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GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

THE RECEPTION OF HAGAR IN THE WRITINGS OF ORIGEN, JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM, AND AUGUSTINE

SUBMITTED TO:

DR. STEVEN R. HARMON, DR. ROBERT CANOY, AND DR. SCOTT SHAUF

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
AND PHILOSOPHY

BY
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Abstract

The premise of this thesis is to explore the reception of the Hagar stories through three prominent early Christian thinkers -Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo - in order to evaluate the theological significance she had for those particular contexts. Hagar functions predominately as a symbol in contexts where group identity, power, and ideology are contested. The hermeneutical and theological stances of the authors are examined to expose and mitigate the religious conflict occurring in their historical location. The resulting interpretations of Hagar and her story vary from Christianization of the character to outright scorn and rejection of the symbolic group she represents. The methodology of this project is drawn from reception theory, tracing the unfolding of Hagar's symbolism through various historical and social contexts, beginning with Genesis and ending with Augustine.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Introduction

Within the past fifty years, Hagar has gained a certain popularity with biblical scholars and theologians. The interest of Hagar corresponds to the flourishing of contextual theologies, which owe much of their scholarship concerning her to feminist and womanist interpretations. This is not a critique; rather it is a fascinating example of how certain biblical figures gain prevalence for hermeneutics due to particular social and cultural contexts. Phyllis Trible, in her now classic *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, paints Hagar as a relatable figure for the oppressed:

As a symbol of the oppressed, Hagar becomes many things to many people. Most especially, all sorts of rejected women find their stories in her. She is the faithful maid exploited, the black woman used by the male and abused by the female of the ruling class, the surrogate mother, the resident alien without legal recourse, the other woman, the runaway youth, the religious fleeing from affliction, the pregnant young woman alone, the expelled wife, the divorced mother with child, the shopping bag lady carrying bread and water, the homeless woman, the indigent relying upon handouts from the power structures, the welfare mother, and the self-effacing female whose own identity shrinks in service of others.¹

Delores Williams covers Hagar as being the blueprint for womanist experience and expounds African-American social history in light of Hagar's impact.² For a more comprehensive overview of Hagar in modern scholarship, as well as an exposition that continues Williams' work, Nyasha Junior's *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible* is a

¹ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, vol. 13 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 28.

² Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013).

valuable resource.³ For the American, and specifically African American, culture and history, Hagar emerges as a figure which allows theological reflection and identification. But what power does she have without that particular cultural context? How did the earliest Christians – without the modern ideas of race, gender, and socio-economic oppression – interpret Hagar? Did she still inspire theological reflection and identification?

The premise of this thesis is to explore the reception of the Hagar stories through three prominent early Christian thinkers -Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo - in order to evaluate the theological significance she had for those particular contexts. Hagar functions predominately as a symbol in contexts where group identity, power,⁴ and ideology are contested. Even the original stories in Genesis lend weight to this, as familial conflict, rooted in power, is undoubtably the source of conflict and movement in the narratives. Paul explicitly creates the Hagar-Sarah allegory in response to recovering the Galatian church's doctrinal identity. Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine, despite the variation in their theologies and social-historical contexts, each conform to some extent to patterns of using Hagar to defend certain theological positions.

Hagar was simply one of many stereotypes used in rhetorical combat to draw the lines of what was or was not acceptable Christian theology or practice. She was frequently used to clarify the Christian position towards the Old Testament, as a temporary image meant to redirect to a superior truth; any faction within the church or outside of it who held the Old Testament as equal in relevance and authority to the New

³ Nyasha Junior, *Reimagining Hagar: Blackness and Bible* (version First edition.), 1st ed., Biblical Refigurations. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴ In this thesis, power is defined as having an advantage or influence over another person or group.

Testament became considered members of the “out-group” of what was acceptable in Christian belief.

John L. Thompson, in his reception history of the women from Tribble’s *Texts of Terror*, frames the treatment of Hagar in Early Christian history with the distinctions of the “literal” Hagar and the figurative Hagar.⁵ However, this terminology is potentially misleading. The reception demonstrates that, regardless of which biblical text is being referenced, Hagar typically has symbolic implications for the audience. Hagar is influential not merely because of the literal details of her story but because those details can be extrapolated to have symbolic significance (in the case of Origen) or practical implications (in the case of Chrysostom) for the whole of the audience.

The methodology for the thesis will rely primarily on Hans Robert Jauss’ concept of reception theory and, to an implicit degree, on feminist-literary scholarship with the subject of Hagar being a primary focus of the biblical passages. While this endeavor appears to have a simple purpose, by researching the versatility of Hagar as a character and the various interpretations that emerge from her story, there will be deeper questions and themes of conflict and identity in need of addressing. In the preliminary research conducted for this project, it is clear that Hagar provokes a spectrum of reactions from the early Christian writers, from sympathy to ambivalence to scorn. Commentary on the biblical texts reveals the complex dynamics of the relationships between characters and

⁵ John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24-36, 37-46. Thompson nuances the “literal” by suggesting interpretations that are “more strictly nonallegorical” [37]. These distinctions are helpful in categorizing major trends of interpretation, considering the scope of his reception is much larger than this project. Since the following reception is narrowed to a select few figure, it is appropriate to continue with the idea of symbol, which can entail an attention to the “literal” details of Hagar as well as a figurative interpretation or application.

develops surprising emotional characterization.⁶ Ultimately, Hagar is a character to “think with,” allowing the writers to grapple with their contemporary religious issues through a biblical figure.⁷

Defining Religious Conflict

As Hagar most frequently appears in writings concerning some form of conflict, this thesis will adapt the definition of religious conflict from Wendy Mayer. Mayer defines religious conflict as “...a complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains (ideology/morality, power, personality, space/place, and group identity) in turn enabled by a range of other conditions (political, social, economic, cultural and psychological).”⁸ The narrative framing of religious conflict can differ from what is being contested.⁹ To distinguish the conflict as religious, the agents involved must identify with and represent particular religious affiliations, in which there are several categories of affiliation: identifiably separate religions, separate factions within the same religion (sectarianism), the same faction of a religion, and even secular authorities, so long as it retains some form of religious authority.¹⁰ However, there are instances in this thesis in which the conflict is a form of familial conflict (in other words, the agents are no longer affiliated with religious institutions but with a family structure);

⁶ An example of this is not the characterization of Hagar but of Sarah. Jo Ann Hackett discusses how modern commentators describe Sarah in Gen. 16 and 21 as hysterical and angry (Jo Ann Hackett, “Rehabilitating Hagar: Fragments of An Epic Pattern,” in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989], 13). However, in some writings of the early Christians, Sarah is praised for her “good sense” in the situation (eg., John Chrysostom, Homily 38 on Genesis).

