MARY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Gary A. Anderson

The Mother of God
William Butler Yeats

The threefold terror of love; a fallen flare
Through the hollow of an ear;
Wings beating about the room;
The terror of all terrors that I bore
The heavens in my womb.

Had I not found content among the shows
Every common woman knows,
Chimney corner, garden walk,
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes
And gather all the talk?

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,
This fallen star my milk sustains,
This love that makes my heart's blood stop
Or strikes a sudden chill into my bones
And bids my hair stand up?

The figure of Mary has provided a considerable challenge for ecumenical relations between Catholics and Protestants. Historically, the grounds for this suspicion rest largely on the Protestant fear that Catholics commit idolatry when they venerate the person of Mary. In his recent article on the subject of Mary, the evangelical scholar Timo-

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thy George makes this point quite clear in an amusing vignette from the life of the famous Scottish reformer, John Knox. George recounts the incident thus:

> Having been delivered from "the puddle of papistry," as he called it, he was taken to be a prisoner in the French galleys where he remained for nineteen months. On one occasion, he tells us, while he was serving in the galleys, the Catholic chaplain of Knox's ship held forth a beautifully painted wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and encouraged Knox and the other prisoners to genuflect and show proper reverence. When the statue of Mary was forcibly placed in Knox's hand, he grabbed it and immediately threw it overboard into the sea. "Let our Lady now save herself," he said. "She is light enough; let her learn to swim!" Never again, Knox adds, was he forced to commit "idolatry" by kissing and bowing to an image of the virgin Mary.[1]

The charge of idolatry has a long pedigree, going back ultimately to the reforms of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22ff.) and the legislation of Moses on Mt. Sinai. Catholics (and the Orthodox) have not been deaf to these worries and typically make a distinction between an act of worship (*latreia*) that can be offered to God alone and an act of veneration (*douleia*) that befits an icon or the Blessed Mother. But in the heat of fervent religious polemic a distinction such as this appears too clever by half. Any sort of compromise, many of the later reformers reasoned, would be tantamount to apostasy. The official sanctioning of idol smashing by King Josiah became the model for the iconoclasts.[2]

In the context of his article, Timothy George does not address the substance of Knox's criticism. Accordingly, it should be no surprise that the veneration of an image of Mary—be it icon or statue—does not find a position of respect within his otherwise revisionary program. Mary, to the degree that she has a special role to play in the tradition, is to be revered as the mother of the church. This appellation is grounded in the "yes" she voices to the angel Gabriel at the annunciation and her faithfulness to Christ that extends even to the depth of his Passion. Though the disciples—including even Peter—fled from Christ at the advent of his Passion, Mary remained steadfast in her devotion. "Her fidelity under the cross," George observes, "showed that the true faith could be preserved in one sole individual, and thus Mary became the mother of the (true remnant) church."[3]

In this essay, I would like to revisit the relationship between Mary's representation in the tradition and the Bible with the goal of proposing a

1. Timothy George, "The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective," in *Mary Mother of God*, ed. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 100–1.

2. See the masterful treatment of Carlos Eire, *The War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

3. George, "Blessed Virgin Mary," 119.

characterization of the Mother of God that would go beyond the admittedly admirable, but narrow contours drawn by Timothy George. To do so, I propose to follow a quite unlikely path, the witness to Mary that is to be found in the Old Testament. This approach will certainly strike most as startling—as well it should. For the figure of Mary is referred to in no explicit fashion in the Old Testament. But as a hint toward the direction my argument will go, let me say that my point of departure derives from the liturgy of the Angelus.[4] Here the moment of the Incarnation is the subject of great praise. At one point, while recounting the drama of the annunciation, John's Gospel is cited: *verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*. The key phrase for my purpose is *habitavit in nobis* for these words recall those momentous occasions in the Old Testament when God took up residence with his people (Exod 29:38–46; 1 Kgs 8:65; Hag 2:6–9; Sir 24) and stood in a tight figural relationship to them. In light of this, one can only respond as did the Israelites of old: with bended knee and full-throated praise. The words of the Angelus are altogether apt: *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus*. But here I press forward too hastily; let us begin in a more leisurely and orderly fashion and consider the problem of how one ought to read the New Testament in light of the Old.

THE DEFERENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE OLD

The Anglican biblical scholar Christopher Seitz has thought long and hard about the relationship of the Old and New Testaments. And the test case that animates much of his writing is the book of Isaiah. This book has long been dear to Christian readers, so dear in fact that St. Ambrose was known to refer to this venerable prophet as "the First Apostle" and instructed the newly converted Augustine to read this book carefully in order to learn about the gospel.[5] Yet for all this, in a recent essay on the usage of Isaiah in the New Testament, Seitz comes to a startling observation. "What is striking," he concludes about all of these citations, "is that none of them pick up Isaiah's royal texts for their own sake to show that Jesus is the messiah promised of old by God's prophets."[6] One might presume that this conclusion would be hard to maintain in light of Matthew's first citation of Isaiah, the citation of Isa 7:14 about the coming figure of Emmanuel. Yet even in this citation the

4. A particular source of inspiration has been the soaring vocal rendition of the same by Franz Bieble (1906–2001).

5. Christopher Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 281.

6. Seitz, *Word without End*, 216.

text shows more interest in the virginal birth of Jesus and his divine origins than establishing the fact that he fulfills the full array of hopes attached to Israel's messianic faith.

Though it would be impossible to enter the minds of the various New Testament writers and know exactly what concerns dictated their use of the Old Testament, this reluctance to engage the powerful royal promises in Isaiah in favor of other themes, such as God's intention to incorporate the Gentiles, is striking. For Seitz there are a number of answers that could be offered. Perhaps these promises of Isaiah were not compatible with the predominant interests of the early New Testament community. In this case, the most important point to be established was rather the authorization of the mission to the Gentiles. Or maybe these promises, because they were so focused on glory, were not seen as fit instruments for rendering the unique picture of Israel's *suffering* messiah. Seitz evinces some unease with explanations such as these because they configure the picture as though the usage of the Old Testament in the early church was governed solely by the interests of the kerygmatic needs of the first apostles. In Christ all the answers were to be found; the Old Testament was simply mined for appropriate proof texts. But what if we consider the matter from a quite different vantage point? What if Isaiah's own voice had not been lost from view but still continued to resound within the gathering halls of early Christian assemblies? What if the eschatological royal promises found in Isaiah—promises that seem to be so "over the top," promises that tell of all the nations streaming to Zion to hear God's Torah, the coming reign of Israel's king that will usher in a day when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid and neither the sun nor moon will be required because God's own light will shine over all—continued to function as they did in Isaiah, as promises of what Christ's coming rule will bring to fulfillment?

