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**Editor's Note**

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Concordia Publishing House. Since her founding, she has supported the church in a number of ways, most especially through the publication of materials used to proclaim God's word. The Editors now take this opportunity to thank Concordia Publishing House for her work, in general, and for supporting the publication of this issue in particular. May the Lord grant Concordia Publishing House increased blessing in service to him.

The Editors

## The Early Christian Appropriation of Old Testament Scripture: The Canonical Reading of Scripture in 1 Clement

James G. Bushur

### I. Habitats Form Habits

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”<sup>1</sup> With these words, a twentieth-century scholar named Durant offers an apt summary of Aristotle’s moral philosophy. As a teacher, Aristotle knows that the task of the catechist is not merely the communication of knowledge. Rather, the teacher’s task is also to turn truth into habit—habits that order the mind, structure life, even form the body itself. Such habits are not simply a physical repetition of conduct; rather, habits are formed when wisdom begins to shape personal identity. Habits are formed when wisdom and truth are no longer simply what we know but become who we are. “We are what we repeatedly do.”

Yet, such habits are notoriously difficult to cultivate. Habits demand more than the understanding mind; they demand zealous hearts, virtuous souls, and disciplined bodies. Habits are abstract ideas taking form in the flesh; they consist in the movement of single-dimensional thoughts into three-dimensional space. Thus, for the ancients, perhaps the most important element for such moral training is the three-dimensional setting in which we are placed. Habits are determined by habitats; habitats direct our movements, influence our sensory experience, inspire our desires, and determine the ends toward which we stretch out. In short, habitats turn life into habits and habits into identity. The training of soldiers demands obstacle courses and diverse fields of engagement where they learn to move, fight, adapt, and overcome. Athletes are shaped by weight rooms, stadiums, and gymnasiums. For Johann Sebastian Bach, the organ was not merely an instrument but also a dwelling place, a three-dimensional setting that gave form and texture to his identity. It is no different for pastors, theologians, and all those engaged in the reading of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the World’s Greater Philosophers* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., 1927), 87.

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The early Christian reading of the Scriptures has generally suffered at the hands of the modern academy, because scholars tend to focus on the question “*How or in what manner* did ancient Christians read the Old Testament?” With this question, scholars seek to analyze exegesis scientifically according to sociological and psychological processes. The academy tends to picture the exegete as a very active reader who begins with certain philosophical biases and then employs literal and figurative methods to extract his own meaning from passive texts. From this perspective, the true genre of exegesis is thought to be the commentary generated by single authors who are shaped by certain psychosocial biases. Thus, the modern examination of patristic exegesis has almost wholly focused on the genre of the ancient commentary, which originated in Hippolytus, Origen, and other third- and fourth-century writers.<sup>2</sup>

However, ancient Christian commentaries do not share a common nature or purpose with modern commentaries. The most profound difference is the setting for exegesis. In our contemporary age, the exegetical task is almost completely severed from the Christian sanctuary. As a consequence, exegesis has gradually ceased to be a spiritual act rooted in Christian *eusebeia*, that is, the life of prayer, contemplation, and eucharistic communion. Rather than the question “*How* did early Christians read the Old Testament?” I will argue that more fundamental is the question “*Where* did early Christians read the Old Testament?” If the early Christian reading of Scripture is to be understood, then it must be recognized that the true setting for patristic exegesis is the eucharistic assembly, and its true genre is the sermon. Already in Paul’s First Letter to Timothy, the ecclesial sanctuary is the setting for his instructions. “I desire then that in every place men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling” (1 Tim 2:8).<sup>3</sup> This sacred setting gives form to Timothy’s pastoral identity, namely, “to attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching” (1 Tim 4:13). Within the sanctuary, the Scriptures are not passive; rather, they live and move within an intensely personal fellowship, subsisting within the direct, reciprocal discourse between God and his people.

For early Christians, the reading of the Scriptures was, above all else, a public, liturgical, and ecclesial event. “And on the day called Sunday,” writes Justin Martyr,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 26–31, 39–50. Simonetti is representative of the strong bias toward commentaries as the genre of exegesis. He writes, “With Hippolytus, catholic exegesis, restricted so far to controversial, catechetical or doctrinal purposes, at last frees itself from these fetters and becomes an independent literary genre, with works devoted explicitly to the interpretation, if not yet of an entire book of the Bible, at least to fairly extensive passages, as the Gnostic Heracleon had already done with the Gospel of John” (27).

<sup>3</sup> Scripture translations are my own.

“all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.”<sup>4</sup> In the same way that water is the constitutive setting for fish, so the eucharistic gathering of the baptized conditions the Christian reading of the Old Testament, turning faith into habits, and habits into personal identity. In this study, I will explore the habits of early Christian exegesis as they formed within the habitat of the eucharistic gathering.

## II. From Scroll to Codex: Old Testament Scripture in Christian Sanctuaries

The early Christian engagement with the Old Testament has been the subject of countless studies and scholarly examinations. The detailed consideration of this scholarship is beyond the scope of this paper. These studies have certainly thrown light on the extensive use, quotation, and allusion to Old Testament texts by early Christians; they have also focused attention on the diverse ways early Christian readers discovered meaning—both theological and moral—in these ancient texts. What is largely neglected in these studies, however, is the significance of the liturgical, eucharistic gathering of the church as the fundamental setting for patristic exegesis. This study will demonstrate that the most significant factor giving form to early Christian exegesis was the transition of the Old Testament out of the synagogue into the church’s eucharistic sanctuary.

The conventional theory concerning the development of the Christian canon assumed that Old Testament books simply were received as inspired and New Testament books were added later. In other words, Old Testament books were the foundation of canonical Scripture, while New Testament books gradually achieved the elevated status of the ancient Torah and prophetic writings. This theory, however, is becoming less convincing. One of the decisive factors against this theory is the curious early Christian practice of reproducing Old Testament scrolls in codex form. In the ancient world, the scroll was the traditional form of a proper book; it was the proper form for the Greek classics from which students would learn to read and to practice their rhetorical skills in oral performance. It was also the proper form of the Torah and the Prophets as read in Jewish synagogues. The codex, namely papyrus or parchment pages bound in the center like a modern book, was a novelty used for taking personal notes at a lecture or recording business transactions. The process by which the codex achieved the status of a book has been studied by C. H.

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<sup>4</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apologia* I.67, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 1:186.

