegetically developed in the *Dialogue*.

Second, and related, Tomita resorts too quickly to possible Jewish "backgrounds" to explain Justin's new covenant concept. The evidence that he posits is scanty, revolving around Jewish metaphors of "tree" and "water" for the Law and its observance in the LXX translation of Jeremiah 30–31,[100] the use of εὐχαριστία in the version of Jeremiah 31:19 preserved in Aquila,[101] and Midrashic oral traditions of the *dorshe reshumot* school of Jewish interpreters concerning the Exodus account of the waters of Marah.[102] Tomita argues that Justin encountered these Jewish exegetical

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[98] Tomita does note the references to Isa 2, 51, and 55 in *Dial*. 11–12, but he attributes their combination with Jer 31:31–32 ultimately to "his reading of the BC [Book of the Covenant, Jer 30–31] in Jeremiah with a Jewish recension (a καίγε type/'Theodotion,' or Aquila)." Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 134–38. Moreover, he fails to discuss Justin's return to the Isaiah texts in the covenantal arguments of *Dial*. 118–135, in which Jer 31:31–32 does not occur.

[99] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 230.

[100] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 122.

[101] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 127.

[102] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 156–59.

traditions of the Book of the Covenant in Jeremiah, which inspired his own articulation of Christ as the new covenant in the *Dialogue*.[103] A Qumran text's identification of the "ruler's staff" with the "covenant of kingship" is adduced as confirmation "that Justin's identification of the NC with Christ is partly rooted in Jewish traditions."[104] It is not my purpose here to refute all of the textual correspondences that Tomita identifies. Rather, I simply suggest that an explanation may be discovered on firmer ground, by examining the way the concept fits harmoniously into Justin's broader intellectual project as an aspect of his theology of the divine Word. It is more likely that distinctively Christian principles, derived from Justin's theological system as a whole, exerted the decisive influence in shaping his concept of the new covenant and reading of the relevant texts, than Jewish exegetical traditions which it is difficult to prove he accessed—especially in the context of a work whose rhetorical purpose is to vindicate Christian interpretations of scripture against Jewish opponents.[105]

Third, and finally, I note Tomita's omission (perhaps deemed outside the scope of his work) of substantive discussion of the particular theological purpose for which Justin employs the new covenant concept in the *Dialogue*. To be fair, Tomita's interest is in the textual *origins* of this concept, rather than its theological or rhetorical function. Indeed, with some justification, he critiques studies that have presented an exclusively biblical-theological ("dispensational" or "salvation-historical") understanding of it.[106] In

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[103] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 211.

[104] Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 222.

[105] The relationship between the new covenant and the Logos doctrine as aspects of Justin's broader theology of the divine Word will be considered in detail in chap. 5.

[106] These include Ferguson, whom Tomita critiques for seeing the new covenant as "primarily a category linked with Justin's view of salvation history," and Backhaus, who argues for continuity between the redemptive-historical covenant concepts of Justin and the author of Hebrews. Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 10–13. See Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 1, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013); Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der Frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 29 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996).

correction, he aims to identify the underlying sources, “backgrounds,” and “influences” of Justin’s new covenant idea that can provide “a better understanding to the origins of this term in his works.”[107] While this approach has value, it cannot provide a holistic explanation of Justin’s own intentions, purposes, and methods in the argumentation of the *Dialogue*, for which, we will see, the identification of Christ as the new covenant is essential. Arising from an intertextual reading of the Old Testament, this move “turns the tables” on Jewish detractors who deny Christian claims to a covenantal identity because of their neglect of the established covenant obligations. In response, Justin contends that Christ himself is the personal embodiment of the new covenant, fulfilling and transcending both of the biblical covenants upon which ethnic Jewish identity was based (the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant) along with their identity-shaping covenant signs (circumcision and Sabbath).

In what follows, I provide an alternative explanation for Justin’s development and application of the covenant concept, by describing the intertextual scriptural network that gives rise to it and articulating its ultimately theological function within the context of the *Dialogue*. I contend that Justin’s christological new covenant concept is, like that of Barnabas, scripturally derived and theologically applied.

Intertextual Scriptural Network

As mentioned above, Justin constructs the new covenant concept of the *Dialogue* using a complex intertextual scriptural network, weaving an intricate web of textual associations around key terms and concepts to build a cumulative biblical case that Christ, as the new covenant, is himself the prophesied law that goes forth from Zion and the light to the nations.[108] Justin makes reference to the new covenant (καινή διαθήκη)

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[107] Tomita, “Christ as the Covenant,” 13.

[108] The definitive and exhaustive treatment of Justin’s use of Scripture is Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile*, NovTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987). A helpful orientation to the concept of

or new law at least sixteen times.[109] He also cites texts from Isaiah that refer to a future "covenant" (lacking the descriptor "new") at least five times.[110] Because these Isaianic citations often occur in the same contexts as Justin's references to the "new covenant," it is clear that Justin takes the covenant of Isaiah 42:6, 49:8, and 55:3 to be identical with the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31. This association is made explicit in the very first instance.[111] After quoting Isaiah 51:4–5, which predicts that "a law shall go forth from me, and my judgment shall be a light to the nations," Justin explains that "concerning this new covenant, God also spoke through Jeremiah," and quotes Jeremiah 31:31–32.[112] Thus, he quickly establishes several key elements of the intertextual network: the law that goes forth, the light to the nations, and the new covenant itself.

Among the sixteen passages referring to the new covenant, Justin explicitly identifies it with Christ in five of them:

1. "An everlasting and final law, Christ himself, and a trustworthy covenant has been given to us, after which there shall be no law, or commandment, or precept."[113]

2. "Christ, the Son of God, who was proclaimed as the future Eternal Law and new covenant for the whole world."[114]

3. "Men would acknowledge that the new covenant, long promised by God, was then in

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"intertextuality," as applied to the interpretive strategies of second-century Christian writers, is provided by Stephen O. Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, Bible in Ancient Christianity 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 12–27. The assumptions of "consonance" and "harmonization" that Presley describes as characteristic of Irenaeus's scriptural exegesis can also be extended to the other major figures considered in this study, including Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage.

[109] Justin *Dial.*1.2 (twice); 11.3, 11.4 (twice); 12.2, 43.1, 51.3, 67.9, 67.10, 118.3, 122.5 (twice); 122.6; 123.1. The Greek text is taken from the critical edition of Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, Patristische Texte und Studien 38/47 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005).

[110] Justin, *Dial.* 26.2, 65.4, and 122.3 cite Isa 42:6; *Dial.* 122.5 cites Isa 49:8; *Dial.* 12.1 cites Isa 55:3.

[111] Justin, *Dial.* 11.3–12.3.

[112] Justin, *Dial*. 11.3 (Falls, 20). English translations are taken from Falls .

[113] Justin, *Dial.* 11.2 (Falls, 20).

[114] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65).

existence, namely, that he himself was the Christ."[115]

4. "Through the calling of the new and eternal covenant, namely, Christ."[116]

5. "Who is the covenant of God? Is it not Christ?"[117]

In two of these cases, the context is Justin's christological reading of the Servant Songs of Isaiah, which identify the Servant of the Lord with the covenant given as a "light to the nations."[118] Justin finds the Servant described as a "covenant" in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8, while in 55:3, he can take either "everlasting covenant" or "David" (both of which may be interpreted christologically) as antecedents of the phrase "I have made him a witness to the peoples."[119] Justin also finds reference to a law that shall go forth as a light to the nations in Isaiah 51:4[120]—a "light to the nations" which *also* describes the "covenant of the people" promised by the Lord in Isaiah 42:6.[121] Finally, the phrase "covenant of the people" also occurs in Isaiah 49:8, connected with the Lord's promise that the Servant will "establish the earth" and "inherit the deserted," which Justin interprets as an allusion to the Gentiles, conceptually equivalent to the "light to the nations."[122] This chain of connections may be summarized in a more linear fashion as follows: (1) The Servant of the Lord is a "covenant"; (2) the covenant is "everlasting"; (3) the covenant is for "the nations" (or the Gentiles); and (4) the covenant may also be described as a "law" for "the nations." Since the Servant of the Lord is identified with Jesus Christ in the Gospels, Justin easily concludes that Christ himself is the everlasting covenant of Isaiah, who goes

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[115] Justin, *Dial.* 51.3 (Falls, 78).

[116] Justin, *Dial.* 118.3 (Falls, 176).

[117] Justin, *Dial.* 122.6 (Falls, 184).

[118] Justin, *Dial.* 11.2, 122.6.

[119] Justin, *Dial.* 12.1.

[120] Justin, *Dial.* 11.3.

[121] Justin, *Dial.* 26.2 (Falls, 40–41); *Dial.* 122.3 (Falls, 183).

[122] Justin, *Dial.* 122.5–6 (Falls, 184).

forth as a law from Zion and a light to the Gentile nations. An assumption of coherence among the messages of the Prophets, resulting from their inspiration by the same Spirit, with the goal of bearing witness to the same Christ, enables Justin to link these Isaianic texts with the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah, and to insist that Christ, as the Servant, enacts, and indeed personifies, the anticipated new covenant.[123]

The remaining three texts that identify Christ with the new covenant do not ground this claim in the Isaianic prophecies.[124] Two of them confirm that the term "covenant" has a *historical* dimension in Justin's thought, delineating discrete periods in the history of God's redemptive acts.[125] Thus, in *Dialogue* 43.1, Christ, as the "Eternal Law and new covenant for the whole world," stands in contrast with the "circumcision" that "originated with Abraham" and "the Sabbath, sacrifices, oblations, and festivals" that originated "with Moses."[126] Here the emphasis is temporal: for Justin, "these things should have their end" in Christ.[127] Likewise, in *Dial.* 51.3, Justin presents the advent of Christ in the new covenant as the summation and termination of the period of "the Law and the Prophets," such that "there would no longer be any prophet" among the Jews.[128] In both cases, the new covenant performs a historical, epoch-dividing function.[129]

The final instance comes at the end of a section demonstrating Christ's

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[123] Goodenough describes the *Dial.* as an effort to show that "the writings of the Jews and doctrines of the Christians are a unified production of the single Spirit of Inspiration and Revelation." Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 99; see also Shotwell, *Biblical Exegesis*, 5–7; Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 87–93.

[124] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1; 51.3; 118.3.

[125] Justin, *Dial*. 43.1, 51.3. Against Osborn, who suggests, "The relationship between the imperfection of the old covenant and the perfection of the new covenant cannot be explained historically. The Platonic contrast between the image and the reality . . . is essential." Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 166.

[126] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65).

[127] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65).

[128] Justin, *Dial.* 51.3 (Falls, 78). In this Justin follows the Gospel tradition, citing a version of Matt 11:12–15.

[129] Cf. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and Mosaic Law*, 110–13.

fulfillment of various scriptural types (beginning as early as *Dial.* 48), and setting the stage for Justin's argument that Christian Gentiles constitute the new people of God (*Dial.* 119.1).[130] It draws a contrast between the Jews, who have been "led astray" by their teachers, and believing Gentiles, who have been "found more understanding and more religious" by virtue of their "calling" to this "new and eternal covenant, namely, Christ."[131] In this way, it serves as a catalyst from the earlier argument that Christ, as the new covenant, fulfills scriptural prophecy, to the *Dialogue*'s final argument, that because Christ is the new covenant, those who are united with him by faith constitute the Church, the true "nation promised of old to Abraham by God."[132]

The significance of this cluster of passages equating Christ with the new covenant is further illuminated by a second cluster, which suggest the connection that this motif shares with Justin's thought more broadly. In *Dial.* 11.3, the "law" of Isaiah 51:4–5 is taken to refer to the "everlasting and final law, Christ himself, and a trustworthy covenant . . . after which there shall be no law, or commandment, or precept": "Have you not read these words of Isaiah: 'Hear me, listen to me, my people; and give ear to me, you kings: for a law shall go forth from me, and my judgment shall be a light to the nations . . . .' And concerning this new covenant, God spoke through Jeremiah thus."[133] Justin connects the "law that goes forth" (associated with the new covenant) with the prophecy of Isaiah 2:3 and its parallel text, Micah 4:2: "For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and out of Jerusalem the Word of the Lord."[134] The law that goes forth is "the doctrine preached by the apostles from Jerusalem."[135] Justin clarifies, however, that in

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[130] Justin, *Dial.* 118.3.

[131] Justin, *Dial.* 118.3 (Falls, 176–77).

[132] Justin, *Dial.* 119.4 (Falls, 179).

[133] Justin, *Dial.* 11.3 (Falls, 20–21).

[134] Justin, *Dial.* 109.2 (Falls, 163); attributed to Micah.

[135] Justin, *Dial.* 109.1 (Falls, 163).

addition, "this whole pericope refers to Christ," as recognized by "Christians, who have gained knowledge of the true worship of God from the Law and from the Word which went forth from Jerusalem by way of the apostles of Jesus."[136] Christ, the law, and the Word proclaimed by the apostles are so closely associated as to be directly identifiable.

Alluding to the same text earlier, Justin had made this same connection: "The blood of circumcision is now abolished, and we now trust in the blood of salvation. Now another covenant, another Law has gone forth from Zion, Jesus Christ."[137] The language leaves no doubt that the law which goes forth from Zion in Isaiah 2/Micah 4 is Christ, who is also the law that goes forth as "a light to the nations" (Isa 51:4) and Jeremiah's "new covenant" (Jer 31:31).[138] Finally, the "above-quoted prophecies" that Justin mentions in *Dial.* 43.1 as showing that Christ is "the future Eternal Law and new covenant for the whole world" also have these texts in view.[139] Here too, Justin draws a contrast between the new covenant, on the one hand, and the circumcision originating with Abraham and the Sabbath originating with the Law of Moses, on the other.[140]

In sum, the intertextual network that Justin develops as the foundation for his concept of the new covenant draws upon an interconnected reading of the law and covenant prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah. For Justin, the new covenant is the Servant of the Lord, who goes forth as both a law and a light for the Gentile nations, establishing among them a new covenant community, which is the true people of God. Simultaneously, the new covenant is the law that goes forth from Zion in the preaching of the apostles, in contrast to previously established covenant signs, such as circumcision

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[136] Justin, *Dial.* 110.1–2 (Falls, 164).

[137] Justin, *Dial.* 24.1 (Falls, 38).

[138] Justin, *Dial.* 11.3.

[139] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65). A footnote in the Falls/Halton translation notes a likely allusion here.

[140] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1.

and Sabbath. This direct identification of the new covenant with Christ is, for Justin, an obvious and necessary exegetical move.

Theological Function

The covenantal argument developed on the basis of this intertextual network is intimately connected with the *Dialogue*'s central concern for Christian identity formation, as evidenced by the facts that (1) Justin's theology of divine revelation through the Logos is mediated by the covenant concept; (2) Justin depicts Trypho's accusations against Christians as charges that operate at the level of covenant identity; and (3) Justin's strategy is to refute these charges by "turning the tables" on his rhetorical Jewish interlocutors, exposing their mistaken sense of covenant identity and vindicating that of the Christians. The theological concept of the new covenant therefore supports the argument of the work as a whole, as the new revelation which forges a new covenant identity, reflected in new identity markers, and constituting, ultimately, a new community.

Belief in the identity-forming capacity of the divine Word or Law was well-established within various streams of Judaism in the second century.[141] Susan Wendel notes, "Throughout the Second Temple period, the Jewish scriptures functioned as a powerful cultural symbol that fostered a sense of national identity for the Jewish people," and continues that "claims to possess an authoritative ability to interpret the Jewish scriptures thus served as a means of articulating group identity."[142] This authority was grounded in the conviction that "scriptural exegesis was a divinely inspired activity" and a "means of attaining revelatory knowledge."[143] Christian writers like Justin likewise "present the exegesis of their group as divinely inspired revelation and use this type of

[141] See the discussion in chap. 2 of this dissertation.

[142] Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 27.

[143] Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 33–34.

claim to show that the Christ-believing community held a privileged status in relation to the Jewish scriptures."[144] Moreover, Wendel acknowledges the importance of the covenant concept to this dynamic.[145] She suggests, rightly, that "by presenting Christ as the new covenant and light to the nations, Justin argues that only those who believe his message practice proper covenant fidelity and so embody the identity of 'true Israel.'"[146] Wendel's discussion of the relationship between covenant and identity in Justin's thought thus acknowledges an important dimension that Tomita overlooks.[147]

Further confirmation that Justin designs the *Dialogue* as a debate about covenant identity comes from the words of Trypho, who, after listening to Justin recount his path to Christianity, states the point of contention between Jews and Christians:

> But this is what we are most puzzled about, that you who claim to be pious and believe yourselves to be different from the others do not segregate yourselves from them, nor do you observe a manner of life different from that of the Gentiles, for you do not keep the feasts or the Sabbaths, nor do you practice the rite of circumcision. . . . Have you not read that "the male who is not circumcised on the eighth day shall be eliminated from his people"? This precept was for stranger and purchased slave alike. But you, forthwith, scorn this covenant, spurn the commandments that come afterwards, and then you try to convince us that you know God, when you fail to do those things that every God-fearing person would do. If, then, you can give a satisfactory reply to these charges and can show us on what you place your hopes, even though you refuse to observe the Law, we will listen to you most willingly.[148]

This unusually substantive statement from Trypho provides a programmatic key to the argumentation of the *Dialogue* as a whole.[149] Trypho specifically employs the word

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[144] Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 81.

[145] Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 173.

[146] Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation*, 247.

[147] Tomita affirms this connection, for example, in discussing Jewish ethnic identity in relation to the account of the Sinai Covenant (Exod 19–24), but generally fails to perceive the way Justin's presentation of the new covenant christologically transforms and reapplies it. Tomita, "Christ as the Covenant," 199.

[148] Justin, *Dial.* 10.3 (Falls, 18–19); cf. 19.1.

[149] Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr*, 9–10, correctly identifies the agenda-setting importance of this passage as demanding "an apologia for the non-observance of the Mosaic Law by Christians" and describes the *Dialogue* as "a theological and scriptural justification of the Christian rejection of the Mosaic

"covenant [διαθήκης]" in his accusation that Christians "scorn" and "spurn" it.[150]

Trypho points to two rituals that Christian neglect: circumcision and the Sabbath. This combination recurs throughout the *Dialogue*, since these rites functioned among Jews as signs of the Abrahamic covenant and Sinai covenant, respectively.[151] As visible markers of the covenant community, they distinguished members from non-members (and Jews from Gentiles).[152] Trypho's astonishment that Christians refuse to observe them assumes that they are prerequisites to any legitimate claim to a communal identity as the people of God.[153] It is therefore significant that Justin's argument opens with a discussion of the new covenant (a prophecy recognized by the Jews), and proceeds by identifying it with the person of Christ. After making his first reference to the new covenant in *Dialogue* 11.2–12.2, Justin turns immediately to the covenant signs themselves: "What you really need is another circumcision, though you prize that of the flesh. The New Law demands that you observe a perpetual Sabbath, whereas you consider yourselves religious when you refrain from work on one day out of the week, and in doing so you do not understand the real meaning of that precept."[154] Justin consistently links circumcision and Sabbath as twin pillars of Jewish covenant identity.[155] He contends, however, that their institution was merely temporary, intended to point

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Law." However, he fails throughout this study to distinguish the centrality of the covenant concept to this argument.

[150] Justin, *Dial.* 10.3.

[151] For the biblical roots of the idea of circumcision as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, see Gen 17:10–14. On the Sabbath as a sign of the Sinai Covenant, see Exod 31:13–17, Deut 5:12–15, Ezek 20:20. As Stylianopoulos observes, "Circumcision and Sabbath, more than the other precepts of the Law, were widely known among the Gentiles as the most conspicuous customs of the Jews." Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and Mosaic Law*, 138.

[152] Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 36, 52–53.

[153] Shotwell suggests that Trypho's statement may reflect a contemporary rabbinic expression. Shotwell, *Biblical Exegesis*, 72.

[154] Justin, *Dial.* 12.3 (Falls, 22).

[155] Justin, *Dial.* 12.3; 23.1; 26.1; 27.5; 29.3; 41.4; 43.1; 47.2; 92.2 (among others).

forward to the "covenant more binding than all others, which must now be respected by those who aspire to the heritage of God," since "a later covenant [makes] void an earlier one."[156] This is made explicit at *Dialogue* 43.1:

> As circumcision, then, originated with Abraham, and the Sabbath, sacrifices, oblations, and festivals with Moses (and it has already been shown that your people were commanded to do these things because of their hardness of heart), so it was expedient that, in accordance with the will of the Father, these things should have their end in him who was born of the Virgin, of the race of Abraham and of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David: namely, in Christ, the Son of God, who was proclaimed as the future Eternal Law and new covenant for the whole world.[157]

Circumcision and Sabbath, have, in Justin's view, completed their intended function of distinguishing Jews from the rest of the world, if not in the way that the Jews themselves assume. For Justin, the rituals of the law were instituted by God on account of Jewish hardheartedness, which culminated in their rejection of Christ.[158] Because the Jews failed to receive the reality to which these symbols pointed, the signs have been transformed from markers that would distinguish Israel for divine blessing into markers appointing them for divine judgment.[159]

For Christians, these ritual markers have become *adiaphora*.[160] The true signs of the new covenant community are their virtues, such as endurance in persecution and prayerful intercession for their enemies.[161] Proof that external actions do not confer righteousness comes from the Old Testament figures who never received circumcision.[162]

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[156] Justin, *Dial.* 11.2 (Falls, 20).

[157] Justin, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65).

[158] Justin, *Dial*. 18.2; cf. 23.2; 43.1; 46.5; 46.7. See Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 57–59.

[159] Justin, *Dial*. 16.2–3. See Chilton, "Early Christian Interpretation," 40.

[160] Justin, *Dial*. 23.3. In 47.1, however, Christians who continue to practice the Law must not impose it upon others. See Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr*, 127–29.

[161] Justin, *Dial*. 18.3; cf. 23.5; 28.4; 29.1. See Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 173.

[162] Justin, *Dial.* 19.2–6; 45.4.

Physical circumcision was a type of the spiritual circumcision of the heart.[163] Indeed, it was only "by reason of your sins and the sins of your fathers that, among other precepts, God imposed upon you the observance of the Sabbath as a sign."[164] Now, both the Sabbath, as sign of the Sinai covenant, and the "blood of circumcision," as sign of the Abrahamic covenant, are fulfilled in "the blood of salvation," for "another covenant, another Law has gone forth from Zion, Jesus Christ."[165]

In *Dialogue* 47, Justin halts the covenant-oriented discussion that began earlier (*Dial.* 10), and turns to a lengthy Christological exposition of the Old Testament, to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.[166] He resumes the covenant theme in *Diaogue* 118, discussing the relation between Israel and the church. The shift back to covenantal concerns is signaled by the reappearance of the identification formula: "By wondrous divine providence it has been brought about that we, through the calling of the new and eternal covenant, namely Christ, should be found more understanding and more religious than you, who are reputed to be, but in reality are not, intelligent men and lovers of God."[167] By suggesting that Christians are the true covenant people, Justin sets the stage for a final argument, which reveals the mechanism by which this transition occurred, and confirms the identity-shaping theological function of the new covenant concept itself. Justin is at pains to demonstrate that the Christian church constitutes "another people" and "another Israel," distinct from ethnic Jews (*Dial*. 118–135).[168] While some ethnic Jews may be included in this new covenant community through faith in Christ, it is, for

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[163] Justin, *Dial.* 43.2. Though it is received "by means of baptism," the spiritual circumcision itself, not the baptism, is the antitype to physical circumcision. See also *Dial*. 41.4.

[164] Justin, *Dial.* 21.1 (Falls, 33); cf. 27.5.

[165] Justin, *Dial.* 24.1 (Falls, 38).

[166] On the arguments of this section, see especially Claudia Setzer, "'You Invent a Christ!': Christological Claims as Points of Jewish-Christian Dispute," *USQR* 44, nos. 3–4 (1991): 315–28.

[167] Justin, *Dial.* 118.3 (Falls, 176–77).

[168] Justin, *Dial.* 123.5 (Falls, 185); cf. 119.3.

Justin, *only* in this way that they become true descendants of Abraham.[169] Thus, the church, composed of both Jew and Gentile, "is really the nation promised of old to Abraham by God, when he told him that he would make him the father of many nations."[170]

In response to Trypho's incredulity at the suggestion "that you [Christians] are Israel," Justin constructs a final plank in his covenantal argument, pointing to the divine promise of the Abrahamic covenant, that from his "seed," all the nations of the earth would be blessed.[171] Finding an echo of this promise to the Davidic king of Psalm 72:17 ("all nations shall be blessed in him"), Justin identifies Christ with the promised seed.[172] This, in turn, prompts Justin to return to the covenant-based network of Isaianic Servant texts from the beginning of the *Dialogue*.[173] Now, however, the emphasis is that the Servant, as "light of the Gentiles," and "covenant of the people," is the means by which the earlier, Abrahamic covenant may be extended to them. Where the identification of Christ as the new covenant (in *Dial.* 11–12ff) focused on his fulfillment of the Sinai covenant (as the New Law), the same identification (and same supporting texts) serve here at the *Dialogue*'s conclusion to show that Christ likewise fulfills the covenant with Abraham (as his true seed, through whom the nations are blessed). In both cases, Jewish identity claims—rooted, on the one hand, in the national boundary markers of the Sinai covenant (the Mosaic law, symbolized by the Sabbath) and, on the other hand, in the ethnic boundary markers of the Abrahamic covenant (physical descent, symbolized by circumcision)—are undermined as insufficient in themselves, redirected toward their

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[169] Justin, *Dial.* 119.4 (Falls, 179).

[170] Justin, *Dial.* 119.4–6.

[171] Justin, *Dial.* 120.1. Cf. Gen 22:18.

[172] Justin, *Dial.* 121.1.

[173] Isa 49:6 (*Dial*. 121.4); Isa 42:16, 7 (*Dial*. 122.1); Isa 42:6–7 (*Dial*. 122.3); Isa 49:8 (*Dial*. 122.5); Isa 42:1–4 (*Dial*. 123.8).

spiritual fulfillment in Christ, and then applied, by extension, to believing Gentiles.

Justin's hermeneutical strategy is neither mere replacement nor total allegorization of Israel and its history.[174] Rather, the hinge on which his reading of the Old Testament covenants turns is the central argument of *Dialogue* 123.8–135.6, that Jesus Christ himself is the true Israel. Finding the divine Servant described as "Jacob" and "Israel" in Isaiah 42:1–4, Justin observes that "God, speaking of Christ in a parable, calls him Jacob and Israel."[175] The scriptural figure of Jacob prefigured Christ, and the name bestowed upon him by God ("Israel," taken to mean "a man who overcomes power"), actually belonged to Christ before it was given to Jacob.[176] Justin can thus conclude that "it has been shown that Israel is also Christ, who is, and is called, Jesus."[177]

The implications are clear: because Jesus Christ is the true seed of Abraham and the true Israel, it is through spiritual union with him, rather than through physical descent, that inheritance of the Abrahamic promises is mediated: "Therefore, as your whole people was called after that one Jacob, surnamed Israel, so we who obey the precepts of Christ, are, through Christ who begot us to God, both called and in reality are, Jacob and Israel and Judah and Joseph and David and true children of God."[178] Stated simply, "all who come to the Father through him are part of the blessed Israel."[179] And thus, "As Christ is called Israel and Jacob, so we, hewn out of the side of Christ, are the

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[174] The "replacement" or supersessionary aspect is stated too strongly, for example, in Rodney Werline, "The Transformation of Pauline Arguments in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho," *HTR* 92, no. 1 (1999): 86. Justin is careful to preserve a place for ethnic Jews within the "true Israel" concept, as at *Dial*. 39.2, 120.2, and 130.2, and affirms their presence alongside Christian Gentiles in the resurrection at *Dial*. 80.1–2.

[175] Justin, *Dial.* 123.8 (Falls, 186).

[176] Justin, *Dial.* 125.3, 5 (Falls, 188).

[177] Justin, *Dial.* 134.6.

[178] Justin, *Dial.* 123.9 (Falls, 186).

[179] Justin, *Dial.* 125.5 (Falls, 188).

true people of Israel."[180] In Justin's view, the mistake of ethnic Jews has been to assume that inheritance of the covenant blessings depends upon physical descent from Abraham through his chosen seed. Without denying the literal reality of the promises, Justin nevertheless christologically reorients the understanding of their fulfillment, such that Christ himself becomes the promised seed, the true Israel, and the inheritor of the nations.[181] In addition, the true covenant people of God are identified as those who unite with Christ "by the mystery of the despised and dishonorable cross"—whether Gentile or "Jew who is pleasing to God."[182] Justin can thus conclude that there are "two seeds of Judah, and two races, as there are two houses of Jacob: the one born of flesh and blood, the other of faith and the Spirit."[183] Justin's final appeal in the *Dialogue* is that his Jewish audience should count themselves among the latter *in addition* to the former.[184] By insisting that they have "scorned" Christ, the new covenant personified, Justin "turns the tables" on the Jewish charge that Christians reject the divine covenant. He insists that it is the Jews who have transformed the identity markers of the Old Testament covenants into signs of divine judgment by refusing to accept their fulfillment in Christ, revealing themselves—not the Christians—to be those who "scorn" the covenant.[185]

Conclusion

Justin's use of the new covenant concept in the *Dialogue* may be summarized as follows: like his Jewish contemporaries, Justin assumes the identity-forming capacity of a covenant-based interpretation of scripture. His explanation of the Christian approach,

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[180] Justin, *Dial.* 135.1 (Falls, 203).

[181] Justin affirms, for example, in *Dial.* 119.5 that "we shall inherit the holy land together with Abraham, receiving our inheritance for all eternity."

[182] Justin, *Dial.* 130.2 (Falls, 106); *Dial.* 131.2 (Falls, 197).

[183] Justin, *Dial.* 135.6 (Falls, 204).

[184] Justin, *Dial.* 137–142.

[185] Justin, *Dial.* 12.2; 120.2; 136.3.

revolving around the christological new covenant, is occasioned by Jewish objection to Christian neglect of the key covenant signs of circumcision and Sabbath. Justin must therefore demonstrate Christ's fulfillment, not only of these signs, but of the Sinai and Abrahamic covenants that underlie them. As the embodiment of the new covenant, Christ fulfills the former as the new law, and fulfills the latter as the true Israel, through whom the Gentiles also become heirs to the covenant promise. The Isaianic Servant Songs, which Justin applies to Christ as "Jacob," "Israel," "covenant for the people," and "light to the Gentiles," provide the connective exegetical tissue for these claims.

In Justin's view, because Christ, as new covenant, is the new law and the true Israel, he himself fulfills the covenant conditions and becomes true heir of the covenant promises—along with those who unite with him by faith to participate in this identity. The possibility of such participation is the cumulative argument of the *Dialogue* as a whole, and the basis for Justin's appeal to his Jewish interlocutors, that in Gooedenough's words, "there is one door open for them, as for all mankind, through Christ, the Eternal Logos-Law."[186]

Tertullian of Carthage, *Against the Jews*

A final second-century text that treats the covenant concept in relation to Judaism (often categorized, like the Epistle of Barnabas and *Dialogue with Trypho*, within the *Adversus Iudaeos* literary tradition), is Tertullian of Carthage's (c. 155–220) polemical treatise *Against the Jews*.[187] As one of Tertullian's earlier works (likely composed around 197), it provides a fitting endpoint, at the close of the century, to the period under discussion here.[188]

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[186] Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 122.

[187] Tertullian's use of the covenant concept in the heresiological treatises *Marc.* and *Prax.* will be considered in chap. 6.

[188] See Dunn's introduction to his translation of the text: Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 55; and the more exhaustive technical treatment on which it is based, Geoffrey D.

Scholarship on Tertullian's Covenant Concept

Unlike Justin Martyr's, Tertullian's concept of the new covenant—its sources and role within his broader theological project—has not received a dedicated study to date. However, some attention has been given to it from two directions.

On the one hand, a few scholars have examined it in broader overviews of patristic covenant theology. Tertullian does not feature in Van Unnik's discussion of the relation between the new covenant concept and the title of the New Testament, but Kinzig's response to it makes significant use of him in arguing that the phrase *novum testamentum* is a Marcionite innovation which Tertullian and others sought to repurpose.[189] Ferguson briefly analyzes Tertullian's theological use of the new covenant (or "new law") within the sequence of divine law-givings described in *Against the Jews*, noting the general emphasis on "two dispensations, old and new" and the "Irenaeus-like relationship" between them, characterized by "progress" and "advance."[190] More substantially, Duncan studies Tertullian's terminology (chiefly, *dispositio*, *instrumentum*, and *testamentum*), also concluding that his schema is "explicitly duocovenantal."[191] In Duncan's view, Tertullian, unlike Irenaeus, ignores divisions within the old covenant itself, which he regards as a single "legal and temporary economy" running from creation to the time of Christ," whereas the new covenant "commences with Christ and is eternal

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Dunn, *Tertullian's Adversus Iudaeos: A Rhetorical Analysis*, Patristic Society Monographs 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2008). Dunn follows the dating proposed by Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), which remains a standard introduction and chronology for Tertullian's works. For introductions to his life and thought, see also Gerald L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979); and Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[189] W. C. Van Unnik, *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik*, part 2, *1 Peter, Canon, Corpus Hellenisticum Generalia*, Novum Testamentum Supplements 30 (Leuven: Brill, 1980); Wolfram Kinzig, "Καινὴ Διαθήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries," *JTS* 45, no. 2 (1994): 519–44.

[190] Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*. The covenant theology of Irenaeus will be treated in chap. 6.

[191] J. Ligon Duncan III, "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995), 200.

in duration . . . superior to the old covenant in every way."[192] Distinctions within the era of the old covenant are to be explained in terms of a "progressive revelation of the law," according to the four-stage scheme outlined (*Iud.* 2–3).[193] Thus, Duncan finds that "the movement from law to gospel in Tertullian's theology is, in one sense, simply progress from old law to new law."[194]

On the other hand, Tertullian's covenant concept has been analyzed as an aspect of his biblical interpretation or theological program.[195] Hanson, for example, in commenting on his hermeneutical method, commends him for refusing to allegorize the Mosaic law, but laments the "legalistic" burden that he introduces in converting the Sermon on the Mount into the "legal code" of a new law.[196] Daniélou situates Tertullian's writings within the streams of "Latin Judaeo-Christianity" thriving in Carthage and Rome, including earlier discussions of the relation between Israel and the church in that tradition.[197] His analysis of Tertullian's *Against the Jews* emphasizes the continuity of its

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[192] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 203.

[193] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 204. He summarizes, "Hence, Tertullian envisions four legal stages within his two-covenant structure of God's economy" (208).

[194] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 212.

[195] For all its many merits, the authoritative study of Barnes, *Tertullian*, is by its own acknowledgment more concerned with enacting a "demolition" of traditional constructions of Tertullian's historical and intellectual context, and offers little engagement with his theological reflection. Thus, it, unsurprisingly, makes no comment on his use of the covenant concept.

[196] R. P. C. Hanson, "Notes on Tertullian's Interpretation of Scripture," *JTS* 12, no. 2 (1961): 273–79. Jan Hendrik Waszink likewise aims to highlight the legal and rhetorical character of his approach, but, in limiting this supposed influence to Greco-Roman convention, omits any discussion of ways that Tertullian's frequent references to biblical law (old or new) might inform it. Jan Hendrik Waszink, "Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken, Théologie Historique 53 (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979), 17–31.

[197] Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. David Smith and John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 17–57. These include *V Esdras* and Pseduo-Cyprian's *Against the Jews* and *On Mounts Sinai and Zion.* The first two texts describe Israel's rejection on account of unfaithfulness to the covenant, while the third offers an interpretation of the Isa 2:3 *testimonium* (concerning the Word, or law, going forth from Zion to the Gentiles), similar enough to Tertullian's own that Daniélou suggests his possible dependence on it (Daniélou, 55).

topic and scriptural argumentation with earlier writers.[198] Also treating Tertullian's theology holistically, Eric Osborn demonstrates the interconnectedness of the three major controversies in which Tertullian discussed the covenants (with Jews, Marcionites, and followers of Praxeas).[199] Without treating the covenant concept directly, Osborn draws attention to the continuity in Tertullian's themes of recapitulation and progress in the economy, which characterize his presentation of redemptive history and the sequential manifestations of divine law within it.[200] By contrast, Geoffrey Dunn's study of Tertullian's thought and his translation of *Against the Jews* attribute to Tertullian an "out-and-out supersessionism."[201] Finally, Tertullian's use of terminology related to the covenants (*instrumentum*; *testamentum*) has been specifically analyzed by Van der Geest, in an extension of the earlier lexical work of Braun.[202]

Below I will build, especially, upon the studies of Ferguson and Duncan in describing Tertullian's concept of the new covenant (analyzing its terminology and its sources) while also examining its rhetorical usage in the first of his three major polemical controversies: the dialogue with Judaism in *Against the Jews*. In this text Tertullian lays a foundation for his identity-forming covenant concept, which he later develops and applies

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[198] Daniélou demonstrates parallels with Barn.; Melito of Sardis, *Pasch.*; Justin Martyr, *Dial.*; Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.*; and Pseudo-Cyprian, *Adversus Iudaeos*. Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, 266–72.

[199] Osborn, *Tertullian*, 117–38.

[200] See Osborn, *Tertullian*, on the divine economy as a source of unity in Tertullian's thought (p. 10); on recapitulation (p. 20); and on the stages of law (p.154).

[201] See Dunn's comments in Dunn, *Tertullian's Adversus Iudaeos*, 65; cf. however, the more recent qualification in Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Tertullian, Paul, and the Nation of Israel," in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: T&T Clark, 2013)," 97. Here this "supersessionism" is dismissed as a mere rhetorical device in Tertullian's polemic against Judaism.

[202]As noted by Robert D. Sider, "Approaches to Tertullian: A Study of Recent Scholarship," *Second Century* 2, no. 4 (1982): 244; J. E. L. Van der Geest, *Le Christ et l'Ancien Testament chez Tertullien: Recherche Terminologique* (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1972); René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le Vocabulaire Doctrinal de Tertullien*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977); see also Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language, Imagery, Exegesis*, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1967), 33–34, 45, 55–56.

in new contexts in *Against Marcion* and *Against Praxeas*.[203]

Covenant Terminology

Across his works, Tertullian uses four key terms to describe the interrelated notions of providential arrangement, the covenants, and the scriptural texts that attest to them: *dispositio*, *dispensatio*, *instrumentum*, and *testamentum*.[204] In *Against the Jews*, he employs *dispositio* three times.[205] Two instances refer to divine arrangements or purposes in Christ's coming, while one refers to a historically understood biblical covenant, quoting Isaiah 42:6.[206] The term *dispensatio* does not occur at all. Tertullian uses *instrumentum* only once, in reference to the "divine scriptures."[207] He uses *testamentum* seven times, and all these occurrences refer to historically understood biblical covenants, following the first occurrence at *Iud*. 3.7—a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31–32.[208]

Clearly, then, Tertullian's covenantal language is scripturally-derived. As with Justin, the presence of *testamentum* in Tertullian's biblical text (Jer 31:31–32; Dan 9:27) provides the concept's terminological foundation, though he also finds scriptural precedent for the use of *dispositio* (Isa 42:6).[209] Tertullian's use is not restricted to explicit biblical citations, however. Even at this early stage in his literary career, he has

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[203] These two works will be considered together in the treatment of heresiological uses of the new covenant concept in chap. 6.

[204] See the discussion of these terms in Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 161–76. However, I depart from his conclusions at a number of points.

[205] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 10.6; 12.2; 14.11.

[206] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 12.2: "*Ecce dedi te in dispositionem generis mei, in lucem gentium, aperire oculos*." The Latin text is taken from the critical edition of Hermann Tränkle, *Q. S. F. Tertulliani Adversus Iudaeos: Mit Einleitung und Kritischen Kommentar* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Steiner, 1964).