⁷ Elizabeth A. Clark, “Interpretive Fate amid the Church Fathers,” In *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, 1st ed. Phyllis Trible Lecture Series, 2004, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 127–47.

⁸ Wendy Mayer, Bronwen Neil, and Christian Albrecht, *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, Vol. 121, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Inc, 2013), 3.

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

this is to accommodate the mode of conflict in the original Hagar narratives in Genesis, which is expounded upon in later homilies. The contested domains remain applicable to these situations.

Within the field of Late Antiquity studies, identity formation and the construction of in-group/out-group biases are commonly studied aspects of religious conflict, particularly by analyzing conflict rhetoric.¹¹ Mayer notes that, “Where identity research is beginning to produce particularly valuable insights concerns an emerging recognition of the gap between rhetoric that had previously been read as indicative of historical inter-group conflict and the reality that this is an example of in-group/out-group bias where the out-group label is used to refer to a deviant other inside the same religion.”¹² However, this intra-group conflict can spread beyond the group and entangle an outside group as the scapegoat of the conflict; Abel Mordechai Bibliowicz defends the position that Anti-Semitism is a “by-product” of early intra-Christian conflict over identity.¹³ The patterns of the Hagar symbolism discussed in this thesis are intended to explore this intersection of religious conflict and identity formation.

Developments of Reception Theory

The interpretative framework of my thesis is dependent on the concepts of reception theory and reception history developed by Hans Robert Jauss. During his career as a medieval literature professor, Jauss began developing theoretical frameworks for tracing the aesthetic influence of literature. Reception theory is categorized as a form of

¹¹ Wendy Mayer, and Chris L De Wet, eds. *Reconceiving Religious Conflict: New Views from the Formative Centuries of Christianity* (version First edition.). Firsted. Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 10.

¹² Mayer, *Reconceiving Religious Conflict*, 11.

¹³ Mayer, *Reconceiving Religious Conflict*, 11.

reader-response theory and builds upon the influential work of Jauss's teacher, Hans Georg Gadamer.¹⁴ Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or "history of effects," creates a basic guiding dialectic: how does the text affect readers, particularly those in various social, historical, or cultural contexts, and how do the readers influence the text?¹⁵ An observation of the cultural and historical context is necessary in making sense of the text and its interpreters.

Over the course of Jauss's career, the major developments of reception theory became designated as his *apologia*. There is a total of four *apologia* with each one contributing to an expansion of Jauss's perspective on the aesthetic experience, literary history, and the role of reception. Of the four *apologia*, elements of the second *apologia* (the text and history) and the principles of the third *apologia* (*Towards an Aesthetic Reception*) are crucial in the framework of this project's aim of a reception of the Hagar narratives.

The Text and History

A major concern literary criticism in the mid-20th century was to determine the proper relationship between a text and history. In his contribution to this overarching discussion, Jauss proposed a three-fold approach to determine the right balance of history and literature. The first phase is referred to as the *text within history*. The text needs to be first examined in its original historical context with consideration given to its production and initial reception by its audience.¹⁶ Next, the text can be analyzed as it received

¹⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2009), 316.

¹⁵ Ibid., 316.

¹⁶ Ormond Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine: An Appropriation of Hans Robert Jauss' Reception Aesthetics and Literary Hermeneutics*, Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia, 19, (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997), 39.

throughout history by various groups of readers; this is the *text throughout history*.¹⁷ The third step in the progression is to consider *the text and history*. This final step emphasizes the social function of the text and its impact on general history.¹⁸ Ultimately, the history of literature is a “communicative process between all three parties (i.e. producer, work, reader).”¹⁹

Towards an Aesthetic of Reception

In 1967, Jauss outlined the theoretical principles of constructing literary history in a lecture titled “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory.”²⁰ The lecture would be later be published and translated under the title *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*.²¹ This work constitutes the third apologia and is considered the foundational document on reception theory. It is these principles of reception theory which are the most relevant portions of Jauss’s work as it pertains to methodology of this work.

The first principle for reception theory is a renewal of literary history to expose the fallacy of objectivism. Jauss describes this phenomenon: “A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period....It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the text from the material world of the words and brings it to a contemporary existence...”²² When readers approach a text, they bring their own “horizon of expectation” to the literature. Since every reader will have a different

¹⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

²⁰ Thiselton., 317.

²¹ Rush., 40.

²² Hans Robert Jauss, and Paul de Man, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Theory and History of Literature, 2, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 21.

horizon, the text invokes different “resonances.” A reader does not engage with a text in an objective or value-neutral way, but rather with questions, motivations, and expectations for what the text means.²³

The second principle is to recognize the avoidance of what is (personally) threatening in the text and to confront the material. Unlike his former teacher Gadamer, Jauss embraced the disruptive and challenging elements of history.²⁴ The text can alter the reader’s horizon of expectation by standing in tension with three elements of the reader’s experience: “literary expectations concerning the genre of work, familiarity with other works and their themes at that time, and the relationship between the literary world created by the reading and the world of the reader’s everyday life.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the work as it appears is not “something absolutely new as in an informational vacuum” but as a work that can convey “overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions.”²⁶

Thirdly, a text can modify, surpass, or disappoint the expectations of the reader(s). This is the power of the text to influence the reader; the reader is not in full control of determining meaning, rather, the text can exhibit the ability to modify the reader’s perspective. Jauss states that the reconstruction of expectations establishes “its artistic character by the kind and the degree of its influence on a presupposed audience.”²⁷ Thiselton will cite this as a point of agreement when translating the principles of reception theory into the field of biblical studies; Christians are willing to recognize and

²³ Thiselton, 317.