Roberts and T. C. Skeat.<sup>5</sup> Their thorough examination shows that the Greco-Roman world did not accept the codex as proper literature in any sense until the beginning of the third century. In addition, the codex did not gain comparable status to the scroll until the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of this cultural preference for the scroll, Christians, at least as early as the second century and perhaps as early as the first, preferred the codex as the form of their Scriptures, both old and new. The conclusion of Roberts and Skeat emphasizes this surprising disjunction between Christianity and its surrounding culture. They write,

The conclusion remains the same, namely that when the Christian Bible first emerges into history the books of which it was composed are always written on papyrus and are always in codex form. There could not be a greater contrast in format with the non-Christian book of the second century, a contrast all the more remarkable when we recall that Egypt, where all these early Christian texts were found, was the country where the papyrus roll originated and where the status of the roll as the only acceptable format for literature was guaranteed by Alexandria with its dominating position in the world of books.<sup>7</sup>

This surprising disjunction between early Christians and the Greco-Roman world compelled Roberts and Skeat to consider its causes.<sup>8</sup> They examined several social and practical issues that scholars typically argue, including financial, pragmatic, and utilitarian factors. After demonstrating the inadequacy of all these explanations, Roberts and Skeat concluded as follows:

In contrast to the slow and piecemeal process by which the codex ousted the roll in secular literature, the Christian adoption of the codex seems to have been instant and universal. This is all the more striking because we would have expected the earliest Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, to be strongly prejudiced in favour of the roll by upbringing, education and environment. The motivation for their adoption of the codex must therefore have been something overwhelmingly powerful, and certainly none of the reasons considered above appears capable of producing such an effect.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: The British Academy, 1987), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> The reasons for the early Christian preference for the codex remains a significant debate among scholars. Cf. Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 61–83. In this essay, I am not claiming to offer a satisfactory explanation for the Christian preference for the codex but simply want to suggest that the liturgical setting has been neglected in this discussion and needs due consideration.

<sup>9</sup> Roberts and Skeat, *Birth of the Codex*, 53.

Frances Young recognizes the significance of Roberts's research for patristic exegesis. Young argues that the early Christian reproduction of the Old Testament in codex form represents more than merely new pragmatic or utilitarian interests on the part of Christians. Rather, it is evidence of a profound cultural battle between Christianity and Judaism that consisted in a deeply personal and spiritual conflict of identity. Young argues that the reproduction of the Old Testament in codex form suggests "that Christian-authored books had a certain priority—the very opposite of the usual view of canon-formation."<sup>10</sup> Young goes on to discuss the implications of this for the Old Testament.

The use of the codex has dramatic implications for the reception and appropriation of the Jewish books. They were physically "taken over"—not just re-read but re-formed. In the act of appropriation, they were subordinated, demoted, long before they were accorded the title "Old Testament." They had been, as it were, wrested away from their original community, and another community was taking charge of this literary heritage. These books were informing a new culture for a new community which received them differently, and according them a different kind of status.<sup>11</sup>

Young argues that in the apostolic church, "It was not scrolls and reading which had primacy," but "the living and abiding voice of witness."<sup>12</sup> The written texts of the Torah and Prophets were no longer ends in themselves; the living, apostolic testimony took precedence. Like John the Baptist in John's Gospel, the Old Testament was relegated to the status of witness; and the codex is the natural form for written testimonies. Young concludes, "We are witnessing, it seems, not the gradual elevation of recent Christian books to the sacred status of the Jewish scriptures, but rather the relativising of those ancient scriptures. . . . They have become secondary to the Gospel of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

Young's argument is certainly thoughtful and provocative. Even if we accept her proposal that in early Christian assemblies, the Old Testament took the form of written testimony subordinate to apostolic preaching, there are questions that remain unanswered. Not only the Old Testament but also the apostolic writings of the New Testament were published in codex form. If the ultimate and most fundamental revelation were identified with the apostolic preaching, why were the original apostolic texts not published in a proper scroll and preserved in their pristine condition for the sake of posterity? If the codex is the form of written

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<sup>10</sup> Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 14–15.

<sup>11</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 14–15.

<sup>12</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 15.

testimony, then it appears that both the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures were accorded equal status as witnesses to something beyond themselves. But witnesses to what precisely?

Already in 1945, Peter Katz offered a suggestion that has not been given due consideration. In a brief article, Katz suggested that the Christian introduction of papyrus codices “may have been a fresh instance of the well-known tendency of the early Church to differentiate itself sharply from Judaism.”<sup>14</sup> Katz understood this differentiation to be more profound and pervasive than merely a preference for the living voice of apostolic tradition; rather, it was a disjunction intimately related to the new three-dimensional setting in which the Old Testament was read and heard by early Christians. He wrote this about the new setting for the reading of the Old Testament:

The grand result of this fresh attitude was the transformed appearance of the rooms of worship. Their front centre was no longer the rolls with their concomitant apparatus, but the sacramental table which indicated the presence of the Lord of the Eucharist and, at the same time, represented the whole spiritual and social life of the congregation, which fed upon the continual mysterious administration of His body and blood, the ever fresh feeding of the multitude. No wonder that the *cistae* and arks, the veils and rolls had to give way.<sup>15</sup>

In synagogues, the Torah and prophetic scrolls occupied a prominent place in liturgical practice. As Katz noted, these scrolls were placed behind veils reminiscent of the holy of holies and later in elaborate containers resembling the ark of the covenant. The scrolls were more than sources of divine wisdom; they were sacred objects to be venerated and preserved as the source of holiness in Jewish communities.

Thus, the Christianization of Jewish synagogues was not benign or gentle, a mere change in utilitarian purpose; rather, the Christian appropriation of Jewish synagogues consisted in a radical transformation of liturgical space. In Christian assemblies, the body and blood of Jesus occupied the altar as the true holy of holies and the genealogical root of Christian identity. Old Testament scrolls had to find a new place in the sanctuary. Like concentric waves spreading from the center when a rock breaks the surface of a pond, so the body and blood of Jesus reverberated throughout the sanctuary and reordered the whole life of early Christian communities. It altered social relations between husbands and wives, masters and

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Katz, “The Early Christians’ Use of Codices Instead of Rolls,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1945): 63.