[207] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 1.7 (Dunn, 70). English translations are taken from Dunn.

[208] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.7; 6.1; 6.2 (twice); 7.1; 8.6; 9.18.

[209] As noted by Duncan, though he overstates Tertullian's preference for *dispositio* over *testamentum* to express the covenant concept. Duncan, "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995), 174.

already incorporated the biblical concept into a larger historical-theological framework, as indicated by his use of the phrase "new covenant" in non-quotation contexts to demonstrate for a Jewish audience that the fulfillment of the faith of Israel hinges upon the coming of the messiah, the inaugurator and "heir of the new covenant."[210] As will be seen, this scriptural notion of *testamentum* establishes in Tertullian's earliest work a conceptual foundation on which other, broader notions (such as *dispositio*) are constructed and developed in later works.

Covenantal Schema

A complete picture of Tertullian's covenantal schema requires consideration of all three of the works where it occurs; for now, however, attention will be limited to its introduction in *Against the Jews*. I will first outline its general features, and then consider it practical function within the context of his argumentation.

Against the Jews is fundamental for Tertullian's view of the covenants not only because of its early date, but also because it develops the schema in greatest detail.[211] As the product (by his own account) of Tertullian's dissatisfaction with the results of a disorderly debate that he observed between a Jew and a Christian, the treatise deals with the relation between the two peoples in light of "a more careful examination of the [scriptural] texts."[212] Tertullian's verdict has led some scholars to conclude that he is "an out-and-out supersessionist," or even anti-Semitic.[213] However, this overview will contend for a more positive understanding of the role of the Jews in his account.

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[210] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 6.2 (Dunn, 78); cf. 7.1.

[211] Barnes dates the work to the summer of 197. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 55. He largely accepts this chronology (65). See also Dunn's survey of opinions regarding the authenticity and integrity of the text (both of which he affirms).

[212] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 1.1. Daniélou situates Tertullian within a stream of reaction against the perceived excesses and corruptions of the popular Jewish Latin Christianity that he observed in Carthage. Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, 135.

[213] For the former see Dunn, *Tertullian*, 63–64; for the latter, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 91.

As Tertullian notes in its conclusion, the work aims to prove from the Scriptures that the coming of Christ was foretold there.[214] The first six chapters narrate the unfolding of the divine economy leading up to this event, while the final eight chapters employ the "proof from prophecy" strategy to confirm Christ's messianic identity.[215] Throughout, Tertullian contends that the prophesied new covenant reveals Christ as messiah.

In response to a Jewish charge that Gentiles are barred from access to "the law of God," Tertullian turns, first, to the Abrahamic promise of Genesis 22:18 ("that in his offspring all the tribes of the earth would be blessed"), which he associates with the prophecy of Genesis 25:23 (that two nations will be born from Rebekah's womb, with the older serving the younger).[216] Together, these texts indicate the universal scope of the divine redemptive plan promised in the covenant with Abraham, and realized, successively, in the covenants with Jewish ("older") and Gentile ("younger") peoples.[217] Despite the reference to the "subjection" of the former to the latter, Tertullian's subsequent language will not allow for the notion of historical succession to be rashly equated with an outright supersessionism (much less anti-Semitism). Indeed, in insisting that "the people or clan of the Jews is anterior in time and older, graced with the first

[214] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud*. 14.11. The suggestion of Barnes that the work is intended primarily for a pagan, rather than Jewish, audience, is unconvincing, given its exclusively scriptural argumentation. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 101, 106. Osborn more plausibly defends a primarily Jewish audience. Osborn, *Tertullian*, 9.

[215] Dunn's rhetorical analysis leads him to place the structural break at 6.1, separating the *refutatio* of the first unit (which counters "the Jewish argument that God had only made a promise and entered a covenant with one people through Moses") from the *confirmatio* of the second unit (which contains "the positive arguments in support of his case.") Dunn, *Tertullian*, 65–66.

[216] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud*. 1.3 (Dunn, 69). While Ferguson is technically correct that the term "covenant" is "not prominent" in Tertullian's discussion of the stages of law-giving, the concept is clearly present here and elsewhere (and, as discussed below, the term itself does appear in his discussion of the new covenant of Jer 31:31–32). Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 189.

[217] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud*. 1.4 (Dunn, 69). Duncan fails to account adequately for the idea of covenantal progress that is present in such passages when he concludes that Tertullian, "unlike Irenaeus, does not speak of progressive covenantal stages within the old covenant framework." Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 203.

honour in relation to the law," Tertullian merely follows the Pauline ordering of the divine economy, as manifest "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16), and gives due recognition to the chronological priority of Israel.[218]

Tertullian's account of the successive iterations of the law, which immediately follows, further illustrates that his concern is not to excise the people of Israel from the divine economy, but to clarify their important role within it, and to demonstrate the justice of God in revealing himself to all peoples at various points in history.[219]

According to his scheme, God has given his law in four discrete manifestations. First, it came to Adam in paradise, already containing within itself "all the hidden commands that afterward came forth" in later iterations.[220] These consist primarily in the double love command, though the commandments of the decalogue are also implied.[221] This "general and original law" carried the prerogative of further additions.[222] Thus, following Adam's failure to keep it, a second, "natural law" governed the patriarchs (Abraham, Noah, Melchizedek), on the basis of which the Scriptures could declare them "righteous."[223] Third, the law was "given to Moses" and "given to the Jews" at Sinai.[224] Fourth, the law was "reformed" and "improved" for a final time in being

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[218] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud*. 1.5 (Dunn, 69). Dunn's characteristic suggestion that Tertullian is a clear-cut supersessionist (except when, for rhetorical reasons, he is not) is largely an argument from silence (for example, in pointing to Tertullian's failure to quote the seemingly pro-Israel texts of Romans 11). Dunn, "Tertullian, Paul, and Nation of Israel," 97. Responding to Dunn, Barclay goes further in suggesting that Tertullian's use of the Jacob and Esau types reveals a complete misunderstanding of Paul's doctrine of elective grace in Rom 9–11. John M. G. Barclay, "A Response to Geoffrey D. Dunn," in Still and Wilhite, 98–103.

[219] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.1–2.

[220] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.2 (Dunn, 70).

[221] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.3.

[222] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.6 (Dunn, 71).

[223] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.7 (Dunn, 71).

[224] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.8 (Dunn, 71).

given to the Gentiles, "as had been promised through the prophets."[225] In each of these manifestations, one and the same law was given, yet with appropriate adjustments "according to the conditions of the time."[226] Notably, supersessionist references to subjection, displacement, and Jewish hard-heartedness do not feature within this summary.[227] Tertullian's purpose is simply to build a scriptural argument, to a rhetorical Jewish audience, that righteousness was available prior to, and apart from, the manifestation of the law given to Israel through Moses.[228]

What makes the final manifestation of the law (the "new law" given to the Gentiles) superior, for Tertullian, to previous iterations is not the character of the people group who receive it, but the content of what is given (circumcision of the heart, rather than circumcision of the flesh).[229] Here, the specific language of covenant (*testamentum*) enters the discussion in Tertullian's citation of Jeremiah 31:31–32 and its anticipation of a "new covenant." This paradigmatic text, interpreted in conjunction with prophecies of a future incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God (Isa 2:2–3) and a law going forth from Zion (Isa 2:3–4), demonstrates the progressive nature of Tertullian's schema, in that an earlier iteration of the divine revelation anticipates its successor.[230] Such

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[225] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.9 (Dunn, 71).

[226] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.9 (Dunn, 71). See Hermann Tränkle, ed. and trans., introduction to *Q. S. F. Tertulliani Adversus Iudaeos: Mit Einleitung und Kritischen Kommentar* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Steiner, 1964), xxiv. As Daniélou also summarizes, "Tertullian bases his answer on a theology of salvation-history which he defines in *Adv. Jud.* II.8 . . . 'He gave the same law to all nations and ordered that it should be observed at certain stated times.' There is, in other words, only one divine law, Tertullian argues, but it is unfolded according to the *statuta tempora*." Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, 264–65.

[227] Even the Mosaic law itself is not repudiated as such. Rather, Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud*. 2.9 (Dunn, 71), explains that "now we do not pay attention to the law of Moses *in such a way as though it were the first law*, but as a subsequent one" (emphasis added). The following section (2.10) objects to circumcision "as a means of salvation" and denies that the sabbath observance should be enforced by "the threat of death," but does not reject these practices *in toto*.

[228] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 2.10–3.3.

[229] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.7.

[230] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.10.

progress includes a moral improvement: where the *lex talionis* of the Mosaic system permitted vengeance, for example, the new covenant is characterized by "clemency" and "peaceful obedience."[231] Finally, the accompanying signs of the older law are terminated, due to the arrival of the greater realities which they signified: "circumcision of the spirit," the "eternal sabbath," and the "spiritual sacrifices" of the new covenant.[232] As he states,

> It is clear that both a temporal sabbath has been shown and an eternal sabbath has been foretold. A circumcision of the flesh has been foretold and a circumcision of the spirit foretold beforehand. A temporal law and an eternal law have been announced. Carnal sacrifices and spiritual sacrifices have been foreshown. Therefore, because of this, it follows that, in the preceding time, when all those commands of yours had been given carnally to the people of Israel, a time would come in which the commands of the ancient law and of the old ceremonies would cease, and the promise of a new law, the acceptance of spiritual sacrifices, and the offer of a new covenant would come.[233]

Having established that a new covenant is prophesied by the old covenant itself, Tertullian turns, in the second major unit, to demonstrating Christ's identity as the promised messiah who would inaugurate it:[234]

> And indeed, I need to ask first whether a proposer of the new law, an heir to the new covenant, a priest of the new sacrifices, a purifier of the new circumcision, and an establisher of the eternal sabbath is now expected. This is the one who suppresses the old law, sets up the new covenant, offers the new sacrifices, represses the ancient ceremonies, suppresses the old circumcision together with its sabbath and announces the new kingdom, which will not decay.[235]

In this description of the messiah as the one who "sets up" the new covenant and serves as its "heir," the christological nature of Tertullian's covenant concept becomes evident. He analyzes the seventy weeks of Daniel to demonstrate,

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[231] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.10–3.11 (Dunn, 74).

[232] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.11 (Dunn, 74); *Iud.* 4.5 (Dunn, 75); *Iud.* 5.1 (Dunn, 76), respectively. As Ferguson observes, Tertullian "proposed a figurative interpretation whereby the law signified spiritual truths by material ordinances." Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 190.

[233] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 6.1.

[234] As Osborn summarizes, "To Jews, therefore, Tertullian's answer is direct. There is only one question: whether Christ, announced by the prophets as the object of universal faith, has, or has not, come (*Jud*. 7.1)." Osborn, *Tertullian*, 18.

[235] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 6.2 (Dunn, 78).

chronologically, that this messiah has come in Christ, with the result that "we may believe without a doubt also that the new law has been given by him and we may not deny the new covenant drawn up for us in and through him."[236]

A collection of other proof-from-prophecy *testimonia* follows this section, overlapping substantially with *Against Marcion* 3.90.[237] Here Tertullian interprets the Davidic "sword" of Psalm 45:4 to signify "the divine word of God, twice sharpened from the two testaments [*testamentis*] of the ancient law and the new law."[238] Christ now wields this sword in the form of "the new law of grace," and his followers are "circumcised with a flint knife—that is, the precepts of Christ."[239] Through this spiritual circumcision, the Gentiles have been incorporated into the people of God by a new covenant, in fulfillment—as also argued by Justin—of Isaiah 42:6 ("I have given you for a covenant of the human race, for a light to the foreigners to open the eyes of the blind").[240] Though Tertullian laments that, in the meantime, the Jews suffer the consequences of their rejection of this messiah of the new covenant, according to "the course of events and the order of the times,"[241] his purpose is not to condemn their unbelief, but to persuade them that "he is such a one as was announced."[242]

Conclusion

As with Barnabas and Justin, the new covenant concept as initially developed by Tertullian in *Against the Jews* has significant implications for Christian identity

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[236] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 7.1 (Dunn, 78–79).

[237] The covenantal arguments of *Marc.* will be discussed in detail in chap. 6.

[238] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 9.18 (Dunn, 87).

[239] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 9.22 (Dunn, 88).

[240] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 12.2 (Dunn, 96).

[241] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 13.28 (Dunn, 101).

[242] Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 14.11 (Dunn, 104).

formation in the areas of belief, ritual, and practice. It represents the final stage in a theological metanarrative (the progressive sequence of revelations of the one divine law), fulfilling earlier stages of that revelation and the associated prophecies and expanding the scope of the redemptive economy to incorporate Gentiles into the people of God. It also signifies the arrival of the spiritual realities foreshadowed by the rituals of the Mosaic law (circumcision of the heart, an eternal sabbath, and spiritual sacrifices). Finally, it establishes a new ethic of grace, superior to (though consistent with) earlier iterations of the moral law. All three dimensions of this covenant identity are centered around the messianic person and activity of Christ, who inaugurates it and mediates its blessings.

Conclusion

In surveying the three second-century texts that most directly address the covenant concept in rhetorical contexts that engage Jewish thought—the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and Tertullian's *Against the Jews*—this chapter has argued for gradual development in Christian writers' reception, christological adaptation, and argumentative application of the covenant theme. Rather conservatively, the author of Barnabas receives (but christologically transposes) the covenantal structure and logic of the Pentateuch (particularly Deuteronomy) to portray Christians as a covenant people, characterized by their own theological story (the christological narrative), ritual marker (baptism) and ethical disposition (the new law of Christ, with its attendant blessings and curses). By mid-century, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* reflects considerable advancement in complexity for the covenant motif, as indicated by his identification formula personifying the new covenant as Christ himself. This greater sophistication had become necessary because of ongoing interaction with Jews who questioned Christians' failure to maintain the boundary markers of the covenant community (circumcision, sabbath, and the other elements of the ritual law). Finally, by the close of the century, an even more developed covenantal schema appears in the

polemic of Tertullian of Carthage, whose work *Against the Jews* fully integrates the new covenant within the grand scriptural narrative, emphasizing its *continuity* with preceding divine revelation, and the consistency of the progressive iterations of the moral law. Like the earlier writers, Tertullian also points to a superior ethical orientation as a crucial differentiating factor in Christian identity.

CHAPTER 5

COVENANT AND GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE: APOLOGETIC LITERATURE

The previous chapter analyzed a trajectory of development in the Christian use of the covenant concept in the second century in texts that rhetorically address Jewish audiences, or interact with Jewish thought (even if polemically). This was a necessary starting point on account of the receptive nature of the Christian usage—in articulating a covenantal identity, Christian writers did not begin with a blank slate, but employed the scriptural terms, patterns, and logic of the Old Testament (though transposing these, as we have seen, into christological terms). Needless to say, the same approach could not be used effectively to express Christian identity in pagan, or non-Jewish, Greco-Roman contexts, where the scriptural texts from which these concepts were derived had little familiarity, and no recognized authority. An important question, then, is whether or not Christian writers did indeed appeal to the covenant idea in addressing secular audiences—and if so, in what ways did the use differ in content or emphasis from the presentation to Jewish audiences? The answer to this question will not only shed light on the degree to which a covenant identity was truly essential to Christian self-understanding, but also will demonstrate how the versatility of this theological concept allowed it to be adapted to a variety of social contexts and rhetorical purposes. Texts that traditionally have been classified as "apologetic" literature—the Preaching of Peter, the *Apology* of Aristides, the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks*—provide the primary source material here.[1] Together, these

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[1] For a good recent overview of early Christian apologetic literature, see D. H. Williams, *Defending and Defining the Faith: An Introduction to Early Christian Apologetic Literature* (New York:

writings, which span the second century, attest to the steady development of the strategy by which early Christians related the covenantal identity inherited from their Jewish heritage to the Greco-Roman context: by integrating it with the established classical Hellenistic concepts of logos and *nomos*. By connecting and interpreting these two notions christologically, grounding them in a Christian doctrine of divine revelation, and constructing historical parallels between them, these writers showed how their new way of life and worship—their new covenant identity—shared both continuities and discontinuities with the most venerable intellectual and religious traditions of Greco-Roman culture.[2]

Logos* and *Nomos

Before examining the Christian texts themselves, it will be profitable first to survey the conceptual development, and some representative instances, of the Hellenistic tradition referenced above—the coordination of the concepts of logos and *nomos*—so that their adaptation by Christian writers can be fully appreciated. Hermann Kleinknecht's helpful orientations to the historical usage of both terms in the *TDNT* illustrate the main contours of development (which certainly cannot be treated in full here), and will help to demonstrate why they could serve as fruitful points of contact for the articulation of a Christian covenantal identity to a secular Greco-Roman audience by

Oxford University Press, 2020), 10–12. Williams defines apologetic writings as those which were "elicited by a set of hostile circumstances or accusatory literature produced by pagans that constituted a threat toward the life or activities of the Church," necessitating "more sophisticated definitions of the doctrinal content of nascent Christianity" with the dual intention "to instruct the Christian, and to persuade less devout Christians or non-Christians who were sympathetic to Christian claims."

[2] As Williams notes, "Early Christianity cannot be understood except within the social, political, and ideological dynamics of the world in which its adherents lived. Exactly how and why these adherents began to drawn boundaries between themselves and 'others' may illuminate aspects of Christians' self-identity and their reactions to the social, religious, and political structures they encountered." Williams, *Defending and Defining the Faith*, 67.

the second century AD. [3]

Logos

The more elastic and wide-ranging of the two terms, λόγος emerged, from its archaic roots as a term for collection or gathering, as "symbolic of Greek understanding of the world and existence" by the Hellenistic period.[4] Already the great "connecting principle" between humanity, the world, and the divine in Heraclitus, it could be understood, even then, as the soul's faculty for receiving the "cosmic law."[5] In the writings of Plato, it grounds the philosophical enterprise, with participation of the individual λόγος in the universal (κοινὸς) λόγος becoming "the basic fact in all life in society."[6] With the Stoics, however, as "the ordered and teleologically oriented nature of the world," it assumed a range of meanings that included the unifying principle of life/creation/animation, universal rationality, identification with the divine (either generically or, in the context of popular religion, in specific mythological figures like Zeus), and, most crucially for the present purpose, association or direct equation with νόμος, as the transcendent ordering principle.[7] In late antiquity, λόγος acquired an even wider range of associations, including a trend toward personification—for example, as a divine emanation (Neoplatonism), the individual religious initiate (the mystery cults), a pagan god (Hermeticism), or an intermediary "god of the second rank (Hellenistic Judaism, as represented by Philo).[8] Such developments did not necessarily undermine the

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[3] Though somewhat dated, these essays still provide useful chronological summaries of the major developments, accompanied by abundant citations from the relevant primary source material. The overviews below follow them closely, but more recent and extended studies are also referenced as needed.

[4] Hermann Kleinknecht, "The Logos in the Greek and Hellenistic World," *TDNT*, 4:77.

[5] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 81, with citations of Heraclitus, frs. 1–2; 115.

[6] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 83, with citations of Plato, *Soph*. 259–64.

[7] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 84–85. See the collected references to Zeno, Chrysippus, Cleanthes, Marcus Aurelius, and Plutarch, among others.

[8] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 85–90.

associations already established, however—they could even reinforce them, as the case of Philo illustrates, when he portrays the λόγος as an active creative power which "guides the world in exactly the same way as the Stoic νόμος or λόγος φύσεως."[9]

From the pre-Socratic period to the Hellenistic era, then, Greek literature attests to an understanding of λόγος that—though far too expansive and multifaceted to describe comprehensively here—possessed a "profoundly rational and intellectual character," describing the overarching principle by which human beings seek to orient themselves properly to reality, in relation to the divine, the natural world, and other people.[10] In this way it could be closely linked conceptually with νόμος, understood as divine, natural, juridical, or some other form of law.

Nomos

In approaching this pairing from the other side, Kleinknecht's essay on the use of νόμος provides an equally useful point of departure.[11] The most important characteristic to note is the term's essentially and consistently religious character:

> As the epitome of what is valid in social dealings νόμος in its unwritten form is first rooted in religion . . . [it] constantly maintained its relation to the cultus and to the worship of the gods . . . . Even the written law of the νόμος is still an expression of the will of the deity which holds sway in the city . . . . This rootage in the divine sphere, which always persists, gives to the Greek νόμος concept its characteristic significance and true strength.[12]

Denoting, etymologically, what is proper, fitting, or accepted as normal, it acquired a religious sense from the outset in being applied to the decrees of the gods (Zeus) or the ancient lawgivers (Solon).[13] Heraclitus, as we have seen, described it as the "divine

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[9] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 89, with citations of Philo of Alexandria, *Opif.* 20; *Cher.* 36.

[10] Kleinknecht, "The Logos," 90.

[11] Hermann Kleinknecht, "Νόμος in the Greek and Hellenistic World," *TDNT*, 4:1023–35; for a recent and dedicated treatment of usage through the classical period, see Thanos Zartaloudis, *The Birth of Nomos*, Encounters in Law & Philosophy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

[12] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1025.

[13] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1026.

[θεός]" principle which orders both the *cosmos* (universal) and the individual *polis* (particular), and portrayed it—like the λόγος—as being "common [ξυνός]" to all people.[14] While increased knowledge of the particular laws and customs of other nations, as compiled in the histories of Herodotus and others, threatened to undermine the notion of a transcendent or universal νόμος, the philosophers combatted this tendency by maintaining its importance, either as the authority for the *polis* demanding absolute obedience (Socrates), or as a manifestation of "the mode of being and mode of operation of the gods"—including appropriate human ways of knowing and worshiping them (Plato).[15] Submission to νόμος could thus be identified as "righteousness" itself, the culmination of all the virtues.[16] Like λόγος, νόμος, could be personified, as in the Laws of Athens appearing to the imprisoned Socrates, the righteous philosopher-kings of the utopia envisioned by Plato, and Aristotle's divine (ὥσπερ θεὸς) man of ἀρετή, who embodies the law and manifests it others.[17] These developments set the stage, in the Hellenistic era, not only for association of the emperor, or divine king, with the embodiment of the universal law, but also—within Stoic thought, in particular—the reassertion of νόμος as a transcendent concept uniting all humanity, societies, and gods as both rational principle and moral guide. As Kleinknecht summarizes,

> In Stoicism, which regards law as a basic concept, the historically developed πολιτικὸς νόμος of the class. period is replaced by the cosmic and universal law . . . The individual of the Hell. world can now seek and find the one true and divine νόμος only in the cosmos . . . . Here there reigns a single law which, being the foundation of all society, binds even men and gods together. As general and supreme reason, this permeates all nature and determines the moral conduct of men. The spiritually determined order of the world is identical with the concept of law. Law again finds its ultimate basis in the religious sphere, whether νόμος be directly

[14] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1026, with citations of Heraclitus, Frs. 2; 44; 113–114.

[15] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1028–29, with citations of Herodotus, *Hist*. 3,38; Plato, *Crito*, 50a; Leg. X,890b, 892a; XIII, 966c.

[16] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1030, with citations of Aristotle, *Eth. Nic*. 5,1, p. 1129, 33ff.; 5,4, p. 1130a, 18ff; 10,10, p. 1180a, 17ff, among other references.

[17] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1029–32, with citations from Plato, *Crito* 50a ff.; *Pol*. 294a/b; Aristotle, *Pol*. 3,13, p. 1284a, 3ff, 10ff.; *Eth. Nic*. IV,14, p. 1128a, 32.

> equated with θεός or deity equated with the unmoved but all-moving law of the cosmos. Adjustment is made to popular religion by giving the name of Zeus to this cosmic νόμος . . . . In the strength of the indwelling νοῦς or λόγος man must decide for νόμος and a life commensurate with it.[18]

Like λόγος, then, νόμος underwent significant evolution and modification between the classical and Hellenistic periods, but the religious understanding as universal or cosmic norm, manifest in the laws of particular people groups, or even personified in royal or divine figures, persisted throughout.

Kleinknecht's essays helpfully demonstrate the interrelationship between λόγος and νόμος, not only in their conceptual overlap, as notions that unite the cosmos (ordering relationships between humanity, the world, and the divine), but also in the explicit coordination of these terms in some of the writings surveyed above, which either pair them contextually or describe them in similar or identical terms. Thus, within the second-century Greco-Roman cultural setting that forms the backdrop for early Christian apologies, they had become intellectual staples, exceedingly versatile for grand depictions of reality among a wide range of religious and philosophical communities.

Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*

The most focused research on the relationship between these two concepts in relation to early Christian writers is that of Carl Andresen, whose study of the pairing in the second-century anti-Christian polemicist Celsus's *True Word* must further frame the discussion below.[19] Andresen likewise collects the references in pagan writers who coordinate logos and *nomos*—the "most central concepts of both late antique thought and early Christian apologetic"—including Heraclitus, Plato, and the Stoic writers

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[18] Kleinknecht, "Νόμος," 1032–33.

[19] Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*: *Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 30 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1955).

Chrysippus and Cleanthes.[20] Though he acknowledges that the specific connotations can vary widely, Andresen's purpose is simply to illustrate the well-established tradition of invoking them together in Hellenistic philosophical and poetic literature.[21]

For Celsus, Andresen notes, logos could be deployed in diverse ways, including the mundane, but when used in the technical sense, it exhibits a Stoic (cosmological), rather than Platonic (dialogical) character, which may be summed up as "finding truth based on the critical principle of *logos*-reason."[22] Significantly, Andresen suggests that Celsus uses logos to encompass the most ancient and venerable intellectual traditions of the past, which the wisest people groups labored to cultivate and preserve—in this sense, "it is *logos* and *nomos* simultaneously."[23] This is to say that it consists ultimately of the true knowledge of divine things, including both philosophical and religious truths, and, accordingly, piety, and the moral standards denoted by *nomos*.[24] In his polemic, Celsus accuses Christians of the "deprivation" (Depravation) and "dissolution" (*Auflösung*) of these twin aspects: Christians inhabit a "world without *logos*," as irrational and unintelligent, and a "world without *nomos*," as irreligious and unethical.[25] Like Kleinknecht, Andresen notes the origin of *nomos* in the "sacral

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[20] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 189. "Die zentralen Begriffe sowohl des spätantiken Denkens als auch der altchristlichen Apologetik . . . Logos und Nomos" (308). He also notes similar pairings in Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch, Albinus, Maximus of Tyre, and Plotinus.

[21] Andresen notes that *nomos*, for example, may refer variously to the divine law of the *polis* (Heraclitus), the immanent cosmic principle (Chrysippus), the divine law/Zeus (Cleanthes), or individual reason (Marcus Aurelius), while the range of possible meanings of logos is even broader. Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 189.

[22] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 108–11. "Auf dem kritischen Prinzip des Vernunftlogos beruhende Wahrheitsfindung."

[23] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 118–31. "Er ist Logos und Nomos zugleich."

[24] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 131–45; 189–200.

[25] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 146–73; 209–37; or as Eric Osborn explains, "Celsus simply reverses the Christian argument, which had, since Paul, made the story of man's salvation an upward climb, from good to better and to best. Celsus starts from an original word of truth and the conviction that things will get worse rather than better. Christianity stands then, not at the peak, but at the bottom of the darkest descent of all." Eric Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 198.

realm"—an overtone Celsus preserves, even in arguing that each people group has modified (actually, distorted) the cosmic or universal law in particular ways.[26] In an important paragraph, Andresen concludes that in the intellectual tradition represented by Celsus, these two interrelated concepts share the same "basic structure":

> So ist der Nomosbegriff des Alethes Logos ebenso wie sein Logosbegriff dadurch ausgezeichnet, daß er in erster Linie ein Geschichtsbegriff ist. Er zeigt die gleiche Grundstruktur wie dieser. Wie der Logos als Prinzip der Geistesgeschichte in namentlich genannten Vertretern nachgewiesen wird, so stutzt sich auch der Nomos als Prinzip der Religionsgeschichte auf namentlich aufgeführte Garanten seiner Tradition. . . . Wie die ‚alten Männer' zugleich auch die ‚weisen Männer' sind, so werde auch die ‚ältesten Völker' gleichzeitig als ‚die weisesten' bewertet. . . . Wie die Träger des Geschichtslogos als ‚gotterfüllte Männer' bezeichnet werden, so können auch die Vertreter des kelsianischen Geschichtsnomos als die ‚gotterfüllte Völker' angesprochen werden. Auch aus ihnen spricht das göttliche Pneuma…Es ist diese Strukturverwandtschaft, die uns Logos und Nomos bei Kelsos als Ausdruck ein- und derselben Konzeption, nämlich seiner Geschichtsidee, verstehen laßt.[27]

Andresen's description of Celsus's use of these concepts is particularly relevant for this study because of what he posits as its direct historical catalyst in the second century: the apologetic activity of Justin Martyr. After making the case that Celsus did not derive his historically-oriented synthesis of these notions from his Middle Platonic background (despite his other affinities with it), Andresen proposes that it was the encounter with Christianity—specifically, its well-developed theology of history—that forced his hand.[28] In Andresen's opinion, Celsus's *True Word* is a direct response to Justin's *Apologies* (composed some two decades earlier), which themselves uniquely modify the traditional logos and *nomos* themes according to a Christian scheme of

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[26] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 193–94. "Für sein Wortverständnis muss man auf die sehr alte Vorstellung zurückgreifen, nach der der Nomos einen mythenhaften 'Gesetzgeber' (νομοθέτης) zum Urheber hat; sie kommt ursprünglich aus dem sakralen Bereich, indem die Götter selbst als die Gesetzgeber gedacht werden."

[27] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 208.

[28] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 239–308. "Wie ist der erste Christengegner dazu gekommen, seine Polemik wider das Christentum nicht einfach von seinem Platonismus aus, sondern auf Grund einer komplizierten, um die Begriffe Logos und Nomos konzentrierten Geschichtstheorie durchzuführen? Die Antwort muß lauten: Wenn sich in seinem philosophischen ‚System' keine Anhaltspunkte zeigen, die ihn zwangsläufig auf die Geschichte führen mußten, dann kann ihm der Anstoß dazu nur von außen her gegeben worden sein" (39).

salvation history and doctrine of divine revelation—both conceived christologically.[29] As logos, Christ structures human history as the agent of creation, manifests the divine presence in the incarnation to enact salvation, and returns in glory to enact the eschatological new creation. As *nomos*, he is the eternal law and new covenant, going forth from Jerusalem through the preaching of the apostles as the one who commands, embodies, and empowers a divine moral standard of "universal validity," transcending and overpowering the individual local *nomoi* established and preserved by demonic forces.[30] In all of this, Andresen argues, logos and *nomos* merge into "christological synonyms," such that "Christus der Logos ist auch der neue Nomos der Kirche," and "der Nomos des Christentums ist die permanente Inkarnation des Logos in Geschichte."[31] It is against this particular claim of Justin—that Jesus Christ is the true fulfillment of the classical motifs of logos and *nomos*, and that Greek thought is a false imitation—that Celsus responds, in his *True Word*, with the counterclaim that the Christians themselves have distorted these notions from their true and original forms.[32]

Whether or not Andresen is correct that Celsus directly addresses Justin—which has not been universally accepted[33]—the point of summarizing his argument above has been to demonstrate that (1) the concepts of logos and *nomos* were essential and longstanding currents of the Greco-Roman intellectual milieu, and (2) even by the time of Justin Martyr's works in the middle of the century, writers in the Christian apologetic

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[29] "Als Zentralbegriffe griechischen Denkens bieten Logos und Nomos einem Apologeten, der das Christentum als die wahre Philosophie ausweisen will, die besten Anknüpfungspunkte. Sie sind allerdings durch sein geschichtstheologisches Denken umgeformt worden. Uberall, wo Christus, der Logos und Nomos, als Mittler göttlicher Offenbarung genannt wird, geschieht es im Sinne eines geschichtlichen Verständnisses der Offenbarung." Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 312.

[30] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 312–44.

[31] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 328, 333.

[32] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 356–57.

[33] See the critique of Gary T. Burke, "Celsus and Justin: Carl Andresen Revisited," *ZNW* 76, nos. 1–2 (1985): 107–16.

tradition had identified and utilized them as versatile points of contact for the proclamation of the Christian gospel and the articulation of an emerging Christian identity. As Andresen comments, "schon die ältere apologetische Tradition hat Christus als Nomos und Logos bezeichnet," and it is evident that Justin knows this tradition on the basis of his christological interpretation of Isaiah 2:3 ("Out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem")—a text that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is a *locus classicus* for early Christian teaching on the mission to the Gentiles.[34]

The remainder of this chapter will trace the development of this apologetic tradition over the course of the second century, with focus on its connection and integration with the covenant idea. It will be seen that logos and *nomos* proved to be valuable resources for expressing the idea of a particular people formed by "covenant"—a scriptural term with no immediate resonance in the Greco-Roman context—that incorporated both Jewish and Gentile members into a unified new community. Thus, the christological reinterpretation of logos and *nomos* enabled the covenant concept to function as an essential component of early Christian identity *beyond* the circles directly informed or influenced by Judaism.

The Preaching of Peter

A crucial early illustration of this approach is the late first-[35] or early second-century[36] apocryphal text *Kerygma Petri*, or the Preaching of Peter.[37] Though preserved almost exclusively in fragments quoted by Clement of Alexandria, this writing bears

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[34] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 326. "Daß Justin diese Tradition kennt, geht aus seiner Auslegung hervor, die der Jesajastelle eine Beziehung auf Christus gibt."

[35] Joseph Nicholas Reagan, *The Preaching of Peter: The Beginning of Christian Apologetic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 79–80.

[36] Michael Cambe, ed., *Kerygma Petri*: *Textus et Commentarius*, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 15 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 3.

[37] Though regarded as genuinely Petrine by Clement of Alexandria, the text's apostolic authorship was doubted as early as Origen, who suggests in his *Commentary on John* that it may be "spurious" in the course of dismissing Heracleon's use of it.

witness to the emerging apologetic tradition that developed over the course of the second century and culminated in the formal apologies of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Clement.[38] It provides a very early example of the christological reconfiguration and coordination of the classical philosophical notions of *logos* and *nomos*, and their correlation to the scriptural and theological concept of the new covenant.

Scholarship on the Preaching of Peter

While aspects of this argument have been suggested by previous scholarship on the Preaching of Peter, it has not been stated in full. The first major study and critical edition of the fragments was that of Ernst von Dobschütz.[39] His textual and interpretive work has been supplemented in turn by Erich Klostermann and, chiefly, Michael Cambe.[40] The exact number of extant fragments has been difficult to determine, but scholars have generally agreed on ten that are certain.[41] Opinions have also varied on the text's provenance, but an Alexandrian origin in the late first or early second century is most likely.[42] Though its purpose cannot be fully reconstructed from the extant excerpts, it appears to illustrate the transition from the early missionary preaching of the apostolic

[38] Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 383, dates the text to the late first century. Williams dates it to the first half. Williams, *Defending and Defining the Faith*, 127. The apologetic nature of the work is challenged by Henning Paulsen, "Das Kerygma Petri und die Urchristliche Apologetik," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 88, no. 1 (1977): 1–37, who argues for a primarily internal Christian audience; however, this betrays an overly restrictive assumption of the potential range of audience for apologetic literature.

[39] Ernst von Dobschütz, *Das Kerygma Petri Kritisch Untersucht*, Bd. 11, Heft 1, TUGAL (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1893).

[40] Erich Klostermann, *Reste des Petrusevangeliums, der Petrusapokalypse und der Kerygma Petri*, Kleine Texte für Theologische und Philologische Vorlesungen und Übungen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1933); Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*. In what follows, unless otherwise noted, English translations come from Elliott.

[41] See the helpful overview of Wilhelm Pratscher, "Scripture and Christology in the Preaching of Peter (Kerygma Petri)," in *Studies on the Text of the New Testament: Essays in Honour of Michael W. Holmes*, ed. Daniel Gurtner, Juan Hernandez Jr., and Paul Foster, New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 555–77.

[42] A first-century date is suggested by Reagan, *Preaching of Peter*, but the majority view favoring the early second century is well-summarized by Pratscher, "Scripture and Christology," 564. The Alexandrian location is based on the text's use by Clement, Origen, and Heracleon, and the references to animal worship, which suggest an Egyptian setting.

church to the apologetic writing of the later second century.[43]

The text's use of the covenant motif has been acknowledged on account of its direct quotation of Jeremiah 31, though not usually extensively discussed as an important feature.[44] Even the early work of Dobschütz noticed the text's association of a christological understanding of the covenant with the identity of the Christian people:

> Grunddogma ist die Einheit Gottes des Schöpfers, der wesentlich als der Absolute gedacht ist. Kund geworden ist dies durch den auf Erden erschienenen Logos, Jesus Christus, den Herren. Dadurch ist ein von Heiden und Juden sich gleichmässig unterscheidendes Geschlecht der Christen entstanden, welches in der Erfüllung der von Christo gegebenen, durch die Apostel übermittelten Sittengebote dem von ihm erkannten Gott den einzig wahren Gottesdienst leistet und sich so der endlichen Errettung getröstet, da Gott auf Grund ihrer freiwilligen Umkehr die früher begangenen Sunden als in Unwissenheit geschehen vergiebt. Das Christentum ist eine νέα διαθήκη, was nichts wesentlich anderes bedeutet als *καινός νόμος*; höchster νόμος dabei ist—das ist in seiner Weise ein erhebender urchristlicher Gedanke—die Person des Herren selbst.[45]

Generally, however, scholars have focused on the *logos*/*nomos* pairing and the third race theme separately from the covenant motif. Reagan's pioneering study commented briefly on the connection between the covenant motif and the notion of Christians as "a new, a third race" in fragment 4, but did not suggest any connection with the *logos/nomos* pairing of fragment 1.[46] Malherbe's consideration of the text as a "forerunner" to the later second-century apologies did not engage the covenant theme, though it noted both Jewish and Hellenistic precedents for the *logos*/*nomos* pairing and

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[43] Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Apologetic Theology of the Preaching of Peter," *Restoration Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1970): 205–23; Williams, *Defending and Defining the Faith*, 127.

[44] Jean-Claude Fredouille, for example, lists "the new covenant" among the essential Christian teachings that the text discusses in his "constructive" grouping of the fragments, along with christological monotheism, Scripture, and the missionary vocation, but does not further discuss its significance. Jean-Claude Fredouille, "Le Kerygma Petrou dans le Contexte Apologétique du IIe Siècle," in *Quaerite Faciem Eius Semper: Studien au den Geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen Zwischen Antike und Christentum; Dankesgabe für Albrecht Dihle zum 85. Geburtstag aus dem Heidelberger "Kirchenväterkolloquium,"* ed. Andrea Jördens and Albrecht Dihle, Schriftenreihe Studien zur Kirchengeschichte 8 (Hamburg: Kovač, 2008), 56–57.

[45] Dobschütz, *Kergyma Petri*, 65; see also Fredouille, "Le Kerygma Petrou," 64, who concludes that "il n'y aurait donc pas d'objection majeure, semble-t-il, à identifier l'apocryphe Kerygma Petrou comme apologie...les apologies du IIe siècle permettent, par effet rétroactif, d'en dégager la fonction apologétique."

[46] Reagan, *Preaching of Peter*, 30.

the text's unique tripartite division of humanity.[47]

It was not until the comprehensive work of Cambe that the importance of this connection was more fully observed, as part of his hypothesis that the worship of God, understood as a distinct "way of life," is the text's primary concern (reflected in what he views as the cohesive literary unit of fragments 2–5, where the quotation of the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31 appears).[48] Indeed, Cambe paved the way for a more complete understanding of the integration between the notion of a distinct Christian mode of worship (viewed as the fulfillment of the new covenant prophecy) and the logos/*nomos* formula by recognizing the importance of the use of the Isaiah 2:3 testimony tradition ("For a law shall go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem") in fragment 1, as cited by Clement in the *Prophetic Eclogues*—a textual tradition that resurfaces in Justin, Irenaeus, Melito, and Tertullian (among others).[49] As I have already demonstrated, second-century authors regularly used this text to develop intertextual scriptural networks that christologically united prophecies concerning law, divine Word, and the new covenant.

