

“I HAVE SET BEFORE JOSHUA A SINGLE STONE WITH
SEVEN FACETS BEARING HIS INSCRIPTION . . .”(ZECH 3:9)
THE “JESUS(S)” OF THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

Christopher A. Decaen

The first-time reader of the New Testament can get the impression that there was some kind of dearth of names in the Holy Land in the first century. Thus, a quick review of just the gospels and Acts yields four Marys, two Johns, three Judases, five Simons, four Josephs, and three Ananiases.² And these are just the clear cases; the mere fact of this apparent custom of name recycling can give one doubts whether one has rightly assumed that, for instance, the Marys in a pair of passages are really the same person.³

Christopher Decaen is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College (1993). He received his doctorate in philosophy from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and has been a tutor at Thomas Aquinas College since 1999. His last article in *The Aquinas Review* was “The Historical Don Quixote” (volume 9, 2002).

¹ This essay is an expansion of a pair of talks presented in the “Tutor Talks” at Thomas Aquinas College on October 12 and November 16, 2011. I would like to thank all the tutors and students who offered their insights, theories, and criticisms in the question-and-answer periods after. Thanks are also due to my wife Rose for making this more readable.

² For the two Marys, other than the obvious, see Mark 19:47, Acts 12:12; the Simons include Peter, the Apostle (also called the “Zealot”), the Cyrene, the Pharisee, and the Tanner (Acts 10:32); besides the obvious Joseph, there is Arimathea, Barsabbas (also called “Justus”), and one who is simply designated as having a mother named Mary. The Ananiases are all in Acts. We could add two Johns to this list.

³ This source of confusion is also a great apologetic tool: Who would bother making up a story in which several of the characters have the

One might be surprised, then, when he reads the *Old Testament* and finds so *little* repetition of names. In a text more than four times the length of the New Testament, spanning hundreds of times as much history, there is only one man named Abraham. There is only one Isaac or Rebecca, only one Jacob or Leah or Rachel, only one Moses or Aaron. One Noah, one Adam and Eve, one Saul, one Samuel, one David, one Solomon, one Elijah, one Isaiah, one Jeremiah, one Job, and so on. The ancient Jews, apparently, almost appear to be opposed in principle to reusing names.

Of course, we must not over-generalize. Names *are* reused in the Old Testament. There are two Manassehs, two Tamars, several Abinidabs and Eliezers, at least half a dozen Abijahs, and literally dozens of Azariahs. But what at first appear to be exceptions to the rule are actually only a refinement of

same name? Unless one were trying to draw the reader to compare or contrast two characters, no *fiction* writer would be tempted to give two characters (much less three or four) the same name; it would generate just too much confusion for the reader, and discourage his immersion in the story. So, then, the apologetic argument would go, perhaps the New Testament is not a work of fiction. Perhaps the New Testament (or the Gospels at any rate) is a work of history, a reporting of what happened and to whom, and if it is confusing that some people had the same first name, then this only fits with the fact that history sometimes is confusing. Much of history, after all, is a matter of chance, and the historian as historian must not tamper with the historical record merely to help the reader—unlike with tales that are made up, whose matter is always subject to the “providential” aims of the author.

We have a striking example of this sort of confusion in the hybrid genre known as historical fiction. Take Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part I*. It was not only for a literary reason that this play has three different characters named Henry, though this parallel is useful to the author, who wants the reader to compare the three. The main reason, no doubt, is that in the historical record *there were* three Henrys. Indeed, Shakespeare is obviously concerned both that the reader make the comparison of the three *and* that he not be confused about which one is which, whence the one is usually called Hal or Harry, another Hotspur, and the third, the king, Henry.

it, for these names are not the names of Patriarchs or central characters in the Old Testament; they are secondary or even peripheral characters. Old Testament Jews, apparently, avoid naming their children after someone *great*, like Abraham or Moses, almost as though there were an inverse proportion between the frequency of a name’s use and the importance of the namesake: The name *Manasseh* is rare, but both Manassehs are significant (if not central) figures in the Old Testament, whereas the names *Abijah* and *Azariah* are common, and the Abijahs and Azariahs always play supporting roles in the narrative. The Old Testament Jewish custom, then, appears to have been the opposite of ours now: Whereas we name a child after someone to honor the namesake, the Jews *withhold* a name from circulation to honor the original bearer of the name.⁴

Whatever happened that induced the Jews of the first century to change their custom of leaving certain names to the ages, the change itself has particular theological significance when one compares the two testaments. To take a couple of significant examples, although there is only one Saul in the Old Testament, there is another in the New, and likewise, the unique Joseph of the Old Testament is the precursor of several Josephs in the New.⁵ Indeed, one often finds that the Old Testament character is a type, or sometimes an anti-type, of the New Testament character. Surely it is more than a coincidence that, for example, Israel’s first, and very defective,

⁴ We preserve a small (but significant) vestige of the Jewish practice when we English speakers refuse to name our children *Jesus*; our neighbors to the south and elsewhere have the opposite practice.

⁵ Other examples: Without too much imagination one can pair Zechariah the prophet with Zechariah the father of John, or even Jonah with the Johns of the New Testament; less obviously, a comparison with Simeon, the son of Jacob, and the several Simons and even the single Simeon in the Gospels is pregnant. Consider also Jacob and the two Jameses (whose name is in fact the same as Jacob), or Judah (the tribe, the nation, the son of Jacob) and the two Judases.

king should have the same name as the New Israel's first, and most effective, *persecutor*; both are of the tribe of Benjamin and have offices that should be *assets* to Israel but both go on campaigns that are (unintentionally) *destructive* of it and at odds with God's will.⁶ The likeness goes even deeper: In each case a David is hunted down by the Saul, and in each case the Saul falls into the hands of the David, who then cries out, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"⁷ And again, in each case Saul is shown, not justice, but mercy. Indeed, the Saul of the *New Testament* seems to be aware of the significance of his namesake, for when he is converted he changes his name from that of the king to that of a little one (*paulus*). To just scratch the surface of the other example, there is an obvious connection between the prophetic dreamer Joseph who led his family, the sons of Israel, into Egypt to escape death in the Promised Land at the end of the first book of the *Old Testament*, and the prophetic dreamer Joseph who led his family, especially one who is the New Israel, into Egypt to escape death in the Promised Land at the beginning of the first book of the *New Testament*. As a rule, these sorts of comparison pay themselves back with interest.

Is Jesus Unique?

So then, given the first century A.D. custom of recycling Old Testament names, one might wonder about the name *Jesus*; does it have a forerunner in the Old Testament? Might there have been an Old Testament Jesus that was somehow a type of our Savior? We readily see that David, and even Moses, Isaac, and Adam are somehow figures of Christ, but is there anyone

⁶ This parallel is amplified when one calls to mind what a disaster the monarchy was for Israel, as Yahweh and Samuel warn them it will be (1 Sam 8, *passim*). The king of Israel quickly becomes the enemy of Israel. Is it a coincidence that the name "Saul" and "Sheol" in Hebrew are spelled the same?

⁷ Compare 1 Sam 24:9, 26:18, and Acts 9:4.

with his same name who might also prefigure him? Now, one will have a difficult time trying to find *Iesus* in the Roman or Greek form of the name in the Old Testament,⁸ but it does not take long before one finds the name in Hebrew, from which the Greek and Latin forms were derived.⁹ That form is Joshua (*Yehoshua*), so right away the reader may suspect that Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant and eventual successor, is a type of Jesus the Christ.

This suspicion is becomes near certainty when Scripture itself indicates, in two places, one in each testament, that this name means "Yahweh is savior," or "Yahweh is salvation," or even "Yahweh the savior." To underline this twofold point—that this is the meaning of the name, and that Scripture itself wants us to *realize* this—I will quote both passages. In the book of Ecclesiasticus Joshua son of Nun is said to have become, "in accordance with his name, the great savior of His elect, to take vengeance on the enemies that rose against them, that he might give Israel its inheritance" (Sir 46:1, author's trans.). Likewise, in the more familiar passage from the gospel of Matthew, an angel tells Joseph that Mary, his betrothed, "will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). The angel's "for" is unintelligible unless he and Joseph understand this name *Jesus* either to *mean* "savior" or to name some famous savior of the people. The former is undeniable, and in this essay I will be arguing that the latter is true as well.

Thus, like with Abraham, David, Moses, and the rest, there is only one man with that exact name *Joshua* in most English translations of the Old Testament. But if one looks closely at the Old Testament, several characters with variants of that

⁸ But it *is* there, as we will see toward the end of this essay.

⁹ Recall that Joshua, or rather *Yehoshua*, is the way that the name of Jesus was spoken by the Jews in the first century A.D.; they spoke amongst themselves either Hebrew or Aramaic, and the name is pronounced this way for both. Only the Greek and Latin speakers, like Pilate or Herod, would have called him *Iesus*.

name appear, indeed, six all told.¹⁰ Since an argument is needed to see even that each of these men has the same name as Jesus (or Joshua), for the moment I will leave the reader in suspense about the identities of these Jesuses. For now just consider the possibility that the thesis is true, that there are six Jesuses in the Old Testament.

This would be puzzling even if only as a unique exception to the unwritten rule against name recycling. Set aside, for the moment, that this is the name of our Savior. Recall that, besides Joshua son of Nun, no other central hero or Patriarch in the Old Testament has a name that is used in naming future generations—much less a name that is recorded as handed on as many as six times. There seem to be only two ways to make sense of this aberration. We could say that the Jews did not consider Joshua son of Nun to be an important, or first tier, figure in their history, one of nearly the same rank as David, Adam, Moses, and the others—i.e., he was peripheral, just another Abiathar or Tamar. This possibility is unlikely, since an entire book is devoted to Joshua's leadership in the conquest of the Promised Land, and that book is even named after him.¹¹ Or we could say that the Old Testament Jews made no fuss about reusing this name because they to some extent recognized something unique about this char-

¹⁰ Technically, besides the six there are three more characters with the name *Joshua* in the Old Testament. See 1 Sam 6:14, 1 Kings 16:34, and 2 Kings 23:8. But these names appear either in mere lists of men, or without any further information, so it seems reasonable to ignore them. At minimum they are not *characters* in the Old Testament the way the six treated in this essay are.

¹¹ Joshua is a character in the greatest number of books in the Old Testament, namely five (Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges; note that Joshua is not mentioned in Leviticus, itself a provocative fact, given what I will show is his peculiar relation to the priests and the priesthood). Moses and David are tied in second place with four books apiece (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, respectively).

acter, or this name, or both. When we now add to this the Christological significance of the name, our hunch that there is something important and typological about the Old Testament characters bearing that name becomes more than a hunch. Christians know, after all, that this is “the Name that is above every other name” (Phil 2:9, author’s trans.).

Unfortunately, however, Scripture is fairly sparing about some of these Jesuses, whence much of what I will propose consists of extrapolations and speculations. Since far more is recorded in the Bible about Joshua son of Nun than about any of the others, he will command more of our attention and we will be on firmer ground in our speculations.

The Son of Nun

I will begin with Joshua, the one (presumably) after whom the other five, and even in a sense Christ himself, are named. In the days when he leads the Israelite conquest of the land of Canaan, Joshua son of Nun readily makes an impression, the most memorable episodes involving him being either his conquest of Jericho, or his command that the sun stop its course in the defense of the Gibeonites, both recorded in the book of Joshua. But Joshua’s person might attract our attention even more so for his peculiarity *before* he becomes Moses’ successor, in the books of Exodus and Numbers.

Joshua makes his first appearance shortly after Moses has led the Israelites across the Red Sea, and immediately after the first water-from-the-rock episode at Meribah and Massah, when Moses singles out the young man to draft Israelite soldiers to repel an unprovoked attack from the army of King Amalek. As long as Moses’ arms remain raised to heaven, Joshua’s army prevails, until “Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Ex 17:13). Immediately thereafter Yahweh Himself singles out Joshua: “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in

the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven' " (Ex 17:14). The first things we learn about Joshua, then, are that he is a great military leader, and that both Moses and God Himself have their eyes on him.

But Joshua's calling gets more peculiar after this event. If one watches closely, it appears that Joshua is at Moses' side at the definitive event in Israelite history, the receiving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. The account begins as follows:

And [the Lord] said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." (Ex 24:1-2)

Yahweh's instructions seem clear: All of them would go up the mountain, but only Moses would be allowed near Him. And that is mainly how the approach to Yahweh unfolds, with an important exception:

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And He did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank. [Then] the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tables of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." So Moses rose *with his servant Joshua*, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, "Tarry here for *us*, until we come to you again, . . ." Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai . . . (Ex 24:9-16, emphasis added)

It sounds like Joshua rose with Moses and then went up to the top of the mountain with him as well.¹² This is confirmed as Moses starts down the mountain after the forty days of hearing the Law, while the Israelites are worshipping the golden calf below. Without the narrative's mentioning his arrival, Joshua is heard perplexedly telling Moses that it sounds like a battle is being fought in the camp (Ex 32:17). Despite Joshua's total silence as Yahweh reveals the Law to Moses on the mountain, then, the most natural reading of these two passages is that Joshua has been at Moses' side the whole time.

As an aside we might reflect that it is difficult to imagine someone of Joshua's zealous disposition allowing the Israelites to forge and worship a golden calf, had he been left behind by Moses. Recall Joshua's reaction when, a year later, after he and eleven others return from scouting out Canaan, the Israelites are unwilling to enter the land, and in fact want to return to Egypt. He and Caleb son of Jephunneh eagerly exhort (and implicitly rebuke) them, saying,

The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them. (Num 14:7-9)

¹² Certainly we could read this passage differently, as implying that Joshua went with Moses further up the mountain than did the others, but that he stopped short of the height to which Moses went to receive the Law. In defense of the reading that Joshua went all the way, however, I might add that Moses is a very old man at this point, nearly eighty (inferring from his age after the forty years in the desert being 120; Deut 31:2), so one suspects that part of Joshua's special attendance upon Moses is to assist him. If so, it seems likely that Joshua would remain by Moses' side at all times as the latter climbed the mountain.

But “the whole congregation” reacts by calling for their stoning, and it appears they might have done so if the cloud of Yahweh had not descended on the Tabernacle right then (Num 14:10–11). Likewise, had Joshua been left anywhere near the camp when Moses went up Mt. Sinai, there either Joshua would have been murdered by the Israelites as he tried to prevent their sin, as he nearly was in this later incident, or there would have been no golden calf.