<sup>15</sup> Katz, “Early Christians’ Use of Codices,” 64.



slaves, rich and poor. It stimulated the structure of episcopal, pastoral, and diaconal ministries. It inspired forms of spirituality—prayer, asceticism, liturgies, hymns, iconography, and martyrs. Finally, it most certainly affected the way the Old Testament was read, heard, and appropriated as Christian Scripture.

Katz's suggestion fits well with the New Testament and helps illuminate the deeply personal and genealogical conflict between early Christians and their Jewish context. Within the Jewish community, the Old Testament was a scroll, that is, a direct and linear narrative intended to be read from beginning to end. As Young points out, this linear movement is characteristic of both the scroll and oral performance.<sup>16</sup> In both cases, texts function in a one-dimensional format like a musical score in which the significance of each word or note depends on what precedes and anticipates what will follow. The apostles appropriated the Old Testament scrolls by grabbing hold and taking control of both sides of the scroll—its beginning and its end.

Paul's preaching clearly emphasized Christ as the new man, the new covenant, and the new creation that brings the Old Testament to its proper end. In Luke 4, Jesus' first act as the anointed one is to preach at the synagogue in his hometown. One cannot help but notice the important theological tone in Luke's description of the event. The scroll of Isaiah is not an end in itself. After it is read and rolled up, the eyes of all are "fixed" on Jesus. In place of Isaiah's future expectation, Jesus proclaims a present reality: "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). This initial step down the messianic path ends with a similar emphasis in Luke 24, where Jesus' oral performance of the Old Testament narrative ends with the opening of eyes in the breaking of the bread.

Likewise, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul directly compares the liturgical act of reading the Old Testament in the synagogue with its reading in the Christian assembly. For Paul, the change in setting could not be more significant; ink must give way to the Spirit of the living God and tablets of stone to the tablets of fleshly hearts (2 Cor 3:3). Paul proceeds to characterize the reading of the Old Testament in Jewish synagogues as a "veiled" reading. Indeed, a veil lies on each aspect in the economy of the liturgical act. Paul mentions three veils: one veil hides the face of Moses, the author of the Torah (2 Cor 3:13); a second veil lies over the public reading of the text in the synagogue (2 Cor 3:14); and a third veil clouds the hearts of hearers (2 Cor 3:15). This veiled glory is taken away only in Christ (2 Cor 3:14). For the apostle Paul, the end of this scroll is not a new scroll but an unveiled, face-to-face communion in the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God," says St. Paul, is no longer hidden under the veil that covers

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<sup>16</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 12–13.

Moses' face and the reading of his text but is located "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). For Paul, Christ himself is the "goal [τέλος] of the Torah" (Rom 10:4) or, as he expresses it to the Galatians, "The Torah was our tutor [παιδαγωγός] to bring us to Christ" (Gal 3:24).

Paul's emphasis on Christianity as the completion or end of the Torah scroll could be heard as a break with the past or an end that makes the past irrelevant and insignificant. Certainly Marcion and some gnostic teachers understood the apostle's letters in precisely this way. For most early Christians, however, Paul's emphasis on Christ as the end or completion of the Old Testament scroll needs to be balanced by John's emphasis on the beginning of the Old Testament scroll. For John, while Jesus' flesh is certainly the true end and eschatological pinnacle of God's revelation, that flesh belongs to One whose origins are from of old. Indeed, the Word who became flesh predates the Prophets, the Torah, and even creation itself. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word," does not merely resonate with the first verse of the Torah; it also predates it. Even before the making of heaven and earth, there was "the Word who was with God and was God" (John 1:1). For John, Christ is not merely the fulfillment of the Old Testament but also the origin of creation, the calling of Abraham, and the prophetic proclamation. While Paul emphasizes Christ as the singular "Seed of Abraham" (Gal 3:16), John testifies to Jesus' words, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Again, for John, Christ is not only the fulfillment of the Old Testament scroll but also its source: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39–40).

Thus, Paul and John testify to the early Christian appropriation of the Old Testament. In the eucharistic assembly, Christians embrace both the beginning and end, the alpha and omega, of the Old Testament scroll. Christ is both the personal author of the Old Testament and its eschatological fulfillment in the flesh. Thus, Irenaeus, the second-century bishop of Lyons, often summarizes the Christian reading of the Scriptures in this simple aphorism: Christ "joins the end to the beginning."<sup>17</sup> With these words, Irenaeus may be commenting on the transition from a linear scroll to a circular codex. The narrative of the Old Testament is no longer a one-dimensional, prophetic line seeking an end; it is a circular witness rotating around a central binder, that is, Christ himself, whose cross binds together Jew and Gentile, old and new into one body. Thus, the eucharistic gathering is a truly formative habitat that profoundly shaped the Christian reading of the Old Testament. What Katz merely suggested some seventy years ago warrants greater consideration. While it may not be possible to prove Katz's proposal historically, it

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV, 12, 4; IV, 20, 4; IV, 25, 1.

bears the ring of truth because it resonates with the early Christian reading of the Old Testament. The remainder of this essay will support Katz's proposal by revealing the intimate and inherent relationship between the Christian reading of the Old Testament and the eucharistic assembly in the early Christian letter known as 1 Clement.

### III. Clement of Rome and the Canon of the Christian Tradition

The first and perhaps most significant example of the early Christian engagement with the Old Testament is the letter sent from the church at Rome to counsel the church at Corinth in the midst of internal strife, commonly known as 1 Clement. The date of this letter is up for debate. While most scholars date it at the end of the Domitian persecution (AD 96), there are sound reasons for arguing an earlier date. The author speaks of Peter, Paul, and other martyrs from the time of Nero as "champions of close proximity" and "noble examples from our own generation" (1 Clem 5:1).<sup>18</sup> If Clement writes after the Domitian persecution, why refer only to martyrs from the time of Nero? In addition, Clement mentions Fortunatus (1 Clem 65:1), who may be the same Fortunatus mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:17. As Edmundson points out, it is unlikely that the same individual who assisted Paul in the fifties would still be actively delivering letters in the nineties.<sup>19</sup> The main argument for a later date seems to be the use of "ancient [*ἀρχαία*]" to describe the church at Corinth (1 Clem 47:6). However, this designation need not connote an ancient time but can refer to that which is merely the foundation or source of something. In Acts 21:16, Luke describes Mnason of Cyprus as "an early disciple [*ἀρχαίω μαθητῆϊ*]." Here, Luke does not mean that Mnason is an "ancient" disciple of a distant past but rather the foundational root of Christianity in Cyprus. Therefore, Clement is referring to the Corinthian church not as a temporally ancient community but as the foundation or source of Christianity in Corinth.<sup>20</sup> While the exact date of 1 Clement is not of great importance for this

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<sup>18</sup> Quotations of 1 Clement are from *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed. and rev. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 28–101. The translations of 1 Clement below are my own but were certainly influenced by the translation of Lightfoot and Harmer.