Michael Wolter likewise emphasizes "manner of worship" as the central concern of the Preaching, noting that it appeals to the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31 to legitimize the novelty of the Christian mode.[50] Meanwhile, Wilhelm

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[47] Malherbe, "Apologetic Theology," 208, 214, 220–21.

[48] Cambe also quotes the earlier judgment of Goppelt, that, for the author of the text, "La promesse de la Nouvelle Alliance est interprétée comme le remplacement du culte grec et juif par le cult chrétien." Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 69. Alternatively, Fredouille divides the fragments into two major "thematic" groups, a positive (or constructive) set of teachings, consisting of fragments 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, and a negative (or refutational) set of polemical arguments, consisting of fragments 3–4, and places these fragments in the former grouping. Fredouille, "Le Kerygma Petrou," 56–57.

[49] Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 292–99. "Ainsi donc, de Justin à Clement d'Alexandrie, toute une série de théologiens chrétiens se réclament du *testimonium* messianique d'Ès 2, 3. Dans la perspective qui est celle de la présente recherche, on peut passer sûrs les relations littéraires éventuelles entre ses différents textes. Nous nous contentons de constater que chaque reprise du *testimonium* a contribué à édifier une tradition interpretative."

[50] Michael Wolter, "'Ein neues "Geschlecht"'? Das Frühe Christentum auf der Suche nach Seiner Identität," in *Ein Neues Geschlecht? Entwicklung des Frühchristlichen Selbstbewusstseins*, ed. Markus Lang and Wilhelm Pratscher, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, Studien zur Umwelt des

Pratscher notices the "intrinsic unity" of the fragments' theological contents, in which Christian identity is a key theme.[51] Though he does not describe this emerging identity in covenantal terms, Pratscher helpfully highlights the christological context for the whole text that is provided by fragments 9–10, with the proto-creedal affirmations of death, resurrection, and ascension.[52]

Covenant, *Logos*, and *Nomos* in the Preaching of Peter

The fragments most relevant for this study are fragments 1, 3, 4, and 9 (quoted below as introduced by Clement of Alexandria):[53]

> (1) And in the Preaching of Peter, you may find the Lord called "Law [λόγος] and Word [νόμος]."[54]
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> (2) Then he goes on, "This God you must worship, not after the manner of the Greeks . . . showing that we and the notable Greeks worship the same God, though not according to perfect knowledge for they had not learned the tradition of the Son. Do not," he says, "worship"—he does not say "the God whom the Greeks worship," but "not in the manner of the Greeks": he would change the method of worship, not proclaim another God.
>
> "Neither worship him as the Jews do for they, who suppose that they alone know God, do not know him, serving angels and archangels, the month and the moon: and if no moon be seen, they do not celebrate what is called the first sabbath, nor keep the new moon, nor the days of unleavened bread, nor the feast of tabernacles, not the great day (of atonement)."

Neuen Testaments 105 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 283–85. As Wolter concludes, "In . . . der *Petruspredigt*, wird die neue Art und Weise der christlichen Gottesverehrung nicht nur von der in Jer 31,31–32 ausgesprochenen Verheißung des neuen Bundes her legitimiert, sondern auch ausdrücklich und in Veränderung des Jeremia-Textes vom Horeb-Bund abgegrenzt. Und wenn die Horeb-Generation Israels dann auch noch 'eure Väter' genannt wird, so können wir daran erkennen, dass auch das christliche Identitätsmanagement, das die *Petruspredigt* betreibt, noch ein Bestandteil des christlich-jüdischen Trennungsprozesses ist" (294).

[51] Pratscher, "Scripture and Christology," 560.

[52] Pratscher, "Scripture and Christology," 577.

[53] The numbering employed here is that of Cambe's edition, which follows the system of Dobschütz in numbering the fragments according to the order of their appearance in Clement's *Strom.* For a full discussion, see Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 9–11.

[54] KP, fr. 1a (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.29.182.3). This quotation appears a second time (fr. 1b) in *Strom.* 2.15.68.2, and Clement also cites it (fr. 1c) in his *Prophetic Eclogues* 58. English translations are taken from Elliott, 20–24.

> Then he adds the finale of what is required: "So then learn in a holy and righteous manner that which we deliver to you, observe, worshipping God through Christ in a new way. For we have found in the Scriptures, how the Lord said, 'Behold, I make with you a new covenant, not as the covenant with your fathers in mount Horeb.' He has made a new one with us: for the ways of the Greeks and Jews are old, but we are Christians who worship him in a new way as a third generation."[55]
>
> (3) Peter in the *Preaching*, speaking of the apostles, says, "But, having opened the books of the prophets which we had, we found, sometimes expressed by parables, sometimes by riddles, and sometimes directly and in so many words the name Jesus Christ, both his coming and his death and the cross and all the other torments which the Jews inflicted on him, and his resurrection and assumption into the heavens before Jerusalem was founded, all these things that had been written, what he must suffer and what shall be after him. When, therefore, we gained knowledge of these things, we believed in God through that which had been written of him."[56]

While it is impossible to determine the positioning and significance of these fragments within the original work, several observations can be made about their content.[57] Fragment 1a introduces the key conjunction of Law (νόμος) and Word (λόγος), directly applying them as christological titles. Fragments 3a and 4a establish "manner" of worship as the most fundamental distinguishing feature of a people group, differentiating the Greek (pagan) and Jewish forms of idolatry from the "holy and righteous" worship of Christians, which is both christological ("worshipping God through Christ"), and covenantal (fulfilling the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31). The author positions Christians between (or beyond) these two traditional people groups as a "third generation," transcending these antiquated "ways" and offering their own true worship "in a new way." Finally, fragment 9 elaborates the historical basis for the Christian community, by summarizing the christological narrative in proto-creedal form (referring to Christ's coming, death, burial, resurrection, and assumption as the "things that had been written" in Scripture, through which Christians "gained knowledge" and "believed" them). Collectively, then, these fragments attest to a Christian self-understanding as a

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[55] KP, fr. 3a, 4a (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.5.39.4–40.2; 6.5.41.2–3).

[56] KP, fr. 9 (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.15.128.1–2).

[57] Cambe does not believe it possible to retrieve the text's structure and declines to offer a suggestion of his own. Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 2.

new covenant community (distinct from the recognized social categories of Greeks and Jews), centered around the worship of God through Christ (who is the fulfillment of both the classical/philosophical titles of "Law" and "Word" and the scriptural messianic patterns of life, death, and resurrection.[58] The "new way" of worship which Christians represent is the prophesied "new covenant," forming the basis for a new identity in which both Jews and Gentiles may participate.[59]

Aristides of Athens, *Apology*

Additional aspects—perhaps even direct developments—of these themes appear in the early second-century *Apology* (c. 125) composed by the Christian philosopher Aristides of Athens (dates unknown; fl. ca. 100–200).[60] Indeed, it has been common for scholars to hold that Aristides knew or depended upon the Preaching.[61] At the very least, it is certain that he stands in the same early apologetic tradition, as an important intermediary witness in the trajectory of development from the Preaching to the

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[58] The covenantal dimension is not noted in Cambe's otherwise helpful summary in Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 8: "L'émiettement des fragments du Kérygme n'occulte pas une des lignes de sens fondamentales de l'œuvre: rappeler la tradition de Pierre et des Douze comme annonciateurs du monothéisme christologique et contribuer ainsi à la troisième dénomination cultuelle, celle des chrétiens."

[59] According to KP (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.6.43 and 6.6.58), Christ commissions his followers to evangelize "any of Israel [who] will repent" and also "throughout the world . . . to all reasonable souls."

[60] Nothing approaching a complete biography of Aristides of Athens exists, as information concerning his life and work is scarce, beyond the brief (and now historically-contested) comment in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.3.3 that he addressed his apology to the Emperor Hadrian. Jerome additionally describes him as an Athenian philosopher who became a "disciple of Christ." Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 20. For a concise and recent discussion of the complex history and transmission of the text, as well as a proposed literary structure, see Michael Lattke, "Die Wahrheit der Christen in der Apologie des Aristides: Vorstudie zu einem Kommentar," in *Ein Neues Geschlecht? Entwicklung des Frühchristlichen Selbstbewusstseins*, ed. Markus Lang and Wilhelm Pratscher, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 105 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 215–20.

[61] The "intimate connection between the two documents" was noted as early as the commentary of J. Armitage Robinson in Aristides, J. Rendel Harris, and J. Armitage Robinson, *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians: From a Syriac Ms. Preserved on Mount Sinai* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 90; Reagan asserts that there is "surely no doubt" of literary dependence. Reagan, *Preaching of Peter*, 45.

Apologies of Justin Martyr.[62] This is evident in the major elements that structure his *Apology*, including its apophatic description of God, delineation of humanity into people groups, discussion of the global preaching of Christ, and traditional statements of the christological narrative.[63] In this section, I contend that, despite its lack of explicit use of covenant terminology, the *Apology* gives evidence of an underlying covenantal framework, which unifies and supports its descriptions of a distinct Christian identity for a Greco-Roman rhetorical audience.

Aristides's *Apology* in Recent Scholarship

In recent scholarship on the *Apology*, identity themes have indeed been a point of focus, owing to the text's extensive use of ethnic or racial language to describe Christians. Two leading studies come from Judith Lieu and Denise Kimber Buell.[64]

Though not focusing on the *Apology* exclusively, Lieu includes the text in her project of tracing the use of ethnic or racial terminology in second-century texts to "construct" an identity for Christians as a "God-fearing race."[65] She observes that for Aristides, it is the mode of worship of God that determines membership in a particular γένος, with the result that "Christians are a 'new race' and more blessed than all other people."[66] Lieu enlists the text to support her broader argument that Christians constructed a notion of themselves as a "God-fearing" people in their apologetic defenses

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[62] For a discussion and survey of opinions regarding the interrelationships between the Preaching of Peter, *Apol.* of Aristides, *Diog.*, and Justin Martyr, see Henry G. Meecham, trans., *The Epistle to Diognetus: The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Theological Series 7 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), 58–62.

[63] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 2, 3, respectively.

[64] As also noted by William C. Rutherford, "Reinscribing the Jews: The Story of Aristides' Apology 2.2–4 and 14.1b–15.2," *HTR* 106, no. 1 (2013): 61–62.

[65] Judith M. Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christian Identity*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 66–85.

[66] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*, 72–73.

against charges of atheism, impiety, and superstition, and as part of a “cluster of terms asserting a rhetoric of identity, of belonging, and of loyalty.”[67]

In a much fuller study, Denise Kimber Buell’s monograph on “ethnic reasoning” in early Christian discourse rejects the oft-made claim that Christians did not conceive of themselves in racial terms, insisting on the contrary that “early Christian texts used culturally available understandings of human difference, which we can analyze in terms of our modern concepts of ‘ethnicity,’ ‘race,’ and ‘religion,’ to shape what we have come to call a religious tradition and to portray particular forms of Christianness as universal and authoritative.”[68] She cites Aristides’s *Apology* as a text that “define[s] Christianness as membership in a people characterized especially by religious practices,” insofar as it “classifies Christians as a *genos* and proclaims their superiority to all other kinds of humans.”[69] Buell notes that the text (particularly in its Syriac recension) employs genealogical language to describe Christians’ descent from Christ, even while defining that “descent” in terms of moral “righteousness” and assent to Christ’s teachings.[70]

These studies contain many useful observations about the relationship between religious practice and identity formation in early Christianity, including the fact that ethnic or racial categories could be used to describe the resulting distinctions. Buell even seems to anticipate the direction pursued by this study when she notices, in a passing comment, the function of the Abrahamic covenant as a basis for both “genealogical” and “religious” relationships.[71] She does not develop this notion at length, however, or apply

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[67] Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?*, 84–85.

[68] Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, Gender, Theory, and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 2.

[69] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 35–36.

[70] Buell, *Why This New Race*, 46.

[71] “The observance of particular religious practices can create or indicate group identity that can also be asserted through genealogical connections to deities. Abraham’s covenant with God and adoption of circumcision creates a relationship that was simultaneously genealogical and religious, a

it to the texts that she discusses. This is what I will seek to do below, in suggesting that the covenant concept provides an effective explanatory framework for describing the relationship between religious belief and practice and the formation of a distinct Christian identity as Aristides develops it in the *Apology*.

Covenant and Identity in Aristides's *Apology*

Toward this end, the most relevant passage is the description, in the Syriac recension, of the "four races of men" in *Apol.* 2—barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians—which, in the Greek recension, are reduced to the three races of Greeks, Jews, and Christians.[72] As William Rutherford notes, this difference is not material for the text's rhetorical purposes, given that in both versions, it is the Christians alone who "provide the paradigm of a human community that manifests in its worship and practice an accurate and authentic knowledge of the divine nature."[73] In this classification, Aristides builds upon the Preaching of Peter's earlier categorizations of the three modes of worship differentiating Greeks, Jews, and Christians (fr. 3a, 4a) which we have already considered, now solidifying them into distinct "races" (γένη).

In describing each human "race," Aristides begins by naming its "head" or founder (e.g., Kronos/Zeus, Abraham, or Jesus Christ).[74] He surveys their beliefs concerning God, which are divided, in an echo of the Two Ways tradition, into the binary

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tradition that early Christians adapted to define themselves." Buell, *Why This New Race*, 43. Unfortunately, Buell does not further explore this connection.

[72] For an erudite discussion of the divergences between these manuscript traditions, as well as an argument for the priority of the Syriac, see Rutherford, "Reinscribing the Jews."

[73] Rutherford, "Reinscribing the Jews," 65. Thus, "These different patterns should not at present distract us. For if we leave aside the status of Jews and Christians, all other 'groups,' however classified, are found to be ignorant of God (chapters 3–13). Since they failed to acknowledge the clear indicators of a single God discoverable through the natural order of things, they came to participate in a social system founded upon many gods. They cannot worship the true God of *Apology* 1 in accordance with truth" (65).

[74] Aristides of Athens, *Apol. 2* (Harris, 35). English translations and Greek fragments are taken from Harris.

categories of "truth" and "error."[75] Whereas the barbarians worship created elements, the Greeks worship deities patterned after human beings, and the Jews (though claiming to worship the one Creator) worship angels through their ritualistic practices, the Christians, by contrast, render worship to the true God, from whom they "have received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds."[76] Through their practice of love and other virtues toward each other, they "live honestly and soberly, as the Lord their God commanded them," and "as those that expect to see their Messiah and receive from Him the promises made to them with great glory."[77] Thus, the Christians alone among the people groups "have found the truth" in their knowledge and worship of God.[78] For this reason Aristides labels them "new," observing, "And truly this people is a new people, and there is something divine mingled with it."[79]

Admittedly, neither the term covenant nor any direct quotations from the primary biblical texts pertaining to the covenants appear in Aristides's *Apology*, so its relevance to the tradition represented by the Preaching of Peter and later second-century texts that treat this concept explicitly may be questioned. However, in light of the *Apology*'s generally-accepted literary connection to the Preaching, a number of its features may be taken to indicate an assumed or underlying covenantal framework.

First, in explaining at the outset that his project is to show which human "races" have found the truth, and which are in error, Aristides echoes the binary framework of the Two Ways tradition, setting out the way of life over against the way of death—which, as we have seen in consideration of Barnabas, is itself deeply rooted in the

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[75] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 3 (Harris, 37).

[76] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 15 (Harris, 48).

[77] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 15–16 (Harris, 48–50).

[78] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 16 (Harris, 50).

[79] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 16 (Harris, 50).

covenantal injunctions and the blessings and curses postulated for the people of God in Deuteronomy and other biblical texts.[80] A resonance of this tradition appears at the conclusion, as Aristides declares, "And truly blessed is the race of the Christians, more than all men that are upon the face of the earth."[81]

Second, Aristides delimits each "race" by describing, in genealogical terms, the relationship between its god (or religious founder) and its members. This involves a brief theological narration, in which the initial "descent" of the people from its god or founder and the commencement of the relationship are explained. In the case of the Jews, there is also mention of Abraham, their patriarch, and an allusion to Moses, "their lawgiver," who was instrumental in establishing Israel as a people. For the Christians, it is the proto-creedal christological summary that, as we have seen elsewhere, often provides the metanarratival basis for Christian self-understanding in second-century texts.[82]

Third, Aristides describes the ethical system that accompanies the mode of worship of each people group, with attention to the laws that result, and the virtues or vices that they promote. The barbarians, in fashioning gods from created elements, "have gone after the desire of their own mind"; the Greeks have established laws that condemn their own immoral deities; the Jews demonstrate proper imitation of God in "the love which they have," but in their commitment to ritual, they render this service to angels instead.[83] Proof that the Christians alone "have found the truth" comes from the fact that they alone harmoniously synthesize a proper conception of God, an appropriate mode of

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[80] "Let us now come to the race of men, in order that we may know which of them hold any part of that truth which we have spoken concerning [God], and which of them are in error therefrom." Aristides of Athens, *Apology* 2 (Harris, 36).

[81] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 17 (Harris, 51).

[82] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 2 (Harris, 36): "The Christians, then, reckon the beginning of their religion from Jesus Christ…This Jesus, then, was born of the tribe of the Hebrews…was pierced by the Jews; and he died and was buried; and…after three days he rose and ascended into heaven."; cf. *Apol.* 9.

[83] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 7 (Harris, 40); *Apol.* 13, 14 (Harris, 48).

worship, and a consistent ethical code of obedience to him, "from whom they have received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds [ἔξουσι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις κεχαραγμένας], which they keep in hope and expectation of the world to come."[84] This last phrase evokes a clear covenantal association, in its allusion to the writing of the law upon the heart, in terms that are conceptually reminiscent, if not precisely verbally reflective, of Jeremiah 31 (the text also cited in the Preaching of Peter). Moreover, Aristides can describe the ethic of love that characterizes the community, in terms suggestive of a covenant, as "the law of the Christians"; it is a set of moral principles or "commandments" which they "observe scrupulously."[85]

Fourth, in his extended survey of the Christian ethic, Aristides portrays Christians as those whose identity as fellow recipients of the Spirit and members of a distinct community of God's people transcends their various other social divisions or classifications: they call each other brethren "without distinction"; they "do not call brothers those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit and in God"; they can be defined simply as those willing to suffer oppression "for the name of their Messiah."[86] They are willing to accept anyone into their ranks—even formerly egregious offenders of their moral code—if these will only confess their sins to God and receive forgiveness.[87]

Fifth, and finally, Aristides presents the Christians as a community united around a shared set of divinely-revealed holy scriptures. Noting that their "sayings" and "ordinances" may be discovered in full detail in "from their writings," Aristides

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[84] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 15 (Harris, 48).

[85] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 15 (Harris, 49).

[86] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 15 (Harris, 49).

[87] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 17.

concludes that there is “something divine mingled” with this new people, as attested “in their writings,” which contain “words which are difficult to speak.”[88] As a result, “truly divine is that which is spoken by the mouth of the Christians., and their teaching is the gateway of light.”[89]

To summarize, the portrait of the Christians that Aristides provides envisions them as a community committed to the way of truth (leading to eschatological blessing) which has been engraved upon their hearts, having been brought into relationship with their God and established as a people through the historical redemptive acts of Jesus Christ. The result is that they know and worship God properly, and enter into relationships of love with one another, which are defined by participation in the Spirit of God and thus transcend pre-existing social divisions. In all of this they are centered around a common Scripture, which imparts divine teaching and inspires them, in turn, to impart it to others.

Cumulatively, these features seem to bear witness to an underlying notion of a covenant identity, as we have seen it described in other texts. Certainly, it is possible that Aristides intentionally avoids explicit covenantal terminology on account of its unfamiliarity to a Greco-Roman audience. Even if these indications are not decisive, however, they still attest, at the very least, to the way that the Preaching of Peter’s notion of Christians as a particular people employing a distinct mode of worship from Greeks and Jews—in a text that *did* explicitly ground this difference in the covenantal terms of Jeremiah 31—further developed into the notion of Christians as a distinct “race” in the *Apology* of Aristides.[90]

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[88] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 16 (Harris, 50).

[89] Aristides of Athens, *Apol.* 17 (Harris, 51).

[90] It would also be possible to trace a number of these themes in *Diog.*, which also likely dates to the middle of the second century. As part of the same apologetic tradition as the Preaching of Peter and *Apol.* of Aristides, this text likewise distinguishes Christians as a “new race” or “way of life” on the basis of their true knowledge of God and worship of him (*Diog.* 1), sets this over against the false worship of

Justin Martyr, *1* and *2 Apologies*

The previous chapter examined Justin Martyr's new covenant concept as elaborated in the *Dialogue with Trypho*; however, it remains to be seen how Justin integrated this covenant idea within his broader theological project—particularly in his apologetic writings, whose primary rhetorical audience is not Jewish. In this section, I will suggest that the Logos doctrine, which features prominently in Justin's *Apologies*, offers intriguing parallels that demonstrate another means of adapting the covenant idea to primarily Greco-Roman rhetorical contexts. It will be seen that these texts represent another significant advance, by the middle of the second century, in the early Christian use of the logos/*nomos* tradition in relation to the covenant concept.

New Covenant and Logos

Like Aristides, Justin does not explicitly treat the covenant concept in either *1 Apology* or *2 Apology*.[91] The junctures where some reference might be expected in *1 Apology*, such as the proofs from prophecy (*1 Apol*. 30–45), discussions of the faithful prior to Christ (*1 Apol.* 46), quotations from Isaiah and Jeremiah (*1 Apol*. 47, 51, 53, and others), and description of the eucharistic formula (*1 Apol*. 66) are all silent with respect to the covenants, while in *2 Apology*, any natural or logical points for inclusion are difficult to identify.

The absence of a theme that features so prominently in the *Dialogue* could be taken to marginalize its importance for Justin's broader theological project. However, the anti-pagan, rather than anti-Jewish, polemical objectives of the *Apologies* can help to

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both pagans and Jews (*Diog.* 2–3), and describes the unique ethical code that results within the Christian community (*Diog.* 5). All of this is facilitated by the Logos (*Diog.* 11–12).

[91] In referring to *1 Apol.* and *2 Apol.*, I am simply using the traditional titles for these texts and their contents, and not taking a particular position on the novel thesis of Dennis Minns and Paul Parvis regarding the stages of their composition as an originally-unified treatise in Justin Martyr, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, ed. Denis Minns and Paul M. Parvis, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). References to the texts follow the traditional numbering.

explain the difference in presentation.[92] Moreover, an analysis of the underlying logic of the Logos concept as developed across the *Apologies* suggests an intriguing structural parallel with the description of the new covenant in the *Dialogue*—which in turn can help to demonstrate the central place of the new covenant concept in Justin's theological argumentation as a whole. Below, after a brief review of the scholarly literature, I sketch the contours of the Logos concept as developed in the *Apologies*. Then, I propose five key correspondences between it and the covenant concept of the *Dialogue*, establishing their relationship and coherence within Justin's thought.

Justin's Logos concept has long been a focus of scholarly interest as a measure of Justin's relation to Hellenism.[93] Its connection with Justin's teaching on the Law (*nomos*) has also received some attention.[94] As we have seen, in his study of the anti-Christian polemicist Celsus, Andresen recognizes the theological connection between the concepts of Logos and *Nomos* in Justin's thought, grounded in his uniquely Christian views of history and revelation.[95] Andresen rightly identifies Justin's reading of Isaiah 2:3 (parallel Mic 4:2) as the scriptural locus of this association:

> Der Nomos des Christentums ist die permanente Inkarnation des Logos in der Geschichte. Damit gewinnt die Ausbreitung des christlichen Nomos unter den Völkern für Justin eine heilsgeschichtliche Bedeutung. Die Prophetie Micha's von der künftigen Heilszeit bezieht sich auf die, 'welche auf der ganzen Erde an den Jesus gläubig geworden sind,' und erfährt schon jetzt ihre Erfüllung.[96]

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[92] Though acknowledging that new Christian converts also may have been within their purview, Mary Sheather effectively summarizes the intended audience of the *Apologies* as "a pagan ethos linked to a dominant political force," even if "the direct or imagined addressees . . . were at this stage highly unlikely to be receptive to the messages contained in these works." Mary Sheather, "The *Apology* of Justin Martyr and the *Legatio* of Athenagoras: Two Responses to the Challenge of Being a Christian in the Second Century," *Scrinium* 14 (2018): 115–32, 120.

[93] For an important critique of the prevalent arguments for its allegedly Stoic or Platonic origins, see M. J. Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *JECS* 3, no. 3 (1995): 261–80.

[94] Already, Goodenough notes the understanding of *nomos* as "a manifestation or aspect of Logos" in Hellenistic Judaism. Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena, Germany: Frommann, 1923), 42.

[95] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 310–11.

[96] Andresen, *Logos und Nomos*, 333.

Following Andresen, Willy Rordorf asserts that in the incarnation, Justin believes, "der alte Nomos sei zum neuen Logos geworden."[97] Edwards, who is less keen to explain Justin's thought in terms of Hellenistic parallels, nevertheless generally agrees with Rordorf's formulation and employs it as the "guiding principle" of his own discussion.[98] Most recently, Daniel Williams suggests that Justin "harnesses" the Logos concept of Middle Platonism for distinctively Christian purposes, "to describe the way the Logos unites divine transcendence with humanity."[99]

Many of these studies refer to the Preaching of Peter as an important precedent in the apologetic tradition known to Justin, which, as we have seen, assimilates *Logos* and *Nomos* as christological titles, exegetically grounds them in the prophecy of Isaiah 2:3/Micah 4:2, and directly relates them to the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–32. Cambe observes that the Preaching's affinity with Justin's *Dialogue* is rendered even more conspicuous by the reference in both texts to "Mount Horeb," which does not appear in any known text of Jeremiah 31.[100] My purpose below is to build upon these insights, by showing more fully how Justin relates these motifs to the new covenant concept of the *Dialogue*.

Justin's Logos doctrine is developed most clearly in *2 Apology*. As stated bluntly there, the Logos "is Christ."[101] As the divine Son, Christ is "the Logos who is with God and is begotten before the creation, when in the beginning God created and set

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[97] Willy Rordorf, "Christus als Logos und Nomos: Das Kerygma Petrou in seinem Verhältnis zu Justin," in *Kerygma und Logos: Beiträge zu den Geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum: Festschrift für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Adolf Martin Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 425.

[98] Edwards, "Justin's Logos," 90–91.

[99] Williams, *Defending and Defining the Faith*, 151.

[100] Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 276, 288. As he notes, "l'affirmation du Seigneur comme loi et logos s'inscrivait par elle-même, de par son libellé, dans une thématique centrale du monde culturel grec."

[101] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol*. 8 (Barnard, 79). English translations come from Barnard.

in order everything through Him."[102] Accordingly, Christians "worship and love the *Logos*," who "also became man for our sakes."[103] The wonder of this incarnation of the *Logos* is that "the whole rational principle became Christ, who appeared for our sake, body, and reason, and soul."[104] The *First Apology* too affirms that the Logos, as divine Son, "is also God,"[105] though he has "taken shape, and become man, and was called Jesus Christ."[106] Moreover, the Logos inspired both the prophets and the philosophers of antiquity.[107] The two *Apologies* present a unified conception of the Logos as divine Word—the rational principle of creation, who orders reality and inspires the ancient sources of wisdom before assuming flesh in the incarnation.[108]

These observations should inform interpretation of a key passage in the proof-from-prophecy section of *1 Apology*, where Justin directly quotes a text that is central to the scriptural network framing the new covenant concept in the *Dialogue*:

> And when the prophetic Spirit speaks as predicting things that are to come to pass, He speaks in this way: 'For from Zion will go forth the law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and He will judge in the midst of the nations and will rebuke much the people' . . . . And that it really happened, we can convince you. For there went out into the world from Jerusalem men, twelve in number, and these were illiterate, not able to speak, but by the power of God they testified to every race of men and women that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the Word of God.[109]

As in the *Dialogue*, Justin cites the prophecy of Isaiah 2:3–4/Micah 4:2–3 as fulfilled in the coming of Christ and the dissemination of the apostolic preaching from the church at

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[102] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 6 (Barnard, 77).

[103] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 13 (Barnard, 84).

[104] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 80).

[105] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 63 (Barnard, 69).

[106] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 5 (Barnard, 26).

[107] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 33 and 46, respectively.

[108] One of the best recent discussions of the relation between the Logos concept and Justin's theology of revelation comes from Craig D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon, and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 175–84.

[109] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 39 (Barnard, 49).

Jerusalem. Here, however, the *Dialogue*'s further elaboration upon the "eternal law" and the Isaianic texts referring to the "everlasting covenant" are lacking. Rather, Justin employs the text as part of his cumulative apologetic argument for the validity of the Christian faith, as reflected in the accurate predictions of its prophets ("And that it really happened, we can convince you").[110] A few paragraphs later, he refers to this text again in commenting on Psalm 110:2 ("The Lord will send forth to you the rod of power from Jerusalem"), which Justin takes as "a prediction of the mighty Word [τοῦ λόγου] which His Apostles, going forth from Jerusalem, proclaimed everywhere."[111]

Parallels between the Logos of the *Apologies* and the new covenant of the *Dialogue* become most apparent, however, through a side-by-side comparison of their characteristics and functions. In both cases, five features can be identified: (1) the Logos that goes forth from Zion represents a divine revelation, (2) attested by the ancients, (3) illuminating its participants, (4) producing morality in them as both subject and object, and yet (5) ultimately rejected by its intended recipients—a rejection which sets the stage for Justin, as apologist, to "turn the tables" on his interlocutors by demonstrating that Jesus Christ fulfills and manifests in his own person the conceptual framework already established within the existing tradition itself (either Judaism or Hellenism).[112] The parallel structures of these conceptual frameworks are depicted below:

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[110] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 39 (Barnard, 39). It is worth noting, however, that Justin does, curiously, use a verbal form of the term *covenant* in an immediately subsequent analogy which compares soldiers' "allegiance" to one another in the face of danger with that of Christians facing persecution.

[111] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 45 (Barnard, 54). The Greek text is taken from the critical edition of Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, Patristische Texte und Studien 38/47 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005).

[112] As Goodenough puts it, "In both cases he represented Christianity as the fullness and completion of what had been only partial before. Christianity was the True Philosophy over against philosophy, and it was the New or Eternal Law over against the Torah. In both cases Christianity was the final revelation of Truth, so that it was the same view of Christianity as the perfect revelation of God which constituted the foundation for Justin's defence against all attacks." Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 117; see also Eric Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, BHT 47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973), 161.

Table 1. Parallels between new covenant (*Dial.*) and logos (*1–2 Apol.*)

Characteristic	New Covenant (*Dial.*)	Logos (*1* and *2 Apol.*)
Attested by the ancients	*Dial.* 11.2–4, 43.1, 51.3, 122.5	*1 Apol.* 21, 23, 46, 59 *2 Apol.* 10
Illuminates participants	*Dial.* 9.1, 11.4, 43.1, 51.3, 118.3, 122.3–5	*1 Apol.* 10 *2 Apol.* 8
Produces morality	*Dial.* 11.4	*1 Apol.* 12, 13, 43, 57
Christ as subject and object	*Dial.* 11.2/12.2–3	2 *Apol.* 8, 13
Rejected by audience	*Dial.* 12.2, 17.1	1 *Apol.* 2, 10, 46, 57 2 *Apol.* 10

Attested by the ancients. The first shared characteristic is that both the new covenant and the Logos are attested by the most ancient sources of authoritative wisdom. In the case of the Jews, these include both the law of Moses and the Prophets:

> Now indeed, for I have read, Trypho, that there should be a definitive law and covenant more binding than all others . . . Have you not read the words of Isaiah: "Hear me, listen to me, my people; and give ear to me, you kings: for a law shall go forth from me, and my judgment shall be a light to the nations."[113]

References to the predictions of the new covenant in the Jews' own scriptural texts establish its antiquity on the grounds of an accepted authority. Through such prophecies, God himself "predicted that he would make a new covenant."[114] Likewise in Justin's other identifications of Christ with the new covenant, it was "proclaimed . . . for the whole world (as the above-quoted prophecies show"); "long promised by God"; and

[113] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2–3 (Falls, 20–21).

[114] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.4 (Falls, 21).

"foretold" by him in many scriptures.[115]

In *1 Apology*, it is the classical Greek poets and philosophers, rather than the biblical prophets, who hold the position of ancient authorities, attesting to the reality and validity of the Logos: "And when we say also that the Word [Logos] . . . Jesus Christ our teacher . . . was crucified and died and rose again and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing new beyond [what you believe] concerning those whom you call sons of Zeus. For you know of how many sons of Zeus your esteemed writers speak."[116] In their myths, Justin continues, the poets constructed tales about divine sons that imitate the truth about the Logos. The wisest pagan philosophers also owed their insights to some measure of participation in him: "He is the Logos of whom every race of men and women were partakers. And they who loved with the Logos are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and people like them."[117] By invoking Socrates and Heraclitus, Justin links Christ, the Logos, with the most ancient and revered fountainheads of Hellenistic philosophic tradition, and suggests their dependence upon him for inspiration. The same tactic reappears in Justin's well-known assertion that Plato derived his most profound teachings from Moses: it was "the Word [Λόγου] through the prophets" from whom Plato borrowed.[118] Finally, in *2 Apology*, Justin spells out most directly that "whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated according to their share of Logos by invention and contemplation," Socrates being the chief example.[119] Thus, where Justin appeals to Moses and the prophets as ancient authorities who anticipated the coming of Christ as the new covenant,

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[115] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 43.1 (Falls, 65); cf. 122.5.

[116] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 21 (Barnard, 37).

[117] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 46 (Barnard, 55).

[118] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 59 (Barnard, 64).

[119] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 80).

he likewise appeals to the classical poets and philosophers as ancient authorities who anticipated the coming of Christ as the Logos.

Illuminates participants. The second characteristic that Justin highlights in both contexts is the capacity of the new covenant/Logos to illuminate participants in new ways that the ancient authorities could not. In the *Dialogue*, Justin contrasts the instruction that Jews receive from "teachers who are ignorant of the meaning of the Scriptures" with the apostolic teaching concerning Christ, which contains "doctrines that are inspired by the Divine Spirit, abundant with power, and teeming with grace."[120] Christians alone "see and are convinced" that Christ is the new covenant.[121] This is not due to any perceptive genius of the Christians themselves, but "in accordance with the will of the Father" and "through God's mercy."[122] Justin insists that "by wondrous divine providence it has been brought about that we, through the calling of the new and eternal covenant, namely, Christ, should be found more understanding and more religious" than Jews, who "are reputed to be, but in reality are not, intelligent men and lovers of God."[123] Indeed, that "men would acknowledge" Christ as the new covenant was part of the very divine promise that accompanied it.[124] Moreover, the prophecies about the new covenant suggest its own self-illuminating power, calling it a "light of the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind": "These words, gentlemen, have been spoken of Christ and concern the enlightened Gentiles . . . for if the Law had the power to enlighten Gentiles and all those who possess it, what need would there be for a new covenant?"[125]

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[120] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 9.1 (Falls, 17).

[121] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.4 (Falls, 21).

[122] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 43.1–2 (Falls, 65).

[123] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 118.3 (Falls, 176–77).

[124] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 51.3 (Falls, 78).

[125] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 122.3–5 (Falls, 183).

The parallel in the *Apologies* is Justin's association of the Logos with humanity's divinely-endowed "rational powers [λογικῶν δυνάμεων]," by which God "both persuades us and leads us to faith."[126] This faculty of reason is grounded, for Justin, in the classical philosophical doctrine of the logos *spermatikos*, which is invoked in *2 Apology* to explain the rational intuitions of "those of the Stoic school, since they were honorable at least in their ethical teaching, as were also the poets in some particulars, on account of a seed of Logos [σπέρμα τοῦ Λόγου] implanted in every race of men and women."[127] Although demons have thwarted the efforts of those "who ever so little strived to live by Logos," the most direct targets of their persecution have been those who "lived not by a part only from Logos, the Sower, but by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Logos, who is Christ."[128] However, the true and complete manifestation of the Logos principle (in which all humanity participates to varying degrees) is displayed when the Logos assumes flesh in the incarnation—when "the whole rational principle [τὸ λογικὸν τὸ ὅλον] became Christ, who appeared for our sake, body, and reason [λόγον], and soul."[129] Thus, in the same way that the prophetic Word of the old covenant anticipated its own fulfillment in the arrival of Jesus Christ, the true Word and the new covenant, so also the Logos "implanted" in all humanity anticipated the manifestation of the true Logos in the incarnation of Christ.

Produces morality. A third shared feature is the distinct morality-producing effect of his arrival, which both fulfills and surpasses the ancient traditions' existing ethical standards, while simultaneously abolishing tendencies toward vice (above all,

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[126] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 28).

[127] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 8 (Barnard, 79).

[128] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 8 (Barnard, 79). "οὐ κατὰ σπερματικοῦ Λόγου μερος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ παντός Λόγου, ὅ ἐστι Χριστοῦ."

[129] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 80).

idolatry). In the debate with Trypho, Justin highlights the first of these aspects immediately upon introducing the new covenant concept:

> A definitive law and a covenant more binding than all others, which must now be respected by all those who aspire to the heritage of God. The law promulgated at Horeb is already obsolete, and was intended for you Jews only, whereas the law of which I speak is simply for all men. Now a later law in opposition to an older law abrogates the older; so, too, does a later covenant void an earlier one. An everlasting and final law, Christ himself, and a trustworthy covenant has been given to us, after which there shall be no law, or commandment, or precept.[130]

Strikingly, Justin affirms that, in abrogating the old covenant and rendering it obsolete, Christ, as the new covenant, establishes a new and "definitive [τελευταῖος]" moral code, identical, ultimately, with himself.[131] The demands of this new covenant are not the ritual observances of the Mosaic law, but their spiritual fulfillment:

> What you really need is another circumcision, though you prize that of the flesh. The New Law demands that you observe a perpetual Sabbath, whereas you consider yourselves religious when you refrain from work on one day out of the week, and in doing so you do not understand the real meaning of that precept. You also claim to have done the will of God when you eat unleavened bread, but such practices afford no pleasure to the Lord our God. If there be a perjurer or a thief among you, let him mend his ways; if there be an adulterer, let him repent; in this way he will have kept a true and peaceful Sabbath of God.[132]

The moral standards of the new covenant do not contradict those established in the decalogue, but the ritual aspects of the Mosaic law are redefined in light of "faith through the blood and death of Christ."[133] In the new covenant, to cleanse the soul of anger, avarice, jealousy, and hatred is to eat the true unleavened bread.[134] To have mercy on the

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[130] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2 (Falls, 20).

[131] A better translation of τελευταῖος is "final," which Falls and Halton do employ in rendering the same word in the last sentence of this paragraph.

[132] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 12.3 (Falls, 22).

[133] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 13.1 (Falls, 22). The efforts of Stylianopoulos to identify a tripartite structure to Justin's understanding of the Mosaic law on the basis of *Dial.* 44.2 are not convincing. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*, Dissertation Series 20 (Cambridge, MA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 52–76. He himself concedes that "the tripartite division has not reached high conceptual clarity" (74). See also the critique of Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile*, NovTSup 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 323–24.