So if we may assume that Yahweh does not disapprove of Moses’ bringing Joshua along, this would imply that Yahweh’s prohibition against anyone’s accompanying Moses did not include him. Yahweh *wants* Joshua to go with Moses, to be present when the stone tablets are written, and when Moses beholds the “pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture,” including the ark of the covenant, which the Israelites were being instructed to make (Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30). No hint is given that Joshua also receives this vision of the original tabernacle that St. Paul will, referring to this same passage, identify as the “heavenly sanctuary,” of which the Israelites’ sanctuary is only “a copy and a shadow” (Heb 8:5). Yet Yahweh’s approval of Joshua’s exceptional presence makes his participation in the vision a real possibility. But even if he does not see what Moses sees, just by bringing Joshua up Mt. Sinai, Yahweh implicitly gives Joshua a unique status among the Israelites: He is not Moses, but neither is he merely one among many Israelites.

Not a Priest?

But neither is Joshua a priest, for he is not even of the tribe of Levi, since he is identified as a member of the tribe of Ephraim (Num 13:8). Yet not only is he the special servant of a Levite, Moses—who is also *sui generis*, being not quite a priest and in a way not even a Levite, in spite of his heritage—he even has the prerogatives of the Levites, even those of

the priests. For only the Aaronite Levitical priests are allowed within the tent of meeting, the tabernacle that houses the altar of sacrifice and the Holy of Holies that in turn contains the earthly ark of the covenant. Though just as Moses has this prerogative, so would his ever-present minister Joshua. We see a striking instance of this in Exodus 33, right after the golden-calf episode, when the author interrupts the narrative to recount the usual pattern according to which Yahweh spoke with Moses in the tent of meeting:

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and every man stood at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent.
(Ex 33:7–11)

One can almost miss that last detail: Apparently it was customary for Joshua to be in the tent with Moses and (reading between the lines a bit) even to remain in there at all times. Like the pillar of cloud, in fact, Joshua almost seems to be standing guard over the tent.

This interpretation becomes more plausible when we recall that this event comes immediately on the heels of Yahweh’s rebuke of the Israelites, telling them that their sins, beginning with Meribah and Massah and continuing with the golden

calf, have rendered them intolerable to Him. He does not want to remain among them:

Depart, go up hence, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “To your seed I will give it.” And I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites . . . but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you in the way, for you are a stiff-necked people . . . [I]f for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. (Ex 33:1–3, 5)

Moses then pleads with Yahweh to stay with them, and Yahweh then partly relents by saying, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Ex 33:14). But because He does not want the Israelites as a whole to defile His presence, only the Levites, who came to His defense during the gold calf incident (Ex 32:25–29), are allowed to enter the tabernacle (Num 18:22–23). Whence we see that, in the general array of the four Levitical camps, the Levites surround the tabernacle, insulating it from the other tribes (Num 2:3ff.; 3:21ff.); the Levites, though accomplished soldiers, are forbidden from participating in battles with other nations, the Israelite army being drawn from the other eleven tribes (Num 31:5ff.). As they did in the golden calf incident, they are to defend the sanctity of the tabernacle from threats arising from *within* Israel, not from *without*. If, then, the Levites are intended to be, as it were, a protective moat around the tabernacle, Joshua seems to be the last line of defense, the tabernacle’s personal body guard, perhaps even one who protects the tabernacle should the *Levites themselves* turn traitor.¹³ This may even explain why we do not see Joshua, an accomplished

¹³ Moses expressed a worry about the Levites themselves when, as he commissions Joshua after the forty years, he tells the Levites to “Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are” (Deut 31:26–27).

soldier and seasoned general, lead another battle for the next forty years—in spite of several significant engagements with armies outside Canaan; only when Moses officially passes his spirit onto Joshua and he is charged with leading the conquest of Canaan does he resume his military role.¹⁴ Until then he appears to be more or less assigned to the tabernacle, waiting, and thereby apparently, like the Levites, he is preserved from the defilement of the battlefield.

And yet Joshua is not a Levite. According to the Law, he should not be in the tabernacle at all, much less all the time. Could it be that he is simply ignorant of this part of the Law? Yet Moses is complicit in Joshua’s presence in the tabernacle, and Moses is obviously not ignorant of the Law. Furthermore, Yahweh Himself entrusts Joshua with the Law in a special way. For He tells Joshua immediately after Moses’ death, and presumably within the tent of meeting, that he is the chosen instrument for fulfilling (at least physically) the promise to Abraham:

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. (Josh 1:5–6)

This promise, however, is concluded with a command to study and obey the Law:

Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded

¹⁴ Only on the day when Joshua is commissioned to replace Moses do we see some sign that he perhaps does not live (or no longer lives) in the tabernacle, when the LORD tells Moses to “call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting that I may commission him” (Deut 31:14). If this passage implies that Joshua no longer lives in or has special custody of the tabernacle, it certainly shows that he is allowed in the tabernacle, unlike the rest of non-Levite Israel.

you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. (Josh 1:7–9)¹⁵

Given this charge, surely Joshua intends to follow the Law carefully at this point in his career. It is unlikely that he disregards this command, especially given both Yahweh's confidence in him and his own military successes that immediately follow.

So if we rule out ignorance of the Law, and even more so malicious disregard of it, the only possible conclusion is that Joshua (and Moses and Yahweh Himself, for that matter) is somehow acting in *accordance* with the Law by entering and even dwelling in the tabernacle. In fact, even after the conquest of Canaan begins a few chapters later, and probably not more than a month after Yahweh tells him to be careful for the Law, an exceedingly troubled Joshua goes to seek counsel “before the ark of the LORD,” lying prostrate “until the evening” (Josh 7:6).¹⁶ The book of Joshua records sev-

¹⁵ Notice that the tone, and even the frequent repetition about being courageous, echoes the exhortation Joshua himself issued to the Israelites when they first refused to enter Canaan forty years earlier (Num 14:7–9). Just as then Joshua commanded *them* not to be afraid, that God would be with them if they entered the land of promise, so now God commands *him* in similar words as he prepares to accomplish this promise. Yahweh is, as it were, reminding him to practice his preaching—and to know well what he is to preach, the Law.

¹⁶ This may be just an expression: One could interpret it as meaning Joshua prostrated himself only before the entrance to the tabernacle; the fact that the verse continues that “the elders of Israel” went with him might be used as evidence in support of this figurative reading. But could

eral other instances where Yahweh speaks with Joshua, and presumably all these episodes occur in the tabernacle. But this one is particularly remarkable because it all but asserts that Joshua went even into the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, which was to be entered by only the high priest, and then *only* once a year on the Day of Atonement. By taking the high priest's prerogative here, it seems that Joshua, like Moses before him, considers himself—and is in fact—either a high priest, or (maybe more likely, since Eleazar, the son of Aaron, is identified as the high priest at this time; Num 27:19) something greater than the high priest.¹⁷ Like Moses, Joshua in some way appears to be outside the possibilities encompassed by the Law.

Indeed, the Sacred Author obviously wants the reader to contemplate the ways in which Joshua's office mirrors, or even perfects, that of Moses. Just as Moses miraculously leads the original generation of Israelite slaves out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, forty years later Joshua miraculously leads the sons and daughters of this same generation of slaves across the Jordan into the Land of Promise. Like Moses, Joshua is not subject to the priests, but communicates to them Yahweh's will, instructing them, for example, about how to bring the ark and the people across the Jordan and into Canaan (Josh

it not be taken to mean that indeed the elders too, with Joshua at their head, entered the tabernacle on this occasion? Certainly the language of going before the ark suggests, if not that the Holy of Holies has been entered, at least that the outer tent, the entrance to the tabernacle, has been crossed, as the Holy of Holies is a sanctuary within a sanctuary.

¹⁷ Notice that the Levites are given charge of the tabernacle originally because, when the golden calf is made, they answered Moses' call, “Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me!” (Ex 32:26). Because of this tribe-wide response, Moses says, “Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the LORD . . . that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day” (Ex 32:29). Joshua, however, was always on Yahweh's side and never left Moses, so he might be considered to also receive this, or a better, ordination this day.

3:6, 4:18). Also, like Moses, Joshua speaks to Yahweh directly, and not through the priests and Levites; he is their mediator before God. Just as Moses encounters an angel that appears as a burning bush on Mt. Sinai, so Joshua encounters one that appears as an armored “man” just outside Jericho, and both angels tell the men to remove their sandals because they stand on holy ground. Like Moses, Joshua is charged in a unique way with enforcing the Law and, in fact, appears to one-up Moses when, upon entering the Promised Land, at Gilgal Joshua has all of the new generation of Israelites circumcised (Josh 5:2–9), the act presupposed for all those bound by the Law, but a command Moses appears to have neglected enforcing during the forty years in the desert. Joshua also reinstates at Gilgal the feast of the Passover (established by Moses), but now in the Land of the Promise, where it was always meant to be celebrated (Ex 12:25; Deut 16:2; Josh 5:10–11). As the Israelites wander the desert, Moses bears in hand a staff, a supporting and even a defensive instrument, whereas when the Israelites conquer Canaan, Joshua bears in hand a javelin, a weapon of attack (Ex 14:16; Josh 8:18, 26). And so on. This is all to show that whereas originally Joshua stands at Moses’ side, lurking almost as his shadow, so that one often even forgets he’s there, he is not destined to be merely a second-rate Moses. As Moses decreases, Joshua increases.

“According to the Order of Melchizedek”

Now, lest one object that all this gives Joshua too much status, putting him somehow above the Law’s order of Aaronite priests of the tribe of Levi, it is worth recalling that even in the Old Testament there is an order of priesthood that is not Levitical. The first priest we meet in the Bible is Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and he precedes the Law by generations, indeed, by centuries; whence St. Paul, in the letter to the Hebrews, argues that the priesthood of Melchizedek is supe-

rior to that of the Levites precisely because Abraham, from which line the Levites would one day spring, pays the tithe to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20). Only the lower would pay tribute to the higher (Heb 7:7). And not only Christ but even David might be one of those referred to in Psalm 110 as a “priest in the line of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6–10); certainly in several instances David acts like a priest, in spite of not being a Levite.¹⁸ One might be able to add other Old Testament figures to that order of priesthood as well.¹⁹ But

¹⁸ Evidence of David’s priesthood is manifold, but to take an example: In 2 Samuel 6:13–18 David dons the high priest’s ephod and offers sacrifice in the tabernacle. In general David displays little reservation about entering the tabernacle, as Christ Himself notes (1 Sam 21:1–6 and Mt 12:1–8; on a possible interpretation of David’s motive for entering the sanctuary, see Ps 62:2–9).

¹⁹ Consider Samuel, the last of the judges. Though not a Levite (an Ephraimite in fact!), he is entrusted to the service of the tabernacle and the custody of Eli the Levitical high priest from his youth. There he “ministers in the presence of the LORD, a lad girt in the linen ephod” (1 Sam 2:18), the garment of a priest. Samuel even appears to sleep in the tabernacle, whereas not even Eli has this practice (1 Sam 3:3–5). When an adult, and the line of Eli is wiped out, Samuel appears to assume the duties of the priests, offering sacrifice, addressing the people of Israel on Yahweh’s behalf, and even anointing the kings. Even Yahweh’s promise to end the line of Eli sounds like a figure of the elimination of the Levitical priesthood itself, followed by the promise of a new priest “according to my heart” (1 Sam 2:30–36). It looks like Samuel (or David?) might be an initial fulfillment of this prophecy. Just as the preference of Levite over non-Levite is diminishing here, we find the barrier between Israel and non-Israel also weakening: As the curse on the house of Eli begins to be fulfilled (1 Samuel 4), we find the ark of the covenant going out to the Philistines, slaying their god Dagon, and thereby evangelizing them about the power of Yahweh (1 Sam 5–6). They return the ark to Israel in a cattle-drawn cart without a driver; remarkably, the ark-laden cart comes to rest in the “field of Joshua the Bethshemeshite” (1 Sam 6:14, 18), about whom we know nothing else. Just as Israel becomes more like the gentiles by taking a king, the gentiles become more like Israel by believing. As one can glean from this brief look, the connections

what is important here is that the psalm implies that there is an *order* of Melchizedek, and one cannot have an order with just one member. Joshua might be considered a member of this order.²⁰

Yet if Joshua is some sort of “high priest’s priest,” why do we never see him offer sacrifice, surely the chief act of a priest? This objection is as serious as speculation about how to answer it is suggestive. Perhaps one could say that his sacrifice is of such a different nature from those offered according to the letter of the Law that it is barely recognizable as a sacrifice. The only burnt offering we see Joshua make is a symbolic one: The people of Canaan are all put under the ban, none of them being left alive, so that there would be no chance that their idolatrous ways would influence and corrupt the Israelites. After thirty-some cities of Canaan have been wiped out and Joshua prepares to die at the age of 110 (Josh 24:29), he presents the Israelites with a farewell address that resembles Moses’ own swansong some fifty years earlier; in it he exhorts and even pleads with the Israelites:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if you be unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. (Josh 24:14–15)

between Samuel and Joshua son of Nun (and Jesus) are themselves worth reflecting upon.

²⁰ Moses says Yahweh’s original intention was that each tribe would provide priests to serve Him, but that the sin of the golden calf provoked Him to restrict the priesthood to the tribe of Levi (Ex 19:6, Num 3:11–13, 8:14–19). This is a sign that the Aaronite priesthood was itself not the only idea of priesthood Yahweh envisioned.

When the people respond that they will be faithful to Yahweh, Joshua persists: “Then put away the foreign gods *which are among you*, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel” (Josh 24:23, emphasis added). Putting the Canaanites under the ban amounts to “putting away” the Canaanite gods themselves, gods to whom the Israelites cling in their hearts; giving them up, making of them a burnt offering, is equivalent to sacrificing oneself, one’s own will, especially a perverse will, so that the Israelites might be single-hearted in their devotion to Yahweh. And just as the Israelites do *not* completely wipe out the Canaanites, even under Joshua’s direction and insistence in his last years, so he accuses them of holding onto these pagan gods, if not by withholding actual idols from being melted down in a burnt offering, then at least by giving them a place in their hearts.²¹ Joshua himself cannot offer the perfect sacrifice because the people first have to voluntarily bring the victim to the altar, and they are unwilling. Joshua can circumcise only the flesh of their foreskins; he cannot touch, much less circumcise, their hearts.