<sup>19</sup> George Edmundson, *The Church in Rome in the First Century* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), 199.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Edmundson, *Church in Rome*, 198. Edmundson argues that Clement's description of the Corinthian church as *ἀρχαίαν* stems from Clement's language in 1 Clem 47:2. Clement refers to Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians as written "in the beginning [*ἀρχῆ*] of the gospel." Here, *ἀρχῆ* refers not merely to a temporal beginning but to the foundation or ontological source of Christianity.

essay, I will argue that this letter represents a very early reading of the Old Testament with roots in the apostolic age.

The letter is universally ascribed to Clement of Rome, though his name never appears in the epistle. Thus, this epistle does not proceed from personal, episcopal authority but represents a fraternal correspondence between Christian communities with a deep familial bond. This fact favors an early date for the letter, that is, one that precedes both the establishment of the monarchical order in Rome and Clement's own promotion to the office of bishop. The identity of Clement has been the subject of much debate. As early as Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 180), Clement is recognized as the third bishop to succeed Peter and Paul following Linus and Anacletus. The identification of Clement with Titus Flavius Clemens, Domitian's cousin who was executed for Jewish practices and atheism, is almost surely to be rejected. Archeological evidence, however, suggests that a Christian church existed in the San Clemente complex, as mentioned by Jerome, and perhaps was patronized by Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, the granddaughter of Emperor Vespasian.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it is possible that the author of this letter, who was likely a presbyter and later rose to episcopal prominence in the Roman church, took his name from the household where he had been a slave.<sup>22</sup>

While Clement's identity remains uncertain, it is clear that he writes with a thorough knowledge and familiarity with the Old Testament. Donald Hagner's thorough analysis of Clement's epistle points out that a fourth of the letter is simply direct quotation from the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Hagner is surprised by how "uninteresting" and "literal" Clement's reading of the Old Testament is.<sup>24</sup> For Hagner, Clement's straightforward application of the Old Testament to the church "consists primarily in seeing Israel and the Church as a continuity—on which point Clement seems almost to go too far." Hagner continues, "The exact relation between Israel and the Church is nowhere expressed, but the implication of Clement's use of the Old Testament is that the Church is virtually equated with Israel and, what is perhaps even more important, the religion of the Old Testament is regarded as virtually identical with that of the Church."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 33. See also Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 159–183.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome*, 32–33.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Hagner, *Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 125–127.

<sup>25</sup> Hagner, *Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 127–128.

Hagner is certainly right to recognize the profound continuity between Christianity and Judaism in Clement's perspective. Clement is content to simply quote the Old Testament as directly and immediately applicable to the Christian church. There are two different ways to understand this continuity. Hagner seems to assume that the Old Testament is Jewish Scripture and that Clement, somewhat illegitimately, appropriates or usurps Old Testament Judaism for Christian purposes. From this perspective, Christianity is nothing more than an innovative offspring from the Jewish vine.

In contrast, I would argue that Clement's reading of the Old Testament is actually the exact converse of this perspective. For Clement, the Old Testament is not Jewish, but Christian Scripture. Yet, the Old Testament is Christian Scripture not by illegitimate cultural appropriation but according to its true genealogical origin. Christianity is not a new form or recent offspring of Judaism; rather, Old Testament Judaism was a preliminary form of Christianity. The Christian origin of the Old Testament is evident in the way Clement introduces his Old Testament quotations. As Hagner points out, Clement is not simply mechanical or formulaic in the way he introduces scriptural quotations. Rather, he is extremely cognizant of the personal source of sacred texts, ascribing passages to God, the Master, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Word, Christ, as well as various Old Testament saints. Thus, Clement seems to follow a Johannine trajectory that emphasizes the Christian authorship of Old Testament texts. Christianity is not merely the eschatological end of the Old Testament narrative but also its genealogical source and foundation.

Clement's exegesis of the Old Testament is perhaps best defined as a genealogical reading. Most scholars recognize Clement's extensive use of *mimesis*, that is, treating biblical saints as patterns of holiness to be imitated, which was common in the ancient world, as seen in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 11).<sup>26</sup> Yet, for Clement, as for the author of Hebrews, the outward, three-dimensional lives of biblical saints manifest a deeper, inward, spiritual, and passionate source.<sup>27</sup> Like branches from the same root or children from the same parent, the external forms of biblical narratives constitute patterns or impressions generated from a common genetic source. In other words, *mimesis* is not merely the ethical imitation

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<sup>26</sup> Hagner, *Use of the Old and New Testaments*, 126–127. In addition to Hebrews 11, Hagner references James 2 and 2 Peter 2 and reasons that Christian writers borrowed a device common in Jewish homiletical practice. See also the comments by Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 226–230.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 230. Young points out the unique character of Clement's *mimesis*, namely that it involves an appropriation of the language of the Scriptures on the part of the reader such that the distance between reader and text is eliminated, thus joining all readers to the community that stands before God.

of external actions but also inherent patterns that reveal a genealogical relationship, that is, a common participation in the same genetic root.<sup>28</sup>

Clement begins his epistle recognizing “the detestable and unholy schism” that threatens the church at Corinth (1 Clem 1:1). Yet, more important to Clement than the immediate causes and peculiar circumstances of the Corinthian conflict is the genealogical origin of the schism. Clement proceeds to trace the origin of schism to the passions of jealousy and envy “through which death entered the world” (1 Clem 3:4). Here, Clement quotes Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 in order to place the Corinthian conflict within an ancient, biblical, and theological setting. The Corinthians are fighting a truly ancient battle that has its beginning in Cain’s murder of Abel, Jacob’s conflict with Esau, Joseph’s persecution by his brothers, Moses’ harassment at the hands of his countrymen, and David’s persecution by King Saul (1 Clem 4). For Clement, the biblical narrative is not one merely of persecution but also of familial conflict within the close confines of the household of God. Such familial conflicts are the external fruit that grows from a common root: the passions of jealousy and envy. Clement, then, proceeds to trace the narrative patterns of jealousy and envy from the Old Testament directly to Peter, Paul, and two female martyrs who became “demonstrations” and “patterns” of “patient endurance” (1 Clem 5–6).<sup>29</sup>

For Clement, the biblical narrative is not a Jewish narrative recording the historical roots of the Jewish people. Rather, Clement reads the Old Testament as a martyrological narrative; the ancient saints are three-dimensional icons displaying a distinctively Christian pattern of life. In the next chapter (1 Clem 7), Clement seeks to exhort the Corinthians to recognize their place within this cosmic martyrological battle. “We write these things, beloved, not only to warn you, but also to put ourselves into remembrance. For we are in the same arena, and the same agony lies before us” (1 Clem 7:1). Clement refuses to see the Corinthian conflict as a mere parochial skirmish; he wants the Corinthians to recognize the eternal and theological dimensions of the schism as it now threatens the church of God.