[134] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 14.1.

poor is to observe the true fast and receive true circumcision.[135] To receive baptism is to experience true purification.[136] Yet in addition to the moral renewal that accompanies the new covenant, it also dispels the lingering temptation of idolatry:

> If . . . through the name of the crucified Jesus Christ, men have turned to God, leaving behind them idolatry and other sinful practices, and have kept the faith and have practiced piety unto death, then everyone can clearly see from these deeds and the accompanying powerful miracles that he is indeed the New Law, the new covenant, and the expectation of those who, from every nation, have awaited the blessing of God.[137]

The novelty consists in the fact that, for Justin, the laws of the Old Covenant were imposed upon the Jews as a direct *result* of their idolatry, toward which they were perpetually inclined.[138] By contrast, followers of Christ possess, in him, the power to resist the demonic forces which animate the idolatrous worship of false gods.[139]

In the *Apologies*, questions of morality and idolatry arise in connection with Justin's exhortations to live rationally, or in keeping with the Logos principle. Justin sees people who suffer from demonic influence as those "who live irrationally [ἀλόγως]," in contrast with those who "aim at piety and philosophy," and therefore "do nothing unreasonable [ἀλογόν]."[140] The worship that Christians offer to Christ, the Logos, is given "rationally [μετὰ λόγου]."[141] Elsewhere, moral discernment (between virtue and vice) is presented as the hallmark of "true reason [ὁ ἀληθὴς λόγος]."[142] These arguments converge in Justin's overarching claim that it is the Christians who live in greatest harmony with

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[135] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 15.1–7.

[136] Justin Martyr, *Dial*. 14.1; 18.2. On baptism, as also developed by Justin through an intertextual reading of the Isaianic Servant Songs, see D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Justin and Isaiah 53," *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 3 (2000): 248–61.

[137] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.4 (Falls, 21).

[138] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 19.6; 22.1; 22.11.

[139] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 30.3.

[140] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 12 (Barnard, 29–30).

[141] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 13 (Barnard, 31).

[142] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 43 (Barnard, 52).

the Logos implanted in all humanity, as illustrated most clearly in their refusal to worship demons (and thus practice idolatry), even to the point of death: "Nor can the wicked demons persuade men and women that there is no burning for the punishment of the ungodly, just as they could not effect that Christ should be hidden when He came. But this only can they do, that they who live contrary to reason [τοὺς ἀλόγως βιοῦντας], and were subject to passions in wicked customs and are deluded, should kill and hate us."[143] Those who live "contrary to reason" (or Logos) pursue wickedness under the idolatrous influence of demons, while Christians, as full participants in the Logos, practice genuine piety without fear. In the cases of both the new covenant and the Logo, the effect of participation is cultivation of a distinct new morality, which transcends the established order, and empowers the pursuit of true virtue and abandonment of idolatry.

Christ as subject and object. A fourth commonality is that Jesus Christ functions as both subject and object—that is to say, he is the agent who gives, as well as the substance of what is given. In the *Dialogue*, this appears in Justin's depiction of Christ as both "law" and "Lawgiver." Having already introduced Christ as "an everlasting and final law . . . after which there shall be no law, or commandment, or precept," and affirmed that Christ "is indeed the New Law [καινὸς νόμος]," Justin explains that in him, "the Lawgiver [νόμοθέτης] has come."[144] Christ is the "new Lawgiver [καινὸς νόμοθέτης]" in contrast with the old lawgiver (or "your own lawgiver"), Moses.[145] Justin senses no contradiction in presenting Christ simultaneously as both Law and Lawgiver.

The conceptual parallel in the *Apologies* is Justin's elaboration of the doctrine of the *logos spermatikos* in *2 Apology*. Having noted the presence of the "seed of Logos

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[143] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 57 (Barnard, 63).

[144] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2; 11.4; 12.2 (Falls, 20–22).

[145] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 14.3 (Falls, 24); *Dial.* 18.3 (Falls, 30). For the contrasting references to Moses as "lawgiver," see *Dial.* 1.3; 112.1; 127.1.

implanted in every race of men and women," Justin identifies its source, alluding to those "who lived not by a part only from Logos, the Sower, but by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Logos, who is Christ."[146] Elsewhere, without employing the terminology of "seed" and "Sower," Justin further hints at this dynamic—that participation in the Logos involves the use of a rational capacity derived from the Logos himself—in his assertion that "whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated according to their share of Logos by invention and contemplation. But since they did not know all that concerns Logos, who is Christ, they often contradicted themselves."[147] The formula resurfaces in Justin's final appeal, as he again affirms that renowned philosophers, poets, and historians "spoke well, according to the part present in [them] of the divine Logos, the Sower."[148] Here again, he highlights the agency of the "Sower" who imparts the "divine Logos," which is Christ himself. A more disputable reference in *1 Apology* to "those men in whom the seed of God, the Logos, dwells, who believe in him" is, admittedly, less developed, but seems to invoke the same logos *spermatikos* imagery and terminology.[149] Other scattered allusions describe the "seed" (without mentioning the "Sower") in terms consistent with this sketch.[150] Throughout the *Apologies*, then, Justin portrays the active and passive revelatory functions of the Logos (as both "seed" and "Sower") in terms that reflect his identification of Christ as the new

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[146] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 8 (Barnard, 79). "κατὰ σπέρματικου Λόγου μέρος, ἀλλα κατὰ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς Λόγου."

[147] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 80). The intriguing conjunction of "lawgivers and philosophers" here lends further support to the conceptual parallel being advanced in this section.

[148] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 13 (Barnard, 83).

[149] See Barnard, *First and Second Apologies*, 45. The translation provided above (my own) diverges from Barnard's, which obscures the meaning by appearing to make "him" (αὐτῷ) rather than "men" (ἄνθρωποι) the antecedent of "whom." However, the Greek form is plural (ἐν οἷς) and will not allow this. Justin's point is that the "seed of God" dwells within those *human beings* who believe in the Logos. Barnard, in any event, registers the opinion that the substance of this reference is "rather different" from that of *2 Apol.* 8 (Barnard, 149n221).

[150] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 44 (Barnard, 54), for example, refers to "seeds of truth among all people" that inspired the Greek "philosophers and poets" by means of certain clarifying "hints from the prophets."

covenant in the *Dialogue* (as both law and Lawgiver.) In both cases, the content of the message revealed is identical with the one who reveals it.

Rejected by intended audience. The fifth and final characteristic shared by the New Covenant concept of the *Dialogue* and the Logos concept of the *Apologies* is their rejection by their ostensible audiences—rejection which Justin describes in terms of "scorning [ἠτιμώσατε]," and which provides the rhetorical occasion for each work. In the *Dialogue*, after the preliminary identification of Christ with the "everlasting and final law" and "trustworthy covenant," Justin levies a significant accusation against the Jews: "This very law you have scorned [ἠτιμώσατε], and you have made light of his new holy covenant, and even now you do not accept it, nor are you repentant of your evil actions."[151] Justin delineates the offenses involved in the Jewish rejection of Christ, centering around their mistaking observation of the ritual law for fulfillment of the will of God.[152] This recitation of Jewish failures extends through *Dial.* 16, and culminates with the most egregious crime of all: "For you have murdered the Just One, and his prophets before him; now you spurn [ἀθετεῖτε] those who hope in him, and in him who sent him, almighty God, the Creator of all things; to the utmost of your power you dishonor and curse in your synagogues all those who believe in Christ."[153] The charge continues,

> The other nations have not treated Christ and us, his followers, as unjustly as you Jews have, who, indeed, are the very instigators of the evil opinion that they have of the Just One and of us, his disciples. After you had crucified the only sinless and Just Man . . . and after you had realized that he had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven . . . you not only failed to feel remorse for your evil deed, but you even dispatched certain picked men from Jerusalem to every land, to report the outbreak of the godless heresy of the Christians and to spread those ugly rumors against us which are repeated by those who do not know us.[154]

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[151] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 11.2; 12.2 (Falls, 21–22).

[152] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 12.3.

[153] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 16.4 (Falls, 28).

[154] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 17.1 (Falls, 28).

As Justin's polemic reaches its crescendo, it is not merely a passive Jewish failure to recognize Christ as Messiah, but a morally-charged "scorning" (ἠτιμώσατε) and "spurning" (ἀθετεῖτε), climaxing in the crucifixion, that draws his most caustic condemnations. Moreover, he argues, their persecution of the "Just One" extends to the righteous figures united with Christ, both before and after his advent. Justin thus connects the identity of those who participate in Christ with his own person and experience.[155]

The theme of "scorning" also appears in the *Apologies*. Justin applies to the Logos this same general sequence of rejection, extending from Christ's forerunners, to his own person, and finally to his followers. As he explains in *1 Apology*, in a polemic against those "reasoning absurdly [ἀλογισταίνοντες]," the Logos had "partakers" among every race prior Christ's incarnation: "And they who lived with the Logos are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and people like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, and Ananias, and Asarias, and Misael, and Elias, and many others."[156] Like the prophets who proclaimed the new covenant and new law to Israel, however, these "partakers" of the Logos endured persecution from those who spurned him, "So that even they who lived before Christ, and lived without Logos, were wicked and hostile to Christ, and slew those who lived with the Logos."[157] Despite the substitution of the Logos for the Law, the structure of the argument remains intact. The divine revelation, attested within the culture's most venerable traditions, and specially embodied among its most insightful thinkers, nevertheless has been consistently scorned, rejected, and even persecuted by those who

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[155] See especially Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 136.3 (Falls, 205), the conclusion of the work as a whole, where the one "who scorns and hates him [Christ] clearly hates and scorns him also who sent him." This statement follows Justin's assertion that Christ, and those united to him by faith, constitute the true Israel (on this, see below).

[156] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 46 (Barnard, 55).

[157] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 46 (Barnard, 55).

ought to have received it.[158] Further confirmation comes from Justin's consistent association of demonic influence with irrationality. From the opening lines of *1 Apology*, it is "Reason [ὁ Λόγος]" that directs true philosophers to resist "irrational impulse [ἀλογῳ ὁρμῇ]."[159] By contrast, the influence of demons persuades those "who live contrary to reason [τοὺς ἀλόγως βιοῦντας], and were subject to passions in wicked customs and are deluded" to "kill and hate us [Christians]."[160] They have also deceived the followers of heretics like Marcion, who have been "snatched away irrationally [ἀλόγως] as lambs by a wolf, and become the prey of godless teaching and of demons."[161] The antidote is to participate in the Logos more fully:

> In order that we may follow those things that please him, choosing them by means of the rational powers [λογικῶν δυνάμεων] he has given us, he both persuades us and leads us to faith. And we think it for the good of all people that they are not prevented from learning these things, but are even urged to consider them. For the restraint which human laws could not bring about, the Logos, being divine, would have brought about, save that the evil demons, with the help of the evil desire which is in every person and which expresses itself in various ways, had scattered abroad many false and godless accusations, none of which apply to us.[162]

Here Justin highlights the ongoing struggle between the Logos, operating through humanity's naturally-endowed rational capacities, and the demonic activity that opposes Logos by preying upon human passions. Hence, he claims, "We worship rationally [μετὰ λόγου]."[163] Just as Jewish rejection of Christ constitutes a "scorning" of the new law and new covenant, so also the failure of the pagans to embrace Christ signals their scorning of the Logos. In both instances, Justin depicts Christ as the true fulfillment of an established,

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[158] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10.

[159] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 2 (Barnard, 23). See also the opening critique of irrational Roman governors in *2 Apol.* 1–2.

[160] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 57 (Barnard, 63). The account that Justin relates concerning a Christian woman likewise highlights the view that judgment awaits those who fail to live "in conformity to right reason." *2 Apol.* 2 (Barnard, 73).

[161] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 58 (Barnard, 64).

[162] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 10 (Barnard, 28–29); cf. 28.

[163] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 13 (Barnard, 31).

authoritative source of revelation, which the presumed audience acknowledges. Refusing to accept him, however, they instead engage in hostility against him and his followers.

This section has demonstrated structural correspondences between Justin's concept of the new law/new covenant in the *Dialogue* and his doctrine of the Logos in the *Apologies* in five respects: both are (1) attested by the ancients; (2) illuminative of participants; (3) efficacious in producing morality; (4) conveyed by Christ as both giver and gift; and (5) "scorned" or rejected by the intended recipients. Cumulatively, these parallels build a case for the correspondence of these concepts, as mirror aspects of his doctrine of the divine Word and theology of revelation. Specifically, the correlations highlight the way that the *Logos/Nomos* conjunction, witnessed in the Preaching of Peter and closely connected, even at that early stage, with the new covenant concept as a basis for Christian identity, could be developed along two separate trajectories—addressing either primarily Jewish or primarily pagan audiences—according to the rhetorical needs of the same individual apologist.

Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*

The last text to be examined in this chapter is Clement of Alexandria's (c. 150–215) *Protreptikos*, or *Exhortation to the Greeks*, which is usually dated to the last two decades of the second century and thus represents the close of the period under consideration here.[164] This work, the first in what traditionally has been considered the "trilogy" of Clement's major writings, is addressed to a primarily pagan Greek audience

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[164] As Ferguson notes in his helpful orientation to Clement's major writings, André Méhat dates all three works to the final years of the second century, or just beyond (*Exhortation to the Greeks* in 195; *Christ the Educator* in 197, and *Miscellanies* between 198 and 203). See John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria* (New York: Twayne, 1974), 17. Classic (though now dated) introductions to Clement's life and thought include R. B. Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Liberalism* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914); Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968); Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971). But see now Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the most recent critical edition of the text, see Miroslav Marcovich, *Clementis Alexandrini Protrepticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

and offers a universal appeal for conversion to Christianity.[165] Though often classified as an apology, an insightful article by Andrew Hofer urges a reconsideration in light of the ancient literary genre of *protreptikos*, as indicated by the title of the work itself.[166] Because he is often regarded—with much overstatement—as "the most Greek of early Christian writers,"[167] Clement's engagement with Hellenistic thought is an especially valuable witness to the way the covenant concept could be applied in discourses addressed to non-Christian audiences.

Scholarship on Covenant in Clement of Alexandria

Though Clement's writings have been studied extensively in the past century and a half, few scholars have dedicated significant attention to the covenant theme.[168] Among those who have, none has analyzed it in relation to Christian identity formation; rather, as we will see, they have primarily explored it from the perspective of biblical theology, or Clement's understanding of the salvation-historical timeline. Since Clement's two major works, *Christ the Educator* and *Miscellanies*, will also be considered in the next chapter, in the context of anti-heretical writings, it is worthwhile to provide a brief survey of scholarship related to his use of the covenant idea here.

The now-dated two-volume study of R. B. Tollinton dedicates a chapter,

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[165] On the complex and much-debated literary relationships between these three works, see the helpful survey of opinions provided by Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 5–15. Osborn himself makes a persuasive case for the coherence of the three works, revolving around the progressive activity of the Logos in drawing a new humanity to himself, in which "Clement sets out the plan of responding movement towards God, from the exhortation of the *protreptikos* to the instruction of the *paidagogos* to the teaching of the *didaskalos*. In these three modes, the logos is eager to lead men to perfection by his plan (*oikonomia*)" (39).

[166] Andrew Hofer, "Clement of Alexandria's Logos Protreptikos: The Protreptics of Love," *Pro Ecclesia* 24, no. 4 (2015): 498–516. Hofer's study is particularly relevant to the present purpose, and will serve to frame the discussion of the relationship between the Logos doctrine and covenantal themes in Clement's text below.

[167] Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 25.

[168] For a thorough overview of scholarship on Clement through the mid-twentieth century, see Walther Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, TUGAL 57 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952), 34–74.

unsurprisingly, to Clement's Logos doctrine, as the "central and dominant conception" of his thought, and the intermediary "bond or bridge between God and the Cosmos."[169] Tollinton recognizes that for Clement, the Logos is the revelatory agent of both philosophy to the Greeks and the Law to the Jews.[170] This is because he is both the divine creator of the universe and the philanthropic educator of humanity, who "ever imparts the truth in love."[171] It was this one and the "same watchful Educator," the Logos, who spoke through both the Old and New Testaments, and Tollinton notes the apologetic function of Clement's arguments for the harmony between "the characteristic principles of the old covenant and of the new."[172] However, he gives exceedingly brief consideration (just two pages) to Clement's use of the term "covenant," defined loosely as "the idea of God bringing man into a moral relationship with Himself"—despite acknowledging that the covenants are "frequently mentioned" throughout Clement's writings.[173] Anticipating a tendency of later scholars, Tollinton's interest in Clement's use of the term is restricted here primarily to his biblical theology (the relation between the Old and New Testaments) and view of the canon (as a title for those collections of texts).

Walther Völker focuses mainly upon Clement's theological anthropology and spirituality, particularly as these relate to the struggle against sin and the ascent toward *gnosis*.[174] In his discussion of the Logos doctrine, however, Völker adds to Tollinton's work the insight that the Logos is the guide not only of the individual soul, but also of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) as a whole—an activity which extends to "entire

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[169] Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria*, 1:334–66.

[170] Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria*, 1:339.

[171] Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria*, 1:351–57.

[172] Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria* 2:199–201. "The identity of the power at work in the old and new dispensations is asserted, and in such a manner that the reader feels it is rather the Hellene than the hostile Jew that Clement has in mind."

[173] Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria*, 2:204–5.

[174] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*.

peoples [ganzer Völker]," both Greeks and Jews.[175] This role is not merely educative, but redemptive.[176] Völker also discusses Clement's view of νόμος, but downplays the identification of this term with Logos as "just an occasionally appearing construction," even though he recognizes that Clement portrays the law—specifically the Mosaic Covenant—as a pedagogical instrument of the Logos, both for restraining sin and for communicating truth (*gnosis*), when understood spiritually.[177] Völker regards this as merely an adaptation of conventional Stoic terminology, not indicative of Clement's "true view."[178] He does discuss Clement's notion of the Logos as the inspiration of both the Mosaic law and the "reformer of the law, the bringer of the *nova lex*," but does not bring this discussion into any specific connection with the covenant theme.[179]

Several more recent major studies fail to treat the covenant theme in Clement at all. It is not surprising that Salvatore Lilla, whose concern is to explain (or rather explain away) most aspects of Clement's thought in terms of Hellenistic or Gnostic "influence," shows no interest in the use of the biblical and theological concept of covenant within his writings.[180] The covenant theme also does not feature in John Ferguson's general introduction to Clement's writings.[181] Additionally, in his recent treatment of Clement's theology, Eric Osborn does not discuss the covenants in depth, despite an illuminating study of his presentation of the divine economy, which unfolds in creation, progresses through the anticipatory revelations of the law (to the Jews) and

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[175] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 101.

[176] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 105.

[177] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 262. "Nur eine gelegentlich auftauchende Hilfskonstruktion."

[178] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 265.

[179] Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 269. "Den Erneuerer des Gesetzes, den Bringer der nova lex."

[180] Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria.*

[181] Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 13–43.

philosophy (to the Greeks), reaches fulfillment in Christ, and ultimately produces a new humanity.[182]

A few surveys of the covenant theme in the patristic period do consider Clement's use of it in a limited fashion. Everett Ferguson helpfully recognizes the "great frequency" with which Clement refers to the covenants, and the emphasis that he places on their harmony as the unified revelations of the one Logos.[183] Though acknowledging that Clement develops "a many-sided theology" of covenant, however, Ferguson focuses primarily upon his treatment of biblical-theological questions, such as the "periodization" of scriptural history and the use of διαθήκη to refer to the canonical collections of the Old and New Testaments.[184] He does not consider the implications of the concept of the new covenant for the formation of Christian identity in Clement's view.

Finally, two dissertations written in the Reformed tradition, those of Andrew Woolsey and Ligon Duncan, find in Clement's emphasis on the unity of the old and new covenants a precedent for the sixteenth-century framework of the covenant of grace—"one true covenant which applied to all believers throughout salvation history."[185] Though Woolsey deals with the theological issues in more detail (including the dynamics of law and gospel and the relationship between faith and covenantal "obligation"), neither study analyzes new covenant membership as an essential component of early Christian

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[182] Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 31–55. The exception is a single reference to the "covenants" made with both Jews and Greeks in an appendix comparing Clement's thought on the divine economy with that of Irenaeus. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 288.

[183] Everett Ferguson, "Covenants," in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 540–41.

[184] Ferguson, "Covenants," 540; Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 1, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 192–96.

[185] Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 208: "Here, in the second century, the very same issues were raised as came to the fore in seventeenth-century covenantal theology"; cf. Duncan, "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995), 241–46. Apart from this, Duncan simply and briefly restates the observations of Ferguson, as he acknowledges.

self-understanding, with attention to the key aspects of metanarrative, ritual, and ethics—rather, their tendency is to retroject Reformation-era categories and points of debate onto patristic writings to marshal historical support for their theological systems.

Covenant in *Exhortation to the Greeks*

Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks* represents, in many ways, the culmination of the apologetic trajectory traced in this chapter. Addressed, rhetorically, to a pagan audience, the text offers (as its title suggests) a protreptic invitation to unite with the Logos in the Christian faith. As Hofer helpfully outlines, an appreciation for the classical literary genre of protreptic—which seeks not merely to defend a position from criticism, in the apologetic sense, but, more constructively, "to persuade an audience . . . to accept a new way of life"—is crucial to interpreting the work.[186] The divine love for humanity (*philanthropia*) is the *Exhortation*'s major theme, and Christ, who "himself is the true Logos *Protreptikos*, the word of loving persuasion from God," is its primary instrument and agent.[187] The Logos doctrine is thus absolutely central to the content and intent of the text, as commentators have noted.[188]

What has not been so well observed is the way that Clement integrates the Logos concept with the covenant theme, using a number of the established motifs from the earlier apologetic tradition. Like his predecessors, Clement employs the covenant concept more subtly in contexts addressing non-Christians than he does in works whose audiences possess familiarity with biblical material.[189] Nevertheless, perhaps more skillfully than any other second-century Christian writer, he does indeed introduce,

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[186] Hofer, "Clement of Alexandria's Logos Protreptikos," 502.

[187] Hofer, "Clement of Alexandria's Logos Protreptikos," 499, 508.

[188] Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 44–45.

[189] As chap. 6 will demonstrate, in examining Clement's *Paed.* and *Strom.*

develop, and apply it, using parallel terms and ideas that were already well-established within the classical Hellenistic tradition. In this section, then, I will describe how Clement uses both biblical and classical motifs to introduce the covenant concept by gradual steps, before finally extending a winsome invitation to his presumed Greco-Roman audience to join and participate in the blessings of this new reality.

On account of this presumed pagan audience, the *Exhortation* contains, by sheer volume, many more references to classical Greek poetry, philosophy, and mythology than direct citations of biblical material. Consequently, the placement and usage of biblical quotations, where they do occur, demand close attention. An early and paradigmatic instance, which sets the stage for Clement's subtle use of the covenant idea, is his citation in the opening chapter of Isaiah 2:3 ("for out of Zion shall go forth the Law [νόμος], and the Word [λόγος] of the Lord from Jerusalem"), in a clear link back to the earlier apologetic tradition of applying the logos/*nomos* conjunction to Christ.[190] As we have seen, this text had regularly provided Christian writers, as early as the author of the Preaching of Peter and continuing through Justin Martyr, with a useful resource for connecting the Logos doctrine with the notion of divine covenant or law, sometimes with specific reference to the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31. Though Clement does not cite the Jeremiah text here, it clearly informs his development of the covenant theme later in the *Exhortation*.

Clement cites this text in the course of his opening rhetorical flourish, which contrasts the absurd mythic songs and poems of the classical tradition with the beauty and power of the "New Song" of the Logos, who "is being crowned upon the stage of the whole world."[191] This notion of "newness" recurs throughout the text to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian gospel to the old and established "customs" of the Greeks,

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[190] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1. All English translations are taken from Butterworth.

[191] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1 (Butterworth, 7).

which Clement urges them to abandon, despite their antiquity. This "new music" offers a "sweet and genuine medicine of persuasion" to those who were formerly ensnared in the deceptions of pagan idolatry.[192] It has a transformative power, being "mighty" to grant spiritual life to those who hear it and bring the entire universe into cosmic harmony with its creator.[193] Indeed, the New Song can be directly identified with the Logos himself, who, though existing in the "divine beginning," only "lately took a name" as the incarnate Christ.[194] Through him, an entire "new creation" is coming into being.[195]

In emphasizing the newness of Christianity, Clement is well aware of the vulnerability of his position, in a culture that valued the familiarity and trustworthiness of tradition. Throughout the *Exhortation* he frequently acknowledges the perceived difficulties of turning away from "ancestral customs."[196] This is necessary, he contends, when a culture's "old way" is wicked, irrational, and tending toward death.[197] As he inquires, "So, in life itself, shall we not abandon the old way, which is wicked, full of passion, and without God? And shall we not, even at the risk of displeasing our fathers, bend our course towards the truth and seek after Him who is our real Father, thrusting away custom as some deadly drug?"[198] To hold blindly to the beliefs and practices of "custom" (συνήθεια) when they do not align with truth and rationality leads to the slavery of ignorance and is, for Clement, the height of absurdity.[199]

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[192] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1 (Butterworth, 7).

[193] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1 (Butterworth, 11).

[194] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1 (Butterworth, 17).

[195] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11 (Butterworth, 243).

[196] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 211).

[197] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 197–199; 215).

[198] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 197).

[199] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 215). "Now custom, in having given you a taste of slavery and of irrational attention to trifles, has been fostered by idle opinion. But lawless rites and deceptive ceremonies have for their cause ignorance; for it is ignorance that brought to mankind the

This sharp dichotomy between adherence to custom and pursuit of the truth illustrates Clement's extensive use of the Two Ways tradition in the *Exhortation*, another consistent marker of covenantal identity formation in second-century Christian texts, rooted in the biblical notion of covenantal obligation and the attendant blessings and curses. It appears in the opening chapter, in Clement's appeal to receive the new "song of truth," and thus enter "into righteousness," rather than remaining in error and pursuing "wickedness"—for "error is old, and truth appears to be a new thing."[200] Indeed, the "slippery and harmful paths" of error, which consist of the idolatrous beliefs and pagan practices, "lead away from the truth," and have "turned aside man . . . from a heavenly manner of life [τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὐρανίου ἐξέτρεψαν διαίτης]."[201] Clement also develops the contrast between virtue and vice as the pathways to "blessing" and "destruction," respectively.[202] Ultimately, these fates are determined by the individual's response to the truth revealed by the Logos: "the Word, having spread abroad the truth, showed to men the grandeur of salvation, in order that they may either be saved if they repent, or be judged if they neglect to obey. This is the preaching of righteousness; to those who obey, good news; to those who disobey, a means of judgment."[203]

At this juncture, it may still appear unclear whether or how Clement connects these themes of the *Exhortation* with the covenant idea. However, his selective explicit references to covenant and related concepts demonstrate that it is not only a significant component of the identity that he urges his pagan audience to adopt, but also integrally related to the themes sketched above. First, it occurs near the end of his opening survey

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apparatus of fateful destruction and detestable idolatry, when it devised many forms for the daemons, and stamped the mark of a lasting death upon those who followed its guidance."

[200] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 1 (Butterworth, 5, 15).

[201] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 2 (Butterworth, 51, 55).

[202] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 4 (Butterworth, 141).

[203] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11 (Butterworth, 247).

of pagan myths and rituals, as Clement makes the programmatic assertion that the pagans—not the Christians—truly practice atheism: "It is a twofold atheism in which they are entangled; first, the atheism of being ignorant of God (since they do not recognize the true God); and then this second error, of believing in the existence of beings that have no existence, and calling by the name of gods those who are not really gods."[204] In support, he cites Ephesians 2:12, "And you were strangers from the covenants of the promise, being without hope and atheists in the world." This reference to the "covenants of promise" from which pagans are alienated could appear to be incidental, if not for Clement's later invocation of the covenant motif at the very heart of his appeal to abandon the corrupt "way of life [ἔθος]" leading to death and embrace the "truth," which leads to "life."[205] It is in this context—pivotal to the argument of the text as a whole—that Clement introduces and deploys the covenant idea most directly, as he describes the reward for pursuing the way of righteousness in terms of the "inheritance" of an "eternal salvation": "This inheritance is entrusted to us by the eternal covenant of God, which supplies the eternal gift. And this dearly loving Father, our true Father, never ceases to exhort, to warn, to chasten, to love; for He never ceases to save, but counsels what is best."[206] The dynamics of God's orientation toward his people that Clement mentions here—exhortation, warning, chastening, and above all, love—are aspects of the covenantal relationship established between God and humanity, as confirmed by Clement's subsequent reference to the covenantal text of Deuteronomy 30:15: "You have, my fellow-men, the divine promise of grace; you have heard, on the other hand, the threat of punishment. . . . Why do we not choose the better things, that is, God instead of the evil one, and prefer wisdom to idolatry and take life in exchange for death? 'Behold, I

[204] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 2 (Butterworth, 47).

[205] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 197–99).

[206] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 205).

have set before your face,' He says, 'death and life.' The Lord solicits you to choose life."[207] Alluding, significantly, to a now-familiar association of concepts, he concludes, "And a Word of the Lord is a law of truth [νόμος ἀληθείας λόγος κυρίου].[208] Clement equates adherence to the way of life with incorporation into the covenant community, though he introduces this particular biblical term only after thoroughly establishing the broader notions of a new way of life, the divine love for humanity, and the pursuit of virtue leading to blessedness, which are integral to it. That covenant membership is the mechanism for pursuing truth and the way of life becomes even more evident, however, in Clement's discussions of the "law" that Christians observe, which he describes in terms that are resonant of the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31. The "oracles [λόγια] of truth have been engraved" upon those to whom God grants immortality, Clement contends; righteousness is "inscribed" within them; the divine writings are "stamped deeply into the soul."[209] Because God himself is their "lawgiver," his laws—which include both the precepts of the decalogue and the teachings of Jesus—are "inscribed in the very hearts of" his people.[210] If there is any doubt that Clement intends allusions to Jeremiah 31 in these phrases, it is dispelled in the following chapter, when he explains how the Logos causes the new "piety towards God" of the Christians to replace and transcend their former pagan customs:

> For He who rides over the universe, the sun of righteousness visits mankind impartially, imitating His Father, who 'causes His sun to rise upon all men,' and sprinkles them all with the dew of truth . . . granting to us the Father's truly great, divine and inalienable portion, making men divine by heavenly doctrine, 'putting laws into their minds and writing them upon the heart.' To what laws does He allude? 'That all shall know God,' and, God says, 'I will be gracious to them and not remember their sins.' Let us receive the laws of life."[211]

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[207] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 207–9).

[208] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 209).

[209] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 231).

[210] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.*10 (Butterworth, 233).

[211] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11 (Butterworth, 243–45).

In this direct quotation of Jeremiah 31:31, Clement confirms beyond doubt that this new covenant prophecy, which anticipates God's actions to form a new community by writing his law upon their hearts, revealing knowledge of himself to all, and forgiving their sins, provides the essential framework for his exhortation to reject the idolatry of paganism and follow Christ. The new covenant is the way of life.

For Clement, Christians have been united with each other in this new covenant, being formed into a distinct new people as a result. They are governed, like other peoples, by a particular law, and in conforming to its precepts they manifest a particular ethical orientation.[212] In addition, the other two key elements of identity formation are present to make them recognizable. First, they possess a common metanarrative that describes their origins (the creation account of Genesis, including humanity's fall and the promise of a future redemption), the formative event in their history (the arrival of the Logos to accomplish salvation in securing the new covenant), and their future (receiving salvation and the inheritance of a new creation "after we depart from this world").[213] Second, Christians practice the distinctive ritual identity marker of baptism. Though less pronounced, this feature appears in Clement's references to the "water of reason": "Receive then the water of reason. Be washed, ye that are defiled. Sprinkle yourselves from the stain of custom by the drops that truly cleanse. We must be pure to ascend to heaven."[214] By juxtaposing this language, in the immediate context, with the "lawless rites and deceptive ceremonies" which "stamped the mark of a lasting death" upon pagan idolaters, Clement positions Christian baptism as an important identity marker for the

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[212] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 243): "If you record yourself among God's people, then heaven is your fatherland and God your lawgiver."

[213] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11; 1; 11 (Butterworth, 237, 19, 199–205, respectively).

[214] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 10 (Butterworth, 215).

redeemed members of the covenant community.[215]

To summarize: as Hofer observes, Clement's protreptic exhortation to a pagan audience to convert to Christianity invites addressees to become recipients of the divine love for humanity (*philanthropia*) through the activity of the Logos, leading to their blessedness rather than destruction.[216] What I additionally propose here is that the covenant idea is a crucial theological framework for further situating this appeal. This possibility has not often been recognized, in part because Clement's explicit uses of διαθήκη within the *Exhortation* are limited. However, attention to the passages where they do occur, as well as to more subtle allusions to covenantal biblical material, reveals that Clement does indeed introduce and apply this biblical concept to a pagan rhetorical audience, by (1) grounding it, in keeping with the earlier apologetic tradition, in the *locus classicus* of Isaiah 2:3, which facilitates the coordination and theological appropriation of the logos and *nomos* concepts; (2) contrasting the old and corrupt "customs" of paganism with historically recent but true "new song" of the Logos; (3) associating adherence to this "new song" with pursuing righteousness rather than wickedness, and thus receiving eternal blessedness rather than judgment, in reflection of the "Two Ways" tradition; (4) explicitly employing covenantal language to integrate all these themes in referring to the promised "inheritance" as the "eternal covenant"; and (5) citing (or clearly alluding to) biblical texts that are unquestionably covenantal in character—including both Deuteronomy 30:15 and Jeremiah 31:31—to describe the Christian community's covenant obligations and attendant consequences (blessings or curses), as well as their supernatural capacity to fulfill them (having the covenant law written on their hearts).

[215] On baptism as the basis for a distinctive ethical orientation in Clement, see Völker, *Der Wahre Gnostiker*, 147–53.

[216] Hofer, "Clement of Alexandria's Logos Protreptikos," 499–500.

In all this, Clement, like the earlier apologists, portrays Christians as a new people, possessing a distinct constitutive narrative (the christological confession), ritual marker (baptism), and ethical orientation (conformity to the law written by God upon their hearts) as "a new man transformed by the Holy Spirit of God."[217] United as the recipients of God's love through the mediation of the Logos, they share "all things in common," and, as Clement himself exemplifies, extend the invitation to join this covenantal fellowship to all the "myriad peoples" of the earth—"both barbarians and Greeks; the whole race of men."[218]

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the use of the covenant concept for the formation of a distinct Christian identity among second-century writers was not restricted to interactions with Judaism, a rhetorical audience that had familiarity with the biblical term διαθήκη. Texts such as the Preaching of Peter, the *Apologies* of Aristides of Athens and Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks* also employed it, whether overtly or more subtly, in writings rhetorically addressed to pagan audiences, in which the form was primarily apologetic or protreptic. In these contexts, the covenant idea first had to be grounded within established philosophical frameworks and associated with more recognized patterns of thought. Thus, we have traced a developing trajectory over the course of the second century in which such texts invoked the covenant concept, connected it with a consistently-recurring set of themes, and integrated these with increasing complexity and sophistication.

Most predominant among these recurring themes were the coordinated concepts of *logos* and *nomos*, which provided conceptual touchpoints and terminologies

[217] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11 (Butterworth, 239).

[218] Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* 11 (Butterworth, 257).

for the divine revelation of Christ himself and the giving of his covenant law. Often, these connections were drawn through citation of the programmatic biblical text of Isaiah 2:3, with its dual prophetic reference to the Law (νόμος) going forth from Zion and the Word (λόγος) of the Lord from Jerusalem and. This prophecy could be read intertextually with Jeremiah 31:31–32 to refer to the arrival of the new covenant and God's writing of the law upon the hearts of his people.

The result was a new race or new people, distinguishable from others not only by their differing constitutive narratives (a redemptive history structured by covenants and culminating in Christ) and ritual markers (such as baptism), but also—and most obviously to observers—through their particular ethical orientation, which adhered to the moral injunctions of their covenant law in pursuit of what the Two Ways tradition had called the "way of life," leading to the reward of eternal blessedness. The fact that second-century Christian writers not only labored to introduce and develop this biblical and theological notion of the new covenant community, but also actively appealed to pagan audiences to join and participate in it by following Christ, indicates the extent to which they viewed the covenant as an essential component of the distinct Christian identity that they sought to cultivate.

CHAPTER 6

COVENANT AND HETERODOXY: IRENAEUS, CLEMENT, AND TERTULLIAN

The previous two chapters examined the use of covenant language and themes to construct a distinct Christian identity in rhetorical contexts addressing practitioners of Judaism and members of pagan Greco-Roman culture—two of the immediate external social domains that second-century Christian writers engaged. The present chapter will turn the focus inward, considering how such language appears and operates in contexts that are concerned to distinguish, internally, between orthodoxy and heresy, within the Christian church. These efforts occur in heresiological texts, which draw contrasts between what their authors regard as genuine apostolic teaching and tradition, and what they denounce as the deviations or corruptions of this teaching, propagated by eccentric heretical leaders and movements. In laboring to delineate these boundaries, such writers reveal a dual orientation, endeavoring both to dispel false teachings from their communities, and to warn members of these communities against adopting the beliefs, rituals, and ethical practices of heterodox sects.

It was documented in chapter 3 that among heterodox sects, those traditionally described as "Gnostics" made virtually no use of the covenant concept in articulating their own theological systems, ritual practices, and ethical codes—that is, the core components of their self-understood identities.[1] One indication is the near absence of the term "covenant" (Coptic ⲇⲓⲁⲑⲏⲕⲏ) within the Nag Hammadi corpus. Marcion and his followers, by contrast, did utilize the covenant concept, but in ways that the

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[1] See chap. 3, s.v. "Covenant and Identity Formation in Gnosticism?"

heresiological writers regarded as unacceptable and inconsistent with apostolic tradition. It was these twin tendencies—the lack of use and the misuse of the covenant idea—and the radical theological conclusions that flowed from them, that formed the major impetus for orthodox writers to develop covenant schemes of far greater sophistication than the encounters with Judaism and Greco-Roman culture had required. Thus, in the heresiological writings of Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage, we discover a third trajectory of development over the course of the second century: one which utilizes the covenant idea to demonstrate the simultaneous antiquity, unity, and novelty of Christianity and its doctrine of God as leading characteristics of orthodox identity over against its heterodox competitors.

Irenaeus of Lyons

Without question, the second-century writer who most extensively develops a covenantal framework is Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 120–200).[2] Evidently, his concern for this theme was well-known, since members of the churches at Vienne and Lyons, where he served as bishop, described him as "zealous for the covenant of Christ."[3] In his two extant works, *Against Heresies* and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus contends for the unity of the old and new covenants, and articulates a complex covenantal structure of redemptive history in response to both Gnostic and Marcionite teachings. In both cases, his purpose is pastoral, and indeed, in the *Demonstration*, catechetical[4]—yet this motivation should not be sharply distinguished from the heresiological, since it is apparent from his comments in *Against Heresies* that for Irenaeus, refutation of heretical

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[2] For recent introductions to the life and thought of Irenaeus, see Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, ECF (London: Routledge, 1997); Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); and especially John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[3] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.4.2.

[4] As also noted by J. Ligon Duncan III, "The Covenant Idea in Ante-Nicene Theology" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995)," 136–37.

teaching and explication of orthodox teaching in keeping with the *regula fidei* represent two sides of the same coin.

Scholarship on Covenant in Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus is one of the few second-century writers whose treatment of the covenant concept has attracted some significant interest within early Christian studies.[5] This scholarly attention has been of three kinds: references to his views in broader surveys of covenant theology in the early church, brief discussions in relation to other aspects of his theological activity, and, in one case, a dedicated full-length study.