Though it may be impossible to make any conclusive decisions about the intentions of the writers of the New Testament themselves, there can be no doubt that the early church heard eschatological texts such as these in precisely this fashion. Origen, for example, specifically says that the promise regarding Israel's messiah entering Jerusalem on an ass found in Zech 9:9 and fulfilled in Matt 21:5 cannot be understood in a simple historical manner as though the events of Palm Sunday constituted the complete fulfillment of this messianic vision. As Origen's Jewish interlocutors made clear, the literary context of Zechariah makes such a reading impossible.[7] For in the verse immediately following the

7. Origen's discussion of the problem can be found in his commentary on the Gospel of John, book 10. A convenient translation and discussion of the text can be found in Joseph Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation,* Message of the Fathers of the Church 9 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 105–6.

prediction of the Palm Sunday entrance Zechariah writes: "And he will destroy the chariots out of Ephraim, and the horse out of Jerusalem, and the bow for war will be destroyed, and a multitude and peace from the Gentiles, and he will rule the waters to the sea and the springs of the rivers of the earth."[8] Yet nothing of the sort occurred during the last week of Jesus's earthly life. A simple promise-fulfillment reading, Origen concludes, cannot make sense of the narrative sequencing of Zechariah's own voice. And in this meeting of the two testaments, Origen will not allow the voice of the Old Testament to be eviscerated in favor of its reception in the New.

The complex manner in which the church has heard the eschatological royal promises of the Old Testament is perhaps best illustrated in the liturgical celebration of Advent. For the church's celebration of Christ's advent contained two parts: the proclamation that the hope of Israel's restoration had appeared, and the recognition that the full scope of the kingdom he wished to inaugurate was yet to come. In short, the first advent of Israel's messiah does not result in the fulfillment of the full array of Israel's messianic hopes. God's intentions for his people and the world have not been brought to completion. In this fashion the recent document issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission strikes exactly the right note:

> What has already been accomplished in Christ must yet be accomplished in us and in the world. The definitive fulfillment will be at the end with the resurrection of the dead, a new heaven and a new earth. Jewish messianic expectation is not in vain. It can become for us Christians a powerful stimulant to keep alive the eschatological dimension of our faith. Like them, we too live in expectation. The difference is that for us the One who is to come will have the traits of the Jesus who has already come and is already present and active among us.[9]

So in Advent we are put in the peculiar position of celebrating one advent while awaiting another. The readings of the first few Sundays are most explicit here, for their apocalyptic tenor clearly puts most of the emphasis on the second coming. Paradoxically, it is in the celebration of the birth of Israel's messiah that Jews and Christians come together in the closest possible way. The Old Testament is not simply a pointer to the New—even in regard to the messiah—but an independent witness whose integrity must still be respected.

And what is the rub for us?—that Isaiah's full eschatological horizon is not exhausted by the appearance of the earthly Jesus. In the church's

8. The citation here, following the practice of Origen, is from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. There are some minor but important differences.

9. *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, 60. The document also appears on the Vatican website at www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_en.html.

elaboration of her eschatological hopes she *defers* to the larger *scopus* of Isaiah's eschatological horizon. Seitz writes:

> But the larger point is that the horizon of Isaiah in respect of royal promises is not a past fulfillment in Jesus that validates Christian hopes and invalidates those of the Jews. In Advent we do not just look back nostalgically on a perfect fit between the prophet's longings and their absolute fulfillment in Christ: like arrows hitting a bull's-eye. Instead, Isaiah's horizon remains the final horizon for Jew and Christian and Gentile: Christ's coming, Christ's advent in glory and in judgment. This is absolutely consistent with the New Testament's own *per se* witness to Isaiah, as we have seen by tracking how Isaiah is heard *in novo receptum*, where Isaiah's promises are not explicitly referred to as fulfilled but *deferred* [italics mine] to as *per se* promises yet to be fulfilled.[10]

Israel's hope has not been superseded. Rather, the church's true frame for construing the role of the earthly Jesus in ushering in the kingdom has been interpreted so as to conform to the larger horizon of Old Testament expectation. The Old Testament is not simply *background* to the gospel; it is part of the very fabric of the gospel whose full meaning can only be articulated by a conversation between the two.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND TABERNACLED AMONG US

One of the most often cited texts from the Gospel of John is that line from the prologue that reads, "[T]he word became flesh and dwelt among us." Though many Christian readers of this verse will presume instantly that they know what this is all about, it must be said that this exegetical confidence comes not so much from the simple sense of John's Gospel as from the influence of the rule of faith or creed on what is at stake. One meaning, however, is ruled out, even among the most ardent supporters of Chalcedon: The flesh of Jesus is not wholly convertible with the being of God. The *logos* does not become the physical body of Jesus without remainder. But, on the other hand, the flesh cannot be a purely accidental feature unrelated to the task of identifying the second person of the Trinity.

The German New Testament scholar Klaus Berger has provided sufficient grounds for seeing why this text has been such a controverted problem in early Christianity.[11] For Berger, following, in part, the lead of Käsemann, the prologue of John is still a long way from what will be-

10. Seitz, *Word without End*, 227.

11. Berger, "Zu 'Das Wort ward Fleisch' Joh. 1:14a," *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974): 161–66.

come the standard Christological teaching of the church. That the word becomes flesh does not imply any sort of intrinsic relation between flesh and the Godhead. Rather, the flesh and bones of this first-century Jew are merely the accidental occasion for a momentary epiphany of the *logos* or divine word. As proof for his thesis, he points to a text in the *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* wherein an eagle is sent by Baruch to Jeremiah and his exilic brethren in Babylonia.[12] At precisely the moment of its arrival, Jeremiah and a coterie of exiled Judeans are making their way outside the city to bury a corpse. The eagle suddenly took voice and said, "I say to you Jeremiah, the chosen one of God, go and gather together the people and come here so that they may hear a letter which I have brought to you from Baruch and Abimelech" (7:16). As the eagle begins to descend, it alights upon the corpse whereupon it is miraculously revived. The narrator then remarks that all "this took place so that they might believe." Then the people rose up and solemnly acclaimed: "Is this not God who appeared to our fathers in the wilderness through Moses and now in the form of an eagle he has appeared to us" (7:20).[13] Berger remarks: "As in the first chapter of John, there is found here, a statement of identification (the eagle is God) and a statement as to how it came to this identity. From the manner of its coming to this identity it is clear that we are not talking about a transformation but a [momentary] becoming-immanent [*Immanent-Werden*]."[14]

My point is not to say that Berger is correct in finding this text an apt parallel to the Christology of the prologue. I would doubt that Raymond Brown would have found this thesis compelling. But it should also be noted that Brown recognized the persuasive elements in Käsemann's position, which is closely related. Brown writes that Käsemann

> insists that the scandal [of the incarnation] consists in the presence of God among men and not the becoming flesh—not the how, but the fact. For Käsemann 14a [the word became flesh] says no more than 10a, "He was in

12. See the recent bilingual edition of Robert Kraft and Ann-Elizabeth Purintun, *Paraleipomena Jeremiou,* Texts and Translations 1 (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1972). The section that tells the story about the eagle can be found in 7:1–23.