As chapter 7 begins, Clement concludes his warning that the Corinthians reject a course of life formed by jealousy and envy. Following this negative counsel, Clement makes a positive exhortation that his hearers embrace a path formed by patient endurance and repentance. In the same way that Clement traced the

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<sup>28</sup> Consider Paul’s common exhortation to Christian churches to imitation (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Eph 5:1, 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 3:7, 9). Paul roots his call to imitation in his own genealogical relation to the Corinthians. “For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:15–16). Likewise, in Eph 5:1, Paul calls his hearers to be “imitators of God, as beloved children.”

<sup>29</sup> Clement uses both *ὑπογραμμός* and *ὑποδείγματα* to emphasize the concrete form of the saints’ lives as worthy of imitation. Cf. 1 Clem 5:1, 7; 6:1; 16:17; 33:8; 46:1; 55:1; 63:1.

genealogy of division to its root in jealousy and envy, so he seeks to establish the genetic root of patience and repentance. Clement writes,

Therefore let us forsake empty and vain thinking, and let us come [ἔλθωμεν] to the renowned and revered canon of our tradition [τὸν εὐκλεῆ καὶ σεμνὸν τῆς παραδόσεως ἡμῶν κανόνα]; indeed, let us see what is good and pleasing and acceptable before the One who made us. Let us fix our eyes upon the blood of Christ [ἀτενίσωμεν εἰς τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ] and let us know it as being worthy of honor to his Father, for being poured out [ἐκχυθὲν] on account of our salvation, it bears the grace of repentance [μετανοίας χάριν ὑπήνεγκεν] for the whole world. (1 Clem 7:2–4)

This text reveals the heart and core of Clement’s engagement with the Old Testament. Much scholarly discussion surrounds the meaning of the phrase “canon of our tradition.” Literally, “canon” refers to a straight rod and generally denotes an ideal, perfect, or fixed rule by which other things are measured and judged. Architecturally, a canonical rod would aid builders as they erect a wall, allowing them to judge the precision of its construction.<sup>30</sup> The canon is the fixed rule according to which a wall is to be conformed and fixed into place.

Early Christians employed the word *canon* freely in several different contexts to refer to a rule governing the Christian way of life (Phil 3:16) as well as ordering its offices and liturgical services (2 Cor 10:13–16). Most intriguing is Paul’s use of the term at the end of his Epistle to the Galatians (Gal 6:16). There Paul brings his argument about circumcision to a conclusion in “large letters” written with his own hand (Gal 6:11). The apostle argues that his opponents practice circumcision so that they can avoid “persecution for the cross of Christ” (Gal 6:12). Circumcision allowed early first-century Christians to be identified with the Jewish community and, therefore, share its protected status in the Roman empire. Yet, Paul does not argue against circumcision by promoting uncircumcision. Rather, he claims that neither counts for anything, “only a new creation” (Gal 6:15). For Paul, the practice of circumcision and, I presume, the practice of uncircumcision are merely attempts to “glory in the flesh” (Gal 6:13). For the apostle, however, there is no glory except “in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14). Paul, then, concludes, “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule [τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν]” (Gal 6:16). What does Paul mean by “canon”? I do not think that it refers to an abstract law or code of conduct. Rather, “canon” may entail a quite literal reference to the cross of Christ himself.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ezek 40:3. “Canon” is originally a Hebrew word referring to a “measuring reed.” In Ezek 40, the “measuring reed” is used to judge the dimensions of the eschatological temple. Cf. also Rev 11:1.

His cross is the fixed rod to which the Christian life is bound; it is the perfect pattern according to which the Christian life is to be conformed. Immediately following his reference to the “canon,” Paul speaks of the “*stigmata* of Jesus” that the apostle himself bears in his own body (Gal 6:17). The *stigmata* of the crucified constitute the perfect circumcision, that is, the sacred marks that identify the Christian life.<sup>31</sup> Jesus’ wounds are the salutary injuries that cut away sin, restore humanity, and bring the Old Testament prophetic rite of circumcision to its intended fulfillment.

Clement’s use of “canon” seems to bear a similar meaning to that of Paul in Galatians 6, that is, bearing a connection to the passion of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Many scholars assume that Clement is referring to an early baptismal creed or a summary of Christian faith. Yet, this seems unlikely. Clement refers to a singular canon or rule that is “renowned” and “revered” among many Christian communities and governs what Clement refers to as a common Christian “tradition.” Yet, there was no formal creed in common use among Christians or generally known and shared among churches until the end of the second century. So, if the canon does not refer to a formal creed, a specific code of conduct, or a summary of Christian teaching, then what is the “canon of our tradition” that Clement references? If we examine the context of Clement’s letter and the texture of the language he uses, it becomes clear that the “canon” is associated with the church’s eucharistic assembly and identified most fundamentally with the flesh and blood of Jesus himself.<sup>33</sup>

Clement uses the word *canon* in connection with what he refers to simply as “our tradition [*παραδόσεως*].” In the first century, the language of “tradition” does not yet refer to patristic writings, conciliar decisions, or doctrinal formulations but is intimately associated with the church’s eucharistic life. The origin of this language is found in Jesus’ passion statements. Following the transfiguration, Jesus teaches his disciples that “the Son of man is being handed over into the hands of men” (Mark 9:31). For Jesus, the present passive verb *παραδίδοται* (“is being handed over”) is the first act that initiates his saving passion. For early Christians, the subject of this verb

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 566–569. Martyn points out the contrast between the marks of circumcision and the *stigmata* of Jesus. He writes, “For the sign under which God is making things right in his new creation is not the physical mark one receives in the religious rite of circumcision, but rather the physical scars Paul has received because he preaches the gospel” (569).