In the first category, Everett Ferguson christens Irenaeus a "covenant theologian," in part because "the covenant scheme of the interpretation of holy scripture became the foundation of [his] theological method" in disputation with Gnostic and Marcionite opponents.[6] Key features noted by Ferguson include the notion of two successive covenants (one for Jews and one for Gentiles), the contrast between the old (associated with law and enslavement) and the new (associated with grace and liberty), the gradual progress or maturation of humanity, and the unity of the divine economy.[7] Though he can still portray Irenaeus as supersessionistic or "dispensational," Ferguson nevertheless concludes that in his writings, "the various covenants were integrated as progressive and ordered phases in a total, organic history of salvation."[8] Though he focuses on the biblical-theological aspects of Irenaeus's scheme, Ferguson offers at least a preliminary hint toward its experiential or identity-related dimensions, in observing the

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[5] See also the survey of scholarship provided by Susan L. Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant': Irenaeus and the Covenants of Israel" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001), 1–6.

[6] Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 1, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 184–85.

[7] Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 186–88.

[8] Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 188.

contrast between the "laws of bondage" and the "new covenant of liberty."[9]

Ligon Duncan analyzes Irenaeus's terminology for the covenants and, again, their role in structuring redemptive history in his biblical theology.[10] He correctly stresses that Irenaeus employs covenantal arguments to defend the unity of God (as both Creator and Redeemer) and the unity of Scripture (in both Old and New Testaments) against Gnostic challengers.[11] He also proposes three distinct senses in which Irenaeus uses the term διαθήκη (Latin *testamentum*): (1) the relational (describing "a divine-human relationship with attendant commitments and favors"); (2) the historical (designating "an era (or eras) or the grand redemptive economy"); and (3) the testamentary (suggesting "inheritance, possessions, reading of a document, and setting servants free"), with the first being by far the most frequent, and the third being "not common—even rare."[12] Despite asserting that the first sense is predominant, however, Duncan spends the bulk of the remaining discussion expounding the second, in describing "Irenaean salvation history."[13] Though he offers some helpful observations here,[14] it is curious that Duncan does not dedicate more space to a discussion of the experiential implications of the

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[9] Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 186. "The gospel was not just a new law for Irenaeus but a new spiritual relation of humanity to God."

[10] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 132–57.

[11] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 139. "In order to repudiate the Gnostics' main premise, Irenaeus had to demonstrate conclusively that the one true God was both creator and redeemer, the God of the old and the new covenants. In *AH* (and particularly in the fourth book), Irenaeus set about the task of defending the concept of the unity of God by manifesting the unity of the Hebrew Scriptures and teaching with the Christian Scriptures and teaching, against the Gnostics' assertions of incongruity. It is of significance that in so doing, Irenaeus chose to use the idea of covenant to stress the unity and continuity of OT and NT religion and revelation."

[12] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 141–43.

[13] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 143–51.

[14] These include the centrality of the covenantal economies to Irenaeus's statement of the apostolic rule of faith, his appeal to the church's proof-from-prophecy arguments in the earlier apologetic tradition as evidence of their belief in Scripture's inspiration, and his flexible vocabulary in referring, alternately, to "two covenants" (old and new) or "four covenants" (as in *Haer*. 3.11.8).

"relational" sense of covenant.[15]

In the second category, a number of studies of Irenaeus have engaged with his covenantal thought in relation to the themes of divine economy and recapitulation. Philippe Bacq's extensive study of *Haer.* 4 demonstrates the literary coherence of the work as a whole, and the covenant concept is central to this task, since proving the unity and continuity of the old and new covenants is Irenaeus's primary objective in book 4.[16] Bacq elucidates many features of Irenaeus's presentation, including the notion of growth, progress, or maturation that he uses to describe the transition from old to new, from law to gospel, and from figure to reality.[17]

Gustaf Wingren's classic study of Irenaean anthropology, in its progression from creation to re-creation through Christ's incarnation, helpfully emphasizes the unity that Irenaeus maintains between the "physical" and "ethical" dimensions of God's creative and redemptive acts in Christ's recapitulation, such that "The Church is to be understood as a creative ethical force in the non-Christian society simply because it is Christ's martyred Body which awaits the resurrection of the dead, the physical miracle."[18] This union of the physical and the ethical applies to humanity's condition before the fall (governed by the *praecepta* of the natural law), after the fall (enslaved in "bondage" to sin), and after redemption in Christ (liberated by grace in the Spirit).[19] Wingren is right to

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[15] One reason may be that in Duncan's excessive emphasis on the continuity between the old and new covenants in Irenaeus's thought—an emphasis that certainly stems from his explicitly-stated desire to find historical precedents for seventeenth-century Westminster covenant theology—the very necessity for such a complex and progressively-unfolding covenant scheme becomes less apparent, since the relationship between the divine and human partners does not change in any appreciable way in the transition from old to new. If, as Duncan contends, Irenaeus affirms that the new covenant, like the old, is still characterized by adherence to the Decalogue, a genealogical principle, and the offering of sacrifices (though differing in form), in what sense has there been "progress" from one to the other?

[16] Philippe Bacq, *De l'Ancienne à la Nouvelle Alliance selon S. Irénée: Unité du Livre IV de l'Adversus Haereses*, Le Sycomore: Série Horizon (Paris: Lethielleux, 1978).

[17] See, for example, Bacq, *De l'Ancienne à la Nouvelle Alliance*, 86–96.

[18] Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), 30.

[19] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 63–64.

map this opposition between bondage and liberty over the distinction between the old and new covenants in Irenaeus's thought: "When the Spirit came on the first day of Pentecost, entrance was thereby given to the people of God to the new covenant, of which the sign is freedom, in the same way as the Old Testament had as its characteristic bondage."[20] Wingren draws attention to the new physical-moral situation of humanity that results from Christ's recapitulation of Adam's failure in the new covenant, in which the outpoured Holy Spirit empowers a new ethic, transcending the requirements of both the natural law and the Decalogue, in anticipation of the new creation in the resurrection.[21]

In his oft-cited discussion of Irenaeus's derivation of the terminology of *recapitulatio* from classical grammatical and rhetorical sources, Robert Grant documents its close connection with the four covenants mentioned in *Haer.* 3.11.8, noting that the fourth, the new covenant, is described there as recapitulating all things in itself.[22] He observes that Irenaeus uses the covenants mainly "to indicate gradual progress in God's dealings with his people."[23] Apart from this biblical-theological structuring function, however, Grant does not consider additional aspects.

Eric Osborn's account of Irenaeus's theology is structured according to the four interconnected concepts of intellect, economy, recapitulation, and participation—all of which are integrally related to his view of the covenants.[24] The divine economy

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[20] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 66.

[21] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 177–79. "But Christ has not only resuscitated the natural laws, which are grounded in Creation, He has also extended and enlarged them, e.g. by insisting on a right mind and enjoining love for one's enemies. Christ's law is the old law, and yet it is also new. . . . What the old Covenant with its Law was never able to do, the Spirit achieves in the new Covenant, viz. the rebirth of the lost, primal innocence."

[22] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 52.

[23] Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 53.

[24] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 21–22.

(*oikonomia*) is defined by humanity's movement toward God, beginning at creation.[25] As "the whole plan of God," it extends "through all salvation history," including both the "old and new testaments."[26] The one universal economy unites the many smaller economies within itself.[27] It can be understood as the "history of humanity," which Irenaeus divides into three temporal stages of natural precepts, law, and gospel.[28] Osborn does not develop the relationship between economy and covenant in detail, however, but simply notes in passing, "Divine plan and human development are evident in the four covenants: Adam, Noah, Moses and Christ."[29] However, a few scattered references to the new covenant as the "law of liberty" and the culmination of recapitulation offer clues to the understanding advanced below.[30] Moreover, Osborn provides an excellent discussion of the "new order of being," and "new pattern of life" that, for Irenaeus, characterize Christianity, though without mentioning the new covenant as grounding it.[31]

The centrality of the divine economy is also pronounced in the study of John Behr, who identifies the movements from Adam to Christ, and from the breath of life at creation to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as key markers for Irenaeus along the one "arc of the economy," in which "the arrangement of the whole is revealed

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[25] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 51. "Man, found in God, will always be advancing to God. This movement defines the economy of salvation which begins with creation."

[26] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 77–78.

[27] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 78. "In the singular it refers chiefly to the incarnation and in the plural to the Old Testament manifestations of the word."

[28] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 79.

[29] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 86. In listing these four covenants, he also does not engage the textual issue in *Haer*. 3.11.8 that makes them uncertain (to be discussed further below).

[30] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 102, 106, 109. "At the same time he makes a new beginning, for the last of the four covenants is a covenant of renewal. In himself he sums up all things by means of the gospel which raises man on its wings to the heavenly kingdom (3.11.8). This means that his treasure is new and old, for in his new song and new covenant, he surpasses Solomon, Jonah and the temple (4.9.2). New and old are joined together for he brought all novelty by bringing himself who had been announced (4.34.1)."

[31] Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 117; see also pp. 117–40.

together in its recapitulation, and diachronously, as it is unfolded through time."[32] Behr certainly acknowledges the place of the covenant idea within this framework, as in referring to the outpouring of the Spirit as "opening the New Covenant" and establishing a new relationship between God and humanity in the "new covenant of liberty."[33] Behr also affirms that the various components of the "symphony of salvation" culminate in the revelation of the new covenant.[34] Generally, however, this is not a point of focus in what is, nevertheless, a masterful treatment of closely-related themes.

Several articles and essays from the past decade are also representative of the tendency to engage the covenant theme only or primarily from the perspective of biblical theology. Denis Minns, for example, reviews Irenaeus's interpretations of seven of Christ's parables in the argument of *Haer.* 4 for "the unity of the two testaments" and the "underlying notion of the progression from Old Covenant to New."[35] Stephen Presley identifies "covenantal unity" as one of four aspects of unity that broadly characterize Irenaeus's approach to Scripture, revolving around "the union of covenants between God and God's people that bind together both testaments in various ways."[36] And Benjamin Blackwell draws attention to Irenaeus's use of the Abrahamic Covenant to ground (and thus unify) both the old covenant and the new in response to Marcionite arguments.[37] While each study contributes helpfully to a multifaceted understanding of covenant within Irenaean biblical theology, none explores its experiential dimension—that is, its

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[32] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 148.

[33] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 175–76.

[34] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 187.

[35] Denis Minns, "The Parable of the Two Sons in Irenaeus and Codex Bezae," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 57–58.

[36] Stephen O. Presley, "Biblical Theology and the Unity of Scripture in Irenaeus of Lyons," *Criswell Theological Review* 16, no. 2 (2019): 7; 13–15.

[37] Benjamin Blackwell, "The Covenant of Promise: Abraham in Irenaeus" in *Irenaeus and Paul,* edited by Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 147–68.

connection with Christian identity formation.

Many other works could be cited that do not engage the covenant theme at all.[38] In a few (astonishing) cases, the covenants have even been dismissed as inconsequential or irrelevant for appreciating Irenaeus's thought.[39] Generally, however, Irenaean scholarship has recognized that the covenants play, at the least, an important supporting role in his thought, and have endeavored to integrate this with the broader concerns of his theological project—if primarily from the vantage point of his biblical theology.

Finally, alone in the third category of scholarship is the work of Susan Graham, the only scholar to date to have produced a dedicated monograph (and derivative articles) on Irenaeus's view of the covenants.[40] As such, her study demands a more extended summary and engagement. Graham contends that Irenaeus treats the biblical covenants as historical narratives, which "convey a number of ideas about the nature of God, of creation and its purpose, of humanity and divine-human relations and redemption."[41] Her method is to examine the literary structures of his two major works to describe the placement and utilization of the covenant idea within each. In both cases, she argues, the covenants "play a role not only in the scriptural organization . . . as might be expected, but also speak to the theological notions he attempts to develop."[42]

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[38] See, for example, André Benoît, "Saint Irénée: Introduction à l'Étude de sa Théologie" (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960); John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth, 1948); Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996); Minns, *Irenaeus*; Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[39] Mark W. Elliott, "Irenaeus, Abraham, Covenants, and the One Thing Needful: The Second Adam," in Still and Wilhite, *Irenaeus and Paul*, 169–76. Elliott suggests that "Irenaeus is not all that interested in Israel or the Law, or the covenant(s) for that matter; he is much more concerned with creation and the Creator God" and fears that fixation on the covenants might "get in the way of the more typical and frequent Adam-typology, the famous doctrine of recapitulation" (171).

[40] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant'"; Graham, "Irenaeus and the Covenants."

[41] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 6.

[42] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 16.

After surveying Irenaeus's independent (non-quotation) uses of the term "covenant," Graham concludes that it refers to "divinely-given relationships between God and humanity."[43] Notably, she defends the Greek variant of *Haer.* 3.11.8, which counts the four universal covenants as the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and new (rather than the Adamic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and new)—a position that I will also maintain.[44] Nevertheless, Irenaeus more often speaks generally of two covenants (the old and the new), in keeping with the "binary view" of Jeremiah 31.[45] The distinctive blessings of the new covenant include "liberty from the 'slavery' to the old (Mosaic) Law," the "'adoption' of believers by faith," the "outpouring of the Spirit in a new way," and a "share in the kingdom of God" for the Gentiles, and participation in this new covenant is marked by receiving the Eucharist and adhering to a higher moral standard.[46]

Exploring their use in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Graham concludes that the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants provide the literary structure for Irenaeus's summary of the biblical storyline leading up to the incarnation in *Epid.* 8–29, and the new covenant provides the framework for the concluding section of *Epid.* 86–97, forming together a sort of "grand *inclusio*" that highlights the incorporation of the Gentiles as the climax of salvation history.[47] Likewise in *Against Heresies*, references to the covenants illustrate the unity of the scriptural narrative at programmatic junctures at the beginning and end (*Haer.* 1.10.3; 5.33.1/5.34.1), and also in books 3–4.[48] Graham's exhaustive documentation of the occurrences of covenant narratives in these two works are indispensable.

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[43] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 32.

[44] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 39–41.

[45] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 36.

[46] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 60–65.

[47] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 107–12.

[48] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 154–205.

Theologically, Graham concludes in her final chapter that "Irenaeus consistently treats the covenants of Israel in their narrative context rather than separating out a conceptual covenant 'idea.'"[49] Though each covenant is simultaneously "relational" and "historical" and "testamentary," in Duncan's categories, each one tends to illuminate a particular aspect: the Noahic Covenant emphasizes inheritance and is thus "testamentary"; the Abrahamic Covenant revolves around descendants and is thus "relational"; the Mosaic Covenant establishes a nation and its laws and is thus "historical." By presenting and interpreting all the covenants as straightforward historical events, however, Irenaeus ensures that they retain their spiritual "implications for the future," through the light that they shed on the theological concepts of creation, divine-human relationship, and recapitulation.[50]

Graham's study is formidable in its scope and comprehensive in its analysis of the covenants as literary elements in Irenaeus's works. It is also stimulating in its reflections on their theological significance, and their connections with other important themes in his thought. Ultimately, however, it betrays the same fixation on the biblical-theological dimensions of the covenants as the other works surveyed above. Though she alludes, in one key section, to the distinguishing features of new covenant membership, she does not take the additional step of considering how Irenaeus may be developing these themes for the sake of identity formation within his own community—both negatively, through the refutation of competing (heretical) claims, and positively, through catechetical teaching. The result is that the new covenant remains, in Graham's analysis, primarily a literary or hermeneutical, rather than experiential, phenomenon for Irenaeus.

In sum, most scholars who have written on covenant in Irenaeus in some capacity have not approached it as a significant category for Christian identity formation.

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[49] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 206.

[50] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 254.

Thus, the key characteristics of liberty, love, and the indwelling Spirit which characterize his discussions of the new covenant will be the focus in what follows. I begin by considering the much larger heresiological text *Against Heresies*, and then turn attention to the catechetically-oriented *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* by way of confirmation.

Against Heresies

Using the lexicon of Bruno Reynders, Graham counts seventy occurrences of *testamentum* in either its nominal or verbal form in the five books of *Against Heresies*.[51] Of these, the overwhelming majority (sixty-six) appear in the contexts of biblical citations, allusions, or extended quotations, especially from the covenant-themed texts of Genesis 17, Exodus/Deuteronomy, and, above all, Jeremiah 31 (Jer 38 LXX).[52] These references are concentrated in books 3 and 4, though there is also a programmatic statement about the covenants in general in *Haer.* 1.10.3.

The discussion below will not rehash the thorough work of Graham in demonstrating the central literary and structural importance of the covenants in Irenaeus's writings. Rather, it will focus on the ways that his covenant schema provides a basis for Christian identity formation. Thus, following an overview of the covenant schema itself, this section will be organized around the three major elements of identity formation—belief/narrative, ritual, and ethical practice—considering the implications of Irenaeus's new covenant concept in each domain. Three passages in particular provide the general framework for Irenaeus's covenant schema as it is developed throughout *Against Heresies*: *Haer.* 1.10.3, 3.11.8, and 4.11.1–2. These sections introduce the importance of the covenants, organize them into a scheme, and correlate them to the broader divine

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[51] See the discussion and table provided in Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 27–31.

[52] Graham identifies at least twenty-six likely allusions to the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31–32.

economy and recapitulation.

Importance of the covenants (*Haer*. 1.10.3). In *Haer*. 1.10, Irenaeus provides perhaps the closest thing to a programmatic statement for the work. First, he describes the continuity of the catholic church's faith, over against the diversity and contradictions of the Gnostic systems outlined in the remainder of book 1.[53] He also sets forth his fullest expression of the rule of faith, the proto-creedal theological convictions that secure this continuity.[54] This rule, or *hypothesis*, governs the interpretation of Scripture, and is not subject to modification, regardless of the personal ingenuity of the interpreter.[55] There are certain matters within its confines, however, that may be further explored, including the meanings of parables, the "dispensation" of salvation, God's patience with apostasy, scriptural theophanies, and, what is most relevant here, "why several covenants were made with the human race" and "what the real nature of each of the covenants was."[56]

The inclusion of the covenants within a list that features such first-order doctrines as creation, revelation, incarnation, and resurrection (all corresponding to elements of the rule of faith as stated in *Haer.* 1.10.1), indicates their importance in Irenaeus's theological system. Indeed, the sequence of proto-creedal statements in *Haer.* 1.10.1 matches, generally, the order of the matters for investigation listed in *Haer.* 1.10.3:

[53] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.10.1. Unless otherwise noted, English translations of books 1–3 come from Unger, while translations of books 4–5 come from *ANF*.

[54] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.10.2.

[55] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 1.10.3.

[56] Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.10.3 (Unger, 50). "*quare testamenta multa tradita humano generi, adnuntiare, et quis sit uniuscuiusque testamentorum character, docere*." Latin quotations are taken from the critical edition of Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies*, SC 263–64, 293–94, 210–11, 100.1–2, 152–53 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf), 1965–1982.

Table 2. Parallels between *Haer*. 1.10.1 and 1.10.3

Haer. 1.10.1	*Haer*. 1.10.3
The Father's creation of heaven and earth	God's creation of temporal and eternal things
The incarnation of the Son	Various forms of OT theophanies
The Spirit's proclamation of divine dispensations through the prophets	The giving and character of the covenants
The passion and resurrection of Christ	The incarnation and suffering of the Word
The resurrection of all people	The mortal body putting on immortality

Despite differences in wording, both sections follow roughly the same format, with phrases in *Haer.* 1.10.3 representing slight expansions or modifications of the more traditional elements in *Haer.* 1.10.1. Within this parallel structure, the reference to the covenants in *Haer.* 1.10.3 correlates to the clause about the Spirit's inspiration of the prophets for the proclamation of the divine dispensations (*oikonomiai*) in *Haer.* 1.10.1.[57] If these, like the creation, incarnation, and resurrection of the dead, are counted among the non-negotiable tenets of orthodox doctrine that skillful Christian teachers may further extrapolate (though never modify), then Irenaeus accords them a central position. Though he does not define "covenant" or comment on their function here, he raises two questions about them (their number, and their character) that he will answer later, in book 3 (3.11.8, dealing with their number) and book 4 (dealing with their character).[58]

Identification of the covenants (*Haer*. 3.11.8). The former question, the

[57] On *oikonomia* in Irenaeus, see Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 49–50, 52.

[58] As Donovan observes, nearly all of book 4 is concerned with the articulation of the unity between the old and new covenants, broadly speaking. Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 97–98. For sake of space, however, the present study will specifically focus on the key passage of *Haer*. 4.11.1–2 and its relevance for determining the place of the covenants in Irenaeus's theological system.

number of the covenants, is the subject of *Haer.* 3.11.8, a passage well-known for its defense of the fourfold gospel tradition. Though often derided as a foray into numerology,[59] the contextual argument for the universality of the four gospels accepted by the church is actually crucial to Irenaeus's introduction of "four universal covenants."[60] Indeed, this unit, beginning with the summary of the biblical narrative, or "cardinal points of the Gospel" at *Haer*. 3.11.7, initiates an important section revealing Irenaeus's view of the relationship between humanity and the divine economy.[61]

Irenaeus asserts flatly, "It is not possible that there be more Gospels in number than these [four], or fewer."[62] This is followed by descriptions of analogous fourfold phenomena in which a single entity is manifest in four harmonious parts. The one world is made up of four regions, as well as four principal winds (*quattuor principales spiritus*).[63] Likewise four pillars uphold the one church, and are identified with the four canonical Gospels, derived from the same Spirit.[64] These Gospels have been handed down by Christ, seated among the cherubim (Ps 80:1), whose four faces are images of the one "economy [*dispositionis*] of the Son of God."[65]

This correlation between the faces of the cherubim—associated with the four

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[59] See, for example, Elliott, "Irenaeus, Abraham, Covenants," 173–74: "Irenaeus does not expand on this matter of four covenants, because in truth he is only interested in the 'fourness' corresponding to the four gospels, which are his real concern here; if a manifold covenant were central to his concerns, surely more would have been said."

[60] The *ANF* unhelpfully translates καθολικαί as "principal," rather than "universal" (which is how it will be rendered consistently below).

[61] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.7 (Unger, 55). Moreover, at *Haer.* 2.25.1 (Unger, 82), Irenaeus himself warns against the dangers of arbitrary numerological speculation as "a weak system," insisting numbers must rather "be harmonized with the existing system of truth. For a rule does not come from numbers, but numbers from a rule." His use of the fourfold pattern in *Haer.* 3.11 illustrates this principle clearly, as he endeavors to subordinate the various phenomena to the structure of Christ's economy as proclaimed by the *regula fidei*.

[62] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 56).

[63] It is important to note that the extant Greek reads "τέσσαρα καθολικὰ πνεύματα," since the descriptor καθολικὰ recurs at a crucial juncture later in Irenaeus's discussion.

[64] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8.

[65] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

living creatures of Revelation 4:6–7—and the authors of the four canonical Gospels is not direct, but is mediated by a middle element: four aspects of the "economy of the Son of God." In other words, it is only after linking each of the living creatures to a particular aspect of the Word's economic self-revelation that Irenaeus takes the additional step of correlating it to a canonical Gospel. These threefold relationships, in which the middle term is primary, can be expressed visually as in table 3 below. Specifically, the four living creatures and the four dispensations of the Son of God correspond to the *introductions* of the Gospels. The Gospel of John relates to the majesty of the lion, because its prologue reveals the majesty of the Son's eternal generation (John 1:1–3). The Gospel of Luke conveys Christ's priestly character by opening with the narrative of Zechariah the priest, ministering in the temple (Luke 1:5–25). The Gospel of Matthew corresponds to the man, because it begins with a genealogy tracing Christ's human descent (Matt 1:1–17). Finally, the Gospel of Mark correlates to the eagle, because it starts with the descent of the "prophetical spirit which came down to men from on high" in the preaching of John the Baptist (in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah) (Mark 1:1–8).[66]

Table 3. Living creatures, economy of the Son, and the four Gospels

Living Creature	Economy of the Son of God	Gospel
Lion	His effectual working, His leadership, and His royal power *Efficabile eius et principale et regale* τὸ ἔμπρακτον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡγεμικὸν καὶ βασιλικὸν χαρακτηρὶζον	John
Calf	[His] sacrificial and sacerdotal order *sacrificialem et sacerdotalem ordinationem*	Luke

[66] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 56).

	τὴν ἱερουργικὴν καὶ ἱερατικὴν τάξιν	
Man	His advent as a human being *secundum homineum aduentum eius* τὴν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον αὐτοῦ γέννησιν	Matthew
Eagle	the gift of the Spirit hovering with His wings over the Church *Spiritus in Ecclesiam aduolantis gratiam* τὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐπι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἐφιπταμένου δόσιν	Mark

Following this discussion of the fourfold Gospel, Irenaeus describes the climax of the fourfold pattern, the four discrete stages of the Word's economy: "Now the Word of God Himself used to speak, in virtue of His divinity and glory, with the patriarchs who lived before Moses' time. And those who lived under the law, He used to assign a priestly and ministerial function. Finally, having become man for us, He sent the gift of the heavenly Spirit upon the entire earth, covering us with his pinions."[67] Though not numbered, four christological movements can be discerned here: (1) the patriarchal christophanies; (2) the institution of a sacred ceremony or service; (3) the incarnation; and (4) the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus explicitly grounds the significance of the first two fourfold sets (the living beings and the canonical Gospels) in these four stages of Christ's economy: "Therefore, such as was the economy of the Son of God, such also was the form of the living beings; and such as was the form of the living beings, such also was the character of the Gospel."[68] These parallels can be visualized as follows in table 4:

[67] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

[68] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

Table 4. Economy, living beings, and four Gospels

Stage of Christ's Economy	Living Being	Gospel
Patriarchal Christophanies	Lion	John
Instituting sacerdotal/liturgical service	Calf	Luke
Being made man (incarnation)	Man	Matthew
Sending gift of the celestial Spirit	Eagle	Mark

It is evident that Irenaeus describes the stages in the Word's economy in ways that are conceptually and verbally linked with his descriptions of the living beings and the Gospels.[69] Thus, the Word conversed with the patriarchs "in virtue of his divinity and glory [*gloriam*]," invoking the "powerful, sovereign, and kingly nature" of the lion, and thus also the "glorious [*gloriosam*]" generation of the Son in John's prologue. The Word's institution of a "priestly and ministerial function [*sacerdotalem et ministerialem actum*]" connects to the calf, and thus also to Luke's emphasis on Christ's "priestly [*sacerdotalem*] character." The incarnation itself, or the Word's "having become man [*homo factus*]," recalls the man, and thus also Matthew's portrait of Christ's human advent (*secundum homineum aduentum eius*).[70] Finally, the Word's gift of the Spirit, "covering us with His pinions [*protegens nos alis suis*]," harks back to the eagle, and thus also to Mark's depiction of the "gift of the Spirit hovering over the Church" in the ministry of the prophets, and above all, John the Baptist.[71] In these ways, the four stages

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[69] As also noted by Ysabel de Andia, *Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilite et Divinisation de l'Homme Chez Irenee de Lyon* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986), 143.

[70] Here, the Greek more clearly preserves the parallel between "His advent as a human being [τὴν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον αὐτοῦ γέννησιν]" and "being made man [ἄνθρωπος γένόμενος]."

[71] While a direct verbal connection is not present here (as in the first three items), the conceptual links involving the giving of the Spirit and the metaphor of flight, in relation to the eagle, are apparent.

of the Word's economy provide the definitive pattern to which both the four living creatures and the distinctive expressions of the four canonical Gospels conform. Irenaeus leaves no room for doubt: "And as the living creatures are fourfold, so also the Gospel is fourfold; and fourfold also is the Lord's economy."[72]

Within this argument for fourfold universality, patterned after the economy of Christ, Irenaeus introduces a final instance: the four universal covenants: "And for this reason [the economy of the Lord] four principal [or "universal"; καθολικαί] covenants were given to the human race."[73] The inferential phrase (*Et propter hoc*/Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο) makes clear that the same four-stage Christological economy which provides the basis for the fourfold form of the living creatures and the fourfold form of the Gospel tradition likewise grounds the fourfold form of the four "universal covenants." As in the previous instances, so also here: the diversity of the four expressions finds completion within the unity of Christ's economy, to which they bear witness, and in which they participate.

***Excursus*: two covenant lists.** At this juncture a brief excursus is necessary to address the two variants of this text (*Haer.* 3.11.8) preserved in the standard Latin translation and an extant Greek fragment. Like Ferguson and Graham, I maintain here that the Greek preserves the original reading.[74] The Latin version lists the four universal covenants as those with Adam, Noah, Moses (or rather, the giving of the law through

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[72] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

[73] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

[74] Ferguson cites the fact that each covenant listed in the Greek version is explicitly described as a covenant in a biblical text. Ferguson, *Ministry, Ordination, Covenant, and Canon*, 185. Graham likewise argues that the Greek list is "more consistent with the development of Irenaeus's argument in *Haer*. and with his treatment of the covenants in the *Epid*.," also noting Rousseau's critical argument for the Greek text (which includes the possible scribal mistaking of Ἀδάμ for Ἀβραάμ). Graham, "Zealous for the Covenant," 40. However, Duncan accepts the Latin, simply asserting that it "is usually considered the most accurate." Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 150. He further suggests that a covenant with Adam is "attested elsewhere in Irenaeus implicitly if not explicitly." No references are provided, however, and a covenant with Adam does not feature anywhere in Irenaeus's discussion. It is worth noting, though, that this concept is fundamental to the sixteenth-century Covenant Theology, whose roots Duncan claims to see in Irenaeus.

Moses), and the new covenant, identified as "the Gospel": "The first, of Adam before the deluge; the second, of Noe [Noah] after the deluge; the third, the law under Moses; and the fourth, which renews man and recapitulates in itself all things, that is, which through the Gospel raises up and bears men on its wings to heaven."[75] By contrast, the Greek fragments offer a list consisting of the following: "One to Noah [before] the flood, under the rainbow; and the second to Abraham, under the sign of circumcision; and the third, that of the lawgiving through Moses; and the fourth, that of the Gospel through our Lord Jesus Christ, which renews humanity and recapitulates all things in itself" [my translation]. Thus, the two variant covenant lists may be represented in table 5:

Table 5. Latin and Greek covenant lists

Latin	Greek
Adamic	Noahic
Noahic	Abrahamic
Mosaic	Mosaic
New	New

Since the lists agree on the third and fourth covenants, only the first and second positions are in question. Here, Irenaeus's preceding discussion of fourfold universality proves illuminating. His assertion that the four universal covenants are patterned after the economy of Christ, in the same manner as the four living creatures and the four Gospels (which also therefore share parallels with each other), suggests that there is also some

[75] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (Unger, 57).

relationship between the covenants and these other sets of four.[76] Though Irenaeus does not explicitly provide the key, a closer analysis of the characteristics and significance of each covenant supports the view that the Greek list should be preferred, since it, unlike the Latin version, is compatible with the parallels already established, as follows (see table 6):

Table 6. Economy, living beings, four Gospels, and covenant lists

Stage of Christ's Economy	Living Being	Gospel	Covenant (Greek List)
Patriarchal Christophanies	Lion	John	Noahic
Instituting sacerdotal/liturgical service	Calf	Luke	Abrahamic
Being made man (incarnation)	Man	Matthew	Mosaic
Sending gift of the celestial Spirit	Eagle	Mark	New

I will demonstrate the nature of these correspondences—in particular, between the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants (rather than Adamic and Noahic covenants) and the first two items of each set—in what follows below.

Function of the covenants (*Haer.* 4.11.1–2). A preliminary clue is found in a later passage from *Haer.* 4, which argues, as Donovan summarizes, "that the one God, together with the Word and Spirit, acts continuously in history for the salvation of

[76] Andia acknowledges elements of the structure described here, but retains the Latin version of the covenant list, and does not probe the nature of each covenant within these parallels in Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 143–44:

> La progression des hommes vers Dieu est liée aux différents modes de manifestation du Verbe. Dans un texte du Livre III sur « L'Évangile tétramorpohe », Irénée distingue parallèlement aux figures de quatre évangélistes: Jean, Luc, Matthieu et Marc, quatre « caractères » du Christ: Verbe, prétre, homme plein d'humilité et de douceur et prophète donnant l'Espirit prophétique, correspondant aux quatre modes de présence du Verbe de Dieu à l'humanité…Il y a donc une quadruple forme de l'économie du Seigneur (*dispositio Domini*): glorieuse, sacerdotale, humanine, et spirituelle, correspondant aux quatre alliances (*testamenta*) données au genre humain.

humanity."[77] The first major unit of book 4 (*Haer*. 4.1–19) attends to the unity of the old and new covenants on the basis of Christ's own words.[78] Here, Irenaeus develops an essential theme: the divine design for the maturation of humanity—what Behr labels the "arc of the economy" from Adam to Christ.[79]

In the context preceding *Haer.* 4.11.1–2, Irenaeus has explained why the Mosaic law given to Israel no longer binds Christians, despite his insistence, against the Gnostics, that it was given by the same God revealed in Christ. He situates the law's function within the broader creative plan of God, "who made the things of time for man, so that coming to maturity in them, he may produce the fruit of immortality."[80] This maturity could not be realized apart from God's self-revelation, however: "since it was impossible, without God, to come to a knowledge of God, He teaches men, through his Word, to know God."[81] The divine self-revelation through the Word began as early as "the creation itself," and continued in "the law and the prophets" before culminating in the incarnation.[82] In all these ways "the Son, administering all things for the Father, works from the beginning even to the end,"[83] and he is like the master of the house who

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[77] Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 97.

[78] Donovan, One Right Reading?, 98.

[79] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 148. Behr clarifies, however, "The unfolding of the economy cannot . . . be told by beginning with Adam considered in himself, proceeding to the 'Fall,' then the 'history of salvation,' and finally to Christ, but must be told in such a way that the end and the beginning mutually inform each other in one arc, both synchronously, in that the arrangement of the whole is revealed together in its recapitulation, and diachronously, as it is unfolded throughout time." Though Behr himself does not draw the connection, I suggest that Irenaeus's concept of the four universal covenants, patterned after the stages of Christ's economy, perform precisely these functions. See also the discussion of this theme within the context of Irenaeus's concept of the economy in Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 80–89, where it involves notions of accustoming, progressive revelation, the ascent of man, and historical knowledge. Though he follows the Latin list, Osborn specifically notes, "Divine plan and human development are evident in the four covenants." Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 86.

[80] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.5.1 (*ANF*, 1:466). "Qui temporalia fecit propter hominem, uti maturescens in eis fructificet immortalitem."

[81] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.5.1 (*ANF*, 1:466).

[82] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.6.6 (*ANF*, 1:469).

[83] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.6.7 (*ANF*, 1:469); cf. 4.7.4.

"bring[s] forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt 8:52).[84] Irenaeus explains that this latter saying of Jesus refers to the old and new covenants, which, despite being "of one and the same substance, that is, from one and the same God," perform quite distinct functions within the divine economy: one is "a law suited both for slaves and those who are as yet undisciplined," while the other consists of "fitting precepts to those that are free and have been justified by faith."[85] Through the advancement from the former to the latter (which is "greater"), he says, "we shall make increase in the very same things . . . and shall make progress" toward the full vision of God.[86] That the covenants instrumentally structure and facilitate this process is made explicit in *Haer.* 4.9.3: "having been revealed to men as God pleased; that they might always make progress through believing in Him, and by means of the [successive] covenants, should gradually attain to perfect salvation."[87] With this, the stage is set for the key statement of *Haer.* 4.11.1–2:

> And in this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made; and truly, He who makes is always the same; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase [*et initium et medietatem et adjectionem et augmentum*] . . . God also is truly perfect in all things…but man receives advancement and increase towards God. For as God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go on towards God.[88]

By now, it is an established principle that sets of four in Irenaeus require special attention, and indeed, I suggest that this sequence of the four stages of humanity's

[84] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.1 (*ANF*, 1:472).

[85] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.1 (*ANF*, 1:472).

[86] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.2 (*ANF*, 1:472).

[87] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.3 (*ANF*, 1:472–73).

[88] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.11.2 (*ANF*, 1:474). Commenting on this passage, Bacq effectively summarizes: "La révélation du Fils a commencé dès le début de l'humanité; elle s'est prolongée dans la Loi et dans la parole tour à tour 'menaçante' et 'encourageante' des prophètes; elle s'est accomplie dans la libération de la servitude et la grâce de l'adoption donnée à l'Église; elle s'épanouira enfin, au temps opportun, dans 'l'héritage de l'incorruptibilité,' lorsque l'homme atteindra sa pleine perfection par la vision du Père. Tel est le rythme de la croissance que réalise au cours de l'histoire la parole prononcée aux origines: 'Croissez et multipliez'." Bacq, *De l'Ancienne à la Nouvelle Alliance*, 95.

progress toward God (beginning, middle, addition, and increase) can help to illuminate the significance of the four universal covenants within Irenaeus's thought. The four stages can be mapped over the fourfold parallels already identified as follows:

Table 7. Fourfold phenomena and stages of human progress

Stage of Christ's Economy	Living Creature	Gospel	Covenant	Stage of Human Progress
Patriarchal Christophanies	Lion	John	Noahic	Beginning
Instituting sacerdotal/liturgical service	Calf	Luke	Abrahamic	Middle
Being made man (incarnation)	Man	Matthew	Mosaic	Addition
Sending gift of the celestial Spirit	Eagle	Mark	New	Increase

Though Irenaeus does not draw these parallels, corresponding features can be recognized. The four stages of human progress in *Haer.* 4.11.2, like the four universal covenants, are modeled after the archetype of the four stages of Christ's economy in *Haer.* 3.11.8 (which also provided the pattern for the four living creatures and the fourfold Gospel tradition). The Word's appearances to the "ante-Mosaic" patriarchs, mentioned in 3.11.8, began with Noah, and the blessings of his sons Shem and Japheth (which Irenaeus regularly links with the Noahic covenant) marked the "beginning" of the Word's covenantal relationship with humanity.[89] The second stage of the Word's economy

[89] On first glance, it may seem that the Latin covenant list, starting with the Adamic, better fits with "beginning" as the first stage of human progress, than does the Greek list, which starts with the Noahic covenant. As essential as the Adam-Christ typology is to Irenaeus's theological project, however, it does not provide the point of departure for his covenantal system. This position is indeed reserved for the Noahic covenant, (the first covenant of the Greek list), and, specifically, the blessings of Shem and Japheth that Irenaeus regularly links with it. This also explains why Irenaeus identifies as "universal" the four covenants that he does: they pertain to the divine redemptive plan for the human race as a whole. This redemptive economy must begin after the entrance of sin, which precludes an Adamic covenant or covenant with Creation from being identified as the first stage. Rather, as will be argued below, the

mentioned in 3.11.8 occurred when he “instituted a sacerdotal and liturgical service [or practice]” for those under the law.[90] Since this phrase is still governed by the reference to “the ante-Mosaic patriarchs,” it likely does not refer to the giving of the Mosaic law, but to Abraham and the giving of circumcision, which would later be *incorporated* into the Mosaic system and given to “those under the law.” The Word’s institution of the sacred practice of circumcision as the second stage of his economy corresponds to the Abrahamic Covenant and also the second, or “middle,” stage of human progress.[91] The third stage of the Word’s economy described in 3.11.8, his assumption of a human nature in “being made man for us,” grounds the third stage of human progress (“addition”), and also the third universal covenant, the giving of the Mosaic law (which Irenaeus, following Gal 3:15–19, describes in terms of a temporary pedagogical addition).[92] Finally, in the fourth stage of the Word’s economy of 3.11.8, “he sent the gift of the celestial Spirit over all the earth.” This outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a mark of the fourth and final universal covenant, the new covenant, and the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God—which provides the connection with the fourth stage of human progress mentioned in 4.11.2: “increase.”[93] As the analysis of the *Demonstration*

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blessing/commandment of Gen 1:28 is re-issued within the context of the Noahic covenant to inaugurate the covenantal economy, which, as a whole, “joins the end to the beginning.”