There is a complementary way in which Joshua is a priest and yet he does *not* offer a literal sacrifice: His apparent priesthood is constituted to catch our eye precisely because he does *not* offer sacrifice. It is as though Joshua is a priest who is permanently in the tabernacle, poised to offer sacrifice, but without ever doing so. His sacrifice is held in suspense. Like the priesthood of Melchizedek, the nature of Joshua’s priesthood is mysterious. Like both the priests and the animals to be sacrificed, Joshua is anointed by Moses by a laying on of

²¹ The sin of Achan, at the beginning of the conquest of Canaan (Josh 7), is a good example of this half-heartedness among the new generation. In spite of their being the generation of hope, this generation turns out to be much like the previous generation. Likewise, after the conquest even the Israelites admit to themselves that “[we] have not yet cleansed ourselves” of the “sin of Peor,” idolatry (Josh 22:17; cf. Num 25:1–5, 31:1–20).

hands,²² but we are never told outright whether Joshua is the priest or the victim.²³ The closest we come to seeing Joshua offer a physical sacrifice is in his circumcision of Israel and his immediately subsequent reinstitution of the Passover at Gilgal—the shedding of the blood of Israel and the blood of the lamb—both of which, we can see in the New Testament, are signs of a more perfect sacrifice whose time has not yet come. So if we are to see Joshua as a priest, or even as something more than a priest, this priesthood is veiled, and even essentially unfinished when Joshua dies.²⁴

His Original Name

More deserves to be said about Joshua son of Nun, but in the interest of seeing the big picture surrounding the repeated name *Jesus* in the Old Testament we must move on. To transition to the next Jesus we must say one last thing about the first Joshua, specifically about his name.²⁵ We are told in passing

²² For the laying on of hands for the animal to be sacrificed, see Ex 29:10–15, Lev 8:14–22, Num 8:10–12; for the laying on of hands for the anointing of the priests, see Ex 40:12–15, and Num 8:10; for the laying on of hands for Joshua, see Num 27:18–23 and Deut 34:9.

²³ As has been mentioned, when he calls the Israelites to enter the Promised Land, they try to stone him. His evangelization almost results in his becoming a burnt offering.

²⁴ Could it be that this is why, at his death, Joshua erects a stone as a witness “against us,” and places it “under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD” (Josh 24:26) in Shechem? The presence of this great tree in the tabernacle is itself suggestive of another tree connected to another Joshua. We have seen this tree in Shechem before (Gen 12:6) and we see it again later (Judg 9:6–21).

²⁵ Joshua was of course born in Egypt and his tribe, Ephraim, is half-Egyptian in the sense that his mother (Joseph’s wife) was the daughter of On, the Egyptian high priest. This may explain why his father has the name *Nun*, as Nun is an Egyptian god, indeed their first god, the god of the waters and of the primordial chaos. All of the other Egyptian gods,

in Numbers and Deuteronomy (Num 13:8–16; Deut 32:44) that his original name was *Hoshea* and that Moses changed it to *Joshua*.²⁶ In Hebrew there is a greater phonetic likeness between the names than we hear in the common pronunciations of these names; scholars even seem to disagree about whether *Joshua* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) is derived from *Hoshea* (יוֹשֵׁה), or whether *Joshua* is the original name and *Hoshea* is just its contraction;²⁷ both names mean “Yahweh [is] savior,” though *Joshua* (*Yehoshua*) bears more explicitly the prefix *Yah-*, itself the contraction of the divine name.

Unfortunately, Moses offers no account of why he changes the young man’s name. Perhaps it was to give greater evidence to Yahweh’s name in that of Joshua, to emphasize the divine character of Joshua’s leadership. Or maybe it was to help hold

even the Egyptian god of creation, are sons or grandsons of Nun, or they are things spat out of him or his sons. He is sometimes associated with the Nile itself. As there is no other Joshua in this period to distinguish the son of Nun from, it seems superfluous that Scripture so often insists on calling him by the patronym “son of Nun,” so the offices of this god might be a sort of justification for it.

²⁶ Is there a significance in this being mentioned right as Joshua is about to lead the scouting party into Canaan? The passage might even be taken to mean that Joshua receives the new name *right then*.

²⁷ “The names are phonetically closer in the Hebrew—Hoshe ‘a and Yehoshu ‘a. The latter is the variant of the former that bears the theophoric prefix, with the meaning ‘God-saves’” (Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* [New York: Norton, 2004], 745). “Both names are in fact the same, Hoshea being an abbreviation of what is undoubtedly [sic] the original form ‘Joshua.’ Although this original form is certainly a combination of the divine name and some verb expressing the rule of God, its precise meaning is unknown. It has been understood as ‘Yahweh is salvation.’” (Peter J. Kearney, “Joshua,” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, R. Murphy [New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968], 125). It is astonishing that this latter source is completely silent about Sirach 46:1 and Matthew 1:21, which are as conclusive proof about what the Israelites at those times understood by the name.

Israel back from thinking of Joshua as a king, since speaking his name or addressing him should inevitably recall the thought that Yahweh, not this man, is the savior. Or could it be that a prophecy is being implied? For a *man* is being called “*Yahweh* the savior”; the true savior of Israel and conqueror of the Promised Land, Whom Joshua son of Nun only prefigures, will be both man and God. This account is especially attractive, given Christ’s own words that Moses was always “speaking about me.”²⁸

But we have to admit that any of these accounts is somewhat problematic, since the Israelites were unwilling to speak Yahweh’s name out of profound respect for, and even fear of taking Yahweh’s name in vain. Indeed, the *Yah-* prefix in a proper name, though more common among the Israelites in later centuries, is extremely rare during the time of the exodus;²⁹ whence, it is all the more astounding that Moses wanted to call attention to it, or even establish it, in Joshua’s

²⁸ Christ says this in various ways in John 1:45, 5:39, 45–47, and Luke 24:27, 44. The most likely target of Christ’s remarks is Moses’ prophecy just before he dies: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from among your brothers—him you shall heed—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb, . . . and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him” (Deut 18:15–16, 18; cf. also Acts 3:22–23). A natural reading of this passage is to say it is about Joshua son of Nun—he fits the description, and Joshua has not yet been named Moses’ successor. But one might hesitate to settle on this, both because Moses sounds like he is speaking about a distant event, and because, after Joshua becomes the new leader, the book ends with a sort of “Yes . . . but”: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him, so the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. And [alt. But] there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses” (Deut 34:9–10). Joshua will fulfill this prophecy perfectly, but not *this* Joshua.

²⁹ This may also be because the name *Yahweh*, God tells Moses, has been a secret until this time of deliverance from slavery (Ex 6:2–3).

case. Again, Moses looks to be carving out for his successor an exception to the Law: You may say “*Yah*,” if you are also saying *Yehoshua*.

The King of Israel

However, I bring this up only to emphasize that *Hoshea* is the same name as *Joshua*. This points us to a second Jesus, or Joshua—namely, King Hoshea son of Elah, the last king of Israel. The first book of Kings records that shortly after the death of King Solomon, in reaction to the cruel leadership of his son Rehoboam, the northern part of the kingdom, including the territory of most of the twelve tribes, breaks away from Israel. It then remains independent more or less continuously until the North is subdued by Assyria centuries later. Because the largest part of the southern territory belongs to the tribe of Judah,³⁰ the so-called Southern kingdom comes to be called simply “*Judah*.” Ironically, then, the breakaway North calls itself “*Israel*,” probably thereby insisting that it is the authentic *Israel*, since it has revolted against a tyrannical rule from the South.³¹

The Northern Kingdom turns out to be more readily susceptible to paganism than is the Southern, though neither kingdom’s decline is a straight line, and there are sporadic but transitory signs of true repentance in both the North and the South. But in general, the North corrupts more quickly than the South, and the kings of the North are particularly responsible for this corruption. The first king of the North is the

³⁰ The Southern kingdom also contains the territory of Benjamin and the tiny parcel of land allotted to Simeon; all tribes have representatives of the tribe of Levi.

³¹ For some reason the South never seems to object to the usurpation of this name. Note, however, that Scripture sometimes also calls the Northern Kingdom “*Samaria*,” since the city of Samaria is its capital for most of its 240-some year history, and some of the prophets even call it “*Ephraim*,” probably because the territory of Ephraim is one of the largest in it, and Samaria is located just within it.

revolutionary and notoriously paganizing Jeroboam, formerly one of Solomon's servants (cf. 1 Kings 11:26). It is Jeroboam who first shrewdly realizes that if sacrifices must continue to occur only at the Temple in Jerusalem, situated squarely in the territory of Judah, the South will exert a powerful religious influence over the North; so in a move that sounds like a page taken out of the playbook of Machiavelli or King Henry VIII, Jeroboam sets up a new Temple in the North, in Shechem, in express violation of the Law (1 Kings 12:25–33). This first heresy sets in motion a long list of additional defections from the Law, and assimilations to the Gentiles, noteworthy among which are the golden calves he sets up in his Temple, proclaiming in pitch-perfect echo of the sin before Mt. Sinai, “Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 12:28; cf. Ex 32:4). As a result his reign, the expression “walking in the way of Jeroboam”³² quickly becomes a byword in Scripture to describe the wickedness of the kings of the North.³³ Whence, just as Jeroboam becomes something of an archetype for the Northern Revolt, he is only the first in a long list of wicked kings: from Baasha, who slaughters the entire house of Jeroboam, to Elah,³⁴ who slaughters the entire house of Baasha, and who is in turn assassinated after only two years of rule, by his servant Zimri, who himself rules only seven days, after which he is killed by Omri and Tibni, who then rule together for four years, until Omri kills Tibni (1 Kings 16:1–28). And of course the infamous king Ahab rules in the North. But the

³² See, for example, 1 Kings 15–16 and 2 Kings 15.

³³ Indeed, Jeroboam's membership in the tribe of Ephraim is then another reason Scripture often refers to the corrupted northern kingdom as “Ephraim” (e.g., Hos 6:4). See note 31 above.

³⁴ Note that King Hoshea is said to be “son of Elah,” though Scripture makes no comment on the designation's significance. It is tempting to infer that he is the sole survivor of the line of King Elah the Issacharite, the fourth king of the North, who reigned 144 years earlier.

last king of Israel, King Hoshea, although he is not described as one of its worst kings, oversees one of the worst episodes in its history.

When Hoshea son of Elah is made king (in 2 Kings 17), the North has already been partly conquered by Assyria. A large part of her people have been carried into exile, and what is left has become Assyria's tributary. At a certain point this King-who-is-not-a-sovereign himself tries to revolt against Assyria. This might seem praiseworthy on the face of it, but Hoshea does this *not* by calling upon Yahweh for aid or even for guidance. Nor does he try to liberate the Northern Kingdom by repenting of its schism and heresy, or by returning to Jerusalem for proper sacrifice. Rather, King Hoshea tries to revolt against Assyria by seeking not the help of Yahweh but the help of *Egypt*. In this “return to Egypt” we see a spiritual reversal of the exodus; Israel does not flee from Egypt but rushes into her arms.³⁵ Inevitably, Assyria finds out about King Hoshea's treachery, invades Israel over a three-year siege, captures the capital Samaria, and takes Hoshea and all the remaining northern Israelites into captivity, repopulating the territory with the citizens of various conquered nations.³⁶ The Israelites of the Northern Kingdom never return from captivity; when Assyria is conquered by Babylon and Persia a century later, the exiled sons of Israel have already assimilated to, and blended with, their conquerors. Nine entire tribes of Israel disappear from history.

Although the account in the second book of Kings of the events surrounding the reign of Hoshea is brief (only about 7 verses), it is followed by a lengthy—and, for second Kings, unusual—interruption of the narrative to explain the significance of these events. It begins as follows:

³⁵ This imagery is literally fulfilled when, after the Babylonian Exile begins, the remnant of Judah, about 130 years later, flees to Egypt (2 Kings 25:26).

³⁶ These will be the Samaritans in the time of Christ.

THE JESUS(S) OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

And this was so, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and [because they] had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations [*alt. gentiles; goyim*] whom the LORD drove out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had introduced. (2 Kings 17:7–8)

The dissolution of the Northern Kingdom is here explicitly contrasted with the salvific exodus from Egypt and Yahweh's faithful protection of the Israelites in the time of Moses and Joshua. This theodicy is then followed by a list of Israel's subsequent apostasies, especially singling out the worship of Jeroboam's two golden calves, and the practice of offering human sacrifices of their own sons and daughters to the Ba'als. The list ends with a general image of their sins and their punishment: “[They] sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. Therefore the LORD was exceedingly angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah only” (2 Kings 17:17–18). The explanation ends still more ominously by connecting the beginning of the Northern Kingdom's revolt—not from Assyria, but from the South, and from Yahweh—with its final oblivion:

When he had torn Israel from the house of David they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. The sons of Israel walked in all the sins which Jeroboam did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. (2 Kings 17:21–23)

The Anti-Jesus

So this Hoshea, the king presiding over the destruction of Israel, does not have much in common with the original Hoshea, son of Nun. But there is a typological parallel even here, but the typology is of a different kind: It is an *anti*-typology. By this I mean that we see between them both a striking contrast, even a diametric opposition, and yet one that presupposes a significant likeness or parallel. Consider a few examples. Probably the most famous example of an anti-typology can be found in comparing Eve and the Blessed Mother. The likeness appears first: Each is, in different ways, the first woman, and each is therefore rightly called the “mother of all the living” (Gen 3:20), just as each is miraculously born in original innocence; likewise just as Adam names Eve “Woman” (Gen 2:23), so the *new* Adam peculiarly addresses Mary as “Woman” (John 2:4, 19:26). But the opposition between the two is also evident: Just as the Latin name “Eva” is inverted in Mary’s “Ave,” so also through the one sin entered the world, but through the other, salvation. Likewise, the one is taken wondrously from the side of Adam, but the new Adam is taken from the virginal womb of the other. Two other obvious examples might be Solomon and Cyrus as anti-types of Christ: The former fulfills (albeit imperfectly) the promise to David of a son who would build Yahweh's house, and he brings a certain peace and prosperity to Jerusalem; the latter, Cyrus, is the king of Persia whom Isaiah himself (44:28, 45:1) calls the “christ,” “messiah,” “anointed,” both for conquering gentile nations and for bringing the exiled Jews back to the Holy Land.³⁷ To generalize from these, then, the criterion for an anti-type is the presence of a significant likeness that invites comparison, but then, upon closer scrutiny, gives way to an even more significant contrast.