<sup>32</sup> Clement uses “canon” three times in his epistle. Besides 1 Clem 7, he uses it in 1:3 with reference to the order and structure of the Christian household; he also uses it in 41:1 with reference to the sphere of liturgical ministry in the church. Clement may be thinking of Paul’s own traditions and instructions as the canon or rule for the ordering of both the Christian household as well as the eucharistic community. In 1 Cor 11, Paul is clearly concerned about the Christian household, which may lie behind 1 Clem 1:3. In 2 Cor 10:13–16, Paul uses “canon” with reference to the sphere of his own apostolic mission, which may inform 1 Clem 41:1.

<sup>33</sup> For a similar use of “canon” as identified with Christ’s own body, see Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 9, 4, where Irenaeus uses “canon of truth” synonymously with “body of the Truth.”



is not simply Judas; he is the one “through whom” Jesus is handed over (see Mark 14:21; Matt 26:24). Rather, early Christians read this verb as a divine passive referring to the Father “traditioning” his own Son for the salvation of the world.<sup>34</sup> In the Synoptic Gospels, the passion statements typically begin and end with divine passives.<sup>35</sup> The Father, who initiates the passion by handing over his Son, finishes the course of salvation by raising him from the dead on the third day (see Matt 17:22–23; 20:18–19; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22, 44; 18:32).

Already in the Gospels, however, this act of divine “traditioning” that initiates the saving liturgy of *pascha* is identified with the Eucharist. The salutary shedding of blood does not begin with the scourging, the crown of thorns, or the crucifixion. Rather, in Jesus’ own words, it begins with the cup of the Eucharist: “This is my blood . . . being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). The participle ἐκχυννόμενον (“poured out”) is present tense, inaugurating the saving liturgy of *pascha*. Indeed, for Jesus, the voluntary handing over of his own blood is not merely the beginning of his own passion, but it is also the perfection of an ancient sacrificial liturgy. Jesus’ shed blood brings to perfection “all the righteous blood shed [ἐκχυννόμενον] on the earth since the blood of Abel” (Matt 23:35).

Thus, like all the feasts in the Gospels, the Eucharist begins with the Father who traditions his Son’s body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, the fellowship of the church, and the salvation of the world. Paul understands his own apostolic identity from within this divine act of “traditioning.”<sup>36</sup> “For I received from the Lord,” Paul says in his own letter to the Corinthians, “what I also tradition [παρέδωκα] to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was traditioned [παρεδίδετο] took bread” (1 Cor 11:23). In addition, Paul uses the language of tradition in 1 Corinthians 11:2 regarding the order and structure of the church as the household of God. He uses it again in 1 Corinthians 15:1–3 regarding the teaching of Christ’s passion in terms of his death, burial, resurrection, and manifestation to the saints. Thus, in Clement’s epistle to the same Corinthians, he references language well known to his hearers.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> An interesting example can be found in *the Martyrdom of Polycarp* 4. The author argues that, like Christ’s passion, martyrs should not hand themselves over but patiently wait for the will of the Father. Polycarp is presented as a true example of such patient endurance whose martyrdom is grounded in the will of God rather than his own choice.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Brian Peterson, “What Happened on ‘the Night’? Judas, God and the Importance of Liturgical Ambiguity,” *Pro Ecclesia*, 20, no. 4 (2011): 363–383. Peterson emphasizes the importance of reading “*paradidomi*” as a divine passive for the church’s eucharistic liturgy.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Peterson, “What Happened on ‘the Night’?,” 367–374. Peterson mentions 2 Cor 4:11 and argues that Paul’s use of the “traditioning” language shows “that the life of Jesus is revealed through the suffering of Paul’s apostolic ministry” (374).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. 1 Clem 42:1–2, where Clement refers to the order inherent in the gospel. “The apostles received the Gospel from the Lord, Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent from God. Therefore, Christ is from God and the apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came from the will of God in good order.” Such a passage may recall 1 Cor 11 and the traditioning of the gospel from the

The “canon of our tradition” refers to the divine ordering of the church’s life constituted in the narrative of Christ’s passion and perfected in the handing over of his flesh and blood.<sup>38</sup>

This eucharistic interpretation of Clement’s letter is supported by the liturgical texture of the language he uses. In chapter 7, Clement employs seven verbs to exhort his Corinthian hearers. With the first two verbs, he speaks of the canon as a geographical place to which we should “come,” “abandoning” a vain course of life (1 Clem 7:2).<sup>39</sup> The third verb assumes the canon as something to be seen and describes it in liturgical, aesthetic language; Clement identifies it with “what is good, pleasing, and acceptable before him who made us” (1 Clem 7:3). The fourth verb is the heart of his exhortation: “Let us fix [ἀτενίσωμεν] our eyes into the blood of Christ.” This language recalls Luke 4:20, where this verb emphasizes the movement from the Old Testament scroll of Isaiah to the presence of Jesus and his preaching. Clement uses this present tense verb again in 1 Clement 9:2, exhorting the Corinthians to fix their eyes on Old Testament saints, who he describes as “the perfect liturgists of his magnificent glory.” He then uses it again in 1 Clement 19:2, calling his hearers to “run with urgency to the goal of peace traditioned to us from the beginning” and to “fix our eyes on the Father.” Finally, he uses it in 1 Clement 36:2, calling the church to gaze through Christ into “the exalted place of the heavens.” Thus, this language always bears strong liturgical connotations and sums up for Clement the heart of the eucharistic liturgy.

Yet, Clement is not finished; he employs three more verbs of exhortation. Having fixed the eyes on the blood of Christ, Clement calls the Corinthians to “recognize or know [γνώμεν] it [Jesus’ blood] as worthy of honor before the Father.” For Clement, as for early Christians generally, the Eucharist begins and

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Father through Jesus Christ, the sending of the apostles, and the appointment of bishops and deacons. Yet, for Clement, the ordering of the church’s life is not merely a matter of governing authority but also of liturgical practice. The orders of ministry in the early church seem to be a natural structure needed for the concrete practice of the Eucharist.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1 Clem 19:2–3, where the language of “tradition” is used again in a liturgical context. Clement writes, “Having a share in so many, great, and glorious deeds, let us run to the goal of peace traditioned to us from the beginning [τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραδεδομένον ἡμῖν τῆς εἰρήνης σκοπόν]; and let us fix our eyes into the Father, even the Creator of the whole world; and let us cling to his magnificent and most excellent gifts and good working of peace.” Here again “the goal of peace traditioned from the beginning” may indeed refer to the blood of Christ that brings the ancient liturgy of peace to its proper conclusion.