[90] The Latin “*sacerdotalem et ministerialem actum praebebat*” differs significantly from the Greek fragment, for which Rousseau and Doutreleau give, “ἱερατικὴν τάξιν ἀπένειμεν” (noting that καὶ λειτουργικὴν does not occur in all manuscripts). Moreover, Harvey’s edition previously argued that the Latin *actum* more likely translates an original “πρᾶξιν,” rather than “τάξιν.” Thus, what the *ANF* renders “a sacerdotal and liturgical service” should perhaps be understood as referring not to a priestly order, but more generically to “a sacred practice,” with which the institution of circumcision would be consistent.

[91] Since Irenaeus views the Abrahamic covenant as the joint foundation for both the third and fourth universal covenants (Mosaic and new), it is not surprising that he assigns it the “middle” place in this scheme. On this see especially Blackwell, “The Covenant of Promise”, 147–68. Blackwell helpfully emphasizes Irenaeus’s grounding of both the Mosaic and new covenants within the Abrahamic, but does not discuss its relation to the Noahic (which, as he acknowledges, is primary).

[92] See for example, Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.2.8; 4.4.2; 4.15.1; *Epid*. 96.

[93] On the theme of increase, see M. C. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 91 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 96–97; Stephen O. Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, Bible in Ancient Christianity 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 139–41.

below will show, this notion of "increase" provides a thematic unity to Irenaeus's covenantal system as a whole, starting with the blessings of Shem and Japheth in the Noahic covenant, and culminating with the incorporation of the Gentiles in the new covenant.[94]

Covenant and identity formation. Having established the covenantal schema of Irenaeus (the most thoroughly-developed of the second century), we are now in position to consider how he applies it to the work of Christian identity formation in the key areas of belief, ritual, and ethical practice.

Belief/narrative. *Against Heresies* does not include an extended summary of the scriptural or redemptive-historical metanarrative structured according to the covenants, as the *Demonstration* does.[95] However, this narrative is implied and assumed, and allusions to it can be discovered throughout the work. Together, they counteract the false *hypothesis* of Irenaeus's Gnostic opponents, which governs their erroneous interpretation of Scripture and the false doctrines drawn from it.

Irenaeus regularly summarizes the salvation-historical storyline by referencing the biblical episodes in which the covenants appear.[96] It is a major concern of book 4 to demonstrate that these covenantal narratives not only structure the divine economy as a whole, but also directly facilitate humanity's "maturation," or progress toward the vision of God: "that they might always make progress through believing in Him, and by means

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[94] Commenting on this passage, Presley helpfully identifies the biblical background of Gen 1:28 to the theme of "increase," noting that for Irenaeus, "the purposes of creation are never separated from the unfolding nature of the divine economy." Presley, *Intertextual Reception*, 139–41. As will be argued below, it is Adam's failure to fulfill the command to be fruitful and multiply that necessitates Christ's recapitulation of it in the economy, beginning with the repetition of this command in the Noahic Covenant, and ultimately finding fulfillment in the incorporation of the Gentiles in the new covenant.

[95] See chap. 6, s.v. "Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching."

[96] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 2.30.9; 3.3.3; 3.10.2. These consistently include the episodes involving Noah, Abraham, the exodus, and the coming of Christ, framed on either side by creation and the eschaton.

of the [successive] covenants, should gradually attain to perfect salvation."[97] The new covenant represents the climax of this process, marked by the "new phase" of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers, a new manner of worship, and the incorporation of the Gentiles into the one people of God.[98] This is the fulfillment of the "growth" or "increase" first promised in the Noahic covenant.[99] Indeed, as divine architect, God sketched out the stages of the economy with this intent, that they should facilitate communion between himself and humanity.[100] Irenaeus reads several of Christ's parables as lending support to this narrative scheme—including, for example, the parable of the laborers (Matt 20:1–16), in which the workers hired late in the day (the Gentiles) are summoned to the vineyard by the same Spirit of God as the earlier workers, and the parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–44), in which the winepress (the "receptacle of the Spirit") is given over to "other husbandmen, who render the fruits in their seasons" (the Gentiles).[101] These parables illustrate the principle that "we ought, after our calling, to be also adorned with works of righteousness, so that the Spirit of God may rest upon us. . . . But those who have indeed been called to God's supper, yet have not received the Holy Spirit, because of their wicked conduct, 'shall be,' He declares, 'cast into outer darkness.'"[102] It is the reception of the Spirit, then, that most clearly identifies the members of the new covenant community, and delineates the distinct, final era of the

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[97] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.3 (*ANF*, 1:472–73).

[98] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.10.2 (Unger, 48–49). "In like manner, Zacharias . . . was filled with a new spirit and blessed God in a new manner. Really, all things were present in a new manner when the Word arranged His coming in the flesh, so that He might make into God's possession that human nature which had gone astray from God. For this reason [man] was likewise taught to worship God in a new manner."

[99] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.11.1–2.

[100] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.14.2 (*ANF*, 1:479). "Accustoming man to bear His Spirit [within him], and to hold communion with God: He Himself, indeed, having need of nothing, but granting communion with Himself to those who stood in need of it, and sketching out, like an architect, the plan of salvation that pleased Him."

[101] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.36.7; 4.36.2 (*ANF*, 1:515).

[102] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.36.6 (*ANF*, 1:517).

divine economy in which they participate.[103] For Irenaeus, the covenants, and the "dispensations" which correspond to them, are the means by which God progressively accomplishes his purpose of drawing humanity into communion with himself.[104] This overarching narrative frames Christian self-understanding as the new covenant people, possessed of the Spirit and advancing toward full participation in the beatific vision.

Closely related to this narrative structure is the Two Ways motif that frequently appears in connection with references to the new covenant. Drawing on a well-established tradition, Irenaeus maps the covenantal economy over the motif of the two paths or ways leading to life and death. This occurs especially in the contrasts drawn between truth (derived from the apostles and their disciples) and falsehood (introduced by the heretics),[105] and between the old covenant of enslavement and the new covenant of liberty.[106] These dichotomies correspond to covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking, respectively, and lead to the eternal fates of blessing or judgment: "For the receptacle of his goodness, and the instrument of His glorification, is the man who is grateful to him

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[103] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.36.6 (*ANF*, 1:517). "For as in the former covenant, 'with many of them was He not well pleased;' so also is it the case here, that 'many are called, but few chosen.'"

[104] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.37.7 (*ANF*, 1:520–21). "God thus determining all things beforehand for the brining of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of his dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God."

[105] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.5.1–3 (Unger, 36–38). "The apostles, being disciples of truth, are beyond all lying; for a lie has no fellowship with the truth, just as darkness has no fellowship with light. . . . The apostles, in turn, taught the Gentiles to forsake their empty wood and stones, which they imagined were gods, and to worship the true God . . . [and] to await His Son Jesus Christ, who by His blood redeemed us from the Rebellion, that we might be a sanctified people, and that He would descend from heaven by the power of the Father and would also judge all people, and those who kept His precepts He would reward with God's blessing. This [Christ] . . . gathered into one and united those who were afar off with those who were near, that is the uncircumcised with the circumcised; thus He enlarged Japheth, and established him in the house of Shem." The last sentence invokes the promise of the Noahic Covenant (which, for Irenaeus, is fulfilled in the new covenant) as the framework for interpreting the blessing received by the integrated (and "sanctified") "people" of God, in opposition to the judgment received by those outside this covenant community.

[106] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.9.1–2 (*ANF*, 1:422). "For the Lord . . . delivers a law suited both for slaves and those who are yet undisciplined; and gives precepts to those that are free, and have been justified by faith." After quoting the new covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31, Irenaeus then observes, "Greater, therefore is that legislation which has been given in order to liberty than that given in order to bondage."

that made him; and again, the receptacle of His just judgment is the ungrateful man, who both despises his Maker and is not subject to His Word."[107] At the final judgment, Christ brings the "liberty" of the new covenant to those who "in a lawful manner . . . do him service," while those who reject God and remain fixated on the images and types of the old covenant receive "everlasting perdition."[108] The new covenant, then, is itself the way of life, distinguished by a new ethical orientation that amounts to keeping the covenant commandments. As in the Epistle of Barnabas, the Two Ways motif, with its covenantal overtones, adds another dimension to the metanarrative of Christian identity.

Ritual. Irenaeus regards the church's sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as ritual expressions of a Christian identity grounded in new covenant membership. Concerning baptism, he contends that the "water of life" has been given to the orthodox churches by the apostles, closely associating this concept with the tripartite rule of faith confessed at its administration. This rule of faith is confessed even by barbarian converts, who have "salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink"—a clear covenantal allusion to Paul's own use of Jeremiah 31 in 2 Corinthians 3:3. Because Irenaeus views the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the distinguishing feature of the new covenant, it is not surprising that he should regard the Spirit's work in baptism as a new covenant sign.[109] Since the time of Christ's own commission to the apostles to teach and administer baptism ("that laver which leads to incorruption") to the nations (Matt 28:19), Irenaeus asserts, the promise of the indwelling Spirit—"renewing them from their old selves for the newness of Christ"—has been associated with the "opening" of the new

[107] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.11.2 (*ANF*, 1:474).

[108] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.11.4 (*ANF*, 1:475).

[109] See, for example, the coordination in Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.12.14–15 (Unger, 70): "They gave the New Covenant of liberty to those who recently believed in God through the Holy Spirit . . . if the Holy Spirit had not rested upon them, someone might have hindered them from being baptized."

covenant.[110] In these "last days" of the covenantal economy ("the fullness of the time"), the people of God are cleansed and washed, that they might pass out of death into "the life of God."[111]

As a result of this cleansing, they partake of the Lord's Supper, an additional marker of new covenant membership. The explicit association between the eucharistic cup and the new covenant in the New Testament (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) has been observed above.[112] Irenaeus maintains and develops this understanding, describing the cup as "the new oblation of the new covenant; which the Church receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout all the world."[113] The significance of the created elements of bread and wine receives emphasis in this description of the Eucharist as an "offering," as part of Irenaeus's argument against the Gnostic and Marcionite devaluation of physical matter. He insists that in the establishment of the new covenant, "the class of oblations in general has not been set aside"; the difference is in the nature and motivation of the people offering them: "the offering is now made, not by slaves, but by freemen . . . in order that, by the very oblations, the indication of liberty may be set forth."[114] Indeed, it is crucial, in Irenaeus's view, to recognize the rite in its proper redemptive-historical sequence as a marker of the new covenant, which is the "time to partake of the cup of emblematic significance."[115] His heretical opponents are unable to harmonize their teaching with their practice, whereas for the orthodox, "our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His

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[110] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.17.1–2 (Unger, 85).

[111] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.22.1–4 (Unger, 103–5).

[112] See chap. 2, "Covenant in the New Testament."

[113] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.17.5 (*ANF*, 1:484).

[114] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.18.2 (*ANF*, 1:484–85).

[115] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.16.7. He explains that Mary prematurely desired to partake of it at the wedding in Cana (John 2). "For all these things were foreknown by the Father, but the Son works them out at the proper time in perfect order and sequence."

own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit."[116]

Summing up the relationship between the sacraments and the new covenant, Irenaeus connects the "liberty which distinguishes the new covenant" with both the "new wine which is put into new bottles" and the "streams of the Holy Spirit in a dry land, to give water to the elect people of God."[117] Though he does not mention the rites by name, the references here to their distinctive elements of wine and water, in conjunction with the outpouring of the Spirit as the means of God's promised provision of "a new heart and a new spirit" to his people, are together highly suggestive of the central place of these sacraments in the distinctive identity that is formed, according to Irenaeus, among members of the covenant community.

Ethics. Alongside the narrative and ritual dimensions of identity implied by the covenant framework, Irenaeus also envisions a particular ethical orientation that flows from it, most often summarized as "liberty." This term refers to the "extensive operation" of the Holy Spirit, in which "a more complete subjection and affection towards our Liberator" is "implanted within us."[118] Though consistent in content with the natural precepts given to all humanity at creation and embraced by the righteous patriarchs, which were re-inscribed in the commandments of the decalogue, Irenaeus asserts that the moral character instilled through the new covenant of liberty actually transcends—that is, both fulfills and extends—these requirements of the old law.[119] This is because, unlike the compulsory, external obedience rendered in the enslaved state of bondage to the law, the divine grace bestowed in the new covenant transforms even the underlying desires that motivate human actions, and in this way brings the "natural precepts" to "growth and

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[116] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.19.5 (*ANF*, 1:486).

[117] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.33.14 (*ANF*, 1:511).

[118] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.13.3 (*ANF*, 1:478).

[119] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.13.1; 4.15.1; 4.16.4.

completion."[120] In the "new covenant of liberty," Irenaeus contends,

> [Christ] has increased and widened those laws which were natural, and noble, and common to all, granting to men largely and without grudging, by means of adoption, to know God the Father, and to love him with the whole heart, and to follow His word unswervingly, while they abstain not only from evil deeds, but even from the desire after them. But He has also increased the feeling of reverence; for sons should have more veneration than slaves, and greater love for their father . . . that we may know that we shall give account to God not of deeds only, but even of words and thoughts, as those who have truly received the power of liberty.[121]

Love of God and neighbor are enjoined as the central obligations in both covenants,[122] however, and in this unity, Irenaeus finds another argument against Gnostic and Marcionite systems that place the old and new covenants in opposition.[123] In both the old and the new covenants, "there is the same righteousness of God," though in the latter, the wrath that he threatens against disobedience is eternal rather than typological.[124] Accordingly, the ethical standard is higher as well:

> In the new [covenant] . . . our walk in life is required to be more circumspect, when we are directed not merely to abstain from evil actions, but even from evil thoughts, and from idle words, and empty talk, and scurrilous language: thus also the punishment of those who do not believe the Word of God, and despise his advent, and are turned away backwards, is increased; being not merely temporal, but rendered also eternal.[125]

These references to eternal judgment for the disobedient and, on the other hand, eternal blessings for those who "love God and follow the Word of God" once again invoke the Two Ways tradition, and reinforce the view that the covenant idea organically ties together such dimensions of identity formation as narrative and ethics. For Irenaeus, members of the "new covenant of liberty" inhabit the final stage of the divine economy, marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers the people of

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[120] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.13.4 (*ANF*, 1:478).

[121] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.16.5 (*ANF*, 1:482).

[122] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.13.4.

[123] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.12.2.

[124] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.28.1 (*ANF*, 1:501).

[125] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.28.2 (*ANF*, 1:501).

God to fulfill and indeed surpass the demands of the divine law inscribed in the decalogue. Those who keep this covenant proceed along the way of life into eternal blessing, while those who reject it advance toward eternal destruction.

Distinction. Having surveyed the ways that the covenant concept informs and supports Irenaeus's vision for Christian identity formation in the areas of narrative, ritual, and practice, it is now possible to consider passages in which he explicitly draws attention to this delineating effect, in his polemic against various heretical figures and movements. In Christ's fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, Irenaeus argues, "those who were not a people" were made into a people.[126] This people is the Christian church, comprised primarily of Gentiles but also of believing Jews, as indicated by the status of the Jerusalem church as the "the Mother City of the citizens of the new covenant" during the apostolic period.[127] It was here that the Spirit descended at Pentecost according to the "preordained economy," so that these new covenant citizens could be "made perfect by the Spirit" in the climactic resolution to the one divine economy.[128] A "spiritual disciple of this sort truly receiving the Spirit of God" is one who recognizes and embraces these truths, understanding and further investigating by the Spirit the unity of the two covenants and the arrangement of divine "dispensations."[129] By contrast, a failure to investigate the sequence and harmony of the covenants, as a result of erroneous scriptural *hypotheses*, is characteristic of heretical groups, especially Valentinian Gnostics and Marcionites.[130] Thus, a proper understanding of the covenantal economy becomes a tool

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[126] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.9.1 (Unger, 45).

[127] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.12.5 (Unger, 61).

[128] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.17.4 (Unger, 86); *Haer*. 3.12.5 (Unger, 61).

[129] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.32.1–4.33.1 (*ANF*, 1:505–6).

[130] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 3.12.12 (Unger, 67). With specific reference to Marcionites and Valentinians, Irenaeus states: "All those who are evil-minded, rebelling against the Mosaic law, think it is different from, and contrary to, the doctrine of the Gospel. But they do not apply themselves to investigate the reasons for the difference between the two covenants. Since, therefore, they have been deserted by the

by which the orthodox are equipped to "judge all those who are beyond the pale of the truth, that is, who are outside the church," insisting on the one God proclaimed by the rule of faith and "the dispensations connected with him" as set forth by the Holy Spirit, "who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth, and has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, in virtue of which he dwells with every generation of men."[131]

Conclusion. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus sets forth a covenantal schema that implies a theological narrative, which progresses through the distinct biblical covenants and culminates in the "new covenant of liberty," inaugurated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and incorporating the Gentiles into the one people of God. Membership in this new covenant is marked by baptism, associated with reception of the Spirit, and the Eucharist, an offering affirming the goodness of the created order and physicality of Christ's incarnation, in addition to his sacrificial death. It is also reflected in a new moral character which not only upholds the ethical code of earlier covenantal dispensations, but surpasses them by subordinating both actions and desires to the Spirit's governing influence—leading to eternal blessing rather than judgment. By "investigating" or developing a proper understanding of the covenant economy, Irenaeus asserts that orthodox Christians acquire an effective instrument for safeguarding proper doctrine and distinguishing themselves from their heretical Gnostic and Marcionite opponents.

Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

Though it is catechetical, rather than polemical, in nature, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* bears important confirmatory witness to the scheme described

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Father's love and puffed up by Satan, and have turned to the doctrine of Simon Magus and have apostatized in their doctrines from Him who is God."

[131] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer*. 4.33.7 (*ANF*, 1:508).

above. Moreover, it demonstrates that the covenant concept which Irenaeus defended in refutation of heretical movements such as Valentinianism and Marcionism, he also sought, positively, to instill in new converts through his catechetical efforts. The centrality of the covenant idea to Christian identity formation in Irenaeus's thought is underscored on both fronts.

Graham identifies 16 occurrences of *testamentum* within the *Demonstration*, noting that, as in the case of *Against Heresies*, these are consistently embedded within biblical allusions and quotations.[132] I suggest that Irenaeus uses these references to present a unified scriptural summary of salvation history as the metanarrative for the community that catechumens are joining, which is accompanied by ritual and ethical implications. This section seeks to confirm the points about the relationship between covenant and identity established above from the polemical arguments of *Against Heresies*, noting the way that this four-covenant schema correlates to the stages of human progress in *Haer.* 4.11.2 and the four covenants mentioned in *Haer.* 3.11.8.

While the literary structure of the *Demonstration* remains debated, it is generally recognized that the work divides into two major sections at *Epid.* 42.[133] In the first, after introducing the three articles of the rule of faith (*Epid.* 1–7), Irenaeus briefly recounts the biblical narrative of Adam's creation, transgression of the divine commandment, and exile from Paradise.[134] However, none of the terms that Irenaeus regularly employs to describe covenants or related concepts (*testamentum*, *dispensation*, *promissio*) appear in this summary. Later passages that describe the covenants also do not

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[132] Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 28.

[133] Graham argues at length for a bipartite literary structure in connection with the covenants. Graham, "'Zealous for the Covenant,'" 83–113; however, see also James B. Wiegel, "The Trinitarian Structure of Irenaeus' Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2014): 113–39. Wiegel suggests an additional layer of arrangement corresponding to the statement of the rule of faith at *Epid*. 6–7.

[134] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 8–16.

refer to a covenant with creation or Adamic covenant. These points speak against the originality of the Latin version of *Haer*. 3.11.8, where a covenant "under Adam" is listed first. Rather, for Irenaeus, the fall of Adam and the murder of Abel are preliminary episodes, establishing the setting for his covenantal schema by illustrating that "wickedness, spreading out for a long time, seized the entire race of men."[135]

Irenaeus moves rapidly past these episodes to reach the account of Noah.[136] The flood itself is largely ignored—it merely expresses the divine judgment that wipes the slate clean, so to speak, with regard to the world's wickedness. Irenaeus focuses attention on Noah's sons: "And the three sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth; of <these> the race was multiplied again, for they are the origin of the men who came after the flood."[137] It is no exaggeration to suggest that this statement functions as a programmatic introduction to the entire covenantal economy recounted in the remainder of the *Demonstration*, as the blessings of Shem and Japheth form the foundation for the divine redemption of humanity as a whole. Irenaeus explicitly anticipates the connections to later covenants by asserting, "This blessing flourished when it reached Abraham . . . or the blessing of Shem extended to Abraham," while the blessing of Japheth (that he would "dwell in the house of Shem") was extended to all the world through "the calling of the Gentiles."[138] It is in connection with this blessing that Irenaeus states, "God established a covenant with the whole world, with all brute animals, and with mankind."[139] The primary human party to this universal covenant is not Noah; rather, "because the three sons of Noah were the beginning of the race of men, God blessed them for multiplication

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[135] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 18 (Behr, 50). English translations are taken from Behr.

[136] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 18–23.

[137] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 19 (Behr, 51). I have modified the names of Noah's sons to make them consistent with conventional English usage.

[138] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 21 (Behr, 52–53).

[139] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 22 (Behr, 53).

and growth, saying: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth and rule it."[140] Here, both the first and the last of the four stages of human progress from *Haer.* 4.11.2 are directly referenced: "beginning" and "increase." The Noahic covenant, then, is linked to the first stage of the Word's economy from *Haer.* 3.11.8 (conversing with the patriarchs), and also constitutes the "beginning" of human progress as described in *Haer.* 4.11.2, as the covenant with humanity preserves the earth for their future "increase" (culminating in the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God). Irenaeus concludes the unit by noting that this is exactly what began to happen: "After this covenant, the race of mankind multiplied, proliferating from the seed of the three."[141]

As expected, Irenaeus then immediately transitions ("Later, when time had passed") to the Abraham narrative.[142] In recounting some nine chapters of Genesis, he simply highlights, in a single paragraph, the transmission of the promise of multiplicity ("increase") to Abraham. Inheriting the land inhabited by the descendants of Noah's son Ham, Abraham is promised innumerable offspring: "And so, in this way, the original blessing [given to] Shem passed to Abraham."[143] Also briefly mentioned is circumcision, given "as a seal of the [righteousness] of his faith."[144] Thus, Irenaeus's treatment of the second covenant in the *Demonstration* is likewise consistent with the scheme developed in *Against Heresies*, where the second stage of the Word's economy (the institution of a sacred practice for those who would live under the law) gives rise to both the Abrahamic covenant and the "middle" stage of human progress (the continued development of the process started in the "beginning," the transmission of the covenant blessing from Noah's

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[140] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 22 (Behr, 53).

[141] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 22 (Behr, 54).

[142] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 24 (Behr, 54).

[143] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 24 (Behr, 56).

[144] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 24 (Behr, 55).

son Shem to Abraham).

Irenaeus merely mentions Isaac and Jacob by way of transition to the next covenantal narrative: the multiplication of Israel in Egypt and the exodus, culminating in the giving of the law to Israel through Moses.[145] Here, as in *Against Heresies*, he distinguishes between the decalogue proper, which reflects the natural precepts given to humanity at creation, and "the commandments and the prescriptions which he consigned to the sons of Israel to keep," which God "<imposed . . . stipulating> the character and the manner those should be who continually were to perform the service of worship."[146] This latter imposition is distinct from the promise given "to Abraham and his seed."[147] It is expressed in the commandments of Deuteronomy, which formed "a new legislation, adding to what was before."[148] The emphasis on the additive character of this covenant's cultic stipulations neatly correlates to the discussion of the third universal covenant in *Against Heresies*, patterned after the third stage of the Word's economy in *Haer.* 3.11.8 (his "being made man for us" by adding, or assuming, a human nature), while also reflecting the third stage of human progress in *Haer.* 4.11.2 ("addition").

Irenaeus explains that the addition of Deuteronomy also contained "many prophecies about our Lord Jesus Christ, and about the people and about the calling of the Gentiles," themes which directly anticipate the last of the four universal covenants that structure the economy: the new covenant.[149] This fourth unit begins with an assertion of

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[145] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 25–29.

[146] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 26 (Behr, 57).

[147] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 27 (Behr, 57).

[148] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 28 (Behr, 59).

[149] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 28 (Behr, 59). This also explains why he dismisses the remainder of the Old Testament canon with cursory references to "David and Solomon his son" in Jerusalem and "the prophets sent from God," in response to the question raised by Elliott, "Irenaeus, Abraham, Covenants," 175: "If Irenaeus desired to show a progressive history of redemption in the Old Testament history, why then does *Epid*. 29–30 have only a paragraph and a half on David and the Old Testament Monarchy, out of which Jesus came?"

the purpose of the entire economy of the Word ("So he united man with God and wrought a communion of God and man") and concludes by linking it back to the beginning ("This is the fruit of the blessing of Japheth, made manifest, by means of the Church, in the calling of the Gentiles, [who were] waiting to receive 'the dwelling in the house of Shem,' according to the promise of God."[150] Though Irenaeus does not use the specific phrase "new covenant" here, all of the phenomena that he describes—the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God, their inheritance of the patriarchal promise, the forgiveness of sin, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—are identified as the blessings of the new covenant elsewhere, in both the *Demonstration* and *Against Heresies*.[151] Thus, the fourth and final universal covenant described in the *Demonstration* directly reflects the fourth and final stage of the Word's economy elaborated in *Haer*. 3.11.8 ("He sent the gift of the celestial Spirit over all the earth"), in addition to fulfilling the fourth and final stage of human progress mentioned in *Haer.* 4.11.2, "increase." It is the multiplication of the people of God through the calling of the Gentiles, and the moral fruitfulness resulting from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among them, that constitute this "increase," and bring closure to the redemptive economy initiated in the promise to Noah's sons.

Covenant and identity formation. Like *Against Heresies*, the *Demonstration* also closely connects the covenant motif with identity formation in the key areas of belief/narrative, ritual, and ethical practice. The narrative component has been sketched above, in the summary of the covenantal structure of salvation history that Irenaeus develops in *Epid.* 11–42. In the preface to the work, Irenaeus also once again frames this narrative in terms of the Two Ways motif, asserting that those who properly receive this instruction regarding the divine economy and their place within it are on the path toward

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[150] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 31–42a (Behr, 60; 67).

[151] See, for example, Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 89–91.

eternal communion with God, while those who do not will be separated from him.[152] The covenantal structure of the biblical overview also expands the narrative summarized in the tripartite rule of faith, which Irenaeus presents in terms of the Father's creation of all things, the Son's incarnation to effect "communion between God and man," and the Holy Spirit's revelation of these truths through the prophets and apostles and outpouring upon all humanity "in a new fashion."[153] The covenants, then, provide the connective tissue of the divine economy, which conveys humanity along the "path of righteousness" toward communion with God, in keeping with the tripartite rule of faith.

In the same passage, Irenaeus firmly establishes the inseparable relationship between this narrative identity and its ritual counterpart in his reference to baptism.[154] Being immersed into the tripartite name, the new convert confesses the rule of faith which properly describes the three divine persons by reference to their works in the redemptive economy.[155] As I have demonstrated, Irenaeus closely correlates baptism with the reception of the Holy Spirit (whose outpouring is the marker of the new covenant) in *Against Heresies*, and the emphasis here on the reception of the Spirit as the means by which humanity is led into communion with God following baptism is quite consistent with this line of thought. This relationship is reinforced at the conclusion of the first major section of the *Demonstration*, when Irenaeus states that the apostles were "sent by [Christ], with the power of the Holy Spirit, into the whole world, realized the call of the

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[152] *Epid.* 1 (Behr, 39–40). "For the way of all those who see is single and upward, illumined by the heavenly light, but the ways of those who do not see are many, dark and divergent; the one leads to the kingdom of heaven, uniting man to God, while the others lead down to death, separating man from God."

[153] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 6 (Behr, 43–44).

[154] The lack of clear references to the Eucharist in the *Demonstration* is likely to be explained by its catechetical nature, given Irenaeus's extensive discussion of it in *Haer.* (as noted above).

[155] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 3 (Behr, 42); *Epid.* 7 (Behr, 44). "We have received baptism for the remission of sins, in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, [who was] incarnate, and died, and was raised, and in the Holy Spirit of God. . . . For this reason the baptism of our regeneration takes place through these three articles, granting us regeneration unto God the Father through His Son by the Holy Spirit, for those who bear the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is to the Son, while the Son presents [them] to the Father, and the Father furnishes incorruptibility."

Gentiles, showing mankind the way of life, turn<ing> them away from idols and from fornication and from avarice, cleansing their souls and bodies by the baptism of water and the Holy Spirit, distributing and dispensing the Holy Spirit . . . to the faithful."[156]

This reference to the reception of the Holy Spirit provides a natural transition into the third aspect of identity formation that Irenaeus envisions in connection with new covenant membership, the cultivation of a distinct ethic. As he continues in the passage just quoted,

> For thus do the faithful keep, having the Holy Spirit constantly dwelling in them, who was given from Him [God] at baptism and kept by the recipient living in truth and holiness and righteousness and patience. . . . This is the fruit of the blessing of Japheth, made manifest, by means of the Church, in the calling of the Gentiles, [who were] waiting to receive 'the dwelling in the house of Shem,' according to the promise of God."[157]

For Irenaeus, then, the "increase" promised in the Noahic covenant and fulfilled in the new covenant refers not only to the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God, but also to the surpassing moral fruitfulness that results from the Spirit's indwelling. This understanding is confirmed in the *Demonstration*'s final section, where Irenaeus returns to the calling of the Gentiles as the climax of the divine economy and fulfillment of the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31.[158] After quoting Isaiah 2:3 ("For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"), Irenaeus draws attention to both the unity and the difference between the two covenants, noting that while both enjoin the love of God, it is only in the new covenant that God "has increased, by means of our faith in Him, our love towards God and towards the neighbour, rendering us godly, righteous and good."[159] "Newness" is the watchword in all that follows: Christians are "saved in the newness by the Word, who is making a "new thing,"

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[156] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 41 (Behr, 66).

[157] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 42 (Behr, 67).

[158] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 86–96.

[159] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 87 (Behr, 93).

the "new way of godliness and righteousness."[160] The resulting virtue is accomplished "in the newness of the Spirit," in fulfillment of Jeremiah's promise of a "new covenant" in which the law would be written upon the hearts of the people (Jer 31:31).[161] Ezekiel likewise spoke of the "new Spirit" that God would place within the hearts of his new covenant people, enabling them to keep his commandments (Ezek 11:19–20).[162] It is this "new calling" which has formed the Christian church into a new "race," a "holy people" distinctly identifiable to observers on account of their righteousness.[163] Unlike their idol-worshiping neighbors or even their law-observing Jewish forebears, this new covenant people is no longer in need of the law's pedagogical function, being inclined, by the "mixing and blending of the Spirit of God" which conforms them to the divine image, to desire and pursue what the law itself commands.[164] As Irenaeus concludes, this is the "way of life"—encompassing proper doctrine, ritual, and ethical behavior—that leads its adherents to the kingdom of heaven, in sharp contrast to the "error" by which heretics, "straying from the truth," reject the tripartite rule of faith and the covenantal economy that is inseparable from it.[165]

Conclusion

While the covenants are indeed crucial to Irenaeus's biblical theology, or presentation of salvation history, as scholars have generally recognized, this is just one component of Irenaeus's broader identity-forming project—specifically, it constitutes the element of belief or narrative, which is then accompanied by ritual and ethical

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[160] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 89 (Behr, 94).

[161] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 90 (Behr, 95).

[162] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 93 (Behr, 96).

[163] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 93–94 (Behr, 96–97).

[164] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 96–97 (Behr, 98–100).

[165] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Epid.* 98–100 (Behr, 100–101).

implications. Taking its cues from the importance that Irenaeus himself assigns to the covenants in *Haer*. 1.10.3 and the fourfold covenantal schema that he develops in *Haer.* 3.11.8—in which, I argued, the Greek version, consisting of the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and new covenants, should be preferred as authentic—this survey proposed that the covenantal schema is best understood in light of the fourfold scheme of human progress delineated in *Haer*. 4.11.1–2, with its four stages of beginning, middle, addition, and increase. In this way, the four universal covenants are patterned after the stages of the Word's economy, which provides the archetype for all of human history, and its gradual progression toward participation in divine communion.

Additional confirmation of the schema identified within *Against Heresies* by comes from the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, which, in its first half (*Epid.* 17–42a) treats these covenants (and only these) in terms that closely resemble the four stages of human progress already described: the "beginning" (the Noahic covenant, which enshrines the initial promise of "increase" to Shem and Japheth) gives way to the "middle" (the transmission of this promise to Abraham, in whom both Jewish and Gentile believers are prefigured), pauses temporarily for the "addition" (of the law, given through Moses as a "pedagogue" anticipating Christ) before finally culminating in the "increase" itself (the incorporation of the Gentiles and their spiritual fruitfulness in the new covenant, as the fulfillment of the promises to Shem and Japheth).

In both of Irenaeus's works, the function of the new covenant concept as an identity-forming phenomenon is displayed, not only in providing the overarching metanarrative that grounds the community's essential beliefs, but also in providing its ritual practices of baptism (closely tied to the reception of the Holy Spirit) and the Eucharist (affirming the goodness of the created order and thus the unity between old and new covenants) and its ethical code and source of power (the indwelling Spirit, poured out at the inauguration of the new covenant). In all these ways, Irenaeus rhetorically and pastorally employs the new covenant motif to cultivate an identity for the orthodox

Christian community that is distinct from its heretical (especially, Gnostic and Marcionite) detractors.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria's use of the covenant theme in his protreptic work *Exhortation to the Greeks*, and its place within a broader trajectory of development in second-century apologetic writings, were considered in the previous chapter.[166] Here, I turn attention to Clement's other two major extant texts, *Christ the Educator* and the *Miscellanies*, to consider his employment of the covenant theme in heresiological contexts. As with Irenaeus, there is both a positive, or constructive, aspect (instructing or catechizing new converts) and a negative, or critical, aspect (refuting heterodox figures and teachings) that comprise this rhetorical effort as two sides of a single coin. Broadly speaking, in *Christ the Educator*, Clement sets forth the new covenant in terms of the internalized law that shapes a recognizably Christian "way of life," while in the *Miscellanies*, he focuses on its connection with philosophy and its propaedeutic function among the Greeks. In both cases, the emphasis is on its distinguishing function, in separating and delineating the belief and practices of members from non-members in the pursuit of true *gnosis*.

Christ the Educator

The *Paedogogus*, or *Christ the Educator* (c. 190), likely represents "a literary account of the instruction and investigation conducted at the catechetical school" in Alexandria, with which Clement is famously connected.[167] Unlike the catechetical program of Irenaeus, Clement developed a system of Christian Gnosticism "to counteract

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[166] See chap. 5, "Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Greeks."

[167] Simon P. Wood, introduction to *Christ the Educator*, by Clement of Alexandria, trans. Simon P. Wood, Fathers of the Church 23 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), viii. English quotations are taken from this translation.

the false Gnosticism of Marcion, Valentinus, and Theodotus."[168] The work is formative in character, aiming to teach faithful "children," or disciples of Christ, "what to avoid and turning them toward a truly Christian way of life."[169] It is therefore significant that in this context that he makes use of the covenant theme—even if not to the extent that he employs it in the *Exhortation to the Greeks* or the *Miscellanies*. Its three books progress from an introduction to the nature and character of Christ as the divine *paidogogos* of humanity (book 1) to practical considerations of the distinctively Christian "way of life," in both its mundane (book 2) and more aesthetic or intellectual (book 3) aspects. Once again, we will organize the discussion according to the identity-forming categories of belief/narrative, ritual, and ethical practice, to observe how the covenant concept informs each one in Clement's thought, differentiating orthodox Christians who possess this identity from heretical counterparts.

Belief/narrative. Clement clearly states the work's overarching purpose at its outset—to describe how the Logos "draws men from their natural, worldly way of life and educates them to the only true salvation: faith in God."[170] The refrain of a particular "way of life" recurs throughout as Clement's shorthand for the entire educative program of Christianity, which is also programmatic for his three major extant works.[171] Clement describes this way of life in terms of loving obedience:

> As for Him who lovingly guides us along the way to the better life, we ought to return Him love and live according to the dictate of His principles. This we should do not only by fulfilling his commandments and obeying his prohibitions, but also by turning away from the evil examples we just mentioned and imitating the good. . . . Let us, then, express our love for the commandments of the Lord by our actions . . . considering the Word as our law, let us see in His commandments and counsels

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[168] Wood, introduction to *Christ the Educator*, ix.

[169] Wood, introduction to *Christ the Educator*, xii.

[170] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.1.1 (Wood, 4).

[171] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.1.3 (Wood, 5). "The all-loving Word, anxious to perfect us in a way that leads progressively to salvation, makes effective use of an order well adapted to our development; at first, He persuades, then, He educates, and after all this He teaches."

direct and sure paths to eternity.[172]

Here, the covenantal notion of a relationship of divine-human communion, resulting in the keeping the divine law, or commandments, is integrated with the Two Ways tradition, such that membership in the covenant community is set forth as "the way to a better life" and the "direct and sure paths to eternity."[173] Clement thus frames the identity of the community in terms of an overarching Two Ways narrative, in which covenant-keeping is the pathway to eternal blessing.

The covenantal character of this framework is made explicit later. Though he never introduces a programmatic covenantal schema like that of Irenaeus, Clement develops the historical contrast between "the old people" of the Jews with the "little ones" or "new people" of the Christian church, differentiated by their childlike soft-heartedness.[174] This transformation results from the inauguration of the new covenant: "Little ones are indeed the new spirits, they who have newly become wise despite their former folly, who have risen up according to the new Covenant. . . . Then the new people, in contrast to the older people, are young, because they have heard the new good things . . . For those who have partaken of the new Word must themselves be new."[175] In this new covenant, God draws them into communion with himself, "giving them a new birth and making them His own adopted sons."[176] Clement follows Paul in drawing a sharp salvation-historical distinction between the condition of the Jews living "by the Law" and Christians who inherit the fullness of "the promise" (Gal 4:1–7).[177] The arrival of the Christian gospel in the new covenant initiates, paradoxically, both a return to "childlike"

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[172] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.3.9 (Wood, 10–11).

[173] Cf., for example, Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.54 (Wood, 50): "The Educator, in his concern for us, leads His children along a way of life that ensures salvation."

[174] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.19 (Wood, 19–20).

[175] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.20 (Wood, 21).

[176] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.21 (Wood, 22).

[177] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.33 (Wood, 32–33).

innocence and a maturation toward "perfection."[178]

Like Irenaeus, Clement insists, against Marcionite and other opponents, upon the organic unity and harmony of the one covenantal narrative. The same Logos who promised to multiply the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and bestowed the "old Covenant as law" to the "older people" of Israel, which "guided them through fear," has now revealed "a new and young Covenant" to "the new and young people," such that "fear has been turned into love."[179] Moreover, Clement defends the agreement in content between the old and new covenants, which enjoin worship of the same God and obedience to the same moral commands: "This is My new Covenant, written with the letters of the old."[180] He offers these arguments in direct response to "certain persons"—undoubtedly including the followers of Marcion—who wrongfully place these two instruments of the Logos, the Law and the Gospel, in opposition, failing to recognize the consistent character of the one God in both cases.[181]

Indeed, both instruments work together to educate humanity in the way of life: returning to the Two Ways imagery, Clement concludes, "He summons the elect to a more excellent life; and those who are bent on evil He restrains from their course and encourages to turn to a better life. Neither way of life lacks its testimony; in fact, the one supplies testimony to the other."[182] By contrast, "He will come as Judge to pass sentence on those who are unwilling to preserve goodness in their lives," as Clement warns in quoting Psalm 78:10: "They kept not the covenant of God: and in His law they would not walk."[183] The covenantally-charged prophetic declaration that for the righteous person,

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[178] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.34 (Wood, 34).