13. I have slightly adjusted the translation given by Kraft and Purintun.

14. Berger, "Zu 'das wort ward Fleisch,'" 163. Berger's essay is a response to those of G. Richter ("Die Fleischwerdung des Logos im Johannesevangelium," *Novum Testamentum* 13 [1971]: 81–126 and 14 [1972]: 257–76) who argues that John 1:14 declares that the Word truly became flesh. For Berger, the meaning of the Greek is the opposite of what Richter maintains: "Erscheinen in einer Gestalt, ohne damit diese zu 'werden.'" Strikingly, he compares this extrinsic connection of *logos* to flesh to the way God inhabits a temple: "Das Erscheinen des Christus im Fleisch und das Wohnen unter/in der Gemeinde bedeutet also nicht, dass der Kyrios mit diesen Menschen identisch wird, sondern dass er in ihnen als in einem heiligen Tempel wohnt (so wie man es sonst vom Pneuma sagt)" (164). This precise question, whether God appeared in the flesh or became that very flesh, was the subject of enormous disagreement in the fourth- and fifth-century Christological controversies.

> the world." The parallelism between 14a and 14b ["and made his dwelling among us"] gives support to Käsemann's contention.[15]

The point I would like to emphasize here is that identifying Jesus as "the word made flesh" does not inexorably point to the high Christology of Chalcedon. In brief, to repeat a line found in many handbooks on patristic theology, there were good exegetical grounds for many of the positions that the latter church would deem heretical.

What is striking, however, when one turns to patristic attempts to sort out the various exegetical options for the phrase, "the word became flesh," is the fact that these writers operate in a manner quite different from the guild of modern New Testament studies. They do not marshal their arguments solely within the ambit of the New Testament documents and their near historical relations. Rather, the Old Testament functions as an equally powerful source for rebutting the views of those professing a low Christology. Childs has summarized this principle well:

> Although it is obviously true that the Old Testament was interpreted in the light of the gospel, it is equally important to recognize that the New Testament tradition was fundamentally shaped from the side of the Old. The Old Testament was not simply a collage of texts to be manipulated, but the Jewish Scriptures were held as the authoritative voice of God, exerting a major coercion on the early Church's understanding of Jesus' mission. In fact, the Jewish Scriptures were the Church's only Scripture well into the second century. As Hans von Campenhausen has forcefully stated, the problem of the early Church was not what to do with the Old Testament in light of the gospel, which was Luther's concern, but rather the reverse. In the light of the Jewish Scriptures which were acknowledged to be the true oracles of God, how were Christians to understand the good news of Jesus Christ?[16]

In the case of the Incarnation, one common point of reference in the Old Testament was that of God's dwelling within the temple or tabernacle of Israel. And indeed, that very symbol is explicitly alluded to in the Johannine prologue. For John not only declares that the word has become flesh, but that it "dwelt among us, and we have seen its glory, the glory of a father's only son." The key clause in establishing that this text speaks to the matter of the temple is the phrase, "he dwelt among us." The Greek verb *skenoo* is clearly borrowed from the story of the tabernacle in Exodus and served to translate the Hebrew word *shakan/mishkan*. As Raymond Brown remarks, "[W]e are being told that the flesh of Jesus Christ is the

15. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII,* Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 31.

16. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 226.

new localization of God's presence on earth, and that Jesus is the replacement of the ancient tabernacle."[17] And as such, this idea nicely dovetails with another major feature of this Gospel, which is that Jesus is "the replacement of the temple" (2:19–22), which Brown adds, is simply "a variation of the same theme."

Brown also notes the very important linkage between the "tenting" of the word and its becoming visible to the naked eye. "In the OT," he observes, "the *glory* of God (Heb. *kabod*; Gr. *doxa*) implies a visible and powerful manifestation of God to men." Then, having reviewed several biblical texts that describe the appearance of God at the site of a temple, he concludes that "it is quite appropriate that, after the description of how the Word set up a tabernacle among men in the flesh of Jesus, the prologue should mention that his *glory* became visible."[18]

To borrow the terminology of Seitz, we could say that the author of the Gospel of John doesn't elaborate this point of similarity between Jesus and the temple because he presumes that his readers will bring to this text a knowledge of how God had indwelt the temple within Israel herself**.** (And this is precisely the value of Brown's commentary on John that I cited above; he locates those sections within the Old Testament that cast light upon the terse formulation in John.) Reading the Gospel of John in terms of its present canonical placement within a two-part Bible, one could say that this Gospel defers to the Old Testament. The very form of the Christian Bible asks the reader to look backward to Exodus 25–40 and informs him or her that if you want to know more, compare these two moments of divine indwelling. And indeed, this is exactly the hermeneutical path followed by St. Athanasius in his "Letter to Adelphius."[19]

For St. Athanasius (fourth century) there was only one answer to the question as to how the body of Jesus is related to the Godhead: The flesh of Jesus *participates* in the divinity of the indwelling *logos*. The manner by which Athanasius arrives at this conclusion depends on a construal of the biblical temple as a structure that *physically* participates in the life of the God who inhabits it. In this document Athanasius is concerned about the readiness of his opponents "*to divide*" the person of Christ into two, his human side and his divine side. But to do so, Athanasius claims, would be idolatrous, for when Christians prostrate themselves

17. Brown, *Gospel according to John I–XII*, 33. Three recent works have treated this theme at great length: Craig Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 1993), 77–113; Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); and Craig Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989), 100–15.

18. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 34.

19. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 4: 577.

before Jesus they do so before the whole person, flesh and body. If the two are divisible then the act of venerating the person of Jesus results in the worship of a creature. "And we do not worship a creature," Athanasius declares. "And neither do we divide the body from the Word and worship it by itself; nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him far apart from the flesh, but knowing, as we said above, that 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14) we recognize Him as God also, after having come in the flesh." And how can an argument for this point be derived from Scripture?—by attending to the practice of the Jewish pilgrimage feasts testified to in the Jewish Scriptures.