³⁷ I assume how Solomon and Cyrus are also in some way opposites of Jesus is manifest.

So with King Hoshea we see an anti-typology as well: Joshua son of Nun and Hoshea son of Elah are both alike and contraries. Their names draw them together, as do other likenesses (such as their stewardship of Israel in the Promised Land), but then contrast supervenes: Just as Joshua son of Nun was the first leader of Israel in Canaan, Hoshea was the last; just as the former *began* the conquest of Canaan, entering from the Eastern shores of the Jordan, the latter *ended* it, or you might say oversaw the conquest of the same land by a *foreign* power, again from the East. Indeed, King Hoshea does not even limit himself to fiddling while Israel burns, but actively participates in the holocaust by performing a sort of *anti-exodus*, first by appealing to Egypt for salvation, and then by himself being dragged out of the Holy Land into the Eastern desert, where he and his people are absorbed into the Gentiles like a drop of wine dissolving in water.

Taking a preliminary look, then, to the Joshua to Whom we should compare or contrast these two Old Testament Joshuas, we can draw a few preliminary conclusions: Whereas one Joshua leads the newly baptized Israel in conquering the gentiles of Canaan, the other leads an apostate Israel in its being conquered by gentiles—or we might say *other* gentiles, for the land of Canaan is no longer populated by Israelites, the adopted sons of God, but by Canaanites, sons of Jacob who have become sons of Moloch. Thus, in one case Israel is the heir to the promise, but in the other Israel is disinherited. Whereas the first Joshua seemed to signal the defeat of idol worship and all the nightmarish sacrifices it entails, the second seemed to signify the glorious triumph of those same demons. One Old Testament Jesus is appropriately named “Savior,” the other is most inappropriately so; one is a Christ figure and the other an anti-Christ figure.

But King Hoshea is not, fortunately, the end of the story, and neither does he stand alone. As if to remind us that this Joshua is himself merely a shadow of the original, the son of

Christopher A. Decaen

Nun, a second shadow of the first Joshua lives in Israel at the same time as King Hoshea, and is witness to the destruction of the North. Indeed, the association between Joshua son of Nun and the last king of Israel becomes clearer if we look at the third Joshua, Hoshea son of Beeri, the so-called minor prophet, and author of the book named from him.³⁸

The Prophet

To any Jew reading the Old Testament the fact that this prophet (and his book) have the same name as Joshua son of Nun is remarkable in itself. The Christian, moreover, could not only see significance in this name being that of the Son of God, but even from reflecting on the book of Hoshea as a whole. Hoshea is implicitly or explicitly referenced in the New Testament no fewer than sixteen times; none of the thirteen other minor prophets is cited more frequently.³⁹ Moreover, of the minor prophets, Hoshea is cited by easily the greatest *number* of New Testament books, being alluded to by the gospels of Matthew and Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation.⁴⁰ The book

³⁸ To someone familiar with this prophet’s name as *Osee*, as it is rendered in the Douay-Rheims, or as *Hosea* (not *Hoshea*) as it is commonly found in most English translations, it may seem like I am stretching the evidence. But in the Hebrew text, the name of the minor prophet and the original name of Joshua son of Nun are identical. In Hebrew an *s* becomes an *sh* by the addition of a dot, and the Masoretic text includes the dot both in the minor prophet and in the text in Numbers that mentions that Moses changed Joshua’s name from *Hoshea* to *Joshua*.

³⁹ Zechariah, arguably, is cited as many times, though never directly quoted. The closest after Hoshea and Zechariah is the book of Joel, with ten New Testament references, mostly in the book of Revelation.

⁴⁰ Hos 1:6–10, and 2:1–3 are referenced by 1 Pet 2:10 and Rom 9:25–26; Hos 6:6 by Mt 9:13 and 12:7; Hos 9:7 by Lk 21:22; Hos 10:8 by Lk 23:30 and Rev 6:16; Hos 11:1 by Mt 2:15; Hos 11:9 by Mt 5:17; Hos 12:8 by Rev 3:17; Hos 13:14 by 1 Cor 15:55; Hos 14:2 by Heb 13:15;

of Hoshea apparently made an impression on the New Testament writers.

Hoshea is also unique in its poetry. For it is in the book of Hoshea that we see the marital image, and especially the contrary image of an unfaithful spouse, employed in the most sustained way to describe the relationship between the chosen people and Yahweh. Specifically, in this nine-page book the language of “harlotry” and “adultery” is used almost thirty times. Likewise, Hoshea is one of the few unambiguously allegorical prophetic writings, as the book opens with Yahweh commanding the prophet to “take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the LORD” (Hos 1:2); when Hoshea does so and the harlot Gomer gives birth to several children, Yahweh commands Hoshea to give each of them a symbolic name: “God sows,” “Not pitied,” and “Not my people,” the symbolism of each of which he immediately explains.⁴¹ The latter two names are themselves prophesied to be altered one day into their contraries: “Not pitied” will become “She has obtained pity,” and “Not my people” will become “My people” and “Sons of the living God” (Hos 1:10, 2:1, 2:21–23).⁴² In this allegory, the prophet Hoshea

and Hos 14:9 by Acts 13:10. Hoshea is cited by more New Testament books than even the major prophet Daniel.

⁴¹ The full passage: “And she conceived and bore him a son. And the LORD said to him, ‘Call his name “Jezreel” [lit. “God sows”], for yet a little while and I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.’ She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, ‘Call her name “Not-pitied,” for I will no more have pity on the house of Israel to forgive them at all.’ . . . When she had weaned Not-pitied, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, ‘Call his name “Not-my-people,” for you are not my people and I am not your God’” (Hos 1:3–6, 8–9).

⁴² Note also the New Testament’s contemplation of this particular allegory in Romans 9:25–26 and 1 Peter 2:10.

is called to stand as Yahweh Himself, and to actually act out the Lord’s faithful love for Israel in spite of her repeated infidelity. In this book, this marriage and its fruit, their children—who are destined to be rejected, but ultimately also saved—become the lens through which Yahweh’s message to the chosen people, both present and future, is to be understood.

Like all of the minor prophets, Hoshea deserves a careful study; unfortunately, a perusal of the minor prophets can make them seem no more than a blur of eschatological fire and brimstone, such that one can miss the distinctive theological power and even poetic elegance of the individual prophecies. Though I do not pretend to do justice to this particular prophet, the following might illuminate it by considering it in light of the thesis of this essay.

First, notice when the book is written: It begins by situating the prophetic visions as having come to Hoshea in the years of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel” (Hos 1:1). If we attend to the chronology of the kings of Judah here, we know that during the reigns of those Southern kings, there were six other kings of the North besides Jeroboam.⁴³ The prophet Hoshea is strangely silent about these kings, which is all the more astounding because the sixth is none other than King Hoshea son of Elah, our second *Jesus*. In fact, the last king of Judah that the prophet Hoshea does mention, Hezekiah, is reigning when Israel, under king Hoshea, is utterly destroyed by Assyria. It is as though, by omitting the king that bears his own name, the prophet is considering the North to be already lost, effectively a thing of the past, even when king Jeroboam dies, and that the last six kings of the South are somehow illegitimate, or that they rule over a non-

⁴³ This Jeroboam the son of Joash is Jeroboam II, Jeroboam I being the aforementioned usurper who initiated the schism of the North from the South. See note 45.

kingdom.⁴⁴ This is puzzling, then, and we might speculate,⁴⁵ but for now let us just repeat that Hoshea the prophet is being inspired to write during the *very last years* of the Northern Kingdom, and therefore during the reign of someone bearing his own name.

Unlike this king, however, the prophet is obviously not an anti-type of Joshua son of Nun. Indeed, he is much like the original Joshua not only in that, also bearing the name “Yahweh the savior,” he speaks and even acts in the person of God Himself in the symbolic marriage to the harlot Gomer, but also in his efforts to lead the Israelites back to Yahweh by an interior conversion. For it is in the prophecies of Hoshea that we first hear the words whose meaning Christ will later (twice!) call the Pharisees to “Go and learn”: namely, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13, 12:7). In its context in the prophet Hoshea, Yahweh is reprimanding Israel and Judah for trying to fool God by only superficially repenting in reaction to being punished for apostasy. A complete quotation of the passage Christ alludes to is still more powerful:

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. Therefore I have hewn them by

⁴⁴ It is difficult to see how to take this illegitimacy literally, since Jeroboam's successor is his own son, not a usurper (though it is true that four of the others are usurpers).

⁴⁵ Given what seems to be a pair of bookends with the first Joshua and King Hoshea (the beginning and ending of the occupation of the Promised Land, at least for the North), is it possible that the prophet is proposing another pair of bookends? For Jeroboam I (the son of Nebat) was the first king of the North, the one who led the secession and perpetuated it by his introduction of idolatry; perhaps, then, the prophet Hoshea is thinking of Jeroboam II (the son of Joash) as the last king of the North, as it were interpreting the North's history as a kind of unit, and maybe even as a chiasmus. This would be to interpret Hoshea as taking a kind of artistic license with history.

the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6:4–6)

Yahweh wants Israel's love, not merely external obedience. These actions naturally bespeak a movement in the soul, and without this they lie. Yahweh wants them to be honest with Him and with themselves. He wants them to *want* to know Him, not to try to placate Him like some distant and arbitrary deity who merely has an appetite for the scent of burnt offerings, regardless of motive.

“Know the LORD”

This language of “knowledge” is itself worth reflecting on in connection with Hoshea's spouse-versus-harlot imagery. The word *know* in Hebrew has a secondary and almost idiomatic meaning pertaining to love, the kind of love that spouses share. As it says in Genesis, “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived.”⁴⁶ Just as knowledge is a kind of intimate union with the known, so love is a kind of perfect joining of lover and beloved. The mercy or steadfast love and knowledge that Yahweh is asking of His people is that of a suitor, a lover whose beloved is nevertheless drawn away by a paramour. Conversely, then, Hoshea frequently speaks of Israel's sins as both harlotry and ignorance; for example, “Hear the word of

⁴⁶ The Hebrew word is *yada* and is a figure of speech for the conjugal act in several passages of the Old Testament. In the Septuagint it is translated as *gignōskō* and it is carried over into the New Testament as well (Lk 1:34). Notice also that the word tends to refer to a conjugal act that bears fruit, it generates life. (Contrast this to the Serpent's deception in the previous chapter of Genesis; though the name of the tree is also based on this same word, eating of its fruit begets only death.) The aspect of fecundity in knowledge is surely relevant to a deep interpretation of the children of Hoshea and Gomer.

the LORD, O sons of Israel. . . . There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land” (Hos 4:1), and a few verses later, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6). And later still, “Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of harlotry is within them and they do not know the LORD” (Hos 5:4).

This imagery of love as being or somehow entailing knowledge is presented most explicitly and beautifully toward the beginning of Hoshea’s prophecy. After an extended description of Israel’s harlotry with the gentiles, Yahweh foretells and promises His final, and successful, courtship of Israel:

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the desert, and speak tenderly to her. . . . And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in that day, says the LORD, you will call me, “My husband,” and no longer will you call me, “My Ba’al.” . . . And I will make for you a covenant . . . And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD. (Hos 2:14–16, 18–20)⁴⁷

Notice that *Yahweh’s* love is characterized as mercy and *Israel’s* love as knowledge. Though Israel will be undeserving—indeed, under the Old Law, maybe more deserving of divorce—Yahweh Himself will initiate her return, drawing her back so powerfully that she will follow Him even into the desert, in a new exodus. Israel will be regenerated, becoming young again. She will call Him no longer Ba’al—the common Canaanite god name, which translates best as “Master”—but “My husband,” which could also be translated as “My man,” indicating that she sees both Him and herself in a new light: She no longer sees herself as bound to Yahweh as a *slave* to a

⁴⁷ Author’s translation. See also Hoshea 14:4–8.

master, but as to One who loves her devotedly, and irrevocably, and far more than she has ever loved him or anyone other than herself. And she knows Yahweh as her Rescuer, her Savior, her “Jesus.” This title—and therefore the association with the prophet’s own name with that of the present king of Israel, and with that of the son of Nun—is explicitly asserted at the end of the book of Hoshea, when Yahweh makes His final exhortation to Israel in the course of recounting her idolatry since the days of the first exodus: “I am the LORD your God¹⁰² from the land of Egypt; you shall know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior” (Hos 13:4). “Savior” translates *yoshea*, the root of *Yehoshua* (Joshua).

Indeed, the idea that Yahweh wants Israel to *know* Him intimately is rooted in the flight from Egypt and the subsequent conquest of Canaan. For this language of love of God as knowledge of God is introduced to the reader of the Old Testament at the beginning of the book of Exodus, when Yahweh consistently characterizes His display of power and fidelity to the Israelites as being ordered toward Israel (and even Egypt) coming to “know that I am the LORD.”⁴⁸ It is not surprising, then, when besides the marital imagery throughout the book of Hoshea we find a consistent “new exodus” typology. Whence, both the events of the Pentateuch and the contemporary actions of King Hoshea of Israel are alluded to when the prophet Hoshea says,

Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt. For Israel has forgotten his Maker. . . [F]or you have played the harlot, forsaking your God. . . They shall not remain in the land of the LORD; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. . . (Hos 8:13, 9:1, 3)

⁴⁸ That Israel might “know that I am the LORD”: Ex 6:6, 10:2; that Egypt might “know that I am the LORD”: Ex 7:4–5, 17; 8:6, 18; 11:7–8; 14:18. Even the whole world? See Ex 9:13–16. In this regard consider Pharaoh’s words at Exodus 5:2.