[179] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.56–59 (Wood, 53–54).

[180] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.59 (Wood, 54).

[181] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.8.62 (Wood, 56).

[182] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.8.74 (Wood, 67).

[183] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.9.86 (Wood, 76).

life comes through keeping the commandments of the Lord (Ezek 18:9) provides for Clement "a complete description of the Christian life and a wonderful encouragement to work for the blessed life, which is the reward of good living, that is, life everlasting."[184]

Ritual. Clement closely associates the identity received in the new covenant with the sacramental markers of baptism and the Eucharist. After noting that those who have "risen up according to the new Covenant" become members of their "mother, the Church,"[185] he observes that they immediately receive perfection (true knowledge of God) in being "enlightened"—or baptized, as he explains.[186] They are purified of their sins, and in keeping with the pattern of Christ's own baptism, "consecrated by the descent of the Holy Spirit."[187] The result is a more fully perfected spiritual vision of the divine: "those who are baptized are cleansed of their sins which like a mist overcloud their divine spirit and then acquire a spiritual sight which is clear and unimpeded and lightsome, the sort of sight which alone enables us to behold divinity, with the help of the Holy Spirit who is poured forth from heaven upon us."[188] For Clement, in the reception of baptism, the preliminary knowledge imparted through catechesis is transformed into living faith by the work of the Spirit.[189] In this new state, all recipients are equal participants—in contrast, for example, to the hierarchical Gnostic classes of pneumatics, psychics, and hylics.[190] Through this "second birth through water, increase through the Spirit," the Logos conforms humanity to the divine image—in covenantal terms, "guiding him surely

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[184] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.10.95 (Wood, 84).

[185] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.20–21 (Wood, 21).

[186] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.25 (Wood, 24–25).

[187] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.26 (Wood, 26).

[188] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.28 (Wood, 27–28).

[189] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.30.

[190] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.31.

to the adoption of sons and to salvation with holy precepts."[191]

The Eucharist, also, is an essential marker of Christian identity in Clement's thought. Interpreting Genesis 49:11 ("He tethers his colt to the vine"), Clement suggests that the "new people" of the church, whom he later identifies with partakers of the new covenant, together receive the "saving potion" of the vine (wine, or Christ's blood).[192] Christ's own command to eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:55) is understood as "a striking figure for faith and for the promise," by which the church "is welded together and formed into a unit."[193] As in the case of baptism, here also the Spirit's work is what makes the sacrament efficacious in sanctifying those who partake: "wine is mixed with water and the Spirit is joined to man; the first, the mixture, provides feasting that faith may be increased; the other, the Spirit, leads us on to incorruption. The union of both, that is, of the potion and the Word, is called the Eucharist."[194] Though he does not cite the Lukan eucharistic formula that explicitly connects the ritual with the new covenant,[195] Clement's understanding of it as a Spirit-empowered practice of the "new people," fostering their communion with the Word, are suggestive of the covenantal framework.

Ethics. In some sense, Clement's entire overarching purpose in *Christ the Educator* is to articulate the distinctive ethical code that must characterize the church, and he outlines the contours of this "way of life" in meticulous detail in books 2 and 3. As those who have been invited into communion with God, Clement exhorts his readers,

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[191] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.12.98 (Wood, 86–87).

[192] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.15 (Wood, 16). As he notes at *Paed.* 2.2.29 (Wood, 19), "Scripture . . . always uses wine in a mystical sense, as a symbol of the holy Blood."

[193] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.6.38 (Wood, 37).

[194] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.2.20 (Wood, 111).

[195] It is not clear which Gospel tradition Clement invokes in the allusion at *Paed.* 2.2.32 (Wood, 21): "He blessed wine, saying: 'Take, drink, this is My blood.'" It may most closely resemble Matt 26:26–29, in which the commands to "take" and "drink" both appear, along with the subsequent reference to the "fruit of the vine."

“Let us, then, express our love for the commandments of the Lord by our actions. Further, considering the Word as our law, let us see in his commandments and counsels direct and sure paths to eternity.”[196] The community thus drawn together shares “one virtue” in addition to their “life in common,” “grace in common,” and “salvation in common.”[197] That this shared moral orientation should be understood in covenantal terms is, again, confirmed by the key passage in *Paed.* 1.5.19, where Clement observes that the “new people” have “recently become gentle and meek of disposition,” (“childlike,” in his favorite term), in contrast to the “old people” of Israel who were “perverse and hard of heart.”[198] Because the “new and young covenant” is characterized by love of God, rather than fear of him, its members “learn to do well” and “turn away from evil and do good.”[199] Living in communion with the Logos in this way is, in Clement’s view, the fulfillment of the classical Stoic endeavor to “live according to reason,” since “the life of the Christian, in which we are now being educated, is a united whole made up of deeds controlled by reason; that is, it is the persevering accomplishment of the truths taught by reason, or rather, the Word, an accomplishment which we call fidelity.”[200] Books 2 and 3 work out the practical manifestations of this “way of life,” as they relate, externally, to food and drink, wealth, social relationships, recreation, and sex (book 2) and, internally, to reason, emotions, and desires (book 3). In all these things, Christian virtue performs a distinguishing function, as Clement concludes, “We have the Cross of our Lord as our boundary line, and by it we are fenced around and shut off from our former sins . . . Good order is the perfect way of life, for it is entirely well behaved, is a quality that establishes

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[196] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.3.9 (Wood, 11).

[197] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.4.10 (Wood, 12).

[198] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.5.19 (Wood, 20).

[199] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.7.59 (Wood, 54).

[200] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.13.102 (Wood, 91).

constancy, fulfills virtuously in deed the things imposed on it, one after the other, and is unsurpassed in virtue."[201] Clement confirms that this unique way of life results from new covenant membership in a closing statement:

> These are the laws of reason, words that impart inspiration, written by the hand of the Lord, not on tablets of stone, but inscribed in the hearts of men, provided only that those hearts are not attached to corruption. Therefore the tablets of the hard of heart have been broken, that the faith of little ones may be formed in their impressionable minds. Both laws served the Word as a means of educating mankind, the one through Moses, and the other through the Apostles. But, what a means of education is the one given through the Apostles![202]

In the clear allusion to Jeremiah 31:31 (by way of 2 Cor 3:3), what is "inscribed in the hearts" of the people of God is the content of the divine law, which remained consistent across both its historical expressions (the Mosaic law and the apostolic new covenant), yet achieved new clarity and force in the latter time of the Word's "blessed dispensation."[203]

Miscellanies

Tracing the covenant theme in the *Miscellanies* proves more challenging on two counts: first, the less straightforward organization of the text, and second, the wider range of uses of διαθήκη.[204] That the work was intended to combat heresy is noted as early as Eusebius.[205] Generally, it progresses from a discussion of Christianity as the true philosophy and its adherents as true Gnostics (in contrast with the false views and immoral practices of heretical groups) in books 1–3, to discussion of widely-assorted

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[201] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12.85 (Wood, 263–64).

[202] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12.94 (Wood, 270).

[203] Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12.94 (Wood, 270); *Paed.* 99 (Wood, 274).

[204] Though often criticized for its apparently disorderliness as a collection of unpublished notes, see the important recent argument for intentionality and coherence in the structure of the *Miscellanies* in J. M. F. Heath, *Clement of Alexandria and the Shaping of Christian Literary Practice: Miscellany and the Transformation of Greco-Roman Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[205] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist.* 6.13.5. "He elucidates the opinions of many, both Greeks and barbarians. He also refutes the false doctrines of the heresiarchs."

topics including martyrdom, faith, allegory, and mysticism (books 4 and 5), before returning to philosophy and the ideal of the true Gnostic in conclusion (books 6 and 7).[206] Relative to *Christ the Educator*, Clement's *Miscellanies* holds a position that is in some ways analogous to the relationship between Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* and *Against Heresies*: the larger work offers an extensive refutation of heretical viewpoints (alongside orthodox teaching), while the smaller work is aimed, more positively, at catechetical or spiritual instruction. In each case, the two works together accomplish a broader project of identity formation by clearly distinguishing orthodoxy and heresy, with the covenant concept playing a significant role.

Covenant in *Miscellanies*. Clement uses διαθήκη with several different meanings in the *Miscellanies.* Most often, he simply distinguishes the old and new covenants—either to demonstrate the unity of their teaching,[207] or in connection with his recurring argument that philosophy performed a propaedeutic function for the Greeks, analogous to the function of the Mosaic law for the Jews.[208] This idea is developed most thoroughly when he appeals to the Preaching of Peter in book 6; while Greeks and Jews have rendered improper worship to God, the Christians worship in a "new way" through Christ, which the Preaching identifies with the new covenant (Jer 31:31):

> He made a new covenant with us; for what belonged to the Greeks and Jews is old. But we, who worship Him in a new way, in the third form, are Christians. For clearly, as I think, he showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks

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[206] As Ferguson notes, the originality of book 8, which precedes the appended treatises *Excerpts from Theodotus* and *Selections from the Prophetic Scriptures* in the manuscript, remains in doubt. Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria*, 154–55.

[207] "From the very beginning, as I have already said, the Law laid down the injunction 'You shall not desire your neighbor's wife' in anticipation of the Lord's closely connected dictum in accordance with the New Covenant with the same meaning from his own lips: 'You have heard the injunction of the Law 'You shall not commit adultery.' I say, 'You shall not lust.'" Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 3.11.71 (Ferguson, 300). English translations from books 1–3 are taken from Ferguson, while English translations from books 4–7 are taken from *ANF*.

[208] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.5.28 (Ferguson, 42). "God is responsible for all good things: of some, like the blessings of the Old and New Covenants, directly; of others, like the riches of philosophy, indirectly."

> in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new and spiritual way by us. And further, that the same God that furnished both the Covenants was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks, he shows. And it is clear from this. Accordingly, then, from the Hellenic training, and also from that of the law are gathered into the one race of the saved people those who accept faith: not that the three peoples are separated by time, so that one might suppose three natures, but trained in different Covenants of the one Lord, by the word of the one Lord.[209]

By placing philosophy in parallel to the "old covenant" given to the Jews, Clement implies that it also may be regarded as a covenant—which he confirms a few chapters later in stating that philosophy "was given to the Greeks, as a covenant peculiar to them—being, as it is, a stepping-stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ."[210] For Clement, then, the "covenants" are not strictly limited to those enumerated in Scripture, but display considerable "variety."[211] Nevertheless, as modes of understanding revealed by God, all of them, including philosophy, possess "the highest authority."[212] Moreover, in their function as testimonies to Christ, they are united: "For, in truth, the covenant of salvation, reaching down to us from the foundation of the world, through different generations and times, is one, though conceived as different in respect of gift."[213] Though led to it by "different" paths, Greeks and Jews come together to comprise the one "peculiar people" who "meet in the one unity of faith."[214]

Additional senses of διαθήκη, apart from the schema developed in *Strom.* 6, come from scriptural quotations,[215] or refer to personal identifications with God, Christ,

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[209] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 6.5 (*ANF*, 2:489–90).

[210] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.8 (*ANF*, 2:495).

[211] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.15 (*ANF*, 2:508). Commenting on Wis 6, "Now the paths are the conduct of life, and the variety that exists in the covenants."

[212] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.8 (*ANF*, 2:494). "And should one say that it was through human understanding that philosophy was discovered by the Greeks, still I find the Scriptures saying that understanding is sent by God . . . [David, in Ps 119] confessed the covenants to be of the highest authority, and that they were given to the most excellent."

[213] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.13 (*ANF*, 2:504).

[214] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.13 (*ANF*, 2:504).

[215] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.6; 6.6.

or divine agency (as in creation).[216] When it is not elaborated further, however, the term most often refers to the new covenant reality that governs the situation of the church, in contrast to the old covenant. Thus, for example, Christians have received spiritual life through Christ "thanks to our covenant."[217] Marriage is not a sin "according to the covenant."[218] The narrative function of the new covenant is reflected in Clement's connection of it to the church's rule of faith, in noting that "the ecclesiastical rule is the concord and harmony of the law and the prophets in the covenant delivered at the coming of the Lord."[219] The enemies of God, who do not obey his commandments, show themselves to be "hostile to his covenant."[220] True Gnostics, by contrast, avoid conduct that is "contrary to the covenant."[221] In each of these passing references, the progression from the old to the new covenant developed in book 6 is assumed. Clement envisions the church as a new covenant community, trained by true philosophy and pursuing virtue.

Ethics. As this last point suggests, Clement conceives of a distinct ethical orientation as characterizing the new covenant community. This is perhaps most directly expressed in his reference to a "gospel ethic" that is violated through the breaking of the commandments and the committing of sins "according to the covenant."[222] The context, significantly, is Clement's refutation of Tatian—a Gnostic teacher who made "a distinction between the old humanity and the new" which, Clement clarifies, "is not ours." The issue in question is the legitimacy of marriage, procreation, and remarriage,

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[216] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.29.182; 4.3; 6.6.

[217] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.10.47 (Ferguson, 191).

[218] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12.82 (Ferguson, 307).

[219] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.15 (*ANF*, 2:509).

[220] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.12 (*ANF*, 2:542)

[221] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.14 (*ANF*, 2:549).

[222] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12.82 (Ferguson, 307).

which Tatian, like other Gnostics, rejected as the designs of the wicked lower god of the material world. Clement agrees with Tatian that the "old" humanity is governed by the Law, and the "new" humanity by the Gospel—but rejects his radical conclusion that the Law of the old covenant should be abolished. In the case of a widower, Clement argues, remarriage is neither "forbidden by the law" of Moses nor is it "sin according to the [new] covenant." Nevertheless, it also does not fulfill "the highest pitch of the gospel ethic," which would be to remain single in dedication to the Lord's service (1 Cor 7:25–40). Clement's larger aim is to demonstrate that the apostolic writers "preserve the connection between the law and the gospel," while at the same time urging members of the new covenant to pursue a higher standard (a "gospel ethic") than the law required.[223]

Distinction. That Clement develops this argument in the context of refuting the heretical teacher Tatian is indicative of the heresiological function that the new covenant concept plays in his thought. Like Irenaeus, Clement is at pains to document that one and the same God is the source of both the old and new covenants, against Gnostic and Marcionite opponents.[224] In fact, because God himself is "the covenant" and "originator of the universe," he is the one who "establishes its orderly disposition" through all forms of law, including natural law.[225] It is in this connection that Clement appeals to the Logos/*Nomos* tradition of the Preaching of Peter, noting that there Christ is "addressed as 'Law and Word.'" Because the same Logos speaks through both the old law and the new covenant, the unity between their precepts can be used "to challenge each of the heresies" and "to refute those who set their dogmas against the

[223] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12.86 (Ferguson, 307).

[224] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.5.28.

[225] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.29.182 (Ferguson, 155–56). "The law of nature and the Law of instruction are certainly from God, and one and the same."

commandments."[226] The orthodox, who are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit who inspired both the prophets and apostles, therefore "know the one to whom we pray, our real Father, the one and only Father of all that is."[227] Proper understanding of the propaedeutic function of the Mosaic law within a broader covenantal scheme is a distinguishing mark of Clement's "true Gnostic," and is also expressed in virtue:

> But now in the Gospel the Gnostic attains proficiency not only by making use of the law as a step, but by understanding and comprehending it, as the Lord who gave the Covenants delivered it to the apostles. And if he conduct himself rightly (as assuredly it is impossible to attain knowledge by bad conduct) . . . blessed then will he be, and truly proclaimed perfect."[228]

Conclusion

The somewhat scattered covenantal reflections of the *Miscellanies* help to fill out the basic covenantal framework of the distinctly Christian "way of life" that Clement imparts to the readers of *Christ the Educator*, applying it now, polemically, against Clement's Gnostic and Marcionite rhetorical opponents. By broadening the use of the term to include the propaedeutic revelations of the Logos in Greek philosophy and natural law, in addition to the Mosaic law, Clement underscores his argument that such figures actively reject or suppress the pathways to true *gnosis* that have been made available. By contrast, the "true Gnostic," or orthodox Christian fervently pursuing spiritual insight, employs a proper understanding of the unity of subject (the Logos) and content (the divine law) between the old and new covenants to arrive at worship of the one true God. This gives rise to a distinctive moral character that upholds the "gospel ethic" of the new covenant—consistent with previous iterations of the law, but exceeding their requirements.

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[226] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.11.71 (Ferguson, 300).

[227] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 3.11.78 (Ferguson, 304).

[228] Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 4.21 (*ANF*, 2:433).

Tertullian of Carthage

Near the end of the second century (and extending into the third), a final major figure who employs the covenant concept for heresiological purposes is Tertullian of Carthage (c. 155–220).[229] Tertullian's covenantal schema, developed most extensively in his treatise *Against the Jews*, has been outlined already.[230] Thus, the focus here will be limited to his adaptation and application of this scheme in heresiological contexts, as in his two major polemical treatises—*Against Marcion* and *Against Praxeas*. As in *Against the Jews*, Tertullian utilizes covenantal arguments in these texts to reinforce a notion of orthodox Christian identity, and to distinguish its characteristics from heretical thought. Before analyzing them, however, it is first necessary to note the intimate interrelationship in Tertullian (as we have seen also in Irenaeus) between the covenant idea and the rule of faith, which forms an important presupposition for his heresiological approach.

Covenant and the Rule of Faith

The authoritative function of the *regula fidei* in Tertullian's scriptural exegesis and theological argumentation is widely recognized.[231] Explicit statements of Tertullian's *regula* occur in three texts: *Prescription against Heretics* 13, *On the Veiling of Virgins* 1, and *Against Praxeas* 2.[232] Despite variation in form, these three expressions reflect a

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[229] For works that provide orientation to Tertullian's life and writings, see chap. 4, s.v. "Tertullian of Carthage, *Against the Jews*."

[230] See chap. 4, "Tertullian of Carthage, *Against the Jews*."

[231] Waszink suggests a judicial and rhetorical background to Tertullian's use of the rule. Jan Hendrik Waszink, "Tertullian's Principles and Methods of Exegesis," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilken, Théologie Historique 53 (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1979), 9–31. Countryman demonstrates its assumed authority and proposes a primarily catechetical context. L. William Countryman, "Tertullian and the Regula Fidei," *Second Century* 2, no. 4 (1982): 208–27. Blowers draws attention to its narratival elements while calling it his "absolutely original bottom line, the objective foundation and infallible logic that informs true faith and gives the lie to heresy." Paul M. Blowers, "The Regula Fidei and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 6, no. 2 (1997): 226. Dunn affirms the role of the *regula* as Tertullian's "measuring stick for interpretation," despite also insisting that his exegetical method depends entirely on polemical context and rhetorical purpose. Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Tertullian's Scriptural Exegesis in De Praescriptione Haereticorum," *JECS* 14, no. 2 (2006): 147.

[232] Countryman, "Tertullian and Regula Fidei," 208–14.

"basic similarity of structure, based on a twofold plan: belief in the Creator and belief in Jesus as Son or Word of the Creator."[233]

In *Praescr.* 13—certainly the earliest of the three versions, following Barnes's chronology[234]—a noteworthy phrase appears in the article on Christ. Following the assertion of his birth to the virgin, it declares "that thereafter He proclaimed a new law and a new promise of the Kingdom of Heaven."[235] These references to the "new law" and "new promise" are closely associated with Tertullian's concept of the new covenant.[236] Thus, the impression conveyed is that Christ's proclamation of a new covenant is, itself, a constituent element of Tertullian's *regula fidei*—an interpretation that Tertullian's polemic against Marcionism supports.[237]

This understanding is supported by Tertullian's other two expressions of the rule. In *Virg.* 1, he discusses the divine economy as a whole. Having begun with the Father's creation and the Son's ministration, it now continues in the Paraclete's "direction of discipline," by which humanity progresses and matures toward fuller participation in God.[238] In *Prax.* 2, Tertullian explains that the monotheism of the *regula*

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[233] Countryman, "Tertullian and Regula Fidei," 208–14.

[234] Barnes places *Praescr.* in 203, *Virg.* ca. 208–209, and *Prax.* ca. 210–211. Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 2, 55. The early date of is not affected by Barnes's proposed revisions in the 1984 postscript.

[235] "*Exinde praedicasse nouam legem et nouam promissionem regni caeolorum*." Tertullian of Carthage, *Praescr.* 13 (Bindley, 53). English translations are taken from Bindley. The Latin text is Tertullian, *Praescr.*, in François Refoulé, ed., *Tertullien: Traité de la Prescription contre les Hérétiques*, trans. Pierre de Labriolle, SC 46 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957).

[236] See the close association and even identification of these terms, as, for example, in Tertullian of Carthage, *Iud.* 3.7–8 and *Marc.* 4.9.

[237] Tertullian of Carthage, *Praescr.* 30 (Bindley, 76), explains that Marcion "separated the New Testament [*testamentum*] from the Old," an argument that will be discussed at length in the treatment of *Against Marcion* below. The significance of the terminology of *testamentum* will also be considered.

[238] Tertullian of Carthage, *Virg*. 1 (*ANF*, 4:27–28): "Nothing is without stages of growth: all things await their season. . . . So, too, righteousness—for the God of righteousness and creation is the same—was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced, through the Law and the Prophets, to infancy; from that stage it passed, through the Gospel, to the fervour of youth; now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity." The specific connection between covenant and economy will be considered further below.

is “subject to this dispensation (which is our word for ‘economy’),” in which the one God is revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit, and which has “come down from the beginning of the Gospel.”[239] Thus, all three presentations of the *regula* suggest an interconnection between its assertions about the three divine persons and their “economic” manifestations in the “dispensation” of the new law (that is, the new covenant).[240] This grounding in the *regula fidei* is an important component of the heresiological identity-forming work that the new covenant concept performs in Tertullian’s argumentation.

Against Marcion

Tertullian’s five-volume treatise *Against Marcion* preserves much of Marcion’s own otherwise lost teaching, though for the purpose of refutation.[241] Written just after the close of the second century, the work nevertheless includes and develops (sometimes directly quoting) ideas that Tertullian had first introduced years earlier, as in *Against the Jews*.[242] Because “the separation of Law and Gospel is the primary and principal exploit of Marcion,” the work continues Tertullian’s earlier endeavor to plot the harmonious relation between the old and new covenants as revelatory of one and the same Creator God.[243] While he makes use of some earlier writers, Tertullian primarily “relied on his own ingenuity, his knowledge of the Bible, and his reading of Marcion’s

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[239] “*Sub hac tamen dispensation*, οἰκονομίαν *quam dicimus*.” Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 2 (Evans, 131–32). English translations are taken from Evans.

[240] Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.10.3, where the number and nature of the various biblical covenants are listed among matters worthy of further investigation by those who hold to the rule just described. As noted by Blowers, with regard to both Irenaeus and Tertullian, the rule facilitates “identification with and in a particular story that transcends all local particularities and aspires to universal significance.” Blowers, “The Regula Fidei,” 214. The present study argues that the covenant concept provides a specific mechanism within the rule by which this process of narratival identification takes place.

[241] See chap. 3, “Covenant in Marcion.”

[242] As discussed in chap. 2 above. Barnes dates *Marc.* approximately a decade letter, in 207–208. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55. Though see the modifications of the rev. ed. at Barnes, *Tertullian*, 326–28.

[243] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.19 (Evans, 49). English translations are taken from Evans.

Antitheses and version of the New Testament."[244] In this, his overarching argument is that the new covenant itself reveals the Creator in his fullness, and was promised by him.

Covenant terminology. Tertullian's choices in covenant terminology reveal his commitments both to the use of scriptural language and to clear explication for the understanding of his audience. It was noted above that Tertullian's writings employ four key terms in connection with the covenants: *dispositio*, *dispensatio*, *instrumentum*, and *testamentum*.[245] In *Against Marcion*, he uses *dispositio* fifty times, and of these, the vast majority refer generally to a divine plan, arrangement, intention, or course of action.[246] Significant possible exceptions are the three occurrences at *Marc.* 3.20. Here, the first two instances are quotations of Isaiah 42:6—the same text quoted in *Against the Jews*—and Isaiah 55:3.[247] The third case interprets these first two occurrences as prophecies of the coming of Christ and the new covenant inaugurated in him.[248] Also noteworthy are the two uses at *Marc.* 4.1, which follow a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31–32. The first describes the divine arrangement of the old covenant (*testamentum*), while the second, again in close proximity to *testamentum*, appeals to the Creator's own prediction of new institutions from the vantage point of the old.[249] Apart from these contexts in which the biblical language of *testamentum* appears, however, *dispositio* more consistently refers to a divine plan, intention, or course of action.

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[244] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 127–28.

[245] See chap. 4, "Covenant Terminology."

[246] Duncan defines it as "something divinely ordained or arranged . . . employed to denote a stage, a dispensation, an administration of the divine economy." Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 173.

[247] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 3.20. "*Et disponam vobis dispositionem aeternam, religiosa et fidelia David*."

[248] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 3.20. "*Ita quae in Christo nova dispositio invenitur hodie, haec erit quam tunc creator pollicebatur, religiosa et fidelia David appellans, quae erant Christi, quia Christus ex David*."

[249] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.1. "*Ecce venient dies, dicit dominus, et perficiam domui Iacob et domui Iudae testamentum novum, non secundum testamentum quod disposui patribus eorum in die qua arripui dispositionem eorum adeducendos eos de terra Aegypti*"; "*Igitur sialias leges aliosque sermones et novas testamentorum dispositiones a creatore dixit futuras*."

The term *dispensatio* occurs six times (all in book 5), due to its appearances in the Latin of Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9.[250] Following a quotation of the former text, Tertullian explains that the underlying Greek term (οἰκονομία) implies a recapitulation (*recapitulare*) of the kind that Marcion's god cannot effect, having no *dispensatio* of his own to fulfill.[251] He then employs it twice more in invoking the language of Ephesians 3:9.[252]

The even broader term *instrumentum* appears twenty times.[253] In every relevant case, it refers to scriptural texts or documents, usually in testimony against Marcion.[254] While it may refer to a canonical collection, it never directly refers to a historically-understood biblical covenant.[255]

Finally, Tertullian uses *testamentum* thirty times.[256] As in *Against the Jews*, the first occurrence comes with a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31–32.[257] Also following the pattern of *Against the Jews*, every subsequent instance most likely refers to a historically-understood biblical covenant—with the exception of two cases in which Tertullian follows Paul's use of the legal sense of διαθήκη to denote a will (Gal 3:15).[258] As indicated by Tertullian's definition of *instrumentum* as *testamentum* in *Marc.* 4.1, his use

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[250] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.17 (4x); 5.18 (2x).

[251] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.17. "*Quam proposuerit in sacramento voluntatis suae, in dispensationem adimpletionis temporum (ut ita dixerim, sicut verbum illud in Graeco sonat) recapitulare (id est ad initium redigere vel ab initio recensere) omnia in Christum*."

[252] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.18.

[253] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.10, 1.18 1.19 (x2); 2.16, 2.20, 4.1, 4.2 (x2); 4.3, 4.10, 4.25, 5.1 (x2); 5.2, 5.6 (x2); 5.13, 5.14, 5.16.

[254] Instances that are not relevant here include, for example, references to the instruments of nature by which God is revealed at *Marc.* 1.18, or the medical instruments used by a surgeon at *Marc.* 2.16.

[255] For example, Tertullian refers to the two *instrumenti* of the Law and the Gospel at *Marc.* 4.1.

[256] The vast majority of occurrences are concentrated in books 4 and 5.

[257] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.20.

[258] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4.

of the latter term is, by this time, complicated by its possible reference to a canonical collection of scriptures. However, even when this may be in view, it should not be assumed that a reference to the associated historical covenant (old or new) is absent, since for Tertullian these concepts are inseparable, if not indistinguishable.[259]

It thus appears that by the writing of *Against Marcion*, *dispositio* has acquired a flexible range of meaning, regularly describing a sequence of divine arrangements or "ordinances," of which the covenants are crucial components.[260] However, Tertullian consistently returns to the biblical term *testamentum* (and the familiar source texts of Jer 31:31–32 and Isa 55:3) when more specifically referring to the divinely-initiated, historically-understood covenantal arrangements attested within Scripture itself.[261] Though *dispensatio* is not a term that Tertullian favors, he reveals his fidelity to scriptural language in his effort to explain its meaning and incorporate it within his scheme when he encounters it in Ephesians.[262]

Generally, then, Tertullian's language for describing the covenant concept in *Against Marcion* is fundamentally and consistently scripturally-derived. The divine ordinance or providence (*dispositio*), as a unified whole, consists of particularized, historical *testamenta* (covenants), as attested within the scriptural documents

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[259] See, for example, Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 2.27; 3.14; 4.1; 4.6.

[260] See the classic discussion of *oikonomia*, which often provides the background for uses of both *dispositio* and *dispensatio* in Tertullian, in G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (1936; repr., London: SPCK, 1952), 55–75. Though he surveys the wide range of Greek patristic uses pertaining to administration, arrangement, and organization, Prestige notes, "Above all, economy expresses the covenanted dispensation of grace," and, "Economy in such contexts means simply dispensation or covenant." Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 64–65. See also the discussion of Tertullian's more distinctive application of this concept to Trinitarian reflection in *Prax.* to signify "interior organisation" and "the co-ordination of constituent elements" within the Godhead (pp. 97–111). These connections will be considered further below.

[261] Duncan seems to agree, asserting that "Tertullian's most common use of *testamentum* is in reference to the dispensation of the divine economy." "The Covenant Idea," 167. However, he later states that Tertullian's uses of this term (and *instrumentum*) are more concerned with the unity of texts (canonical testaments) than the unity of redemptive history (covenants), whereas *dispositio* is his preferred term for describing the relation between old and new covenants (169).

[262] As Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 175, also notes.

(*instrumenti*) with which they are inseparably linked, and they relate to each other by means of a progressive economy (*dispensatio*) of recapitulation. Tertullian is committed to developing his conceptual framework in consistency with scriptural vocabulary, even when it may seem redundant or cumbersome to do so.[263]

Covenantal arguments. Tertullian makes substantial covenantal arguments in books 1, 3, and 5, of *Against Marcion*, presenting the new covenant as the culmination of a progressive redemptive economy and the verification, in history, of the identity between the Creator God and the Father of Jesus Christ—all inaugurated by the eschatological event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God.

First, building upon his work in *Against the Jews*, Tertullian returns to Jeremiah 31:31–32 as early as *Marc*. 1.20, to introduce (or re-introduce) the new covenant as the "reforming ordinance" prophesied by the Creator God within the old covenant itself.[264] Rejecting the novel "rule" of Marcion, which radically divides Law from Gospel, Tertullian counters with the apostolic "rule of faith," which identifies them as revelations of one and the same Creator (the Father of Christ).[265] This, in a sense, is the programmatic argument of the entire work.

In the final two books, Tertullian conducts an extended exegetical refutation based on scriptural texts that Marcion himself accepted (in redacted form): the Gospel of Luke (book 4) and the letters of Paul (book 5).[266] He opens his treatment of the Gospel in

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[263] Thomas P. O'Malley notes, in analyzing Tertullian's glosses, that he "is sensitive to language; that he is aware of the peculiarities of biblical, and of Christian language; that, with his passion for clarity, he sets out the meaning of these words." Thomas P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible. Language, Imagery, Exegesis*, Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1967), 35.

[264] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.20 (Evans, 53).

[265] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 1.20–21 (Evans, 53–55).

[266] As Eric Osborn observes, the first two books are dedicated to the presentation of a systematic and logical critique of Marcion's view, while the latter three books are given over to scriptural

book 4 with a concession:[267]

> So then I do admit that there was a different course [*ordinem*] followed in the old dispensation [*in veteri dispositione*] under the Creator, from that in the new dispensation [*in nova*] under Christ. I do not deny a difference in records of things spoken, in precepts for good behaviour, and in rules of law, provided that all these differences have reference to one and the same God, that God by whom it is acknowledged that they were ordained [*dispositam*] and also foretold.[268]

Tertullian turns this concession to his advantage, however, by adducing a litany of texts proving that such a change in "dispensation" was repeatedly predicted by the Creator himself.[269] Chief among these is Jeremiah 31:31–32, with its promise of a *testamentum novum*, standing behind Tertullian's assertion that "the original testament [*pristinum testamentum*] was temporary, since he declares it changeable, at the same time as he promises an eternal [*aeternum*] testament for the future."[270] As in *Against the Jews*, so here, the eternal *testamentum* also constitutes the "holy and faithful things of David" from Tertullian's version of Isaiah 55:3, providing in Christ a fulfillment to the Davidic promise of 2 Samuel 7. Having drawn these texts together, Tertullian concludes, "If therefore he has said that other laws and other words and new ordainings of testaments would come from the Creator . . . it follows that every change which results from renewal must lead to difference from those things of which it is [the renewal], and to opposition as a result of difference. . . . He who ordained the change, also established the

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exegesis, which provides documentation for the case asserted (beginning, in book 3, with the Old Testament, where much of the material from *Against the Jews*, considered above, is repeated). Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 90.

[267] As Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 185–86, also notes.

[268] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.1 (Evans, 258).

[269] Isa 2:2–4 ("A law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"); Isa 51:4 ("A law will go forth from me, my judgment also for a light of the Gentiles"); Isa 43:18 ("old things have passed away; new things are arising"); Jer 4:4 ("Renew for yourselves a new fallow . . . and be circumcised in the foreskin of your heart"); Jer 31:31–32 ("I will make for the house of Jacob and the house of Judah a new testament"); Isa 55:3 ("Hearken to me, and you shall live, and I will ordain for you an eternal testament").

[270] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.1 (Evans, 259).

difference."[271] Tertullian thus channels an entire network of scriptural texts pertaining to the biblical covenants through the programmatic lens of Jeremiah 31:31–32 to ground his argument that the new covenant reveals no other God than the Creator.[272]

Though he concedes to Marcion the "newness" of the new covenant, Tertullian insists that it relates to the "oldness" of the old covenant by way of progress, rather than separation or replacement.[273] The Christ of Marcion's Gospel of Luke, for example, affirms the goodness of the Law of Moses in his instructions to the healed leper while also revealing a "deeper understanding of that law which indicates spiritual things by means of things carnal."[274] This is in keeping with the view, already developed in *Against the Jews*, that the separation of two things requires their original unity:

> Separation is possible because things are conjoined: and their conjunction brings it about. So he made it plain that the things he was separating had once been in unity, as they would have continued to be if he were not separating them. In that sense we admit this separation, by way of reformation, of enlargement, of progress, as fruit is separated from seed, since fruit comes out of seed. So also the gospel is separated from the law, because it is an advance from out of the law, another thing than the law, though not an alien thing, different though not opposed.[275]

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[271] Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.1 (Evans, 260–61). See also Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.9 (Evans, 289): "Marcion's purpose is in no sense served by what he supposes to be an opposition between the law and the gospel, because this too was ordained by the Creator, and in fact was foretold by that promise of a new law and a new word and a new testament [*testamentum*]."

[272] Duncan also notes the foundational place of Jer 31:31–32 as Tertullian's key "proof text." Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 202.

[273] Cf. Tertullian of Carthage, *Virg.* 1 (*ANF*, 4:27–28): "Nothing is without stages of growth: all things await their season . . . Look how creation itself advances little by little to fructification. First comes the grain, and from the grain arises the shoot, and from the shoot struggles out the shrub: thereafter boughs and leaves gather strength, and the whole that we call a tree expands: then follows the swelling of the germen, and from the germen bursts the flower, and from the flower the fruit opens: that fruit itself, rude for a while, and unshapely, little by little, keeping the straight course of its development, is trained to the mellowness of its flavour. So, too, righteousness—for the God of righteousness and of creation is the same—was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced, through the Law and the Prophets, to infancy; from that stage it passed, through the Gospel, to the fervour of youth: now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity."

[274] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.9 (Evans, 291–93). "As concerned the observance of the law, he ordered the proper course to be followed: Go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded. Knowing that the law was in the form of prophecy, he was safeguarding its figurative regulations even in his own mirrored images of them."

[275] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.11 (Evans, 309). Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Haer.* 4.11.1: "And in this respect God differs from man, that God indeed makes, but man is made; and truly, He who makes is always the same; but that which is made must receive both beginning, and middle, and addition, and increase [*et initium et medietatem et adjectionem et augmentum*] . . . God also is truly perfect in all things .

Continuity between revelations proves their common source, such that the voice of the Creator can and must be perceived in Christ's pronouncement of the beatitudes: "This must be that excellent Word, of benediction surely, who by the precedent of the old covenant is recognized as the initiator of the new covenant as well."[276] Their content is consistent with the natural law that he first established—though also definitively expanded and improved.[277] By contrast, the God of Marcion enters the scene abruptly and reveals himself without forewarning, lacking the historical, prophetic, and, specifically, *covenantal* anticipation that would make the message of his messiah persuasive.[278]

Turning to the letters of Paul in book 5, Tertullian begins with Marcion's prized epistle to the Galatians, acknowledging that its "whole intent . . . is to teach that departure from the law results from the Creator's ordinance" in a movement "away from the law, towards grace."[279] Following Paul's argument, however, Tertullian insists that this "pattern of grace" was first established in the *testamentum* which sealed the promises to Abraham, prior to the Mosaic covenant that came 430 years later (Gal 3:15–18).[280] Paul's "allegorical" interpretation of the mothers of Abraham's sons as "two covenants [*testamenta*]" (Gal 4:24) lends further support to Tertullian's argument for the historical

. . but man receives advancement and increase towards God. For as God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go on towards God."

[276] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.14 (Evans, 323).

[277] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.16 (Evans, 343): "The Creator's law is found in Christ . . . Consequently the precept in the gospel will have come from him who of old time both prepared for it and gave it distinct expression, and set it under the arbitrement of his own rule of conduct, and has now, as was his right, given it summary precision."

[278] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 4.31 (Evans, 441). Having just interpreted the parable of the banquet in Luke 14:12–24 as a summary of the redemptive economy of the Creator (who has repeatedly made himself known prior to the feast by sending "invitations," in the form of the prophets), Tertullian asks rhetorically: "Of the rehearsal of this history in accordance with the covenant and prophecies of the Creator, how much can have any application to that [Christ] whose [god] has done all his work at one time, and has neither history nor covenant to harmonize with the parable?"

[279] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.2 (Evans, 515).

[280] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4 (Evans, 525).

continuity between the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and new covenants.[281] His offhand remark is therefore all the more notable, that the Marcionites translate this phrase as two "revelations [*ostensiones*]."[282] Their effort to dehistoricize the covenants plays directly into Tertullian's criticism that Marcion's god lacks any verifiable temporal precedent.[283]

By contrast, Tertullian asserts that the incorporation of the Gentiles (the children of the free woman of Gal 4:24) is facilitated by the historical outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the eschatological fulfillment of Joel 2:28.[284] This theme recurs in Tertullian's subsequent commentaries on the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12,[285] the superiority of the new covenant to the old covenant from 2 Corinthians 3:6,[286] and the drawing of the Gentiles in Ephesians 1:13, by which they have been brought to the God of "the commonwealth of Israel, and the covenants and the promises" (Eph 2:12).[287]

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[281] R. P. C. Hanson, "Notes on Tertullian's Interpretation of Scripture," *JTS* 12, no. 2 (1961): 273; he begrudgingly acknowledges that Tertullian employs allegory in moderation, while generally lamenting his "legalistic" approach to the New Testament, which turns Christianity into a "baptized Judaism" (279). However, Tertullian's emphases on newness, grace, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit cannot support such a simplistic reading.

[282] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4 (Evans, 531): "'For these are two testaments [*testamenta*]'—or two revelations [*ostensiones*], as I see they have translated it."

[283] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4 (Evans, 527), commenting on Gal 4:4: "To have waited for the time to be fulfilled was characteristic of him [the Creator] to whom belonged the end of time, as also its beginning. But that leisured god of yours, who has never either done anything or prophesied anything, and so knows nothing of any time, what has he ever done to cause time to be fulfilled, and to justify waiting for its fulfillment?"