> [7] But we should like your piety to ask them this. When Israel was ordered to go up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple of the Lord, where the ark was, "and above it the Cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy-seat" (Heb 9:5) did they do well or the opposite? If they did ill, how came it that they who despised this law were liable to punishment? For it is written that if a man make light of it and go not up, he shall perish from among the people (cf. Num 9:13). But if they did well, and in this proved well-pleasing to God are not the Arians, abominable and most shameful of any heresy, many times worthy of destruction, in that while they approve the former People for the honor paid by them to the temple, they will not worship the Lord Who is in the flesh as in a temple? And yet the former temple was constructed of stones and gold, as a shadow. But when the reality came, the type ceased from thenceforth, and there did not remain according to the Lord's utterance, one stone upon another that was not broken down (Matt 24:2). And they did not, when they saw the temple of stones, suppose that the Lord who spoke in the temple was a creature; nor did they set the temple at nought and retire far off to worship. But they came to it according to the Law, and worshipped the God who uttered His oracles from the temple. Since then this was so, how can it be other than right to worship the Body of the Lord, all-holy and all-reverend as it is, announced by the Holy Spirit, and made the Vesture of the Word? It was at any rate a bodily hand that the Word stretched out to raise her that was sick of a fever (Mk 1:31); a human voice that He uttered to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43); and once again, stretching out His hands upon the Cross, He overthrew the prince of the power of the air, that now works in the sons of disobedience, and made the way clear for us into the heavens.
>
> [8] Therefore he that dishonors the temple dishonors the Lord in the temple; and he that separates the Word from the Body sets at nought the grace given to us in Him. And let not the most impious Arian madmen suppose that, since the body is created, the Word also is a creature, nor let them, because the Word is a creature, disparage His Body. For their error is a matter for wonder, in that they at once confuse and disturb everything, and devise pretexts only in order to number the Creator among the creatures.

Athanasius's point is crystal clear. Just as the Jews had complete justification in prostrating themselves before a building of stone and *not dividing*

the God from the house in which he dwelt—for though they knew God was not limited to any material structure, they did not use this fact as due cause for not going up to Jerusalem—so the Christian has complete justification in prostrating himself before Jesus and not dividing the indwelling God from the flesh that contains him. But equally clear is the hermeneutical direction of his argument. The New Testament does not cast light on the dark shadows of the Old. Rather, the somewhat hasty and quite brief description of the New finds a needed deepening and elaboration from the Old.

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF THE TEMPLE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

But it could be objected that Athanasius has based his Christological argument on thin exegetical grounds. Is it really the case that the Israelites paid honor to the temple itself on the grounds that in doing so they were honoring the God who dwelt within? Many readers of the Bible, I think, would reflexively answer: no! But a diligent conspectus of how the Bible speaks about the dwelling place of the Lord will show otherwise.

The most obvious point to turn so as to see where this identification of God with the building in which he resides takes place is Num 4. This text describes how the tabernacle is to be taken down when the priesthood prepares it for transportation. Special care must be taken with veiling its holy furniture because anyone who would improperly gaze upon these sacred items would be subject to death. As a result, the architectural space of the tabernacle is divided up according to the degree of sanctity that the objects within contain. The minor priests, known as the Levites, are able to handle and look at the outer curtains of the courtyard, but they must not under any circumstances enter the tabernacle itself even to see the furniture that resides within. Only Aaron and his sons can enter the tabernacle in order to cover the sacred vessels so that they will be safe for transport.[20] There is only one way to explain the remarkable care and detail that the Bible shows for these matters. *Seeing the furniture of the temple is akin to seeing the very face of God, and, as a result, approaching the furniture, like approaching God, is an activity subject to the most extreme sorts of spiritual and bodily preparation*.

But the Priestly source in the Pentateuch is not the only place where we see such honor bestowed on this building. So close can the physical structure of the temple be to the very character of God that our Psalmist at one point feels free to exclaim: "Walk about Zion; go around it, count its towers. Consider well its ramparts; go through its citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God [i.e., the buildings of Zion!], our

20. The best place to turn to see how the architectural divisions of the tabernacle work themselves out in the liturgy of ancient Israel is Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985).

God forever"(48:13–15). Or when the ark of the covenant enters the gates of the city of Jerusalem, it is addressed as though it were God himself: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in" (24:7).[21] And in the psalm that Jonah sings, the nexus between the private audience with one's God and viewing the temple is made crystal clear by way of poetic parallelism. The plaintive lament, "I am driven away from your sight," is seconded by the query: "how can I look again upon your holy temple" (Jonah 2:4).

The Jewish biblical scholar Jon Levenson observes that these Zion texts, which have such a high estimation of the physical space in which God dwells, "provide us with a different mode of spiritual experience from that associated with Mount Sinai."[22] For at Sinai, the imageless nature of the deity is so deliberately and powerfully emphasized that one might conclude that the Israelite deity was one who revealed himself solely by decree. The militantly anti-iconic tone of these texts would seem to rule out any revelatory dimension to the visual. But in Num 4, Ps 24, and Ps 48 as well as other texts of this sort we see that "it is the eye which [having beheld the temple], to foe and friend alike, communicates the nature of God and his special relationship to Israel."[23]

In rabbinic midrash the matter was taken one step further. In several biblical texts Israel is commanded to come to the temple on pilgrimage three times during the year "to see the Lord God."[24] The Rabbis were certainly aware that the Bible only on the rarest of occasions describes the actual appearance of the Holy One in a theophany at the temple. The question, then, was just how this commandment could be fulfilled. One rabbinic text suggests that during the days of a temple feast the curtains of the temple were pulled back so that the gathered throng of Israelites could gaze on the furniture: "R. Kattina said: Whenever Israel came up to

21. On the setting of Ps 24 as an entrance rite for the ark of the covenant, see Nahum Sarna, *Songs of the Heart: An Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 126–35. Compare also the story of the ark's capture in 1 Sam 4–6. Here the loss of the ark is tantamount to losing the presence of God (see especially 1 Sam 4:21–22). To be sure, there was no statue of God that rested on the ark as would have been standard in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Yet this piece of furniture was thought to be so closely linked to the personhood of God that wherever the ark went, so went God. As a result the ark could be addressed, in moments of rhetorical excess, as though it were the deity itself.

22. Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 150.

23. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 150–51.

24. See Exod 23:17 and parallels. It should be noted that the Massoretes vocalized the verb "to see" in this verse in the passive voice so that nearly all translations read: "to appear [sc. to be seen] before the Lord." It has long been recognized that the original vocalization of the verb was most likely in the active voice, "to see the Lord." This was already noted by Luzzato (*Sefer Yeshayahu* [Padua, 1855] ad Isa 1:12); cf. August Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1897), 276. It is worth noting that the Rabbinic literature preserves solid evidence that the active form of the verb was read in the first few centuries of the common era as well. See S. Naeh, "*Ha-im em la-Massoret*?" [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 61 (1992): 413.

the Festival, the curtain would be removed for them and the Cherubim were shown to them, whose bodies were intertwined with one another, and they would be thus addressed: Look! You are beloved before God as the love between man and woman."[25] Another text ascribes the defining mark of the Israelite people as the particular ability to gaze upon the being of God contained within the sacred ark:

> The Queen of Sheba brought circumcised and uncircumcised persons before Solomon. They were of similar appearance, height, and dress. She said to him, "Distinguish for me the circumcised from the uncircumcised." Immediately Solomon gestured to the high priest and he opened the Ark of the Covenant. Those who were circumcised bent over half-way but no more so that their faces might be filled with the radiance of the Shekinah. The uncircumcised promptly fell to the ground upon their faces. Solomon said to her, "The former ones are the circumcised and the latter are the uncircumcised." She said, "How do you know this?" He answered, "Is it not written about Balaam, 'he who gazes upon the sight of the Almighty, [fallen (partly over) but with eyes unveiled]?' (Num 24:4). Had he fallen completely to the ground, he would not have seen anything."[26]

Finally, there are other rabbinic texts that suggest that the furniture that was housed within the temple was brought out to the forecourt so that the pilgrims could view it while they stood before the altar. As one scholar noted, during these festival occasions all Israel was temporarily elevated to the rank of priest so that they could behold the furniture and not die.[27] And it is probably exactly this attitude toward the temple and its furniture that led some copyists of the Hebrew Bible to rewrite the line, "to see the *Lord* God (*adon elohim*)" as "to see the *ark* of God (*aron elohim*)." And perhaps for the same reason, the Greek translator of the Hebrew Bible altered the text, "and have them make me a sanctuary so that *I may dwell* among them," to "and have them make me a sanctuary so that *I might be seen* among them." Here the act of seeing would not be defined solely by the occasional theophany but by the ability to gaze and meditate on the material structure of the temple itself. Similarly, a whole variety of Second Temple Jewish texts develop at some length the tradition that the most precious vessels of the temple were sealed in a secret location so that the Babylonian invaders could not profane them when they destroyed the temple.[28] The only way to understand these materials is against the

25. Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 54a.

26. *Midrash Mishle*, ed. B. Visotsky (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1990), 6.

27. I. Knohl, "Post-Biblical Sectarianism," [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 60 (1991): 139–46.

28. The hiding of the temple vessels was a widespread theme in the literature of the Second Temple and Rabbinic eras. See P. R. Ackroyd, "The Temple Vessels—A Continuity Theme," in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTSup 23; Leiden: Brill, 1972): 166–81; George Nickelsburg, "Narrative Traditions in the Paralipomena of Jeremiah and 2 Baruch," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35 (1973): 60–68; Marilyn F. Collins, "The Hidden Vessels in Samaritan Traditions," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 3 (1972): 97–116.

background of a very high theology of temple artifacts. So closely bound up were they with the identity of God that they could not be exposed to the ravages of war and exile. As God sits in anxious patience awaiting the day he can reenter his shrine in Jerusalem, so his furniture stands at the ready for the advent of this momentous return.

We might note too at this point the argument of the Jewish theologian Michael Wyschogrod.[29] Though Jews have been reluctant to concede to the doctrine of the Incarnation any truth whatsoever, Wyschogrod argues that there is no way that Judaism can rest content with a God who has no spatial location whatsoever. For Judaism has the audacity to claim that God has an address.

> There is a place where he dwells and that place is Jerusalem. He dwells in Number One Har Habayit Street. It is a real dwelling and for every Jew, the sanctity of the land of Israel derives from the sanctity of Jerusalem, and the sanctity of Jerusalem derives from the sanctity of the temple, and the sanctity of the temple derives from the sanctity of the holy of holies where God dwells.[30]

Of course, the hallowed nature of the Western Wall—the last remaining sign of the venerable structure of the temple—gives elegant testimony to this, as does the tradition of the hidden temple vessels. But Wyschogrod's point is deeper than this. For if God can have an earthly address, then his identity must have some spatial dimension.

> God has undertaken to enter the world and to dwell in a place. That, of course, is still a far distance from saying that God dwells in a particular human being and that as a particular human being walks by us—there is God walking! On the other hand, it is the dimension of spatiality, of the presence of God in a particular place which would not be possible if there were not some sense in which God has entered space and therefore some sense in which incarnational thinking is justified.[31]

THE TEMPLE AND INCARNATION AMONG THE ANTIOCHENES

At this point it should be obvious that texts such as John 1:14 compelled Christian thinkers to consider the singularity of the Incarnation against the background of God's indwelling of the temple. Given the importance of this Christological theme in the Bible and the early church, one might have expected that this "temple-theology" would have had a long

29. M. Wyschogrod, "Incarnation," *Pro Ecclesia* 2 (1993): 208–15.
30. Wyschogrod, "Incarnation," 210.
31. Wyschogrod, "Incarnation," 211.

afterlife itself. But in fact it does not go much further than Athanasius himself. This is because of what happens within the school of Antiochene Christianity. There, already with the figure of Theodore of Mopsuestia, it is propounded that God abandons Jesus at his Passion and lets the man suffer on his own. Though the textual justification is grounded in a textually problematic verse from Hebrews, the larger thematic argument comes from the metaphor of a temple.[32] For though God can indwell a temple such that his presence infuses even the furniture and masonry, *he can also depart from a temple and go into exile*. Ezekiel is the best witness to this theologumenon. For in a famous section of his book, he articulates in considerable detail how God mounted his chariot-throne in the holy of holies and departed the temple, making it completely vulnerable to the assaults of the Babylonian invaders (Ezek 8–11).

Pursuing this aspect of temple theology to its logical end, Theodore, and later most notoriously Nestorius (early fifth century), argued that the indwelling of God in Jesus's body, like a temple, is a *wholly extrinsic* affair. There was no intrinsic relationship between the temple and the deity who resided within. God was free to come and go at his leisure. And such was the method of reading the Gospels as evidenced by Nestorius and his circle. In some parts of the gospel story we see only the weak human body that Jesus inhabits; in others the deity bursts onto the scene. At the Crucifixion, God literally departs from his temple and leaves the man Jesus to die on his own.

Theodore's position is well illustrated in his *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*.[33] Throughout this text Theodore distinguishes what happened to the man Jesus—here described as the material framework of the temple—in contrast to God who resided within him—here understood like the glory of the Lord that sits atop the ark and is free to come and go as it pleases. As a result, Theodore could not countenance any sort of "strong-reading" of John 1:14; the word appears in the flesh but does not in any way become flesh.[34]

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32. Theodore grounded this remarkable assertion in a textual variant of Heb 2:9. "And in order to teach us why He suffered and became 'a little lower [than the angels]' he said: '*Apart from God* [in place of, 'by the grace of God'] He tasted death for every man.' In this he shows that the Divine nature willed that He should taste death for the benefit of every man, and also that the Godhead was separated from the one who was suffering in the trial of death, because it was impossible for Him to taste the trial of death if (the Godhead) were not cautiously remote from Him" [from A. Mingana, ed., *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed* (Woodbrook Studies 5; Cambridge: Heffer, 1932): 86–87].