²⁴ Ibid., 317-8.

²⁵ Rush, 40.

²⁶ Jauss, 23.

²⁷ Ibid., 25.

admit that this is a capability ascribed to the Bible.²⁸ Furthermore, Jauss discusses the aesthetic distance of this principle, describing the responses from the audience to these new changes can range from spontaneous success to belated understanding.²⁹

Another principle is to provide a narrative way of answering the questions posed by the narrative through a culmination of different readings. The use of question and answer is important in this principle; A work seeks to answer a question and the reader approaches the text with their own set of questions; this results in the reconstruction of the horizons of expectation.³⁰ This series of reconstructing the expectations of readers allows the current reader to pose new questions about the text and to explore how the past readers might have understood the text.³¹ This dialect between current and historic understanding is a crucial point of the theory.³² Whereas reader-response theory is criticized for its subjectivity, the fourth principle of reception theory gives weight to the differing readings as well as to the cumulation of interpretation.³³

Central to the concept of reception theory is the fifth principle, which emphasizes the historical unfolding of an understanding of the text.³⁴ This principle “acknowledges

²⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, “Reception Theory, H. R. Jauss and the Formative Power of Scripture.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, no. 3 (2012), 290.

²⁹ “If one characterizes as aesthetic distance the disparity between the given horizon of expectations and the appearance of a new work, whose reception can result in a ‘change of horizons’ through negation of familiar experiences or through raising newly articulated experiences to the level of consciousness, then this aesthetic distance can be objectified historically along the spectrum of the audience’s reactions and criticism’s judgment (spontaneous success, rejection or shock, scattered approval, gradual or belated understanding).” [Jauss, 25].

³⁰ Rush., 41.

³¹ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 318.

³² “It brings to view the hermeneutic difference between the former and the current understanding of a work; it raises to consciousness the history of its reception, which mediates both positions; and it thereby calls into questions as a platonizing dogma of philological metaphysics the apparently self-evident claims that in the literary text, literature [Dichtung] is eternally present, and that its objective meaning, determined once and for all, is at all times immediately accessible to its interpreter.” [Jauss, 28].

³³ *Ibid.*, 318.

³⁴ Jauss, 32.

the relation between interpretation and the readers' pre-understandings."³⁵ When "new" interpretations or questions are inspired by the text, those expressions are considered to be an aesthetic or artistic category.³⁶ The determination of any kind of "newness" lies within the response of the successors.³⁷ This principle highlights the dialectic nature between texts: "Put another way, the next work can solve formal and moral problems left behind by the last work, and present new problems in turn."³⁸

The sixth principle is notably difficult to address,³⁹ and that is the diachronic changes of mind and linguistic shifts which occur during the historical unfolding of understanding.⁴⁰ While Jauss's intention for this principle was to develop diachronic and synchronic analysis of the piece of literature, the introduction of linguistics complicates this principle.⁴¹

Finally, reception history must focus on a special period of history, taking into consideration the social formation of both reader and text.⁴² Jauss distinguishes the social function of literature from the idea that an "idealized" social existence will emerge from the text: "The social function of literature manifests itself in its genuine possibility only where the literary experience of the reader enters into the horizon of expectations of his lived praxis, preforms his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on

³⁵ Thiselton, "Formative Power," 296.

³⁶ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 318.

³⁷ Thiselton, "Formative Power," 294.

³⁸ Jauss, 32.

³⁹ Due to the limitations of linguistic capability that would be necessary to appropriately consider this through the passages of ancient Greek and Latin, this principle will have to be suspended for this thesis.

⁴⁰ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 318.

⁴¹ Jauss also develops an analogy between literature and grammatical systems [Jauss, 36-8].

⁴² Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 317-8.

his social behavior.”⁴³ This creates an appropriate framework for examining the affective power of literary standards, societal influences, and emerging ideas.

Modes of Reception

When directly addressing the reception of biblical texts, Ulrich Luz, a biblical scholar whose work with reception theory, clarified that a receptive history ought to be traced through a variety of media (sermons, liturgy, treatises, hymns, etc.), though he discounts commentaries as a resource on the basis of it not being a unique enough usage of the text.⁴⁴ When considering Patristic literature, the categories of commentaries and homilies are fluid, essentially following the same format and exegetical principles. The fluidity of these genres makes observing the reception of Hagar as presented in commentaries a valid endeavor.

The three figures whose work I will be analyzing were selected to observe how Hagar and her story are discussed in a variety of medium, including letters, sermons, and theological works; Augustine is undoubtedly the most prolific example. However, when examining the total corpus of each receiver, their commentaries were included in order to identify every possible interpretation and use of Hagar.

Relevance for Biblical Studies

The field of religious studies often looks towards other disciplines to inspire new questions and methodologies to employ in their own research. Literary criticisms have been a staple of biblical studies and reception theory is emerging as a viable option for furthering scholarship in biblical studies and Christian history. Anthony Thiselton is a

⁴³ Jauss, 39.

⁴⁴ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 316.

staunch proponent of the benefits of utilizing reception theory in biblical studies, as it corresponds to tenets of biblical interpretation, such as the formative power of Scripture, the rejection of objectivity, and (re)discovering the layers of events that have shaped the text.⁴⁵ Thielton and Rush agree that one of the benefits of applying reception theory for biblical studies is that it creates a balance of historical-critical and literary methods; unlike some reader-response theories, as advocated for by Stanley Fish, reception theory creates a disciplined approach to unfolding the meaning of the text with its emphasis on communal influences and readings.⁴⁶

However, this point has been viewed as a weakness for the theory. New Testament scholar Mark Knight critiques reception theory in comparison with Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* as being a "clunky" scientific system that "... threatens to make reading overly reliant on the sort of empirical approach that ignores the particular issues that arise whenever a text and reader meet."⁴⁷ This objection is especially salient when one realizes that the sixth principle on linguistics has been nearly impossible to integrate properly into the field of biblical studies; Thielton can only cite one example of this being in James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, this critique diminishes when one approaches the theory as a broad interpretative framework instead of a restrictive, scientific methodology.