[284] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.4 (Evans, 527). "God . . . has foreordained and foretold the revelation of his own Son at the far end of the times . . . . 'In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'" (Joel 2:28).

[285] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.8 (Evans, 559): "So now there is that promise of the Spirit made in general terms by Joel: 'In the last days I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh.' . . . And in fact if it was for the last days that the Creator promised the grace of the Spirit, while in the last days Christ has appeared as a dispenser of spiritual things . . . it is clear also from that foretelling of the last times that this grace of the Spirit appertains to the Christ of him who foretold it."

[286] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.11 (Evans, 579). "So also the New Testament [*testamentum novum*] will belong to none other than him who made that promise: even if the letter is not his, yet the Spirit is: herein lies the newness. Indeed he who had engraved the letter upon tables of stone is the same who also proclaimed, in reference to the Spirit, 'I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh'."

[287] Tertullian of Carthage, *Marc.* 5.17 (Evans, 615). "And so the apostle refers to himself [and his own], which means the Jews, in such form as to make a distinction when he turns to the Gentiles: 'In whom ye also, after ye had heard the word of truth, the gospel, in whom ye believed, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of his promise.' What promise? That made by Joel: 'In the last days I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh': that is, upon the Gentiles also."

Though his heightened interest in the activity of the Spirit doubtlessly results in part from developing Montanist inclinations,[288] Tertullian's connection of Joel 2 to the establishment of the church nonetheless clearly marks out the bestowal of the Spirit as a crucial element of his new covenant concept.

Conclusion. While Tertullian reiterates many features of the covenantal schema developed in *Against the Jews*—such as the exegetical starting point of Jeremiah 31:31–32 (showing that a new covenant was anticipated within the old covenant itself), and the affirmation that the new covenant fulfills the covenants with Abraham and David,[289] he also introduces new arguments, as demanded by the need to demonstrate unity between the old and new covenants in the confrontation with Marcionites. Thus, he now describes the new covenant as (1) the culmination of a progressive divine revelation (unfolding more organically than suggested by the demarcated iterations of law-giving in *Against the Jews*);[290] (2) the historical verification of the Creator God's self-revealing activity through the fulfillment of prophecy; and (3) the eschatological incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Each argument supports Tertullian's demonstration of the identity between the God of the new covenant and the Creator.

Against Praxeas

Finally, representing Tertullian's most mature (though also most "openly

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[288] The traditional view that Tertullian embraced this heretical sect during the latter portion of his career, which appears as early as Jerome, *Vir.* 53, has been regularly nuanced, modified, and challenged in recent scholarship; see, e.g., Gerald L. Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 55–62; David E. Wilhite, "The Spirit of Prophecy: Tertullian's Pauline Pneumatology" in *Tertullian and Paul*, ed. Todd B. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 45–71.

[289] Duncan thus overstates the case in insisting that Tertullian's schema is exclusively "duo-covenantal." Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 200.

[290] See the discussion of Tertullian's use of organic metaphors of growth to describe the relation between the testaments in O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, 70–71, 124.

Montanist") thought,[291] the treatise *Against Praxeas* clarifies further aspects of his new covenant concept.[292] Now in the context of the last great controversy of his career, Tertullian opposes the modalistic monarchianism espoused by the followers of Praxeas, the heresy which famously "put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father," and had, apparently, made its way from Asia to Carthage by way of Rome.[293] Beyond the work's relevance for the development of trinitarian doctrine, *Against Praxeas* also attests to a final stage in Tertullian's reflection on the new covenant, in the central affirmation that the new covenant reveals the Trinity itself, through its manifestation of the Son and the Spirit as distinct persons within the Godhead.

Covenant terminology. In *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian uses *dispositio* eight times—now to clarify, against modalists, the "ordinance" by which the Son exists in distinction (but not separation) from the Father.[294] Though he uses *dispensatio* only twice, he again explains that it translates οἰκονομία.[295] The word *instrumentum* appears three times.[296] Of the two relevant instances, one refers to a canonical collection of texts, while the other refers to the collection of Paul's letters.[297] Lastly, Tertullian uses

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[291] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 141.

[292] Ernest Evans, introduction to *Treatise Against Praxeas*, by Tertullian (London: SPCK, 1948), 18. Evans suggests a date of 213, where he also marks the beginning of Tertullian's "Montanist period," while Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55, places it somewhat earlier (ca. 210–211), believing Tertullian's Montanism to be apparent as early as 206.

[293] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 1 (Evans, 131). English translations are taken from Evans .

[294] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 3, 4, 5, 6, 16, 19, 21, 23.

[295] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 2; cf. *Marc.* 5.17. "*Sub hac tamen dispensatione, quam οἰκονομία dicimus, ut unici dei sit et filius*." In the second occurrence, at *Prax.* 4, Tertullian seems to use *dispensatio* interchangeably with *dispositio* (with which it is paired in the context) to refer to the present mode of the divine self-revelation, in which the Trinity is "introduced." See also Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 175.

[296] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 3, 20, 28.

[297] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 20 and 28, respectively. This is consistent with the patterns of usage noted in *Against Marcion* above.

testamentum three times.[298] While these instances may suggest a canonical grouping of texts (in relation to "the old scriptures" and "the Law and the Prophets"), Tertullian emphasizes in each case the progress in divine self-revelation that has made recognition of the Son and the Holy Spirit possible (and necessary).

Tertullian's use of *dispositio* in this work shows further development in that it now explains, against modalists, the revelation of divine distinctions. *Testamentum* language, though less prominent, coincides with the concept of progress, indicating a definitive stage of revelation subsequent to "the Law and the Prophets" initiated by the coming of Christ. Though intimately associated with the collections of texts that bear witness to the old and new covenantal arrangements, Tertullian's preferred term for a document (or set of documents) is *instrumentum*.[299]

Covenantal arguments. At the beginning of the treatise, Tertullian rejects the monarchian view as an innovation, a deviation from the "rule" handed down "from the beginning of the Gospel" concerning the Godhead.[300] He notes that the orthodox, like Praxeas, confess "one only God," but in addition they affirm, "subject to this dispensation (which is our word for 'economy') that the one only God has also a Son, his Word who has proceeded from himself," who also "sent from the Father the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."[301] Thus, the revelation of the Son and the Spirit as distinct persons of the

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298 Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 15, 20, 31.

299 As also concluded by Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 167; and O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, 33, following René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le Vocabulaire Doctrinal de Tertullien*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977), 463–73. See also the full discussion at Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, 463–73.

300 Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 2 (Evans, 131–32).

301 Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 2 (Evans, 131). As Prestige explains, "When Tertullian employs economy, which he transliterates instead of translating, as a means of expressing the nature of the divine activity, the reference which lies behind this usage is mainly to the sense of interior organisation." , Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 99. However, Prestige likely delineates too sharply between the reference to this "interior organization" within the Trinity, and its external ("economic") manifestation in

one true God is a phenomenon realized within the new "dispensation" of the "Gospel."[302] It is the "mystery of that economy which disposes the unity into trinity, setting forth Father and Son and Spirit as three . . . yet of one substance and one quality and one power."[303]

In support, Tertullian cites scriptural texts that delineate the relationship between this "economy," in which the Son and Spirit are revealed, and the new covenant. The scriptural prophecies that clearly distinguish the Son and the Spirit from the Father, for example, are those that anticipate their economic manifestation, such as Isaiah 49:6 and 61:1.[304] In such texts "the distinctiveness of the Trinity is clearly expounded," when interpreted, as intended, "by the grace of God . . . according to the calculation of the economy which makes plurality," so that Christ is "recognised as God" in his coming.[305] Such recognition results from the illumination of the scriptures by the Spirit, who now has been "poured forth" as "the preacher of one monarchy and also the interpreter of the economy for those who admit the words of his new prophecy."[306] The familiar language of Joel 2:28 resurfaces in Tertullian's description of this indwelling and illuminating Spirit as the distinctive hallmark of the people of God in the new covenant, the final stage of the redemptive economy:

> Moreover this matter is of Jewish faith, so to believe in one God as to refuse to

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the new covenant. Tertullian's purpose, as will be seen below, is to show that these aspects are mutually implied. See also the discussion at Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. David Smith and John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 365.

[302] Though Tertullian uses the term *Gospel* in a variety of ways, nothing in the contexts suggests that it should be taken in a strictly documentary sense. Rather, the usage seems to be temporal, referring to the earliest historical juncture within the present "economy," when such heresies as Praxeas defends had not yet arisen.

[303] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 2 (Evans, 132).

[304] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 11 (Evans, 144). "I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa 49:6); "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to men" (Isa 61:1).

[305] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 11 (Evans, 144); *Prax.* 13 (Evans, 147).

[306] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 30 (Evans, 179).

> count in with him the Son, and after the Son the Spirit. For what [difference] will there be between us and them except that disagreement? What need is there of the Gospel, what is that confidence of the New Testament which establishes the Law and the Prophets until John, unless thereafter Father and Son and Spirit, believed in as three, constitute one God? It was God's will to make a new covenant for the very purpose that in a new way his unity might be believed in through the Son and the Spirit, so that God who had aforetime been preached through the Son and the Spirit without being understood might now be known in his own proper names and persons.[307]

Not only, then, does Tertullian view the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a signal of the establishment of the new covenant, in fulfillment of earlier prophecies, but he also sees one purpose of the inauguration of the new covenant itself to be the eschatological self-revelation of the Trinity, facilitating apprehension of the Spirit, along with the Son, as fully distinct, yet fully divine.[308] In short, the new covenant reveals God as Trinity.

Conclusion. Tertullian's view of the new covenant emerges in *Against Praxeas* in its most mature form, as (1) a new "dispensation" that began with the introduction of "the Gospel"; (2) a Spirit-illuminated hermeneutical lens for the interpretation of scriptural texts describing the economic manifestations of the Son and the Spirit; and thus (3) the definitive self-revelation of the Trinity, in which the Son and the Spirit are recognized by the orthodox as distinctive persons within the Godhead. In probing the implications of the new covenant concept for an orthodox doctrine of God's triunity, Tertullian provides a striking example of the heresiological function that covenantal identity could perform, in distinguishing adherents of truth from adherents of error.

Conclusion

In addressing quite distinct movements, Tertullian's treatises *Against Marcion* and *Against Praxeas* together display the heresiological versatility of the covenant

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[307] Tertullian of Carthage, *Prax.* 31 (Evans, 179).

[308] Duncan, "The Covenant Idea," 220.

concept. In the former case, it could function to safeguard the unity of the scriptural witness to the one Creator God, who orchestrates a single, continuous redemptive economy. In the latter case, however, it could serve to explain the full revelation of plurality within the Godhead, as manifest historically in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Spirit in the inauguration of the new covenant. In carefully shaping this particular conception of the relation between the immanent and the economic within the divine, the covenant concept directly contributed to a doctrinal threshold that could be used to demarcate between orthodox and heretical communities.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this study I have argued that a self-understanding as the people of the new covenant was an essential component of the project of early Christian identity formation as it can be observed in second-century texts, which has not yet received its due in mainstream scholarship. This self-understanding was developed and expressed in each of the major rhetorical and polemical contexts in which Christian writers sought to articulate and defend a distinct Christian identity: that is, in relation to Judaism, Greco-Roman culture, and in the differentiation between orthodoxy and heresy within the church. By way of conclusion, it may be helpful to draw together the various strands and lines of argument connected with the covenant concept that have been surveyed, in order to summarize, synthetically, its most predominant or frequently-recurring characteristics. While I have noted considerable diversity in the modes of expression and particular details of the covenantal schemes articulated, there has also been remarkable consistency in their broad strokes—a continuity that helps to confirm the centrality of this concept across the wide range of Christian communities represented. This consistency, in turn, suggests the general unity of identity that characterized these temporally-separated and geographically-distributed communities, with respect to belief, ritual, and ethical practice.

Contexts

This study began with two chapters outlining the two primary historical and cultural background contexts for the Christian development of the covenant concept as an important component of identity formation.

First, a survey of Jewish texts showed that the covenant motif, as introduced and extensively developed in the Old Testament, maintains a constant presence in texts of the Second Temple period, where it functions to distinguish Jews from Gentiles (or other Jews) in apocryphal, Qumran, and Hellenistic texts. It does so by providing the covenant community with a particular set of beliefs (rooted in a theological metanarrative), a set of ritual practices (primarily circumcision, but also including sabbath observance and purification rites), and distinctive moral laws that, when embraced, lead to blessing rather than curse. This demarcating function has been well-recognized, and has provoked significant debate, in the scholarly discussions surrounding the "parting of the ways" and the "New Perspective on Paul," since it was from this Jewish context that covenant as an identity-forming concept was inherited by the first Christians, including writers of the New Testament, where it is already attested in the earliest writings of Paul.

Second, in the Greco-Roman context, the term διαθήκη does not occur in the theological sense outside the LXX and the New Testament. Though roughly comparable notions of divine-human relationship and collective identity can be found in the religious sphere (*polis* religion, mystery religions, and the imperial cult) and social sphere (voluntary associations), the differences between these phenomena and the Christian understanding of the covenant are too significant for the latter to be explained strictly in terms of the former. Moreover, within movements that the orthodox came to reject as heretical, such as the widely-diverse sects of "Gnosticism" and the churches embracing the teachings of Marcion, the covenant concept either did not inform their approaches to identity formation (in the case of the Gnostics), or it did so by introducing radical oppositions and disjunctions between the covenants (in the case of the Marcionites). These points support the main argument, that its use among orthodox Christians was truly distinct.

Synthesis

Following these considerations of background contexts, the main discussion (chapters 4–6) centered around the strategies by which leading orthodox writers used the covenant concept to form a distinct identity for the emerging Christian movement in response to the problems and challenges that they encountered in these contexts. Thus, the study has been organized, first, according to the three major rhetorical domains in which writers constructed a notion of Christian identity, and, secondly, according to three major components of that identity that are substantially informed and shaped by the new covenant concept (belief, ritual, and ethical practice). Within these three categories, a number of important themes recur across texts. While not all the following themes appear in every text, they collectively attest to the versatile and multifaceted character of the new covenant concept as developed and applied to the task of Christian identity formation in the second century.

Belief

The term *belief* has been used throughout this study to denote the fundamental presuppositions of the Christian community. It is inclusive not only of doctrinal commitments, but also of underlying metaphysical assumptions, corresponding to theological-historical narrations about the past, present, and future. In short, it constitutes the total worldview or view of reality in which the believing community contextually situates itself. We have seen that the concept of the new covenant directly and thoroughly shapes this overarching metanarrative for second-century Christian writers in at least three ways, through the devices of redemptive history, the rule of faith, and the narrative/eschatological aspects of the Two Ways tradition.

Redemptive history. The first and most often-noticed way in which the new covenant shapes the belief of the Christian community is in structuring and sequencing the scriptural scheme of redemptive history. The covenant concept itself is biblically-

derived, and inherited, in an already well-developed form, from Jewish predecessors who had recognized the pivotal importance of the scriptural accounts of the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic covenants. Texts that rhetorically address Jewish contexts thus adhere closely to the covenantal literary structure and logic of the Pentateuch (as in the *Epistle of Barnabas*) and develop increasingly sophisticated intertextual networks of covenant prophecies (as in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*) to construct overarching historical-theological narratives that culminate in the coming of Christ and inauguration of the new covenant (as in Tertullian's *Against the Jews*). In a much less-noticed parallel to this, apologetically-oriented writers addressing Greco-Roman audiences (including the Preaching of Peter, Justin's *Apologies*, and Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks*) use the notion of Christ as *nomos* and logos to ground the phenomenon of Christianity in the witness of ancient philosophical traditions. Finally, heresiological writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian develop covenantal schemes in greatest detail to clarify the unity of divine revelation and order the redemptive economy against what they perceive as Gnostic and Marcionite distortions of it. Structuring their readings of the scriptural narrative according to the progression of the covenants enabled these writers to clarify a theology of history and view of metaphysical reality which provided essential contexts for the church's understanding of its own situatedness within the world. A key turning point marking the inauguration of the new covenant era for nearly all the writers considered in this study is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as described in Acts 2. It is this event, more than any other, that most directly informs their understanding of their own place within the unfolding economy.

The rule of faith. Closely connected with the redemptive economy, I have demonstrated that many second-century writers view the new covenant as an integral component of the church's *regula fidei*. This is not as surprising as it may first appear, insofar as the rule of faith itself emerged as a theological instrument for expressing and

maintaining the unity of scriptural revelation in an implied narrative of creation, redemption, and eschaton. Irenaeus, then, could list the "giving and character of the covenants" as an element in his statement of the rule (*Haer.* 1.10–1–3), and, in the catechetical context of the *Demonstration*, immediately follow his summary of the tripartite rule with an overview of what he calls the "four universal covenants." Tertullian, even more explicitly, includes the giving of the "new law and new promise" within the christological portion of one of his own expressions of the rule, and employs the new covenant concept extensively to demonstrate the incompatibility of the theological frameworks of the followers of Marcion and Praxeas. Thus, the new covenant helped to safeguard and reinforce the doctrinal content of the church's confession with delicate precision, as in maintaining the identity of the Creator with the Father of Christ, while also explaining the occasion and necessity of the full revelations of the distinct persons of the Son and Spirit.

The Two Ways. In keeping with the two previous points, the new covenant idea also helped to shape belief in a particular eschatological conclusion to the divine economy, first inaugurated in the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and culminating in Christ's return in glory. Second-century writers synthesized this eschatological expectation, not only with the narrative of redemptive history and the rule of faith, but also with the ancient tradition of the Two Ways, leading either to blessing or to curse. Drawing on the Deuteronomic covenantal pattern, in which this framework had already been established, the author of Barnabas, Aristides, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus present the new covenant as establishing a new relational dynamic between God and the community of his people, which involves a particular set of obligations. The ethical content of these obligations will be reviewed below. In terms of belief, however, they cultivate an understanding that obedience leads to flourishing and covenant blessing, while faithlessness leads to judgment and covenant curse. These two outcomes are to be

fully realized at Christ's return, which, as the eschatological conclusion to the redemptive-historical narrative, brings about the fulfillment of the Two Ways motif.

Ritual

I have noted that, according to the useful definition of cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, rituals are practices that "relate an ontology and cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality."[1] In building this bridge, they visibly express and conceptually reinforce both the community's assumed metanarrative (beliefs about reality) and the moral orientation (ethics) that is implied by it. In these habitus-forming ways they become distinguishing markers of the community's identity, for both the observation of outsiders and the emulation of insiders. In the case of the new covenant community envisioned by second-century Christian writers, these ritual markers are, namely, baptism and the Eucharist.

Baptism. On account of the scriptural witness to ritual markers that distinguished Israel as the old covenant community—circumcision accompanying the Abrahamic covenant, and the sabbath ordinance enshrined in the Mosaic covenant—the early Christians inherited a well-developed understanding of this function from their Jewish predecessors, as evidenced by the centrality of these signs in the discussions of Barnabas and Justin Martyr in the *Dialogue with Trypho*. Just as quickly, however, these writers christologically reconfigured the notion of ritual markers, arguing that the old covenant rites had anticipated Christ and his blessings ("circumcision" or softening of the heart, and true spiritual rest). In addition, they forefronted the new ritual of water baptism as the preeminent mark of entry into new covenant membership. Developing the thought of New Testament authors, they argued that baptism symbolized incorporation into

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[1] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 87–125, 127.

Christ's death and resurrection and the reception of his Holy Spirit—phenomena that attested the inauguration of the new covenant era as described in Acts 2. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and others contrasted both the theological narrative confessed at Christian baptism (the triune God revealed in the unified divine economy), the blessings that accompany it (the forgiveness of sins, purification, illumination or enlightenment), and the new spiritual life that flows from it (the fruit of the Spirit) with the absurd and immoral secret rituals of pagan mystery religions and heretical sects. In these contexts, baptism was frequently devalued as a secondary rite, if it was practiced at all.

Eucharist. Like baptism, the Eucharist also represents participation in the new covenant for orthodox second-century writers. From an early date, the New Testament authors had explicitly linked these concepts in their accounts of the Last Supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25). Members of sects such as the Valentinian Gnostics interpreted the ritual quite differently, however, or even rejected it outright as a marker of the established church (a further confirmation of its identity-forming function). According to Tertullian, Marcion dropped the descriptor "new" from "new covenant" in his version of the Lukan eucharistic formula, likely because he recognized the redemptive-historical continuity that it implied. In contrast to these views, Irenaeus depicted the Eucharist as the "offering" of the new covenant, affirming the goodness of the created order and thus safeguarding the identity of the Creator with the Father of Christ. Clement of Alexandria found in it a source of collective unity for the "new people" formed into the one church, recognizing that, as in the case of baptism, the physical elements were made effective only through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, what the orthodox considered to be the defining development and most certain evidence of the redemptive-historical narrative in the new covenant era—the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost—was a necessary precondition for the effective administration of the church's two primary sacraments, which in turn conceptually reinforced and symbolically re-enacted the

Spirit's work of incorporating the faithful into the one covenant body of Christ.

Ethics

Though second-century writers thus regarded the church's rituals as important identity markers of the new covenant community, they did not understand these to be its only, or even its most visible, distinguishing features to external observers. Whether in rhetorical dialogue with Jews, pagans, or heretical groups, they consistently emphasize the new "way of life" manifest among Christians as their most notable characteristic. Like the redemptive-historical narrative and its corresponding rituals, they understood the determinative factor and motivating force of this differentiated lifestyle to be the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The distinctive new covenant ethic could be described in a wide variety of ways, but a few of the most frequently-recurring motifs are the appeal to the Two Ways tradition and the law/grace or law/Spirit dichotomy, involving interrelated themes of newness, interiorization, and liberty or freedom.

The Two Ways. Already well-established as a literary convention prior to the Christian era, the Two Ways motif proved especially conducive to what I have called a covenantal logic, as first espoused, for example, in the book of Deuteronomy, with its call to choose life rather than death, and thus receive covenant blessings rather than curses. We have noted the reception and adaptation of this covenantal framework in second-century texts that assume familiarity with it, as in the concluding unit of the Epistle of Barnabas (Barn. 18–20). In such texts, the Two Ways motif is reappropriated christologically, such that faithfulness to Christ and the cultivation of the corresponding virtues becomes identified with the way of life, while rejection and disobedience are associated with the way of death. As noted above, writers can also map the Two Ways imagery over the redemptive-historical narrative that is implied by the new covenant concept, such that progressing in the way of life leads to the eternal destination of

salvation in the eschaton, which concludes and culminates the metanarrative. Focusing here on its ethical implications, however, we may note the use of such dichotomies as truth vs error (Aristides), righteousness vs wickedness (Clement of Alexandria), and apostolic truth vs heretical falsehood (Irenaeus) to distinguish these Two Ways, and to demonstrate that Christians pursue the former in each pairing. The notion of covenant faithfulness, or law-keeping, often serves to demarcate practitioners of one Way from the other, again reflecting the covenantal nature of this scheme.

Law and spirit. Though they can use the Pentateuchal language of law-keeping to describe covenant faithfulness to the "new law" or "law of Christ," second-century writers elaborate both continuities and discontinuities between the ethical codes of the old and new covenants and, following Paul, draw contrasts between the law and the Spirit as corresponding spiritual modes of being. Also following Paul (2 Cor 3:1–6), they often describe the church's covenant identity using the themes of newness, interiorization, and liberty or freedom from bondage to sin/the law. In interactions with Judaism, Barnabas referred to the "new law of Christ" which makes Christians "free from the yoke of compulsion (Barn. 2:6); Justin Martyr pointed to Christ himself and the Christian virtues (rather than circumcision and sabbath) as the distinguishing markers of the covenant people; and Tertullian discussed the true spiritual circumcision and moral progress that accompany the new covenant as the final iteration of the divine law. Similar emphases on the new covenant as a mode of spiritual worship, accompanied by an internalization of the law's moral code (in allusion to Jer 31:31) appear in the apologetically-oriented texts of the Preaching of Peter, Aristides, and Clement of Alexandria (who also portrays the new covenant as a "New Song" that engraves the oracles of truth upon the hearts of its members). Finally, in their heresiological efforts, Irenaeus refers continuously to the "new covenant of liberty" that replaces enslavement to sin and the law, while Clement contrasts the higher (though not contradictory) "gospel

ethic" of the "new people" with the moral code of the "old people" living under the Mosaic law. On all these fronts, the regular interweaving of the themes of the reception of the Holy Spirit and the interiorization of the divine law, yielding a distinctly recognizable ethical orientation, are the leading features of new covenant membership.

Conclusion

As this synthesis has shown, the connective threads that can be traced across most, if not all, second-century discussions of the new covenant are the notions of incorporation into Christ and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Of course, the writers view these concepts as two sides of a single coin, the indwelling Spirit being the means by which individual believers experience union with God in Christ, and union with each other in the context of a covenanted community as a result. Developing these understandings on the basis of scriptural prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and the universal outpouring of the Spirit, Christian writers applied them, rhetorically, in works addressing Jewish, Greco-Roman, and Christian heterodox movements.

In each of these contexts, they labored to demonstrate how being united with Jesus Christ by his Spirit in the new covenant thoroughly informed and shaped a distinct Christian identity. It provided the contours of humanity's historical-theological metanarrative, progressing through the biblical covenants and culminating in the arrival of Christ and his bestowal of the Spirit at Pentecost—which in turn implied a particular set of metaphysical commitments about God himself (as articulated in the rule of faith) and the nature of reality (as expressed in doctrinal convictions). It also found expression in the twin ritual boundary markers of baptism and the Eucharist, both picturing and publicly reenacting the death of Christ, with which members of the community were united through the Spirit's effective work. Finally, it supplied both the content (the law of Christ) and the power (the leading of the Holy Spirit) of a new moral framework, consistent with the standards of both the Mosaic law and the best of the secular ethical

traditions, yet far surpassing them in its rigor and fervor. Appeals to the new covenant concept in all these various dimensions, then, became a crucial instrument for inculcating a distinct and fully-formed Christian identity in second-century texts. Internally, this phenomenon united and shaped the community around a shared core of ideals and practices, while externally, it exposed and critiqued outsiders and impostors who threatened its integrity and mission.

Applications

The primary concern of this study has been to draw attention to the new covenant concept as an under-appreciated element in early Christian identity formation. The approach has been to survey representative second-century texts to show how Christian writers appeal to this concept in all of the major rhetorical contexts where they develop and defend an emerging Christian identity, and to examine the way it informs their understandings of the major aspects of identity. Thus, the project has been placed into conversation with the recent works of specialists in early Christian studies who have been concerned with identity and have analyzed its construction or formation from social, literary, and ethnic perspectives (though often without substantial consideration of the theological and doctrinal components). Nevertheless, this research also bears implications for other scholarly discourses that it has not been possible to engage fully here. A few of these have been mentioned in passing.

Biblical Theology

To date, when the covenantal theology of early Christian writers has been of interest to anyone, it has been mainly to scholars engaged in the discipline of biblical theology, the endeavor to describe the unity of the biblical canon and trace the development of themes across it. Practitioners of biblical theology have sometimes appealed to the precedents of patristic theologians to support the biblical-theological systems of dispensationalism (in its various iterations), the covenant theology of the

Reformed tradition, or the more recent Baptist alternative, progressive covenantalism. Of course, the temptation in such works can be to cherrypick quotations that suit the purpose, from writers who engage in this task most fully (such as Irenaeus of Lyons) and to ignore or exclude those that seem less compatible with the system being advocated.

I hope that this study has shown, first, that while there is remarkable continuity in the ways that second-century writers—separated by decades and representing a wide geographical range—speak about the new covenant, there is also considerable variety, such that enlisting all of them in support of a particular modern biblical-theological scheme simply is not feasible. The terms, concepts, and particular biblical arguments differ according to an individual work's author, rhetorical audience, and polemical purpose. Thus, while a study of these texts does indeed hold value for the development of contemporary biblical-theological schemes, it does so primarily by pointing out the common points of major emphasis—the unity, but also progression, between the old and the new covenants, and the fundamentally christological and pneumatological nature of that new covenant—rather than by offering fully-developed systems for imitation.

Second, and related to this, the study has labored to show that the covenant concept cannot and must not be reduced merely to its hermeneutical dimension, as an element of Christian writers' interpretation of Scripture (structuring the biblical narrative and enabling christological exegesis). While it certainly does perform this important function, we have seen that the covenant concept is in fact a much broader—indeed, an all-encompassing—device, which is central to the emerging notion of Christian identity itself. In its implications, not only for the metanarrative that gives rise to Christian doctrine, but also in its significance for the rituals of Christian liturgy and the ethics of daily Christian living, membership in the community of the new covenant has extensive social, cultural, philosophical, and political ramifications as well.

Parting of the Ways

This study may make a preliminary contribution to the ongoing scholarly discussion about the divergence between Judaism and Christianity, often labeled the "Parting of the Ways" discourse, which has been referenced at points in the examination of second-century texts that assume or rhetorically invoke a Jewish audience. At times, this discourse has been largely fixated on sociohistorical phenomena which, I would suggest, are simply not capable of fully explaining the evolutions of these movements in separate directions after the first century. I have drawn attention to the covenant concept in part to exemplify the way in which particular sincerely-held theological and doctrinal convictions could shape scriptural exegesis (in this case, exegesis of the shared texts of the Old Testament), leading to radically distinct interpretive conclusions that had substantial real-world effects in the formation of identity, at both the individual and collective levels. While many critical scholars have dismissed theological concerns as tangential or merely rhetorical guises for underlying social, ethnic, or political motivations, I contend that this is to impose a modern frame of reference onto the mindsets of ancient authors, whose outlook certainly did not so easily bifurcate the social and religious spheres. Historians do a disservice both to the historical figures who wrote these texts and to themselves in seeking to understand these developments if they do not attend seriously to the motivating role of theological conviction within them.

New Perspective on Paul

In a similar vein, these conclusions have application for the debate in New Testament studies regarding the so-called New Perspective on Paul—in particular, its presentation of the Jewish concept of covenant. In part, they lend support to points that scholars associated with the New Perspective have sought to emphasize as neglected or overlooked in earlier readings of both Second Temple Judaism and Paul. Sanders's insistence on the essentially gracious, rather than legalistic, nature of the covenant finds some vindication in the continuity that second-century Christian writers see between the

old and new covenants as redemptive revelations of one and the same God, when interpreted with their proper christological reference. Dunn's contention that what Paul protests in his epistles is the social exclusivism of contemporary Jews who used covenantal "works of the law" to maintain boundaries between themselves and Gentiles is also at least partly confirmed by the way the covenant is still assumed to perform this distinguishing function in such texts as Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, with the point in question being its specific manner of doing so (literal observance of ritual laws, or adherence to their true spiritual and ethical meanings). Finally, Wright's tracing of the covenantal logic of the Old Testament narrative in Paul's depiction of the advent of Jesus Christ as its climax or fulfillment is quite consistent with the way Christian writers continued to interpret these texts in the following second century (in part, no doubt, under Paul's own influence, but often with quite distinct interpretive moves and points of emphasis).

Nevertheless, this study should not be construed as a wholesale approbation of the New Perspective's conclusions, which indeed have often overcorrected in its areas of concern. As we have seen repeatedly, theological motivations simply cannot be detached from social and hermeneutical ones in late antique Jewish and Christian contexts. Thus, Paul's critique of continued observance of the Mosaic law certainly cannot be restricted to its "ritual" or cultic components, if the second-century Christians' view of the covenant as an all-encompassing source of identity (involving doctrinal, ritual, and ethical dimensions) is any indication. And while the social integration of Jews and Gentiles continued to challenge these writers, they clearly saw this question as inseparable from their theological convictions regarding the divine economy, redemptive history, the eschatological hope, the formation of a unified people of God, and the basis righteousness or justification.

In all, then, while New Perspective scholars have drawn necessary attention to underappreciated implications of the covenant concept in Judaism (and thus in Paul),

these are not capable of explaining it in full, since they tend to marginalize underlying theological presuppositions as mere pretexts or occasions for what are actually social or rhetorical struggles, when in fact these dimensions are inseparably interrelated in the ancient context.

Further Research

Finally, this study raises several questions for further consideration, with regard to both the major figures and texts analyzed here, and the later historical and theological developments that followed them.

On the former point, it has not been possible to provide more than a preliminary sketch of the covenant concept developed by each Christian author considered in this study. The writings of figures like Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian are voluminous, and a thorough explication of the covenantal theology of each one could easily command a monograph-length treatment. To date, this has not been attempted for any except Irenaeus (in the work of Susan Graham). It also has not been accomplished in this project, which has sacrificed depth for breadth, so to speak, in endeavoring to demonstrate the extensive, generally consistent, and gradually-developing use of the concept over the course of the second century, and across diverse geographical regions, in service of an argument for its centrality to Christian self-understanding as a whole. Moreover, it would be possible, and profitable, to examine writings that I have categorized in one particular way for the sake of this study (for example, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* in its rhetorical context addressing Judaism, or Tertullian's *Against Marcion* and *Against Praxeas* as heresiological polemics) from a different or additional angle, recognizing that these writings are multidimensional and do not themselves regard "internal" instruction of the Christian community as separate (or necessarily even as distinct) from "external" apologetic or polemic discourse.

Finally, it will be obvious that this study takes only a small, initial step toward

a comprehensive description of the relationship between covenant and Christian identity in the early Christian church, being limited, as it is, to texts of the second century. Indeed, it has not even been possible to discuss all of the relevant second-century texts, for lack of space.[2] This somewhat artificial restriction of scope has been necessary due to constraints of space and manageability, though it also has some justification, in placing focus on the most formative period for the development and articulation of Christian self-understanding, in the decades immediately following the apostolic era. Nonetheless, many subsequent centuries of further refinement remain unconsidered here. Future scholarly explorations of the ways that covenant membership continued to inform and shape Christian identity in drastically different social and political contexts—for example, following the Constantinian turn, in the emergence of monastic communities, and in the growing divide between the eastern and western churches—will likely prove illuminating.

Certainly, the writings of a number of figures from the third, fourth, and fifth centuries show great promise for further study. The most obvious and immediate candidate is Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 253), who in many respects represents the culmination of the second-century streams of thought considered here in his wide-ranging exegetical, theological, polemical, and apologetic works, and whose use of the terms "old testament" and "new testament" reflects the full establishment of these phrases as canonical titles.[3] The connection between Origen's spiritual exegesis and the distinction of the two covenants—the letter and the spirit—also demands further study. To this could be added the exegetical and homiletical works of fourth-century theologians like Ambrose (339–397) and Jerome (347–420) in the West, the Cappadocian Fathers and

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[2] One example is Melito of Sardis, *Pasch.*, which deals extensively with issues of typology and the relationship between "old" and "new."

[3] Everett Ferguson, "Covenants," in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 542.

John Chrysostom (347–407) in the East, and the largely-unexplored Syriac fathers Aphrahat (c. 270–345) and Ephrem (c. 306–373), for whom the covenant is an essential concept.[4] Above all, the voluminous writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), and in particular his treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*, would reward intensive study, as elaborating upon his famous dictum that "*novum testamentum in vetere latet, vetus testamentum in novo patet*."[5] Though more attention has been given to his use of the covenant concept than that of the figures mentioned previously, none has considered it from the holistic vantage point of this study.[6] All this is to say nothing of the medieval period, which certainly invites efforts to bridge the gap between two eras in which covenant thought is prominent (the early church and the Reformation)—not least because by its later period, the covenant concept had become deeply intertwined with nominalist questions of divine will, grace, and merit.

In sum, then, the work of more fully appreciating the significance of the covenant concept for Christian identity formation has only just begun. Much remains to be discovered, or rediscovered, concerning the ways in which Christians through the ages have understood themselves as members of the new covenant. There can be no better candidates for undertaking this task, however, than Christian historians and theologians (of any era), who understand themselves to be fellow members of this same new covenant community, united across time and space as the one people of God.

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[4] On Aphrahat, see the preliminary treatment of Gräbe, *New Covenant, New Community*, 175–81.

[5] Augustine of Hippo, *Quaest. Hept.* 2.73; cf. *Catech.* 4.8.

[6] The most extensive recent treatment is Joshua N. Moon, *Jeremiah's New Covenant: An Augustinian Reading*, JTISup 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); see also Ferguson, "Covenants," 543–44.

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ABSTRACT

COVENANT AND IDENTITY FORMATION
IN THE SECOND CENTURY

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This study examines the use of the covenant concept in second-century texts that address three primary social and rhetorical contexts for early Christian identity formation: Judaism, Greco-Roman culture, and heterodoxy. It argues that leading Christian writers consistently developed and applied a notion of the church as the new covenant community by interpreting scriptural sources through the lens of christological assumptions, which they used to characterize the covenant community's identity in the areas of belief, ritual, and practice.

Chapter 1 notes the absence of the covenant idea as a major element in recent scholarly discussion of early Christian identity formation and also reviews the history of scholarship on the covenant concept itself, which has been analyzed in both biblical studies and historical theology, in addition to select studies of individual writers (though rarely in connection with identity formation).

Chapter 2 surveys the first of two important background contexts for understanding early Christian use of the covenant concept—its use and development within Judaism, including the Old Testament, apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature of Second Temple Judaism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. It also briefly examines the New Testament usage in the Synoptic Gospels, Paul, and epistle to the Hebrews.

Chapter 3 turns to the Greco-Roman context and notes the absence of the covenant concept as a significant category of identity there, and explores possible

parallels to it in the religious and social realms. It also notes the lack of usage within diverse "Gnostic" movements and the mis-use, from the perspective of orthodox writers, within Marcion's theological system.

Chapter 4 introduces three chapters analyzing the orthodox Christian use of the covenant concept, beginning with the dialogue with Judaism, which also regarded it as an essential category of collective identity, and derived it from the same sources, the Old Testament scriptures. Though retaining Judaism's basic covenantal logic and structure, such Christian texts as the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and Tertullian of Carthage's *Against the Jews* redefine these features in christological terms to develop the notion of a distinctly christological new covenant community.

Chapter 5 examines the ways in which apologetically-oriented writers redeployed these covenantal concepts in engaging Greco-Roman culture—for example, by identifying Christ as logos and *nomos*. The *Apologies* of Justin Martyr and Aristides of Athens and Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks* follow the precedent of the Preaching of Peter in presenting Christ as the New Law and portraying the new covenant community as a "third race" that fulfills and transcends the ideals of earlier Hebrew and Greek philosophical traditions.

Chapter 6 focuses on the "internal" application of the covenant concept to the church's struggle with heterodox movements, which either lacked or mis-used covenant schemes in articulating identities grounded in false doctrines. Among heresiological writers, Irenaeus of Lyons defends the unified redemptive-historical narrative that results from a christological understanding of the covenants (*Against Heresies; Epideixis*), while Clement of Alexandria utilizes the covenant concept for the moral formation of the orthodox community (*Christ the Pedagogue*) and applies it to Greek philosophy as a parallel concept to the Mosaic law among Gentiles (*Miscellanies*). Finally, Tertullian of Carthage uses it to argue, like Irenaeus, for the unity of Scripture against Marcionites

(*Against Marcion*), and also grounds his anti-monarchian Trinitarian theology in a proper understanding of the new covenant economy (*Against Praxeas*).

Chapter 7 summarizes the findings of chapters 4–6 and offers a synthetic portrait of the new covenant idea among Christian writers of the second century, noting its leading characteristics in the identity-forming areas of belief/narrative (redemptive history and the rule of faith), ritual (baptism and the Eucharist), and ethics (the Two Ways tradition and the Law/Spirit dichotomy). The conclusion suggests some possible implications for contemporary scholarly discussions and avenues for further research.

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