The banishment to Assyria is then another enslavement to Egypt, an undoing of the original exodus to, and settlement of, the Holy Land; their being forced to eat unclean food in Assyria is both a violation of the Law and a sign of Yahweh's giving Israel what it wants: to forget its Maker. His message is clear: *If you do not want to obey the Law, the covenant we made at Mt. Sinai, the Law will be put out of your reach; if you do not trust Me to subdue the land I have put before you, but would rather return to Egypt with her fleshpots, you can have them. If you wish to be a gentile, I will make you one.*⁴⁹

Hoshea, then, is showing Israel that she is becoming an anti-type of herself. *By being a people set apart you were destined for the Promised Land, but you are now trying to leave that land, to blend into the gentiles. Your ancestors, upon arriving at the outskirts of Canaan and upon hearing the report of Joshua, the head of the tribe of Ephraim, wanted to return to Egypt, but finally they repented of this wish and did not go back; they were shamed into wandering the desert for forty years, and although that generation died there, their sons were given the Promised Land. You, latter-day sons of that generation, will also demand to return to slavery in Egypt, to flee from Yahweh your husband, Whom you somehow regard as the worse slave-master; but this time Yahweh will fulfill your wish, you will go back. And a latter-day Joshua gives you, Ephraim, this warning.*

This is why Hoshea's otherwise bleak prophecy ends with an exhortation:

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you the words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity. . . Assyria will not save us. . . We will say no more ‘Our God’ to the work of our hands.” (Hos 14:1–3, author’s trans.)

⁴⁹ We see here then the significance of the children of the harlot Gomer, the allegorical Israel whom Hoshea is commanded to marry. They wish to cease to be the chosen people, so their seed will be named “Not my people” (Hos 1:9–11).

The prophet here twice commands the people of Israel, who has obstinately abandoned the Promised Land in spirit, to “Return”—the Hebrew word could also be translated “Repent, O Israel.”⁵⁰ As a part of this repentance, Israel is commanded to recognize her sins of idolatry, to admit that neither she herself nor these “gods” can *save* her from these sins—and neither can Assyria—and finally to admit that only Yahweh is the savior: *Yehoshua*.

Surprisingly, then, the exhortation is capped with an unconditional promise of an already accomplished salvation: “I will heal their faithlessness; I will love them freely, for my anger *has turned* from them. I will be as the dew to Israel, and he shall blossom as the lily, he shall strike root as the poplar . . . They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow” (Hos 14:4–5, 7, emphasis added). Like Joshua son of Nun, Hoshea is calling Israel, about to be exiled from the Promised Land, to repentance, to a circumcision of the heart, a circumcision that only Yahweh Himself can fully accomplish. Whence, this new Joshua is reiterating the essence of Moses’ last commands, warnings, and promises, as Israel was about to enter the Promised Land. Recall those final words of Moses, as he prepared to die, and as he commissioned Joshua to lead Israel across the Jordan:

And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you return in your heart among all the gentiles where the LORD your God has driven you, and you return to the LORD your God, you and your sons, and hear his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will turn back your captivity and have compassion upon you, and he will turn you back and gather

⁵⁰ Israel is commanded to take with her both into, and later out of, exile, “the words”; this could be a reference to these words of prophecy, or even to the Law itself, for what we translate as the “ten commandments” in Hebrew is literally the “ten words.”

you again from all the gentiles where the LORD your God has scattered you. . . . And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. (Deut 30:1–3, 6, author's trans.)

The parallel in both content and word choice—especially the refrain of “Return”—is unmistakable. As this successor to Moses, this resurrected Joshua son of Nun, Hoshea the prophet is also the one who by merit would be the steward of Israel—he is what a king of Israel *should* be. Thus, thinking back to his contemporary and namesake, the last king of Israel, we can see that the Hoshea the prophet is *himself* an anti-type of King Hoshea son of Elah. He is his nemesis.

Those words of hope at the end of Hoshea are important, then, for were the reign of the King Hoshea to be the end of the Old Testament, that would be a very dark ending indeed. But in fact the history of the Chosen People continues; after the dissolution of Israel there is still a remnant, the Southern kingdom bearing parts of three or four tribes, and most importantly the seed of David. While even the South eventually succumbs to paganism and is carried into Babylon, a remnant of *that* remnant returns seventy years later.

The High Priest and the Levite

Appropriately, then, in that Return we find our fourth and fifth *Jesuses*, for like the two *Hosheas*, these two men appear chronologically and geographically together in salvation history. Although they are largely in the background, each has a significant role in the resettlement of the remnant of Judah in the Promised Land.

The book of Ezra records that, after Cyrus king of Persia conquered Babylon, the better part of a century after the conquest and captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Israel (Judah), something remarkable happens. This pagan king re-

ceives a command from the God of Israel to rebuild His house in Jerusalem, and to send the Jews spread throughout the Babylonian-turned-Persian empire back to the land, to do the building and to resettle there. At the head of the list of those Persia sends back,⁵¹ besides the familiar names of the appointed governors Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, and eventually Ezra the priest scribe, we find mentioned several times the Levitical high priest named Jeshua, whose father Jehozadak was high priest when Judah was carried into exile (1 Chr 6:15).

This high priest, though a somewhat secondary character in accounts of the Return and the rebuilding of the Temple, is also a recurring character in the later books of the Old Testament. He is referred to not only in Ezra and Nehemiah, but also in Haggai, Zechariah, and Sirach—and reasonably so. For upon arriving in Jerusalem, Jeshua the high priest, with the help of Zerubbabel, before even the foundation for the new Temple is laid, builds the first altar and improvised Tabernacle. And because the appointed day for the feast was upon them, Jeshua the high priest leads the remnant in reinstituting the feast of Succoth (Ezr 3:1–6).

Succoth, which is often confusingly translated as “Tabernacles” or “Booths,” was one of the three principal feasts instituted at Mt. Sinai (along with Passover and Pentecost).⁵²

⁵¹ Cyrus is recorded as hearing the word of Yahweh in Ezra 1:1, and the list of those who return is at 2:1–2. Though it is difficult to gather from these two chapters, the Return which chapter 2 records is really the second, the first being led by a Davidic heir named Shesh-bazzar (Ezr 1:8, 11); this was a smaller Return, and was less successful than the Return headed by Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, and preceded it by nearly twenty years. The principal Return is the latter, and it occurred not under Cyrus but Darius I. The prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai, and most of the history recorded by Ezra and Nehemiah, concern only this second Return.

⁵² Pentecost is also called “Weeks.” Christians all remember Passover and Pentecost because of their relevance to the New Testament, but

Like the other two, it was to be celebrated only at “the place that Yahweh will choose” (Deut 16:15), which later turns out to be Jerusalem; whence, all the Israelites three times a year had to travel to the Holy City to participate in the festival. This possibly suggests a double meaning of the other name of Succoth, the festival of “Ingathering.” This name for the feast refers both to its occurring at the time of harvest⁵³ and to its commemoration of Yahweh’s leading of the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan (Lev 23:42–43), their own “gathering in” to the Holy land. So also Succoth is particularly fitting a feast for the remnant of Israel to celebrate at their return to, or gathering back into, that same land.

The structure of this feast is itself relevant. Succoth begins five days after the Day of Atonement, when, on the tenth day of the seventh month, the people are both to rest and to “afflict themselves,” and the high priest is to make his annual visit behind the inner curtain of the Tent of Meeting, into the Holy of Holies, to offer sacrifice before the Ark of the Covenant.⁵⁴ The Law requires Succoth to happen at “the end of the year” (Ex 23:16, 33:22), on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, exactly seven months after Passover (which occurs on the fifteenth day of the first month). It commences with a day of solemn rest, at the end of which the Israelites are to begin living for seven days as sojourners in “tabernacles” or “tents,” improvised huts made from palm branches; during these days they are to rejoice and make burnt offerings before the Tent of Meeting, the chief tabernacle. The feast is to end on the eighth day, another day of solemn rest, also called “the great

among the Jews Succoth is just as central to their faith. According to Josephus, in fact, it is “the holiest and greatest of feasts” (*Jewish Antiquities* VIII, 4, 1).

⁵³ Roughly, late September to mid-October. On its connection with the harvest, see Ex 23:16, 33:22, Lev 23:34, and Deut 16:13.

⁵⁴ See Lev 23:26–32, and Num 29:1–11.

day.”⁵⁵ The book of Ezra records that the Israelites celebrate this feast with careful attention to these rubrics.⁵⁶ And this celebration inaugurates the remnant’s return to all the rites of their fathers, including Passover, which they celebrate three chapters later (Ezr 6:19); by reinstituting these rites, as the book of Ezra puts it, “Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning” (Ezr 3:8).

At this point also in the Return the governor and the high priest appoint Levites and Judahites to lay the foundation of a new Temple, and our *other* Jesus of this period makes his brief appearance. A Jeshua son of Kadmiel is among the Levites given “oversight of the work of the house of the LORD” (Ezr 3:8). Although their building of the Temple comes to a halt due to the interference of the non-Israelite local inhabitants, it is resumed, and brought to completion, about twenty-five years later under Darius II. Jeshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, along with the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, spearhead this final push to complete the Temple (Ezr 5:1–2). This Jeshua the Levite, however, is mentioned only in passing a half-dozen times after this;⁵⁷ from then on he only lurks in the background when important events are happening around him, but not singled out as integral to these events.

⁵⁵ See Lev 23:33–44, Num 29:12–38, Deut 16:13–16. The only account we have of Christ’s participating in the Feast of Succoth is found in John (7:2–44); here the eighth day of the feast is called “the great day” (v. 37). The meaning of Christ’s participation in this celebration of Succoth is nebulous; he begins by explicitly saying he is not going to the feast (v. 8), but he then does; further, on the eighth day he suddenly stands up (apparently in the Temple) and announces that “If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink” (v. 37) of “living waters” flowing from his heart (v. 38). Although the connection between these words and the feast of Succoth is not apparent, no doubt there is one.

⁵⁶ “And they kept the feast of booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as each day required” (Ezr 3:4).

⁵⁷ Cf. Ezr 2:40, 8:33; Neh 7:43, 9:4–5, 10:9, 12:8, 12:24.

A good example in which Jeshua the Levite is mentioned in a minor role is decades later, when Zerubbabel and Jeshua are no longer the heads of the resettled Israelites but have been succeeded by, respectively, Nehemiah and Ezra, and Artaxerxes rules in Persia, and the feast of Succoth is celebrated yet again. The book of Nehemiah records this celebration in great detail, even quoting Ezra's lengthy speech on the Day of Atonement, which recounts the history of Israel from Abraham to the present. The narrator, however, says something strange here: "And all the assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths; for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so" (Neh 8:17). What about what Jeshua the high priest had done just a few decades before? Nehemiah was explicitly listed among those in the original Return, so presumably he participated in the previous Succoth. Was there something different, presumably defective, about the way Jeshua the high priest had reinstated the feast in the previous generation, at least by Nehemiah's estimation? We will return to that possibility in a moment. Coming back to Jeshua the Levite, during the celebration of Succoth he exhorts the people, at the end, to bless Yahweh, and then he does so himself (Neh 9:4–5). But then nothing else of note is said of Jeshua the Levite or of Jeshua the high priest; a little more, however, is said of their sons.

The Next Generation and the Gentiles

In Nehemiah we learn that Jeshua the Levite, and by then ruler of Mizpah⁵⁸ in the territory of Judah, has a son who helps build the wall around Jerusalem (Neh 3:19). This is somewhat remarkable because the prophet Zechariah, in the days of Jeshua the high priest, had explicitly prophesied that

⁵⁸ *Mizpah* means "altar," so Joshua the Levite is also "ruler of the altar."

"Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle in it. For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the LORD; I will be the glory within her" (Zech 2:4–5, emphasis added). Both the size Yahweh intends Jerusalem to grow to, and the fact of His own sufficiency to protect her, make walls not only unnecessary and counter-productive, but even a kind of infidelity on Israel's part. This son of Jeshua the Levite does not appear to be of one mind with his father.

In what may be another indication of this reversal on the part of the next generation after the Return, we learn that at the dedication of that wall, Nehemiah and Ezra report (Ezr 10:18) that the sons of Jeshua the former high priest had taken wives from the non-Israelite population already inhabiting the land of Canaan and the surrounding region. Ironically, Nehemiah calls these locals "wives of foreign descent" (Neh 13:3). Ezra the new high priest, then, commands that these women be divorced and they be "put away with their children" (Ezr 10:44), claiming as justification Yahweh's prohibition, in the Pentateuch, of such intermarriage, and His charge that they "never seek the peace or prosperity" (Ezr 9:12) of the inhabitants of Canaan; finally, Nehemiah the governor associates the marriages with the sin of Solomon (Neh 13:26–27). The people of Israel, including the sons of Jeshua the high priest, concede to what is, on the surface, an act of strict obedience to the Law, and "separate from" their wives and half-breed sons and daughters (Ezr 10:19).

Now, it is not easy to assess these two actions: the wall building and the divorces. Zeal for the Law, to the point of loving God more than one's own family, is praiseworthy, as is any basic prudence about fortifying one's city. Are these moves, then, signs that the sons of the two Jeshuas are following in their fathers' holy footsteps? One may have doubts. Specifically, what the two acts have in common is a strict desire to restore Israel's absolute separation from the Gentiles,

and it is difficult to see the necessity of such a stricture in these later days, especially when it also appears to violate Yahweh's command, or at least His plan, as transmitted through the mouth of Zechariah, or when it destroys families and disinherits and in all likelihood impoverishes children.⁵⁹ Further, one sees signs that the previous generation, under Jeshua the high priest and Jeshua the Levite, is more open to the evangelization of the Gentiles. Indeed, the book of Ezra, as we mentioned, opens with Yahweh Himself stirring the heart of Cyrus, and then later those of Darius and Artaxerxes, to initiate and even pay for the resettlement of the Promised Land and the reconstruction of the Temple. Darius even seems in some measure to be converted to Judaism by this experience, as he asks the remnant to "pray for the life of the king and his sons" (Ezr 6:10). And under Jeshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, the Israelite remnant, following explicit allowances codified in the Law (Ex 12:43–50), welcome into the fold non-Israelites inhabiting the land to celebrate the Passover: "everyone who had joined them and separated himself from the pollutions of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel" (Ezr 6:21).⁶⁰ So it seems plausible, even more likely, that the later wall building and mass divorce were instances of mistaking the letter for the spirit of the Law, God's words for God's will.

⁵⁹ The Law (Deut 24:1–4) does not explicitly legalize divorce, but says that *if* one is going to divorce his wife, here is how he does it. As Christ says, divorce is not intended by the Law—it is tolerated by it, and only because of the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites (Mt 19:3–9).