Explanation of Project

⁴⁵ Thielton, "Formative Power," 291-3.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 290-1; Rush, 39. Jauss's *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* greatly emphasizes the communal nature of each of the principles of the theory.

⁴⁷ Mark Knight, "Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 2 (2010), 140.

⁴⁸ Thielton, "Formative Power," 295.

My thesis project will be composed of five main chapters, tracing the influence of the Hagar story through the New Testament and a selection of patristic writers. Essentially, the second chapter of the thesis will be an exegetical analysis of Genesis 16 and 21 to develop an understanding of Hagar's story, followed by a third chapter analyzing Galatians 4. Paul's epistle to the Galatians becomes the first Christian reception of Hagar and introduces two critical concepts that will dominate the interpretation of Hagar in early Christianity. The first concept is the inclusion of the Greek allegory into emerging Christian hermeneutics. The second is the use of Hagar, especially in allegorical form, to address and rebuke conflict in the church(es).

For the next three chapters, I will examine three receivers: Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine. A variety of factors were considered in the selection of the receivers, with the most obvious criterion being at least a moderate scope of writings that refer to Hagar and discernable interpretations of her and her story, regardless of whether the interpretations were negative or positive. Each of the writers were selected for their influence and impact on Christian history. The intention in selecting these figures stem from the concept of diachronic readings in reception theory, providing a general survey of chronologically and socially different receivers to observe the unfolding of the text's meaning.

The content in these chapters will seek to address the social context and broader hermeneutical ideas for receivers. Each work that has a reference to Hagar, whether influenced by the Genesis story or Galatians allegory, will be analyzed to determine its rhetorical function within the medium and how the larger theological leanings of the scholars have impacted their treatment of Hagar, especially in their use of her as a symbol

of conflict. The contested domains of religious conflict (ideology/morality, power, personality, space/place, and group identity) will be addressed in each section of material. Examinations of these materials demonstrate Hagar's symbolic function in discussions of conflict within religious communities.

Chapter 2: Genesis

The building of an argument for the reception of the Hagar passages requires that the primary texts of Hagar's story have a chance to be heard. The narrative elements ought to be considered in their original form to establish a groundwork for the later interpretations, as different interpreters highlight particular elements of the text. The claim that Hagar is a central character to the Genesis narrative and to the larger narrative of salvation history can be argued through exegetical practices that are accepted in scholarship and align with the general methods of reception theory, namely a mix of historical and literary analysis. The argument that the biblical text – and God – show concern for Hagar's life and fate is a crucial first step in guiding this thesis, as it demonstrates that Hagar is a figure capable of inspiring theological reflection for later interpreters.

Within the Genesis narratives, Hagar functions as the source of familial conflict. Central to the conflict are Hagar's and Sarah's power dynamics implied by their social positions and their identities based on their respective fertility statuses. The familial conflict ultimately results in the fracturing of Abraham's family, relegating Hagar and her son both to the margins of wilderness and salvation history. This origin story's presentation of conflict and resolution through division becomes the foundation for directions taken in the subsequent reception of the Hagar texts.

Literary Context

The structure of Genesis begins with the universal, primordial history and moves into a more specific history of a people, the Israelites, following the stories of their

ancestors. The two Hagar passages (Gen 16 and 21) are located in the cycle of stories concerning the first patriarch of the Hebrew people, Abraham (Gen 12-25). As the story focuses on the development of the Israelites through their ancestors, the inclusion of the Hagar episodes creates tension within the narrative as an “outsider” who is thrust into the story of promise and progeny.

Each narrative interjects the overarching story of Abraham’s and Sarah’s anticipation for the Lord’s promise to be fulfilled in the form of offspring, a theme that resounds throughout the genealogical focus of Genesis. Thematically, the promise of offspring is the unifying feature of the literary context surrounding both of the passages. Preceding Genesis 16, Abraham’s righteousness is demonstrated and juxtaposed with the delayed promise. Occupying the space between the two Hagar episodes are a variety of stories that likewise threaten the fulfillment of the offspring for Abraham and Sarah, such as the duplicate story of Sarah being passed off to a king (Gen 20). The Hagar episodes provide tension within this history: will the planned surrogacy be successful? Will Hagar’s son be a threat to the promised child? Though the introduction and expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael are sudden and brief, Genesis 16 and 21 connect to the broader ancestral stories with the central conflict being around familial power dynamics, all within the framework of faith, or lack therefore, in the Divine’s promise.

Structure/Outline

Hermann Gunkel, Gerhard von Rad, and Jo Ann Hackett represent a sampling of Old Testament scholars in agreement that Genesis 16 and 21 are source variations of the same story, with Genesis 16 being the Yahwist version and Genesis 21 being from the

Elohistic source.⁴⁹ Hackett outlines the plot agreement between the text as: 1) Hagar or her offspring embarrasses Sarai and belittles her (Gen 16:4; 21:9); 2) Sarai has an intense emotional reaction over the situation (Gen 16:5-6; 21:9-10); 3) Sarai initially focuses her anger on her husband Abram (Gen 16:5 21:10); 4) Sarai threatens Abram with the seriousness of the situation and claims that Yahweh will side with her (Gen 16:5; 21:10-12); 5) Abram quickly grants Sarai permission to do whatever she sees fit to deal with Hagar (Gen 16:6; 21:14).⁵⁰ The aftermath of this results in Hagar leaving the family of Abram and going into the desert (Gen 16:7; 21:14), where she will be confronted with a messenger of the Lord and receive a promise (Gen 16:7-12; 21:17-19). Each passage contains an etiological slant near its conclusion, explaining the significance of a place or a people group (Gen 16:13-14; 21:20-21).⁵¹ This core plot structure is consistent.