<sup>39</sup> There is a strong geographical element to Clement’s letter. He speaks of Peter going “to the appointed place of glory” when he was martyred. Paul, likewise, “departed the world and went to the holy place.” The Eucharist is a place to which we “come.” This geographical emphasis informs Clement’s understanding of the church and the virtue of “hospitality” as seen in Noah’s ark, Abraham’s friendship, Lot’s hospitality, and Rahab’s house as ecclesial settings of salvation (1 Clem 9:4–12:8).

ends with the Father; the Father traditions his Son but also receives the voluntary offering of Jesus' blood as the atonement for the sins of the world. For Clement, this blood is worthy of honor because "it is poured out [ἐκχυθὲν] for our salvation" and "bears [ὑπήνεγκεν] the grace of repentance for the whole world." The verb ἐκχυθὲν ("poured out") is almost certainly to be associated with the words of institution and the Old Testament sacrificial liturgy; the use of this verb solidifies the argument that, for Clement, the canon is most fundamentally to be identified with the Eucharist.<sup>40</sup> Yet, the blood of Jesus is more than just the cause of atonement; it is also the geographical location of atonement. The blood dwells before the Father as the very place of atonement, honor, and glory. Thus, it "bears the grace of repentance for the whole world."

Finally, in the last two verbs of exhortation, Clement connects the Eucharist to the reading of the Old Testament. For Clement, the blood of Jesus is the fixed canon and the perfect pattern to which he conforms his reading of the entire Old Testament narrative. Clement continues,

Let us pass through [διέλθωμεν] all generations and let us truly learn [καταμάθωμεν] that in generation after generation, the master has provided a place of repentance [μετανοίας τόπον] for those desiring to turn to him. Noah preached [ἐκήρυξεν] repentance, and those hearing were saved. Jonah preached [ἐκήρυξεν] catastrophe to the Ninevites, but repenting of their sins, they propitiated God while praying and received salvation, even though they were strangers to God. (1 Clem 7:5–7)

For Clement, Noah, Jonah, and the rest of the Old Testament saints are no longer merely patriarchs of the Jewish race prophesying a future hope; they are also Christian preachers and eucharistic liturgists serving the glory and honor of Christ's blood. In the narrative of their lives, Clement sees the genetic code of Jesus' own passion—his patient endurance, his priestly ministry, his voluntary self-sacrifice, and his eternal glory. Thus, Clement concludes his journey through the Old Testament this way:

Let us fix our eyes [ἀτενίσωμεν] on those who were perfect liturgists [τοὺς τελείως λειτουργήσαντας] of his magnificent glory. Let us receive Enoch who, being found righteous in obedience, was translated and death did not find him. Noah, being found faithful, preached the regeneration [παλιγγενεσίαν] of the world through his liturgy [διὰ τῆς λειτουργίας αὐτοῦ] and the Master

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<sup>40</sup> Clement uses this language, "ἐκχυθὲν (poured out)," in 1 Clem 46:6 with reference to trinitarian "grace" and in 1 Clem 2:2 with reference to the Holy Spirit.

saved through him those living creatures entering the ark in harmony.  
(1 Clem 9:2–4)

For Clement, the Eucharist is not a new liturgy; it is the perfection of a truly ancient liturgy.<sup>41</sup> This liturgy extends back to the creation of the world, where Christ's passion receives testimony from the rhythm of the rising sun, the generation of seeds out of the earth, and the regeneration of the phoenix<sup>42</sup> (1 Clem 24–25). This liturgy continues through the Old Testament receiving the service of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and even the harlot Rahab, whose hospitality under the sign of the scarlet cord hanging from her house testifies to "redemption through the blood of the Lord" (1 Clem 12:1–8).

The flesh and blood of Christ is not merely the eschatological perfection of this ancient liturgy but also its generative source. Christ is the true High Priest of the sacrificial liturgy.<sup>43</sup> His shed blood is the seed that generates the fruit of patient endurance manifested in Abel, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David, as well as Peter, Paul, and those martyrs of Clement's own generation. Thus, for Clement, the Old Testament is an intimate, familial narrative, not of the Jewish race but of the Christian church. The Old Testament saints are Christian "fathers,"<sup>44</sup> and their Scriptures do not belong to the synagogue but to the eucharistic gathering where their veil is removed, their voice is set free, and their testimony is perfected in the glory of Jesus' passion.

#### IV. Conclusion: Habits Formed by a Habitat

Vince Lombardi once said, "In truth, I have never known a successful man who did not appreciate the discipline that it takes to win."<sup>45</sup> The early Christian reading

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 169–171. Brown and Meier recognize Clement's fondness for Old Testament cultic language. They maintain that 1 Clement moves beyond Paul's Letter to the Romans and Peter's first epistle, which spiritualize the Old Testament cult. They also assert that 1 Clement is directly opposed to the Epistle of the Hebrews, which sees Christian worship and the Old Testament cult as incompatible. However, I think if one recognizes the place of the Eucharist in Clement's perspective, these supposed disagreements and differences fade away. For all of these early Christian writings, the Eucharist does not so much spiritualize or abrogate the Old Testament cult as fulfill and perfect it.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Edmundson, *Church in Rome*, 196. Edmundson refers to the public display of a phoenix in Rome during the reign of Claudius around AD 47. Clement may have witnessed this display as a youth.

<sup>43</sup> Jesus is called "High Priest" in 1 Clem 61:3; 64:1.