⁶⁰ As was mentioned earlier, the initial interference to rebuilding the Temple came from local Gentiles who had first wanted to help with the restoration. Zechariah prophesies a few decades after this incident that "many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people" (Zech 2:11), and "those who are far off shall come and help to build the Temple of the LORD" (Zech 6:15). Note also that the Feast of Succoth was, according to the Law, to be practiced with particular attention to the sojourner (Deut 16:13–15).

There is precedent for such an (admittedly limited) openness to the Gentiles, and appropriately enough it is found in the acts of the first Joshua. The son of Nun, recall, welcomed into the assembly of the people of God the Canaanite family of Rahab (a harlot no less!), because she aided in the destruction of Jericho and wanted to worship Yahweh rather than her own people's gods (Josh 2:8–14, 6:17–25). Nor is Joshua's making an exception to the ban on all living things in Canaan unique to Rahab and her family. For shortly thereafter the Canaanite Gibeonites, convinced of and terrified by the power of Yahweh as Joshua son of Nun conquered the Promised Land, deceived Joshua into making a vow to allow them to join themselves to Israel for protection from the other Gentiles in Canaan. But even after Joshua learned that the Gibeonites were in fact among the people Yahweh had earlier commanded to be wiped out (Deut 20:16–18), he refused to renege on his covenant with them. Like a marriage vow, this promise was preserved as irrevocable, and Joshua defended the city of Gibeon against other Canaanites kingdoms (Josh 9:3–10:14). And Yahweh is with him here, for it is in the battle of Gibeon that Joshua commands the sun to stop in its path. So just as the original Joshua trusted to the strength of Yahweh to defend the remnant of the forty years as he led them into Canaan, so the new Joshuas, especially the high priest, trust Yahweh that they do not need walls as they lead the remnant of the Babylonian captivity back into that same land. Just as the son of Nun allowed for a providentially inspired grace to be shown to certain Canaanites, so also the son of Jehozadak trusted the Law's own exceptions to allow the incorporation of certain Canaanites into the assembly of Israel.⁶¹ Just as Joshua the quasi-priest and custodian of the

⁶¹ Joshua does not, however, allow the Gibeonites to become full equals among the people of God, making them "always to be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God" (Josh

THE JESUS(S) OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Law would not violate a covenant that itself only unintentionally violates Yahweh's command, as with the Gibeonites, so Joshua the Levitical high priest is not tempted to dissolve marriages apparently made in good faith, especially when the alternative would be to send off the wives and children to an uncertain fate.

It might be mentioned, in finishing this inspection of the two Jesuses of the Return, that their contemporary the prophet Zechariah, in the last chapter of his own book, prophesies regarding the Last Days:

Behold a day of the LORD is coming . . . I will gather all the nations [alt. gentiles] against Jerusalem to battle . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations . . . And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one . . . Then every one that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. (Zech 14:1–3, 7–9, 16)

Zechariah, then, promises *two* future in-gatherings: a final *battle* gathering the gentiles together *against* the Chosen People, and, after this, a final *peace* gathering the survivors of the gentiles *together with* the Chosen People, for the celebration of Succoth, or Ingathering. And this prophecy of the salvation of the gentiles is given to the Jews returning from exile, in the days of Jesus son of Jehozadok, the high priest, as they intermingle with and marry the gentiles who have inherited the Promised Land in their absence.

9:21–27). Likewise, although the family of Rahab “dwelt in Israel to this day,” they seem to settle “outside the camp of Israel” (Josh 6:25, 22).

Ben Sirach

The sixth and last Jesus is the only one whose name is literally *Jesus*. The book of Ecclesiasticus, also called Sirach, is traditionally placed as the last of the six Wisdom books (the other five being Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and the Wisdom of Solomon).⁶² It is the only one not attributed to David or the son of David. It may also have been the last one written, being dated to fewer than two centuries before the birth of Christ.⁶³ Already these marks might demand our

⁶² I am counting only these six as Wisdom books, though I realize that the dividing line between what counts as wisdom literature and what belongs with other books of the Bible is disputed. In fact, not all scholars include Psalms as a whole or the Song of Songs at all, and Job is frequently listed among the Wisdom books (more because of its subject matter than because of its stylistic genre, since it is more wisdom within a narrative than wisdom simply); likewise, Daniel is sometimes included among the books of wisdom. That is part of the slippery slope: Once Job and Daniel are admitted, Ezekiel seems like a candidate as well, and once Ezekiel, then other prophets also seem to fit the category.

As for the list I use above, I cannot deny that one motivation derives from the thesis of this essay: They would all, on my thesis, in some sense be written by a Jesus. But in its further defense, it matches the grouping implied in the Latin Vulgate from the fourth century and the Codex Vaticanus, the oldest copy we have of the Septuagint. Job's place in this sequence allows it to be considered the first of the Wisdom books or the last of the narrative books. If the former view is the better one—and it is sometimes said that this is the Christian custom (R. Murphy, “Introduction to Wisdom Literature,” *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 487)—then there would be seven Wisdom books. Fittingly it would then be the first, since in a way it more asks a question than proposes an explicit and concrete answer, whereas the others have a manifold answer. Fittingly also, Ecclesiasticus seems to be the last, for Jesus is its author, and He is Wisdom itself.

⁶³ Though there is some dispute about the exact dating, the dominant view is that it was completed around 180 B.C. But the status of the question is complicated, since (until relatively recently) book has come down to us in only a Greek translation, composed by Jesus ben Sirach's grandson (who also wrote the prologue), which dates to after 117 B.C.

attention. But when we see that its full title is “Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach,”⁶⁴ we Christians feel ourselves even more called to a closer study of it.

Nevertheless, I feel a degree of uncertainty about the following account of how this book fits with the thesis of this essay. Here the problem is not a shortage of information but an excess of it. Ecclesiasticus is a long book, easily the longest of the wisdom books after the Psalms. As with the other Wisdom books, it is largely a list of proverbs, and it is easy not to see the unity in it.⁶⁵ Thus, it is easy, and therefore tempt-

Only in the twentieth century were parts of a Hebrew text discovered, and we still have pieced together only about half of the book. To further muddy the waters, it is unclear that any (much less all) of this Hebrew is the original, or is it itself a translation from a Greek text. (See P. Skehan and A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 39 [New York: Doubleday, 1987], 8–10.)

The Wisdom of Solomon is the only other contender for being the last book written, as some scholars date it to possibly just under a century before Christ. Some even think the question is settled: “Wisdom . . . is the last of the OT books” (A. Wright, “Wisdom,” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 556). There is, however, reason to be doubtful about this, however, given the guesses involving its dating. Certainly if we consider that the inspiration of Ecclesiasticus may not be limited to its Hebrew original, but even communicated to Ben Sirach’s grandson’s Greek text and the Septuagint, then its date is so close to that of Wisdom that priority cannot be readily assigned.

But what is more decisive for this essay is the fact that the Wisdom of Solomon *claims* to have been written by Solomon, and therefore intends to be considered as having a far earlier date than Ecclesiasticus. Regardless of whether the title of Wisdom expresses a historical fact, the work was written from the perspective that it belongs with Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. Whence, only Ecclesiasticus of the Wisdom books *wants* to be contemplated as a late work.

⁶⁴ The author’s full name is given as “Jesus ben Eleazar ben Sirach” at the end of the book (Sir 50:27). This same name is given at 51:30 in one of the partial Hebrew manuscripts (P. Skehan and A. Di Lella, *op. cit.*, 3).

⁶⁵ One scholar complains that “there is virtually no organization in

ing, to cherry-pick verses to support just about any theory, so the reader should be suspicious of the following array of evidence.⁶⁶ The only alternative to being anxious about a possibly selective use of the verses is to carefully look at *all* of them; but such an exhaustive study cannot be done in this essay, though below we will present as many quotations and citations in support of my reading as is feasible. It is left to the reader to reread Ecclesiasticus on his own to test the interpretation we will propose.

That interpretation has two parts, and they might be summarized by saying that this book is a book of transition, a book in between. For unlike the other Jesuses we have considered, Jesus ben Sirach, judged by his work, does not directly or even indirectly draw the reader to Joshua son of Nun. This

the contents of Ecclesiasticus and no progression of thought is apparent in the book” (D. A. Hagner, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2: D–G [Zondervan, 1975], 192). The authors of the Anchor Bible volume echo this: “The book manifests no particular order of subject matter or obvious coherence” (P. Skehan and A. Di Lella, *op. cit.*, 3, 10).

⁶⁶ For example, some Scripture scholars have seen in this book a kind of nascent Sadduceeism, both because of the book’s near complete silence about angels, the afterlife, and resurrection of the dead, and because of the book’s frequent and extensive praise of the Levitical priesthood. (The point about the afterlife, however, is disputed, especially in the Greek text; see P. Skehan and A. Di Lella, *op. cit.*, 86–87, esp. note 14.) Other scholars, however, reject the charge that Jesus ben Sirach is a proto-Sadducee by pointing out that the book frequently cites as authoritative books that are not in the Pentateuch, especially the books of prophecy; a Sadducee would never do such a thing. Rather, *these* scholars say, the reliance on the prophets shows that Jesus ben Sirach is a proto-Pharisee. But even this seems a stretch, inasmuch as that original, i.e., B.C., Phariseism seems not to be anything other than orthodox and ordinary Judaism, so the label is unilluminating; if, however, we think of the Pharisees of the New Testament, the book of Ecclesiasticus’ repeated stress of the need for personal piety and sincerity in performing the works of the Law—which I will show below—does not fit that mold, so the label is misleading. (On both views, see Hagner, *op. cit.*, 191 and 195.)

exception, we suggest, may not be a vice. Whereas we argued before that the other Jesuses are somehow to be compared to, or contrasted with the son of Nun, and therefore only *indirectly* to be compared to our Savior, Jesus ben Sirach points to Christ more directly. Thus, in this respect Ecclesiasticus is more forward-looking than the other four Jesuses after Joshua son of Nun. As wisdom, however, in a way this book is also backward-looking, the way an adult or even one in his twilight years recollects in himself his entire life and reflects on it with greater penetration. Ecclesiasticus is a culmination, or even a *summa*, of wisdom literature. Let us defend this last point first.

Ecclesiasticus obviously has several characteristics in common with the other Wisdom books, for example, its frequent refrain associating wisdom with the fear of the LORD, which we also find in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom of Solomon.⁶⁷ Yes, the wisdom offered here is chiefly moral, practical wisdom; but Ecclesiasticus is unique in reflecting at length and frequently on matters of speculative theology. Jesus ben Sirach in several places even seems to wade into deep waters, discoursing on God's omniscience and omnipotence;⁶⁸ in other places he addresses the relationship between predestination and free will, contrasting man's dignity as a being made in the Divine image with man's inborn inclination to sin;⁶⁹ there is even a brief reflection on presumption and how

⁶⁷ See Sir 1:14–16, 20, 27, to take just a few verses; see especially 19:20. Again like these books, Wisdom itself is personified as a woman of immeasurable value, to be pursued, wooed, and wed at all costs (cf. Sir 4:11–19, 6:18–31, 51:13–21). Like in Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, in fact, here in Ecclesiasticus Lady Wisdom herself speaks at some length, in the centerpiece of the book (chapter 24). In this same chapter, Wisdom, consistent with how she is spoken of in the other Wisdom books, is said to be the first creature through whom Yahweh created and structured the cosmos.

⁶⁸ Sir 42:15–43:33; see also 16:18–30, 33:7–13, 39:16–35.

⁶⁹ Sir 15:11–26, 10:19, the entirety of ch. 17.

a theological inquiry motivated by pride can lead to heresy.⁷⁰ One of the most striking theological passages in Ecclesiasticus reflects on how God transcends not only our knowledge and language, but also all finite being:

Where shall we find strength to praise Him? For He is greater than all His works. Terrible is the Lord and very great, and marvelous is His power. When you praise the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can, for He will surpass even that. When you exalt Him, put forth all your strength, and do not grow weary, for you cannot praise Him enough. Who has seen Him and can describe Him? Or who can extol Him as He is? Many things greater than these lie hidden, for we have seen but few of His works. For the Lord has made all things, and to the godly He has granted wisdom. (Sir 43:28–33)⁷¹

The intellectual maturity of these theological passages, then, is another sign that this book is a sort of capstone to the revealed wisdom of the old dispensation.⁷²

But this development of the wisdom literature is even more evident when we note Ecclesiasticus' frequent emphasis on the connection between wisdom and the Law itself, to the point that they sometimes appear indistinguishable. After Wisdom-personified speaks in the middle of the book, the narrator concludes the description of Wisdom with, "All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the Law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance" (Sir 24:23).⁷³

⁷⁰ Sir 3:17–24. This passage is the first Scripture verse cited in the *Summa Theologiae* (I, q. 1, a. 1, obj. 1), where it is asked whether sacred doctrine should not be sought because it is so far above the human intellect.

⁷¹ On God's transcendence, see also Sir 42:21.

⁷² Note that the author of the Greek text, Jesus ben Sirach's grandson, explains that the book is the fruit of the "long study of the Law, the Prophets, and the other books of our ancestors" (Sir prologue).

⁷³ See also Sir 6:37, 9:15, 15:1, 21:11, 24:8–12. Fear of the LORD and keeping the commandments seem equated in Sir 1:26ff.

The Law is the embodiment of Yahweh's will for the chosen people, and thus also of His mind, His plan, His wisdom.

It may even be right to characterize this association of the Law and wisdom as the chief theme of this book, since much of Ecclesiasticus can be seen as an extended elaboration upon the Ten Commandments, taking each of them singly to apply to far more than their superficial content. For example, according to chapters 4, 14, 29, and 35, "Thou shalt not steal," implies also, "Be patient with a man in humble circumstances and do not make him wait for your alms. Help a poor man for the commandment's sake, and because of his need do not send him away empty" (Sir 29:8–9). The prohibition of bearing false witness entails also a command to speak only the good: "Let your conversation be with men of understanding, and let all your discussion be about the law of the Most High" (Sir 9:15). In fact, over a dozen chapters in Ecclesiasticus are almost entirely counsel about when to speak and when to remain silent.⁷⁴ Likewise, chapters 9, 25, and 26 are devoted to expanding the prohibitions against adultery and covetousness, so that they imply the command to avoid even occasions for such sins:

Do not go to meet a loose woman, lest you fall into her snares. Do not associate with a woman singer, lest you be caught in her intrigues. Do not look intently at a virgin, lest you stumble and incur penalties for her. . . . Turn away your eyes from a shapely woman, and do not look intently at the beauty belonging to another. (Sir 9:3–5, 8)⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See chapters 3–5, 7, 18–23, 27, 28, 32, 37, and 39. Other expansions of the Law include discourses on honoring one's parents (see Sir 3:1–16). Likewise, what Christ calls the "great commandment," Deuteronomy 6:5, is referred to and given a new emphasis: "With all your soul fear the Lord, revere his priests. With all your strength, love your Maker, neglect not his ministers" (Sir 7:29–30).