Viewing the episodes through a literary lens offers a different perspective. The tone and characterization of Hagar and Abraham varies in each of the passages. The Hagar of chapter 16 is impudent and feisty, while the Hagar of chapter 21 is despondent and distressed. Abraham is reserved in the first narrative, but emotionally conflicted in the second (Gen 21:11). Gunkel claims that the characterization of the three main characters (Abram, Sarai, Hagar) are Israelite stereotypes: the pious husband, nagging wife, and impudent servant.⁵² While the source theory provides a historical rationale for

⁴⁹ Hermann Gunkel, and Mark E Biddle, *Genesis*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), 183; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Translated by John H Marks, Rev. ed., The Old Testament Library, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 191; Jo Ann Hackett, "Rehabilitating Hagar: Fragments of An Epic Pattern," In *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 12.

⁵⁰ Hackett, 15.

⁵¹ Von Rad, 195, 234.

⁵² "Abraham is good-natured and just; "he obeys his wife."... Sarah is the passionate wife, proud of her wife status in the household, cruel, and very subjective in her passion....Finally, the slave's varying fate pleases and touches the hearer. She was first a slave, then the master's concubine and mother of the

why there are similar narratives, when read as a literary whole, there are changes within the characters that remain consistent in the “doubled” narratives to the surrounding material. For example, Sarah’s portrayal remains consistent and Abraham’s development could be interpreted as his affection towards his children (Gen 21:11).⁵³ Ultimately, in the final form of the text, both narratives exist as viable progressions despite any internal tension.

Themes of Seeing and Hearing

Sensory perception is a critical detail of literature in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁴ The details of hearing and seeing were used to communicate the validity of divine encounters.⁵⁵ Throughout the two passages, though more strongly in Genesis 16, the themes of seeing and hearing guide the narrative. The culmination of the themes is made obvious in the names given to characters: “El Roi” (the God who Sees) for God and “Ishmael” (God hears) for the son, in addition to the name of the well, “Beer-lahai-roi.”

In Genesis 16, the theme of sight is introduced in verse 4 when seeing her pregnancy, Hagar “made her mistress small in her eyes.” While many translations attempt to smooth out the translation by removing “in her eyes,” the translation might lose the emphasis the text places on vision. The phrase is repeated in Sarai’s complaint to Abram (Gen 16:5); Abram listens. The narrative is moved forward with phonetic associations on the Hebrew word of “eyes” (*ayin*): being made to suffer (*vate’aneh*; Gen 16:5), fountain

heir, and as such insolent toward the childless mistress, then severely mistreated and deeply injured in her maternal pride. These three, husband, wife, and maidservant are apparently Israelite stereotypes. The naïve legend finds it very natural that they behave as they do.” [Gunkel, 185]

⁵³ Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis*, 1st ed., Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 63-64.

⁵⁴ Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2012), 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 267, 269.

(*'en an ha'ayin*; Gen 16:7), to suffer (*vehit'ani*; Gen 16:9), and suffering (*'onyek*; Gen 16:10).⁵⁶ Ishmael is proposed as the name of the child since God listened to the Hagar's afflictions, the interplay of senses coming to an ironic conclusion. The refrain of seeing continues as Hagar names and justifies the name of God on her encounter. The well, the *'ayin* of Gen 16:7, is given a new name to reflect the experience of Hagar. The narrative enforces the connection between sight and suffering, creating a rich theological reflection on God.⁵⁷

Genesis 21 begins with Sarah seeing the interaction between Ishmael and Isaac that ignites her harsh response. Initially, Abraham believes that the plan Sarah proposes is bad in his eyes (Gen 21:11). Nevertheless, God intervenes and persuades Abraham to listen to Sarah by stating that the situation should not seem bad “in his [Abraham's] eyes.”⁵⁸ In Hagar's distress in the desert, she does not wish to look upon her child dying (Gen 21:16). The next verse rapidly builds on Ishmael's name, “God hears,” as God hears the voice of Ishmael. Note that the details in this scene are not consistent, as Hagar was the one described as crying and raising her voice (Gen 21:17). The theme of sight, and emphasis on eyes, returns as Hagar's eyes are opened, enabling her to see the provision of the well (Gen 21:19).

⁵⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁷ Jacob and Leah will claim that God saw their suffering (Gen. 29:32; 31:42). In the Exodus narrative, the connection of sight and suffering continues as God moves to liberate the Hebrew people because God has seen their suffering (*'oni*) [Ibid., 77].

⁵⁸ Ibid., 79.

Historical Context⁵⁹

Though the accuracy of the historical context for these written narratives is impossible to determine, a brief summary will suffice to demonstrate the reception of oral stories into a written text. There is a consensus of contemporary biblical scholars that the biblical material originated as oral traditions, passed down through generations before being written down.⁶⁰ Various oral stories were received into communities and were eventually written down in particular styles. For over two centuries, source criticism has been the standard criticism to view the composition of Genesis, claiming that it is the result of weaving three main written sources together: the Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), and Priestly (P) sources.⁶¹ In theory, each source has its own distinctive literary and linguistic stylings which allow them to be identified. As stated above, scholarship has aligned these two narratives to particular sources on the basis of literary genre and stylistic choices such as vocabulary: Genesis 16 is associated with the Yahwist source and Genesis 21 being with the Elohist source.

Traditionally, these sources would have been redacted together throughout Israelite history, ranging from the United Monarchy to the post-exilic times.⁶² However, in recent years source criticism has been challenged over the reliability of dating the source materials; there is almost no consensus on how these sources came together in the

⁵⁹ There is an interesting parallel between Jauss's conception of the text and history and with the categories of historical criticism. The text within history corresponds to source criticism; text throughout history with redaction criticism; and the text and history with canonical criticism. A further exploration of these connections would have potential, but it is not the case of this thesis to present an exact adherence to Jauss's principles.

⁶⁰ Darr, 91.