<sup>44</sup> Clement refers to Old Testament saints as "our fathers" in 1 Clem 60:4, which may recall 1 Cor 10:1.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 114. O'Keefe and Reno offer an excellent survey of early Christian interpretation and conclude with this quote from Lombardi to emphasize the disciplined character of patristic exegesis.

of the Bible was not a haphazard process characterized by intellectual confusion or the chaotic application of literary techniques. Rather, the exegesis of the ancients stems from a disciplined way of life. Exegesis is a deeply spiritual habit knit together into one fabric with prayer, contemplation, sacramental communion, works of service, and the self-offering of martyrdom. Yet, the sanctuary not only turned faith into three-dimensional habits, but it also allowed these habits to constitute a new genealogical identity. Early Christians heard the word of God as a new word with the most ancient of origins. Indeed, the very Word generated from the bosom of the Father has taken on three-dimensional form in human flesh and continues to dwell among us. His body is the new habitat in which human beings are generated anew, “not from blood, nor from the desires of the flesh, nor from the desires of man,” as John says, “but begotten out of God” (John 1:13). It is within the spiritual fabric of the church’s eucharistic fellowship that the habits of early Christian exegesis took shape.

Without in any way being exhaustive, there are at least three exegetical habits evident in Clement’s letter to the Corinthians. The first habit is Clement’s assumption that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture. This assumption testifies to the inherent interconnection between the reading of the Old Testament and the eucharistic assembly in Clement’s mind. Here is where early Christian exegesis, such as Clement’s, presents a profound challenge to the contemporary age where habits are shaped by an ever fragmenting habitat. The contemporary reading of Scripture simply assumes the separation and independence of the Scriptures from the eucharistic gathering. This schism between the Scriptures and the eucharistic altar makes the patristic reading of the Old Testament somewhat inaccessible; yet, its inaccessibility is not so much due to the confusion of the patristic tongue but to the limited scope of our modern senses. It is like a sound that cannot be heard because it communicates with a tone that lies outside the spectrum of normal hearing. Fundamental to the problem is the setting. For Clement, the church’s sanctuary is the very atmosphere within which the divine voice of the Old Testament is meant to be heard; and Old Testament Scripture is the genealogical narrative that constitutes the hereditary root of the church’s true identity. For Clement, the Old Testament Scriptures cannot be extracted from the eucharistic gathering anymore than a fish can be extracted from water or an internal organ like the heart or liver can be extracted from the human body without fatal consequences.

The second exegetical habit formed in the eucharistic assembly is Clement’s engagement with Old Testament Scripture as the direct, living, and personal correspondence between God and his people. The true genre of patristic exegesis is the sermon where the Scriptures sound forth in the present tense as the direct discourse of God to his people. Yet, this correspondence is by no means a

monologue but consists in a reciprocal and deeply spiritual communion. Here again is a fundamental challenge to modern scholarly exegesis. Separated from the church's sanctuary, contemporary exegesis is defined in terms of psychological and sociological processes that can be exposed by the application of scientific methods and literary techniques. Lost in this secular, academic model are the theological and, perhaps more important, spiritual dimensions. For Clement, reading Scripture is an act of prayer and is, therefore, inseparable from the church's spiritual mode of existence. To read Scripture is not merely to hear what God has said in the past; it is also to hear him speak in the present. Exegesis, therefore, is not merely the passive reception of divine revelation from a distant age, but it also entails active discipline, repentance, and spiritual effort. For early Christians, the exegetical act entails prayer, contemplation, and a spiritual *ascesis*, that is, a daily struggle with the devil's lies, the temptations of the world, and the passions of the flesh.

The third exegetical habit is Clement's conviction that the body and blood of Jesus form the fixed canon, the unchanging rule, and the perfect pattern according to which the Old Testament is read. For Clement, the shed blood of Jesus is the genetic code that underlies the entire biblical narrative; it is the theological DNA that is the source of Christian identity and manifests itself in the lives of the saints. This genealogical reading propels the exegete along a radically different path. The trajectory of contemporary exegesis is typically intellectual, that is, a movement from text to conceptual thought. In other words, the text is often reduced to the psycho-social processes by which authors and readers argue, counsel, and converse. Sacred texts originate in the minds of authors and end in the minds of readers.

The trajectory of Clement's exegesis, however, is truly incarnational, moving from text to the three-dimensional lives of saints. Rather than merely a thought or idea, sacred texts seek to communicate a life with concrete, fleshly form. For early Christians, the true medium of divine revelation is not abstract concepts, but human flesh and blood. Just as an artist may favor paint or a sculptor his clay, so God prefers to work with humanity. From the beginning, human flesh bears the form and texture of God's own hands and moves by the vitality of his breath. The perfection of this divine revelation is the flesh and blood of Jesus—crucified, risen, and exalted into glory. The saving pattern of Jesus' paschal blood likewise shapes the Old Testament saints, whom Clement describes as "examples" and "patterns" of the Christian life. In this way, Clement's eucharistic reading of the Old Testament leads directly to a contemplation of both Christian virtues and demonic vices. For early Christians, neither sin nor righteousness can remain abstract, general concepts; both sin and righteousness manifest themselves as deeply personal experiences that have concrete texture and form. Sin manifests itself in diverse passions, such as envy or jealousy, that lead to fleshly forms of corruption, like strife, division, and death.

In the same way, virtues, such as patience, repentance, and hospitality, are three-dimensional forms of the righteousness perfectly embodied in Jesus' passion.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."<sup>46</sup> Clement's exegesis reveals deeply ingrained habits formed in the church's sanctuary. The eucharistic habitat has formed Clement's faith into three-dimensional habits and his habits into identity. Thus, the Eucharist is truly formative of the early Christian reading of the Old Testament. Yet, it is formative not in the sense that Clement simply chooses to read the Scriptures sacramentally as if he superficially imposes a foreign sacramental veneer on the text in an arbitrary and capricious way. Rather, the Eucharist forms his exegesis because the body and blood of Jesus constitute the ground of his own identity. Like a pebble entering the water, the body and blood of Jesus reverberate throughout Clement's life. In the same way that light affects our perception and the atmosphere our ability to hear, so the Eucharist is the habitat that conditions Clement's sensory experience and orientates the way he hears and sees everything, including the Scriptures. Thus, it is appropriate to conclude with a final exhortation from Clement as he calls the whole church to join in his own hermeneutical vision.

This is the way, beloved, in which we found our salvation, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our infirmities. Through him, let us fix our eyes [*ἀτενίσωμεν*] into the exalted places of the heavens; through him, we perceive [*ἐνοπτρίζομεθα*] his unblemished and lofty countenance; through him, the eyes of our hearts have been opened; through him, our senseless and darkened understanding grows up into the light; through him, the Master has desired that we taste immortal knowledge. (1 Clem 36:1–2)

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<sup>46</sup> Durant, *Story of Philosophy*, 87.