⁷⁵ Compare Job 31:1.

This last extension of the commandment sounds a lot like "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28). This leads us back to the first part of the thesis about Ecclesiasticus—that this book points to, or foreshadows the teaching and wisdom of Christ.

The Good News

Several passages in Ecclesiasticus seem to anticipate elements of the Sermon on the Mount. To take another example, Jesus ben Sirach constantly calls all men, even the great, to a sort of universal humility, not only before God, but even before one's fellow man:

My son, perform your tasks in meekness; then you will be loved by those whom God accepts. The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself, so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord. For great is the might of the Lord; he is glorified by the humble. (Sir 3:17–18, 20)⁷⁶

Likewise, a refrain throughout the book is both our need to be aware of God's patience and mercy with us, and our consequent need to show patience and mercy to our neighbor. Thus, we are told: "Do not reproach a man who is turning

⁷⁶ See also Sir 1:30, 2:4–5, 10:6–12, 28, 11:1, 13:20–23, 35:17. One such exhortation to humility ends in a song that resembles part of Mary's *Magnificat*: "For the beginning of pride is sin, and the man who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore the Lord brought upon them extraordinary afflictions, and destroyed them utterly. The Lord has cast down the thrones of rulers, and has seated the lowly in their place. The Lord has plucked up the roots of the nations and has planted the humble in their place" (Sir 10:13–15). Compare Luke 1:48, 51–52: "[H]e has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden . . . [H]e has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and he has exalted those of low degree."

away from sin; remember that we all deserve punishment . . . Do not rejoice over anyone's death; remember that we all must die" (Sir 8:5, 7). And later Jesus ben Sirach counsels, "Before you speak, learn. . . . Before judgment, examine yourself, and in the hour of visitation you will find forgiveness" (Sir 18:19–20). Thus, in one of the more Christlike and rhetorically remarkable passages, the reader is counseled to offer forgiveness rather than seek vengeance for suffering an injustice:

He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins. Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. Does a man harbor anger against another, and yet seek for healing from the Lord? Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself, and yet pray for his own sins? If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make expiation for his sins? Remember the end of your life, and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death, and be true to the commandments. Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook ignorance. (Sir 28:1–7)⁷⁷

Elements of this sound like part of the *Pater Noster*, or even the gospel parable of the servant who receives mercy from his master but will not show it to those in debt to him.⁷⁸

Lastly, Ecclesiasticus is noteworthy for driving home the primacy of the spirit of the Law over the letter, when it declares that sacrifice must begin in the heart:⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Other such passages pertaining to mercy include: Sir 2:7–11, 16:11–14, 17:24–29, 18:5–24, 29:1, 47:22, 50:19, and 51:8.

⁷⁸ See Mt 18:21–35 and 6:14. This parable is paired with this passage from Ecclesiasticus in the Liturgy, so I am not alone in seeing a connection between these two passages.

⁷⁹ A note of doubt or even despair about such a requirement being fulfilled by Israel can be found in Jesus ben Sirach's remark, "Their ways from their youth tend toward evil, and they are unable to make for them-

The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly, and he is not propitiated for sins by a multitude of sacrifices. . . . If a man washes after touching a dead body, and touches it again, what has he gained by his washing? So if a man fasts for his sins, and goes again and does the same things, who will listen to his prayer? . . . Do not offer [the Most High] a bribe, for he will not accept it; and do not trust to an unrighteous sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge and with him is no partiality. He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. (Sir 34:19–20, 25–26, 35:12–13, 16)

The thought is the same as what we saw in Hoshea the prophet: Offerings to Yahweh are not bribes to buy off some corrupt or fussy deity; they are tokens presented to Yahweh signifying a genuine turning of the heart. The external motions of the sacrifice do not by themselves atone for sin; indeed, Jesus ben Sirach claims, one must *already* be righteous, or at least repentant, in order to offer a sacrifice that will be accepted by Yahweh.⁸⁰

In these examples, then, we see something of the significance of the name of the author of this book. For such wisdom sounds almost like the nucleus of the Gospels. In fact, it

selves hearts of flesh in place of the stony hearts" (Sir 17:16), a verse that hearkens back to Moses' words about the circumcision of the heart and Ezekiel's promise that God will give Israel a fleshy heart.

⁸⁰ Two final New Testament anticipations: Anticipating Christ's and St. Paul's stress of Abraham's importance in salvation history, Ecclesiasticus is the unique exception to the Old Testament's total silence (after Genesis) about the events of Mount Moriah (Sir 44:19–22). Second, there is even a hope for the call of the gentiles in Ecclesiasticus: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, the God of all, and look upon us, and cause the fear of thee [i.e., wisdom] to fall upon all the nations. Lift up thy hand against foreign nations and let them see thy might. As in us thou hast been sanctified before them, so in them be thou magnified before us; let them know thee, as we have known that there is no God but thee, O Lord" (Sir 36:1–5); see also Sir 18:13, on God's "mercy reaching all flesh," as His "flock."

is not going too far to call Ecclesiasticus a digest of both the gospel and the Law. For in the Pentateuch Moses, and later Joshua and the prophet Hoshea, stressed the same things as Christ, though many (then and now) did not see this likeness of message between the two testaments. Just as Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill the Law, so we find Jesus ben Sirach recalling the Jews to the essence of the Law, and therefore to its proper fulfillment, which was itself on the horizon and rapidly approaching.

In summary, then, Jesus ben Sirach is writing at the end of something, and yet looking to the beginning of something else. This Jesus even seems to be aware of at least part of this; he appears to sense that he is bringing something to completion. The last six chapters of the book (Sir 44–50) are a sign of this self-awareness, insofar as they sing a lengthy and detailed litany praising what the author calls the “famous men” of Israel (which could also be translated the “glorious men”; Sir 44:1), beginning with Enoch and Abraham and continuing through almost every major character in the Old Testament up through Simon the priest around the time of the Maccabees. Not only Joshua son of Nun but even Jeshua the high priest of the Return are eulogized. It befits what we have been saying of Jesus ben Sirach’s emphasis on forgiveness over judgment that he also calls these the “men of mercy” (Sir 44:10). Of course, a review of salvation history is not unusual in the later books of the Old Testament, but such are usually found among the books of the prophets (which of course by definition look both backward and forward) more than among the Wisdom books.

A second sign that the author has a sense of reaching a goal—or perhaps more an extinction?—might be inferred from a rare self-referential point in the book where Jesus ben Sirach seems to cry out in a plaintive tone:

I was the last on watch; I was like one who gleans after the grape-gatherers; by the blessing of the Lord I excelled, and like a grape-gatherer I filled my wine press. Consider that

Christopher A. Decaen

I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction. Hear me, you who are great among the people, and you leaders of the congregation, listen (Sir 33:16–18)

A lonely, almost John the Baptist-like “voice in the desert” quality can be detected in these words; whereas John was the last of the prophets, Jesus ben Sirach is both the last (or one of the last) of the wise men. But he speaks of himself as almost a prophet, both the last of those bearing the wisdom of Yahweh, and as fearful that his words might not be heeded. His addressing of the congregation is itself noteworthy, as the word *ecclesiasticus* is a Greek word probably best translated as “for the congregation,” from *ecclesia*, meaning “assembly,” “congregation,” “church.” By this title, then, Jesus ben Sirach dedicates this wisdom to the people of God, and especially to those who need it most, those entrusted with the care of the people: the present and future leaders of Israel. For the last wise man on watch will not be with them much longer.

Now, we must not overstate this reading of Ecclesiasticus, or the significance of Jesus ben Sirach. The book does not present the gospel in its fullness. There is no intimation about a coming Incarnation, and only a little about a future Messiah, and the fulfillment of salvation history that He will inaugurate through His perfect sacrifice.⁸¹ Though the book

⁸¹ In the catalog of the men of mercy, at the end of the praise of David’s life (Sir 47:1–10), Jesus ben Sirach says, “The Lord . . . exalted his horn forever” (v. 11); after this follows a summary of the reign of the son of David, Solomon (47:12–18), his sin and the division of the kingdom (Sir 47:19–21), but which interrupts its own narrative to reassure the reader of that promise: “But the Lord will never give up his mercy, nor cause any of his works to perish; he will never blot out the seed of his chosen one, nor destroy the posterity of him who loved him. So he gave a remnant to Jacob and to David a root of his stock” (v. 22, author’s trans.). Both verses (11 and 22) resemble the Messianic prophecies of 2 Sam 7 (especially vv. 9, 12–13, 16), and those of Ezek 29:21, Ps 132:17, Zech 6:12, Jer 33:15, and Is 11:1, 10. But these are the only references to the Messianic age found in the book. Indeed, at the end of the catalogue of the men of mercy (ch. 50), and the end of the book itself, where

THE JESUS(S) OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

resembles the prophets in many ways, it is not a *consciously* forward-looking book in that way. Rather, you might say that we see the son of Sirach exhorting us to live out the moral consequences of the new covenant rather than foreshadowing that covenant's central element, the High Priest's sacrificial death, resurrection, and mediatorship with God the Father. Jesus ben Sirach, then is a type of Christ, but we should say Christ the Teacher, Christ the wise man, not so much Christ the savior. Although, as we noted earlier, Jesus ben Sirach shows us that he is well aware of the meaning of his name, "Yahweh is savior," he associates this meaning with the son of Nun and not so much with his own teaching. In this way he is *not quite* a Joshua. Although Jesus ben Sirach is also at, or very near, the beginning of something that will make all things new, he does not seem to be aware of it.⁸²

the reader has been brought through salvation history up to the present, we would most expect a reference to the son of David to come. What we find, instead, is a lengthy (21 verse) praise of an otherwise obscure Aaronite high priest, Simon son of Onias, and a prayer, not a promise, that God might "give us gladness of heart and grant that peace may be in our days in Israel, as in the days of old. May He entrust to us his mercy and let Him deliver us in our days" (50:23–24). A subtle prophecy by way of a spiritual sense, however, might be detected in Sir 51:10, where Jesus says, "Lord, my Father and the Master of my life. I extolled the Lord, 'You are my Father, my mighty savior, only you!'" (Compare also Sir 23:1–4). This juxtaposition of God being Jesus's Father and "savior" is surely significant.

⁸² Having now examined all six Jesuses in the Old Testament, one hopes to see an order among them. In particular, since we detected an anti-typology between two of them, one might look for other anti-type pairs. A word of caution is in order, though, about finding more in a pairing than the text can bear: The superiority of one character over another does not render them anti-types, any more than the difference between white and grey renders them contraries. Likewise, finding one Jesus to be lacking compared to another does not yield an anti-typology, however aesthetically pleasing such an order might be. The aforementioned defect of Jesus ben Sirach does not mean he is an anti-type of one of the earlier Jesuses, or even of Christ Himself.

Zechariah's Branch: The Jesus of Prophecy

By way of contrast, and in conclusion, we can return briefly to one of our other Jesuses, Jeshua the high priest, son of Jehozadak, at the time of the Return from the Babylonian captivity. In one place in the Old Testament, a place that I intentionally neglected to mention earlier, *this* Jesus is explicitly described as a type of a Jesus to come.

Jeshua the high priest, we saw, is a character in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, but he also plays a strange part in the prophecies of his contemporary, the prophet Zechariah. In the second chapter of Zechariah's vision, right after an angel has told him that Jerusalem will be built without walls, and that Yahweh "will come and dwell in the midst of you. And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and they shall be my people" (Zech 2:10–11), the vision suddenly introduces the high priest. I will quote it in full:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him,

A more defensible order among these six lies in the historical pairings: first Joshua son of Nun appears by himself, then the two Hosheas, then the two Joshuas of the Return, and then Jesus ben Sirach by himself. This 1-2-2-1 waltz meter might even be seen as a 3-2-1 sequence, since the son of Nun and the two Hosheas, I have argued, belong together: The King is the anti-type of the son of Nun, and the Prophet is the anti-type of the King (and therefore a type of the son of Nun). The last three Jesuses, on the other hand, do not readily seem to fit together as a unit, except perhaps in their common interest in the Law, and in fact its spirit over its letter, love and mercy over justice alone. Rather, the order of 3-2-1 looks like a countdown. Put another way, the seventh Jesus is the limit, but a limit that is reached, and therefore the target of the other six. Like a point in relation to magnitudes of various sizes, He is the first in the genus that causes all the species.

"Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments; and the angel of the LORD was standing by. And the angel of the LORD enjoined Joshua, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.'" (Zech 3:1-7)

Without explaining this (admittedly, very rich) vision in detail, it is not difficult to see it as at least Zechariah's exhortation to his contemporary Jeshua the high priest to serve Yahweh in sincerity. But it is striking that Jeshua is portrayed as being under the direct assault of Satan himself, so a figurative meaning seems a likelihood as well.⁸³ Notice briefly that this Jeshua is being said to receive his high priesthood not genetically, as the Levites do by right of inheritance, but as a grace and a reward, and that he bears iniquity but it does not quite touch his person, inasmuch as it is removed merely by his being stripped of his filthy clothing.⁸⁴ But the prophetic character of the last part of the vision is clearest:

⁸³ Besides of course Christ's forty days in the desert in which the Devil puts him to the test, the scene here is also reminiscent both of Satan's accusation of Job before Yahweh (Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6), and Job's own description of this trial as involving his Advocate defending his case before Yahweh (Job 16:19, 19:25-27). This gift of access to the Divine court and the divine judgments given to a priest is unprecedented and, therefore, bothersome to some scholars; it appears to give to a priest what in the past was distinctive of the prophets. (See C. and E. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 25B [New York: Doubleday, 1987], 196-97).