33. A. Mingana, ed., *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed.*

34. See the good discussion of F. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM, 1983), 209: "The Logos could not move from place to place, nor 'become' flesh except *kata to dokein*—he meant 'metaphorically' rather than 'docetically' because he continued: 'In appearance, not in the sense that he did not take real flesh, but in the sense that he did not *become* flesh.' For Theodore truer expressions are to be found in the phrases 'he tabernacled among us' or 'he assumed flesh'—'flesh' being a term which he explicitly takes to mean human nature in its entirety. So the incarnation could not imply any change in the essential Godhead any more than it could undermine the autonomy of the manhood."

> It is not Divine nature that received death, but it is clear that it was that man who was assumed as a temple to God the Word which was dissolved and then raised by the one who had assumed it. And after the Crucifixion it was not Divine nature that was raised but the temple which was assumed, which rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God; nor is it to Divine nature—the cause of everything—that it was given that every one should worship it and every knee should bow, but worship was granted to the form of a servant which did not in its nature possess (the right to be worshipped). While all these things are clearly and obviously said of human nature he referred them successively to Divine nature so that his sentence might be strengthened and be acceptable to hearers. Indeed, since it is above human nature that it should be worshipped by all, it is with justice that all this has been said as of one, so that the belief in a close union between the natures might be strengthened, because he clearly showed that the one who was assumed did not receive all this great honor except from the Divine nature which assumed Him and dwelt in Him.[35]

If this text is read side by side that of Athanasius, one can see significant points of continuity. And this should occasion no surprise, for Theodore thought of himself as a vigorous defender of Nicene orthodoxy. Athanasius's opponents were his own opponents. Most important in this regard is his claim that because God indwelt Jesus as he had dwelled in Israel's temple so one can worship and bend the knee toward Jesus. Theodore, however, goes one step further. He takes special pains to emphasize the division between the body and the God who indwelt it. The relationship between the two bespeaks, to be sure, "a *close union* between the natures," but a union that remains sufficiently divisible such that God can abandon this temple and three days later raise it up. Proper gospel interpretation, by extension, requires the ability to divide the human figure from the divine being who indwells him. This propensity to divide the person of Christ met extreme resistance in the person of Cyril of Alexandria and the controversy that erupted between him and Nestorius.

MARY AND THE TEMPLE

In the aftermath of the Nestorian controversy the temple metaphor as a means of understanding the Incarnation was categorically rejected. Leo the Great's homilies on the Nativity make this clear:

> For this wondrous child-bearing of the holy Virgin produced in her offspring one person which was truly human and truly Divine, because nei-

35. A. Mingana, ed., *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*, 66.

> ther substance so retained their properties that there could be any division of persons in them; *nor was the creature taken into partnership with its Creator in such a way that the One was the in-dweller, and the other the dwelling* [italics mine]; but so that the one nature was blended with the other.[36]

In this text Leo desires to make clear that the concept of a "close union" between deity and humanity that Theodore favored was not adequate for defining the Christological mystery. What was needed was an idiom of speech that allowed the two natures to interpenetrate one another so fully that such a separation would be very difficult. For these purposes the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* (what can be predicated of the divine can also be said of the human and vice versa) provided far better service. In this vein, the metaphor of the temple would no longer be appropriate because Ezekiel's depiction of the exile allowed one to construe the relation of the indweller to the dwelling in a far too casual manner.

But then what became of the rich temple language of the Old Testament once it lost its natural connection to the person of Christ? It was far too central a witness to be passed over in silence. If the integrity of the character of God across the two testaments was to be preserved, the metaphor of the temple could not be ignored. The logical place to turn was the womb of the Virgin Mary. That person who would be identified in the iconographic tradition as "the container of the uncontainable"—an unmistakable allusion to the God of Israel whose being could not be contained even in the highest of the heavens (1 Kgs 8:27) yet nevertheless deigned to dwell in Jerusalem—proved a fit dwelling wherein the Creator of the universe could find habitation. Leo writes,

> For the uncorrupt nature of Him that was born had to guard the primal virginity of the Mother, and the infused power of the *Divine Spirit had to preserve intact the chamber of chastity and the dwelling place of holiness that it*

36. Leo the Great, Sermon 23.1 [3.1]. The text can be found in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series 12: 132. For Leo it is crucial that there be no division between God and man in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result the temple metaphor as deployed by the Antiochene school is allowed no place at the table. In Leo's mind, Nestorius had effectively divided the in-dweller (God the Son) from the dwelling (Jesus as man) and hence ruled out any direct comparison of Jesus to the temple. For the Latin original, see Léon le Grand, *Sermons, SC* 22, 2d ed. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 94–99. The note appended by Dom René Dolle, the editor of the text, is worth citing (97 n. 3): "C'était là, en effet, une expression employée par Nestorius pour caractériser l'union du Verbe divin avec l'homme Jésus. Dans une letter à S. Cyrille, il écrivait: <<Il est exact et conforme à la tradition évangélique, d'affirmer que le corps du Christ est le temple de la divinité>> (PG 77, 49), texte qui pouvait certes s'entendre dans un sens orthodoxe mais qui prenait un sens très particulier dans le contexte de pensée nestorienne; par ailleurs le XIe Anathématisme de saint Cyrille s'exprimait ainsi: <<Quiconque ne confesse pas que la chair du Seigneur donne la vie et qu'elle est la proper chair du Logos divin, mais pretend qu'elle appartient à un autre que lui, qui ne lui est uni que par la dignité et qui a servi de demeure à la divinité . . .>>"

> *had chosen for itself* [italics mine]*:* that Spirit (I say) who had determined to raise the fallen, to restore the broken, and by overcoming the allurements of the flesh to bestow on us in abundant measure the power of chastity: in order that the virginity which in others cannot be retained in child-bearing, might be attained by them at their second birth.[37]

Mary does not become God, of course, but she does "house" God in the most intimate way imaginable. The extrinsic manner of relating God to temple is put to good use: Mary both receives the divine Son and gives birth to him. But in the logic of the Incarnation this moment transforms her forever. Her body remains holy forever thereafter as a result of housing the Holy One of Israel. And as the temple could be revered and praised on its own terms without any worry of committing some form of idolatrous apostasy, so Mary could be revered and adored. Not as a god(dess), but as the one who housed God. If one could turn to the temple and say, "how lovely is thy dwelling place," and attend to its every architectural detail, why would one not do the same with the Theotokos?