⁶¹ Terrence E. Fretheim, "Genesis" *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, New Interpreter's Bible, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 19.

⁶² Ibid, 20.

final form.⁶³ While it is impossible to determine the exact historicity of the individual sources, the final, canonical form of the text allows readers to interact with the stories within a larger literary and theological framework.⁶⁴

Genesis 16: Contextual Analysis

The dynamics between the characters of Hagar, Abram, and Sarai are established early in the passage: “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar” (Gen 16:1).⁶⁵ Hagar occupies the lowest social ranks: female, foreign (Egyptian), and slave.⁶⁶ Throughout the chapter, Hagar is referred to as Sarai’s *sipha* (female slave/servant), even after she becomes Abram’s “wife” in 16:3.⁶⁷ The messenger of the Lord is the only character to speak her name, although the identifier of *sipha* is still used. The identification of Hagar as Egyptian has been connected to Abram’s and Sarai’s sojourn and endangerment in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20) since the earliest Christian⁶⁸ and Jewish⁶⁹ commentators. The theory is that Sarai and Abram received Hagar as a servant from Pharaoh before he sent them away from Egypt; as Genesis 12:16 recounts: “And for her [Sarai’s] sake he [Pharaoh] dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, *female servants*,⁷⁰ female donkeys, and camels” (ESV; emphasis mine).

⁶³ Ibid, 20.

⁶⁴ Darr, 91.

⁶⁵ All biblical references will be from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁶ The preferred word for her status in Gen. 16 is *sipha*, while in Gen. 21 it is ‘*amah*. The two words have the same meaning, though there might be some evidence that they are merely used in different literary contexts, with *sipha* occurring more frequently in narrative contexts and ‘*amah* occurring more in lists or reports. [Robert Alter, *Genesis*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 67].

⁶⁷ David W. Cotter, *Genesis*. Berit Olam, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 103.

⁶⁸ For example, John Chrysostom will cite this exact understanding in his homily on Genesis.

⁶⁹ Darr, 135.

⁷⁰ In Hebrew: *sipha*, the same word used to describe Hagar in Gen. 16. (See Cotter, 103).

In contrast to Hagar is her mistress Sarai, the wife of the wealthy man, related to the kin of her husband, and in a position of power over her servants. As for Abram and Sarai, they are in the midst of the infertility and painful waiting for the offspring the Lord had promised to Abram.⁷¹ Sarai's legal status is as Abram's wife, yet the issue of infertility is a threat to her function as a wife.⁷² Jacobs summarizes the predicament of childlessness in the Ancient Near East: "Since her necessity is defined by her childbearing capacity, the woman's childlessness impedes the man's progress and jeopardizes his present and future status. Thus, both men and women agonize about childlessness."⁷³ Since Sarai acknowledges that her childlessness is a result of the Lord restraining her ability to bear children (Gen 16:2), there is one other solution to resolve the issue: surrogacy. The option of surrogacy is indicative of Sarai's power derived from her social status.⁷⁴ Sarai's barrenness is a cause of extreme concern for herself and her plan is to give her personal slave-girl to Abram so she might conceive, and the child be attributed to Sarai. Sarai's proposition has precedent in the larger Genesis context and in Ancient Near Eastern culture through examples of the Nuzi tablets.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Jacobs observes that the promise of fertility and pregnancy is never articulated to Sarai, but to Abram (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1-5; 17:1-8; 18:10; cf. 21:-12-13; 22:15-17). Additionally, the resolution of infertility is always through the birth of a son, not a daughter. [Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 132]. This observation makes the annunciation of Hagar's child all the more significant, as she is the first woman of the Bible to directly receive a promise about her offspring (later recipients will include Hannah and Mary, the mother of Jesus).

⁷² Ibid, 132.

⁷³ Ibid., 133.

⁷⁴ In other words, if Sarai was in Hagar's position as a slave, she would not have the option of finding a surrogate to produce a child; it is only because of her marriage to a wealthy man that Sarai has the option to pursue surrogacy. [Ibid., 135, 138]

⁷⁵ One of the Nuzi tablets describes a similar situation, in which a husband is permitted to take a lower-class woman to be a surrogate for his barren wife, and the child would be considered to be the child of the barren wife [Darr, 134].

Abram recedes as a character in comparison to Sarai's forceful nature; in both passages Abram defers to Sarai's plans for both the surrogacy ("And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai," Gen 16:2) and the subsequent expulsion (Gen 21:12). He follows her plan and impregnates Hagar (Gen 16:4). While Abraham is viewed as the protagonist of the surrounding narratives, he has very little interaction within this scenario, with most of his actions being described (Gen 16:2-4) and having only one line of dialogue in which he gives Sarai permission to punish Hagar (Gen 16:6). Truly, the primary characters are Hagar and Sarai, although Hagar is noticeably silent until later in the narrative (Gen 16:8ff).

The conflict between Hagar and Sarai results from Hagar's successful conception, as the text narrates: "He went into Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress," (Gen 16:4). There is a clear power struggle between the two women as they both suffer from the weakness and/or shame of their positions in patriarchal society: Sarai's childlessness and Hagar's lowly position. Despite the success of the surrogacy plan, the women lack control over the emotional consequences.⁷⁶ As a result of Hagar's successful pregnancy, the text reports that Hagar made her mistress small in her eyes (Gen 16:4). This diminishing of status, whether it was mere pride at carrying a child or if it was arrogance, the disrespect Sarai appears to have experienced causes her to seek out Abram to settle the situation.⁷⁷ She presents her argument by deflecting her responsibility in the surrogacy onto Abram: "Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl

⁷⁶ Jacobs, 139.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 147.

to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!” (Gen 16:5).