⁸⁴ The Levitical priesthood is said to "bear the iniquity of the sanctuary . . . and of your priesthood . . . so that there be wrath no more upon the sons of Israel . . . and they shall bear their iniquity" (Num 18:1, 5, 23). Note that the word *soim*, translated as "filthy," designates

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of good omen [*lit.* men of symbol, *mophet*]:⁸⁵ behold, I will bring my servant the Branch [*tsamah*]. For behold, upon the stone which I have set before Joshua, upon a single stone with seven facets,⁸⁶ I will engrave its inscription," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day. In that day," says the LORD of hosts, "every one of you will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree." (Zech 3:8-10)

The destiny and identity of this "Branch" that Joshua the high priest is told of is made both more explicit and more mysterious a few chapters later, when Yahweh says:

Take from the exiles . . . who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown,⁸⁷ and set it upon the head of Joshua, the son of

an extreme uncleanness, and is sometimes used to designate excrement (see Deut 23:14 and 2 Kings 18:27), an apt image for sin. See C. and E. Meyers, *op. cit.*, 187-89.

⁸⁵ The meaning of this word is puzzling. It is sometimes used for signs of Yahweh's power, miracles such as the ten plagues visited upon Egypt (Ex 7:3; Deut 4:34, 7:19; in these cases it is often translated "wonder"), and it is sometimes used for signs, even allegories, of future events, such as when Ezekiel, under Yahweh's command, symbolically "goes into exile" from Jerusalem (Ezek 12:1-16). If taken in the second sense, the companions of Joshua would themselves be symbols, allegories, of the Joshua to come; obviously this would fit nicely with the thesis of this essay and the seven-faced stone engraved before Joshua. (See C. and E. Meyers, *op. cit.*, 199-200.)

⁸⁶ Literally, seven "[pairs of] eyes" ("pairs" being implied because the word seems to be dual), but it is also translated as "faces" (whence "facet" is not a stretch). If we take "faces" or pairs of eyes as the meaning here, again we have seven men carved into the single stone.

⁸⁷ It appears that the more likely translation of the word here is plural, "crowns." A possible reading, then, is that one was made of silver, the other of gold, the practice of blending the metals being unlikely at the

Jehozadak, the high priest; and say to him, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, the man whose name is the Branch. For he shall grow up in his place and he shall build the Temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the Temple of the LORD, and shall bear royal honor,⁸⁸ and shall sit and rule⁸⁹ upon [H]is throne. And he shall be the priest by [H]is throne, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both.’”⁹⁰ (Zech 6:9–13)

In these two passages we find a double paradox: The Branch who is to build the Temple of the LORD and to rule it as a king is both *distinguished from* and *identified with* Joshua the son of Jehozadak. Joshua is both crowned and commanded to see this crowning as a figure of another crowned Joshua who will *not* be a returning exile, but one who will “grow up” in the Promised Land. He is both a priest beside Yahweh’s throne and distinguished from the priest by sitting on Yahweh’s throne as king. He is both a Levite and he is to fulfill

time. C. and E. Meyers (*op. cit.*, 347–51) argue that the silver crown should be taken as placed on Joshua’s head and the gold one to be held in the Temple (according to 6:14) for the future “Branch.”

⁸⁸ C. and E. Meyers make an interesting claim about this word “royal honor” (*hod*), given our thesis: “Num 27:20 . . . records God’s instruction that Moses invest Joshua with ‘authority’ (*hod*) . . . That the term *hod* so often designates Yahweh’s universal cosmic power adds to the idea that the Davidide’s [i.e., the Branch’s] earthly power is integrally related to and sanctioned by Yahweh’s rule over all the world” (*op. cit.*, 359).

⁸⁹ Our word for “rule” (*msl*) is distinct from the word for the “rule” of a kingdom (*mlk*); the former extends to dominion that exceeds the normal or established borders of a kingdom, so it would include newly conquered or tributary lands. (See C. and E. Meyers, *op. cit.*, 360.)

⁹⁰ The grammatical antecedents are obscure here, and the Septuagint renders the text slightly differently; a somewhat different translation could be: “and he shall sit and rule upon his [own] throne. And there shall be a priest by his [the Branch’s] right hand, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both.” This reading, however, renders opaque the reason for associating Joshua the high priest with the Branch, a king and son of David: the king will not be a priest, but will have one on hand, and they will get along.

the promise to David the Judahite (2 Sam 7:13) that his son would build the Temple and rule Jerusalem in peace.

A little Hebrew points a way toward resolving this confusion if we look more closely at the name “Branch,” for this is the same description the prophet Jeremiah had used to describe Israel’s hope, about a century before, at the fall of Judah:

I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold. . . . Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king, and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The LORD [is] our righteousness.” (Jer 23:3, 5–6)

Jeremiah repeats this prophecy about the “righteous Branch” later almost word for word (Jer 33:14–16), again with the Branch also called “The LORD (is) our righteousness.” Notice that the Branch is said to “save” (*toshua*) Judah, Joshua’s name without the theophoric prefix (*Yah-*). But even more importantly, note the repeated word “righteous.” In Hebrew this is *tsadak*,⁹¹ and the Branch’s other name, “The LORD is our righteousness,” is, roughly, *Yahweh tsadekenu*, the *-nu* suffix meaning “our.” Thus, with the name of God contracted to *Yah*, as is typical in Hebrew names, the name “Yahweh is righteousness” would be *Yahotsadek*. Recall the name of the father of Joshua the high priest: Joshua son of Jehozadak. It is in fact the same name.

This suggests that the way to make sense of Zechariah’s vision is to take Joshua the son of Jehozadak as a living sign

⁹¹ Compare Zadok, David’s high priest, the last in the line not slaughtered by Saul in his attempt to punish those who aided David; see 2 Sam 8:17.

of another Joshua to come, one who will himself more perfectly deserve the names “Yahweh the Savior” and “The Son of Yahweh the Righteous.” Just as the high priest foreshadows the Christ, the Christ is the model whom the high priest imitates. This latter-day Joshua will be the true Branch, the shoot from the stump of Jesse, for he will more perfectly bear the life of the Chosen People that will save them. Although in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Joshua the high priest does help build the new Temple, this Temple is but a shadow of its former self under King Solomon. *Both* these temples, however, are but shadows of what we might call its *later* self, the Temple that is to come, the Church that the Branch will build. This Branch will be of the tribe of Judah, literally a son of David, and yet He will also be the high priest, but of a higher order of priesthood than that of the Levitical priesthood, the order of Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem (which St. Paul tells us means “Peace”), and whose own name means “King of Righteousness.”

A similar interpretation of Jesus as prefigured, or aimed at, in the Jesuses of the Old Testament can be found in the *New* with respect to the chronologically first and archetype of these Jesuses, Joshua son of Nun. In the third and fourth chapters of the letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul reflects on the psalm that the Church later chose for singing daily in the Liturgy of the Hours:

Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the desert, where your fathers put me to the test. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.” As I swore in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.” (Ps 95:7–11; Heb 3:7–11)

Paul then meditates on what this “rest” was that the Israelites were denied. Is it simply the end of the sojourn in the literal

Christopher A. Decaen

desert, to which Joshua led the Israelites? No, he argues, for the Psalmist speaks of the promise of entering this rest as still remaining unfulfilled; indeed, St. Paul points out, the Lord “sets a certain day: *today*, speaking through David so long after” the events of the exodus from Egypt, and Joshua’s conquest of Canaan (Heb 4:7, emphasis added).

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day. So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God’s rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Heb 4:8–11)

The translation as “Joshua” here in the Revised Standard Version is really an interpretation. The Greek just says “Jesus.”⁹² This passage is surrounded by a discourse on Christ’s high priesthood, so the use of the name “Jesus” here is not a coincidence; it is a comparison. St. Paul is implying that there is Jesus and there is Jesus. *One* is a type of the *other*. The first Jesus led the faithful Israelites into Canaan, but this was an imperfect Jesus, and an imperfect Israel, and therefore an imperfect Sabbath rest was accomplished. The true Jesus makes possible the perfect conquest of the land truly promised to Abraham, a Jesus who will lead the perfect number of the Chosen People to a permanent homecoming in the Promised Land. He alone, therefore, gives them the divine rest, God’s own rest on the Seventh Day.

⁹² The Douay-Rheims version is the only English translation I have seen that avoids interpretation here and simply says “Jesus” in Hebrews 4:8.

The Eternal Feast

Let us conclude with a question that takes us back to the feast of Succoth, which Jeshua the high priest reinstated upon the Return from Babylon. Christianity's fulfillment of the original feasts of Passover and Pentecost is well known: Passover proved to be a figure or foreshadowing of Christ's passion wherein the death of the Lamb through his blood saves the people from the angel of Death punishing the sins of those who, like Pharaoh, do not *know* Yahweh and so will not *obey* Him. Pentecost was to celebrate the first fruits of the growing season in the Promised Land after forty years in the desert, so obviously its fuller meaning is revealed in the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. As was said before, both feasts involve a gathering of the chosen people into Jerusalem, which is why so many foreign Jews are present on both occasions in the New Testament narratives (Acts 2:5–11). The feast of Succoth, Tabernacles, or "Ingathering," however, is not often attended to by Christians.⁹³ Is the feast of Succoth somehow fulfilled in the time of Christ? If so, how so? Of what in the *New* Covenant is the Old Testament Succoth a foreshadowing?

Could it be that the fulfillment of Succoth is not recorded in the New Testament because it is *not yet fulfilled*, or at least not entirely? For just as the original Passover and Pentecost both involved lesser "ingatherings" of the people of the Lord, so already since the Passover and Pentecost of the *New* Testament the nations have been gathered into the new Jerusalem, which exists mystically already among the militant members of the Church, the New Israel. But the *final* Ingathering—which,

we have noted, happens according to the Law exactly seven months after Passover, in the seventh month of the year, the Sabbath month of rest and therefore the time of completion—has already begun, is happening now, and will be brought to complete fruition when the number of the elect is achieved at the end of time. On that Last Day, "at the end of the year," the harvest will be completed, and the fruits of the New Adam's labor by the sweat of His brow will be brought forth from the earth. If Christ's *own* resurrection was, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "the first fruits" of the harvest—and so corresponds to Passover and Pentecost together—so the final harvest of the season, Succoth, will be when the rest of the fruit of the soil (*adamah*) is drawn forth from the ground in the *general* resurrection.

Whence, we see still more deeply the reason why it was important that Jeshua the son of Jehozadak reinstitute Succoth: Just as the Return from exile was a fleshly depiction of the New Israel's final spiritual and physical return to the true Promised Land, the heavenly Jerusalem, so the Ingathering of that Return from exile is a figure of both the final fulfillment of the Law and of the final harvest on the Last Day. Joshua the high priest must do this because he prefigures the seventh, and final, Joshua—the one in whom all the rest *participated* and *at whom*, therefore, they aim. In various and imperfect ways they represented the Christ, under the personas of the wisest of men, as a prophet of repentance, as the final king of Israel, as a Levite who lays the foundation of the New Temple, as a high priest according to the Law leading the remnant in restoring the feast of Tabernacles, and even a supreme high priest according to the order of Melchizedek dwelling in the first Tabernacle as in a home. Priest, prophet, and king. But most importantly, the Sabbath Jesus, like the son of Nun, subdues the enemy holding the Promised Land, leading the Chosen People to not only possess this land but also to inherit it as an

⁹³ For example, the five volume, 4500+ page, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, an otherwise amazing resource for detailed information about Scripture, is virtually silent about Tabernacles, offering only three short paragraphs (about a quarter of a page) on the feast.

eternal home. This “gathering in” to the Holy Land did not begin with the son of Nun’s crossing of the Jordan. It began with the Son of God’s being baptized in the Jordan. And it will be complete when this Joshua comes again in glory to complete his first coming, at which time he will lead us back to Zion to celebrate the eternal feast of Succoth, the heavenly harvest.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ It might seem incongruous, on this account, that Succoth occurs in the fall, not at the end of either the traditional year or at the end of the Hebrew lunar calendar (in March). What happened to the winter? Or is the winter supposed to correspond to eternity and peace? Although it’s reasonable to think of winter as a period of rest, it seems equally necessary to see it as a time of death, or even of waiting for spring. So a better extension of this idea of the cosmic and eschatological significance of Succoth is not to understand winter as coming after the year but as coming *before*. For if Passover and Pentecost correspond to the time of Christ, who is also the center of history, and Succoth to the end of time, it would make more sense that the winter, the time of death and of anticipation of resurrection, correspond to the time before Christ, the age of the curse, death, and the Old Law. Thus, the six months of (roughly) October through March belong to the Old Testament, the dispensation of Adam, and the six months of April through September belongs to the New Testament, and the dispensation of the New Adam. The first is a “week” without a Sabbath, sweat of the brow without a day of rest; the second is a “week” that ends with that seventh “day,” one that steps out of the cosmic “year” and into eternity, on the eighth day.

I recently found in the writings of St. Methodius evidence of a tradition for this interpretation of the feast of Succoth. His ninth discourse is about the feast, both in its literal sense and its typological or mystical sense, but the account in the first chapter bears a striking similarity to ours:

[T]hese things [in the Pentateuch about Succoth], being like air and phantom shadows, foretell the resurrection and the putting up of our tabernacle that had fallen upon the earth, which at length, in the seventh thousand of years, resuming again immortal, we shall celebrate the great feast of true tabernacles in the new and indissoluble creation, the fruits of the earth having been gathered in, and men no longer begetting and begotten, but God resting from the works of creation. For since in six

days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, so by a figure in the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, we are commanded to keep the feast to the Lord, which signifies that, when this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years, when God shall have completed the world, He shall rejoice in us. For now to this time all things are created by His all-sufficient will and inconceivable power; the earth still yielding its fruits, and the waters being gathered together in their receptacles; and the light still severed from darkness, and the allotted number of men not yet being complete . . . Then, when the appointed times shall have been accomplished, and God shall have ceased to form this creation, in the seventh month, the great resurrection-day, it is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be celebrated to the Lord, of which the things said in Leviticus are symbols and figures, which things, carefully investigating, we should consider the naked truth itself. (St. Methodius, “Banquet of the Ten Virgins,” *Discourse 9*, chapter 1, tr. W. Clark, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 6, eds. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe [Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886].)