In late Byzantine hymns to Mary the temple imagery reaches new heights. Indeed, a brief scansion of the patristic homilies that Brian Daley has collected and edited in his fine volume on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin reveals how important the Old Testament stories about the tabernacle and temple were for the construction of her character.[38] Almost anything that was said about this Old Testament precursor became fair game for depicting the life of the Virgin Mary that the New Testament authors in their great modesty "neglected" to tell us. Consider this sample from John of Damascus:

> And so your holy, spotless body is committed to a reverent burial, as angels go before you and stand around you and follow after, doing all the things by which it is fitting to serve the mother of their Lord. The Apostles, too, are there, and all the full membership of the Church, crying out divine hymns to the music of the harp of the Spirit: "holy is your temple, wonderful because of God's salvation" (Ps 64:5) and again, "the most High has made his tabernacle holy" (Ps 45:5), and "God's mountain is a mountain of plenty, the mountain where God is pleased to dwell" (Ps 67:16). The company of the Apostles lift you up on their shoulders, the true ark of the Lord God, as once the priests lifted up the typological ark that pointed the way to you. Your immaculate, completely spotless body was not left on earth, but you have been transported to the royal dwelling-place of heaven as queen, as lady, as mistress, as Mother of God, as the one who truly gave birth to God.[39]

37. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, 12: 130. For the Latin, see Léon le Grand, *SC* 22, 80–81. I have slightly altered the English translation. My thanks to Brian Daley for assisting me with the Latin.

38. Brian E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998).

39. Daley, *On the Dormition*, 197–98.

Or, in turn, consider the description of the procession of Mary's bier from Mt. Zion to Gethsemane found in Theoteknos of Livias. It is created, in large part, from stories about the procession of the ark in the Old Testament.

> [6] The all-blessed body, then, of the holy one was being carried towards the place I have mentioned, accompanied by angels' songs of praise; and the unbelieving Jews, who had killed the Lord, looking down the valley, saw her remains lying on the bier and went towards it, intending to do violence in that very spot to the body which God had honored; his temple, his lampstand, his vessel containing the pure oil, his altar of holocausts, appearing in splendor within the Holy of Holies.
>
> All those who meant to attack her and to burn her body were struck with blindness; and one of them, who touched her bier with his own hands, was deprived of them—they were cut off! (cf. II Sam 6) So that immaculate flesh was glorified; all of them came to believe and confessed her Mother of God, and the one whom they had vilified as a seductress they now praised in song as God's own mother. And those who had lost their sight saw the wonders worked by God towards his mother. . . . For a wonderful thing happened: the hands of the one who had lost them [were restored to him.] And all believed in Christ, who was before her and from her and with her, "the Son of David according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3).
>
> Let no one think that the miracle worked by the all-holy body of the Mother of God was something impossible—for she had remained a virgin incorrupt. It was, after all, fitting for the spiritual ark, which contained the vessel of manna and the blooming rod of Aaron (Num 17:23), for she blossomed and bore the fruit that can never be consumed. The former ark defeated the hostile foreigners, who wanted to do it violence; how much more, then should the spiritual ark defeat those who from the beginning have fought against God and against the beautiful name "that is invoked over us" (Jer 14:9).
>
> [7] For she is ark and vase and throne and heaven. She was judged worthy to be entrusted with ineffable mysteries; she was judged worthy to reveal things hidden and sealed in the Book of Daniel, and through her "all of us, with faces unveiled, will gaze on the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Through her, the veil on Moses' face has been lifted.[40]

The cult of Mary in the medieval period is greatly indebted to this development. But I would commit a grave error if I left my story in this simple developmental sequence. To be sure, temple images for Jesus become difficult to sustain after Chalcedon and their logical referent becomes that of the Virgin Mary. But it is not accurate to say that Mary's character is developed in a whole new direction. For the connection of Mary to the temple has a long pedigree that antedates Chalcedon. Already in *Protevangelium of James*, Mary is imaged as something like a living, breathing temple into which the Creator of the universe has taken up residence.

40. Daley, *On the Dormition*, 75–76.

What we witness in the developments after Chalcedon is a marked amplification of a preexistent theme in light of its restriction to Mary.

MARY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: A METHODOLOGICAL REPRISE

The development of the temple metaphor in relationship to the Incarnation sheds considerable light on how the early church conceived the relationship between the two testaments. The relationship between the two is not primarily predictive, but figural. And in this fashion the Old Testament can do more than simply anticipate the New; it can take a necessary role in filling out what the New has not disclosed. Such a move is perhaps best illustrated in St. Augustine's reading of the book of Psalms in light of the *totus Christus*. Since Christ adopts Israel's persona on the cross by expressing his grief through the opening words of Ps 22, Augustine reasoned that the rest of the Psalter could be understood in a similar fashion. This opened up a dramatic new vista into the person of Jesus Christ that forever altered how the book of Psalms would be read. One could learn as much about the person of Jesus from the Psalter as one could from the Gospels. A similar hermeneutical move is made with the temple and the figure of Mary. Once the figural link is established, the character of Mary grows well beyond what little the New Testament had said about her.

It should be emphasized that I am not saying that the Old Testament texts about the tabernacle and the temple predict in a univocal way the coming of Mary. Here the model of the *totus Christus* is of considerable value. All the psalms, even in the Augustinian register, retain their—historically primary—Israelite voice. Indeed, they must retain their original voice because it is that specific voice which Jesus wishes to assume. Jesus cannot speak *in persona Israel* if there is no *vox Israel* to assume! When Ezekiel spoke of Israel's eager hope for the rebuilding of the temple and the return of God's presence to dwell within it, Christian homilists almost uniformly assumed that the ultimate referent was that of the person of Mary. Indeed, in the icons used during the Marian feasts in the Eastern Church, Ezekiel is almost always shown holding his temple, a figure for the person of Mary.[41] But this does not obliterate the primary historical reference

41. Timothy George notes that Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli were all in agreement about the perpetual virginity of Mary even though Scripture makes no explicit judgment on this matter. "Strangely enough," George observes, "Zwingli attempted to argue for this teaching on the basis of scripture alone, against the idea that it could only be held on the basis of the teaching authority of the church. His key proof text is Ezekiel 44:2: 'This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened: no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered through it'" ("Blessed Virgin Mary," 109). But this is hardly as strange as it appears. Zwingli is simply working from a typological identification that goes back to the patristic period.

the text has in the prophet's own self-consciousness and within the subsequent living tradition of Judaism. To illustrate this, consider the rendering of Ezekiel in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. The prophet Ezekiel stands just below the fifth and central panel of the Genesis cycle that adorns the ceiling. In this panel Eve comes forth from Adam's rib, a painting that can also be read as the church (i.e., Mary) issuing forth from the rib of Christ.[42] Loren Partridge catches the drama well:

> Ezekiel has just spun around from one genius—his scarf and scroll still rippling from the sudden movement—to carry on an intense polemic with the other angelically beautiful genius who points heavenward with both hands while Ezekiel's open-palm gesture equivocates between accepting and questioning. His extraordinary physical and rhetorical energy . . . is heightened by the parallel diagonals of bull neck, thick torso, titanic limbs and broad lavender drapery falling across his orange tunic and between his splayed knees.[43]