Once again, Abram listens and concedes to Sarai’s presentation of the situation, authorizing her to deal with it in: “But Abram said to Sarai, “Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please” (Gen 16:6). The result is that “...Sarai dealt harshly with her [Hagar]” (Gen 16:6). Though modern commentators often draw comparisons from ancient Near Eastern legal codes to demonstrate a legal right of Sarai to demand a response to Hagar’s attitude, there is a question of the exact nature of punishment and whether it was an appropriate response.⁷⁸ The same verb is later used to describe the oppression of the Israelites by the Egyptians, creating an ironic parallel to the Exodus story.⁷⁹

Hagar escapes into the wilderness (Gen 16:6-7), a daring feat for a pregnant woman to be willing to deal with the harsh environment rather than live with a harsh mistress. It is there she encounters the Divine, in the form of an omniscient messenger (Gen 16:7-12).⁸⁰ The presence of water in the desert environment is often correlated with the presence of the divine in ancient Hebrew and other cultures.⁸¹ This encounter ought to

⁷⁸ Hammurabi’s Code permits a head priestess to punish her slave-girl if she attempts to hold equal status after becoming the concubine of the head priestess’ husband [Darr, 137].

⁷⁹ Additionally, later Israelite law would prohibit afflicting (root ‘nh) foreigners. [Cotter, 104]

⁸⁰ Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is possible that there is a potential biblical theme or type that stems from Hagar’s situation in the narrative, which reappears to an extent in chapter 21. The situation can be broken down into this combination: feminine distress, barren environment, and divine intervention/salvation. For reiterations of this type, see Hosea 2, the Exodus story and its retellings in the text (since the children of Israel are usually characterized as a feminine entity), the Samaritan women, and Revelation 12. The salvific experience in the desert does not diminish the oppressive situation she had been subject to – there would be no need for salvation if there had been no injury or distress. By emphasizing the aspect of Hagar’s receiving of divine interaction, inherent to the situation is the negative elements of her past situation. Those who would choose to portray Hagar as a villain struggle to appropriately address the salvific experience, thus diminishing the nature and character of the God she encounters. Further investigation is needed to bear out the theory proposed here.

⁸¹ Gunkel, 187.

be highlighted for its uniqueness in the canonical text, for Hagar is the first woman to directly encounter the Lord. The Lord only speaks to Hagar in this chapter, an usual occurrence in light of the larger Abraham cycle in which the Lord does not address Sarah until later in the narrative, though Abraham has already received a promise concerning her conception and their future descendants.⁸² There is an ambiguity in determining if the messenger of the Lord and Yahweh are one and the same; based on the narrative, the promise of descendants is given in the first person which mirrors promises in Genesis often given to the Hebrew patriarchs.⁸³ The text explicitly says that Hagar spoke with Yahweh and even described her experience with a divine name: “So she named the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are El-roi’; for she said, ‘Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?’” (Gen 16:8). This tension of the messenger of the Lord and Lord being the character in the story occurs in later Genesis passages (Gen 21, 22, 31) and there is no satisfactory mitigation for this tension.⁸⁴ The attention to the text reveals empowering elements of Hagar’s story as well: she is the first to interact with a divine messenger, the only woman to receive a direct promise of future generations, and the first to bestow a name on God –the God who sees.⁸⁵

However, the Lord’s initial command appears harsh to the reader – Hagar must return and submit to the harshness of Sarai (Gen 16:9). The promise of her children appears as a consolation: “The angel of the LORD also said to her, ‘I will so greatly

⁸² Cotter, 102.

⁸³ Hackett, 14-5.

⁸⁴ Cotter., 105. Quoting Carol Newsom, ABD, “Angels.” Robert Alter’s perspective on this issue is helpful: “But it is anyone’s guess how the Hebrew imagination conceived agents of the Lord three thousand years ago, and it is certainly possible that the original traditions had a blurry notion of differentiation between God’s own interventions in human life and those of His emissaries.” [Alter, 69]

⁸⁵ Tribble, 14-18, 28.

multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.’ And the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the LORD has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.’ (Gen 16:10-12). The description of her son is an image of untamed freedom and mightiness;⁸⁶ while seemingly an ambiguous blessing, for one who has suffered oppression and entrapment by social status, the annunciation could be a message of hope, providing the strength to endure the harshness she would be subject to upon her return to Abraham’s household. Likewise, this image of untamed freedom and the lack of a promise of inherited land, a feature in the Abrahamic promises, could be related to the Ishmaelites being a nomadic people group.⁸⁷ However, embedded in this oracle is the inherent conflict that will continue to follow Hagar and her offspring (Gen 16:12).

This ambiguous encounter simultaneously to empower Hagar as the woman of so many firsts and to disenfranchise her further by the Divine sanctioning the oppressive environment she had fled. On one hand, it demonstrates that Hagar has her own relationship with the Lord, but it causes theological tension when the family of Abraham seem to be the Divine’s favorites. Brueggemann argues that this demonstrates the tension between the elect and the non-elect who are treasured by God.⁸⁸ Cotter further elaborates this sentiment:

The simplest meaning of the name that Hagar gives to the being she encountered is “God Who Sees Me.” This is a fitting name, for prior to this moment it seems that no one has ever seen her. Essentially nameless, she was simply a tool to create a son. It was only God who saw her. Hagar’s position of privilege can

⁸⁶ Alter, 71.

⁸⁷ Gunkel, 188, 190.

⁸⁸ Brueggemann, 153.

hardly be overestimated. Like Abram she received a promise of progeny. Like Israel she underwent an Exodus towards freedom. Like Moses she sees God. And why? Because God is justice, and she stands for those for whom God has special concern, the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow.⁸⁹

While there is no explicit mention of Hagar returning, it is clear that she does return and gives birth to Ishmael: “Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael” (Gen 16:15). This detail of Abram naming the child Ishmael leaves the reader to infer that Hagar had communicated her experience with the Lord. Furthermore, as will be revealed in the next Hagar episode, it appears that the child is considered to be Abram’s and Hagar’s not Abram’s and Sarai’s (Gen 21:9). The surrogacy, while successful in its pregnancy, did not extend to the child belong to Sarai as a son of her own; the familial tension over an appropriate heir remains unresolved until the birth of Isaac.