Why such excitement and surprise? I would suggest that Michelangelo knows that what the prophet is made to say within the Christian tradition is not what the prophet himself had in mind. His scroll in his left hand points in one direction—to *terra firma*—while the angelic figure to his right points upward. As Eric Auerbach had argued so well, the Christian figural tradition attempted to retain an integral voice to the Jewish Scriptures while at the same time reconfiguring its various compass points to point beyond themselves.[44]

But this process of development should not be left solely within the plane of hermeneutics, as if all we were talking about were rules of literary growth. What allows the Church Fathers to proceed in the direction they

42. On the relationship of Eve to Mary on the Sistine ceiling, see the extended discussion in Gary Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1–20 and esp. 4–7. For a brief review of the pertinent data, consider these comments of Loren Partridge (*Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling, Rome* [New York: George Braziller, 1996], 50). He argues that this panel's "pivotal role was both deliberate and appropriate, for it was a common symbol of the founding of the Church, embodied by the Virgin, the second Eve, just as the Virgin's Assumption, to which the chapel was dedicated, symbolized the Church's triumph. Eve's importance is underlined by the mighty figure of God, cramped within the pictorial field, who appears for the first time standing on the earth. Born from the side of Adam, Eve also alludes to the Church's principal sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, for both water and blood flowed from the side of Christ, the second Adam. And indeed, Adam is intended to suggest the sacrificial Christ by his crumpled sleeping figure leaning awkwardly against a dead, cross-like stump."

43. Partridge, *Michelangelo*, 80.

44. As is well known, Auerbach exerted a strong influence on the work of Hans Frei and many of the "narrative theologians" who came to make up the Yale school. In this instance, Michelangelo's understanding of Ezekiel allows the prophet to retain his historical voice within the community of ancient Israel. Ezekiel thought that Israel's restoration would require the rebuilding of the actual temple in Jerusalem. The angel, however, alerts the prophet that God's providential ordering of his words will result in a very different interpretation from what he had intended.

do is a profound appreciation of what the subject matter or *res* of Scripture consists. Both the Old and New Testaments are chock-full of references to how God takes up residence amid his people. And these texts are not simply symbolic, for to paraphrase and domesticate the fiery tongue of Flannery O'Connor, if they were merely literary devices then their relationship is endlessly fungible. And could one confidently declare that God was present in any of them? Certainly the poetic idiom of Yeats found in the epigram to this essay turns on precisely this point. What could be the cause of the sudden chill in Mary's bones that bids her hair stand on end?

The challenge to the reader is to see how these references to God's *real* presence—both in Israel and within the church—relate to one another. On the one hand, Scripture witnesses to the deeply transformational quality of these moments of indwelling. As the biblical author makes very clear, God wants the tabernacle built not simply as a place for him to dwell, but so that he can dwell among his chosen people, Israel (Exod 25:8). As a result of this indwelling, Israel is obligated to live a life that befits such holiness (e.g., Lev 11:44–45). All of the moral and sacral legislation of Leviticus and Numbers depends on this crucial point. But, on the other hand, the object of this incarnation, be it tabernacle, temple, or womb, becomes worthy of veneration in its own right. This is not a vestige of paganism or a form of idolatry; it is the reverent admission that any part of creation brought that close to the presence of God is overwhelmed by his power and sanctity. The liturgy of the Angelus allows one to recall *and adore* this event afresh. Here, the witness of the Old Testament is absolutely crucial in order to counter the charges brought against the Catholic Church in the wake of the Reformation. The Holy One of Israel cannot indwell a space and leave it unchanged. Venerating Mary as mother of God (*Ave Maria, gratia plena* . . .) does not detract from the doctrine of the Incarnation, it safeguards it. (On this point, consider the acts of veneration that Jews bestow on sacred texts that hold the veritable name of God.)

My own approach to the development of Mary's person has gone in a somewhat different direction from that of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic commission that produced the very influential and stimulating volume, *Mary in the New Testament*.[45] In this volume the interests were necessarily quite different than mine. A vigorous scholarly attempt was made to read each New Testament author on his own and not to allow later church doctrines anachronistically to be read back into the original voices of the text. The results of this study were clear, sober, and unassailable. But, the end result of the volume was unsatisfying for me because the implication was that the growth of Marian doctrine was conceived to be a slow and careful outgrowth of what the *New Testament* had only hinted at. One

45. *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress, and New York: Paulist, 1978). The volume was edited by Raymond Brown, Karl Donfried, Joseph Fitzmyer, and John Reumann.

would not have gathered from this volume that the elaboration of Mary in the church was just as much an attempt to understand her in light of the church's two-part Bible.

But I should concede that the two-testament witness of the Christian Bible is not the whole story. In addition, one must reckon with the influence of the vicissitudes of history. Had Theodore of Mopsuestia not brought to light the fact that the deity seems free to enter and leave the temple as witnessed in Ezek 8–11, the wholesale transfer of the temple form to Mary might not have happened. Though texts like the *Protevangelium of James* were already moving far in that direction, most patristic writers up to Chalcedon seemed to be most comfortable using the image of the temple as a metaphor for the indwelling of the Godhead within the person of Jesus. In addition, the rising importance of the Marian feasts within the liturgical life of the church in the wake of Chalcedon should not be underemphasized. These feasts quickened the need for and the development of icons and innumerable homilies. And both the icons and the homilies provided the fertile soil from which the growth of Mary's temple-like being could flourish. Given the paucity of material about Mary in the New Testament, it can hardly be surprising that the homilies on the Dormition that Brian Daley has collected devote such an extraordinary amount of space to the metaphor of Mary as temple.

In sum, one can see that the doctrine of the Incarnation was not understood in patristic tradition as solely an affair of the New Testament. In some very important ways, the New Testament was thought to defer to the Old. The task of the Catholic reader of the Old Testament is perhaps best illustrated by Michelangelo. In keeping with the historical sense it is absolutely crucial that we allow this Old Testament prophet his own voice. Otherwise, whence will come his surprise? The Old Testament, with complete theological integrity, imagines that all world history points toward God's rebuilding of Zion. We cannot compromise this perspective. In the New Testament, on the other hand, that hope takes a radical and unexpected turn, but not one that renders null and void the subject matter of Ezekiel's hopes. As Michelangelo indicates, God has indwelt a virgin and the task of the Christian reader is to explore how Ezekiel's words and imagery take new shape in light of the mystery of Christ. The Angelus is one such means the tradition has offered for adoring the moment of Incarnation. For when Mary responds *fiat mihi*, her body becomes a fit vessel (*gratia plena*) to contain the uncontainable. Like the Israelites of old who fell on their faces in adoration when they witnessed the descent of God to earth to inhabit his tabernacle, so for the church (*Ave Maria . . . Dominus tecum*). In this fashion a high doctrine of Mary both ensures and safeguards the doctrine of the Incarnation.