Genesis 21: Contextual Analysis

This second passage occurs after the birth of Isaac, the promised child of Abraham and Sarah, and is set during a feast in celebration of his weaning. During the festivities, a conflict between Isaac and Ishmael occurs: “But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac” (Gen 21:9). What exactly did Sarah see Ishmael doing to incur her response? The verb *metsaheq*, is ambiguous. Scholars propose numerous explanations for what the verb could mean; at a basic level it means “laughing,” “playing,” or “mocking,” though some interpret it has a more violent or even sexually exploitative meaning.⁹⁰ However, “mocking” would be a

⁸⁹ Cotter, 105-6.

⁹⁰ Alter, 98.

sufficient action to incur Sarah's anger.⁹¹ Hackett cleverly suggests that since the root word (*shq*) is related to Isaac's name that when Sarah saw Ishmael "Isaac-ing", she perceived him to be a threat to the inheritance and blessing she wanted for Isaac.⁹²

According to historical accounts, there was a precedent that the son of a free man and a slave would be considered free, regardless of the legal status of the mother; theoretically, Ishmael and Isaac were equals in legal status, making this realization all the more potent for Sarah.⁹³

To ensure that she and her son would maintain their position of power, Sarah convinces Abraham to cast Ishmael⁹⁴ and Hagar out: "So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac'" (Gen 21:10). There are several points of difference from the Gen. 16 narrative. Unlike the previous narrative, God speaks to Abraham and reassures him to obey Sarah's request in verse 12: "But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.'" Furthermore, Hagar is no longer the defiant woman taking the situation into her own hands by choosing to leave (Gen 16:6); instead, she and her son are cast out of the home without

⁹¹ Ibid., 98.

⁹² Hackett, 20-1. Also, Alter, 98.

⁹³ Elsa Tamez, "Hagar and Sarah in Galatians: A Case Study in Freedom," *Word and World* 22 (2000): 265-71.

⁹⁴ Ishmael is not referred to by name in this passage at all. He is only referenced by relationship status; he is the "son of Hagar the Egyptian," (by Sarah) "his son" (by Abraham), "the child" (by Hagar), and "the youth" (by God). This lack of personal recognition is similar to the treatment of Hagar in Gen. 16; unlike her son, Hagar is referred to by name in this passage, though still overwhelmingly called by both her status (slave) or by simple pronouns (she, her). In Sarah's anger, she refers to them only by their lowly social status. [Cotter, 138.]

any sense of control in the situation (Gen 21:14).⁹⁵ Abraham's characterization is sympathetic and hesitant; he seems to love and care for Ishmael and perhaps even Hagar, as the text explains, "The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son" (Gen 21:11). It is only when God speaks to him and sides with Sarah does Abraham follow through with the plan to cast them out. God seems to indicate in this narrative that Ishmael will become a great nation because of his connection to Abraham (Gen 21:13). By comparison, there is no clear indication in Genesis 16 that the promise about Ishmael and concern for Hagar was due to the kinship with Abraham (Gen 16:1-12). Genesis 21:13 explicitly connects the familial bond with Abraham as being the reason for divine engagement in Ishmael's future: "As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." Abraham prepares them some basic supplies of bread and a skin of water, gives Ishmael over Hagar (Gen 21:14).⁹⁶

As Hagar and Ishmael are cast out into the wilderness,⁹⁷ the narrative becomes emotionally poignant. The distress of the situation is once again clear: "When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept" (Gen 21:15-16). Ishmael is near death and Hagar is mourning. The details of this scene are inconsistent, as the narrative describes Hagar crying but God hearing the voice of Ishmael: "And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to

⁹⁵ Gunkel, 229-30.

⁹⁶ There has been confusion over whether Ishmael is also being placed on his mother's shoulder like the bread and water skin; however, note that Ishmael's age is incredibly inconsistent in this passage and it seems very unlikely that at his age this would be possible. So it may be best to simply think of Abraham giving him over to his mother (Alter, 99).

⁹⁷ Jewish commentators note the similarity in this passage and Genesis 22, as Abraham gives up both of his sons, each who were at some point intended to fulfill the promise of offspring, (Darr 133).

Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is,” (Gen 21:17). This could indicate that Ishmael had begun to cry as well, or it could merely be playing off the theme of his name, “God will hear.”⁹⁸ Hagar’s eyes are opened, in keeping with the theme of “seeing”, and she sees a well which provides her son a drink, ensuring that he will survive to live into his promised future (Gen 21:19).

The episode concludes with a short narration of Ishmael’s life: “God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt,” (Gen 21:20-21). The detail of verse 21 indicates Hagar and Ishmael’s unusual situation, as most wives are selected from the father’s homelands, unless they intermarried; since Hagar has been the primary parent for Ishmael, cultural norms allow for the matriarch to fulfill the roles typically filled by the patriarch, including matchmaking.⁹⁹ Though Hagar’s and Ishmael’s story is one of abuse and danger, the resolution of the passage suggests that the Lord’s promise to make Ishmael a great nation is coming into fruition and that the pair have found true freedom outside of the relationship of Abraham’s family.¹⁰⁰ The familial conflict is resolved by this parting of ways.

Conclusion

Though there is a tendency to treat the Hagar episodes as an unwelcome distraction from the unfolding of the “elected” family of Abraham, the inclusion of such

⁹⁸ Alter, 100.

⁹⁹ Steinmetz, 114-5.

¹⁰⁰ Cotter, 139.

stories within the canon position Hagar as an important character; her story is yet another testimony to the God who sees and intervenes. The various details of her story – the themes of seeing/hearing, her relationship to the family of Abraham, her diminished social status and depersonalized references, and the providence of God - are integral to the reception of Hagar. It is the familial conflict she was involved in within the narrative which becomes her legacy for the emerging Christian sect, providing a reference for contested domains of power and identity. The family of Abraham will be divided as those on the inside and those on the outside, a dichotomy that will be applied to the community of faith in subsequent reception.

Chapter 3: Galatians

The story of Hagar and her son is addressed within Scripture beyond Genesis. Paul is the first Christian to receive Hagar and Ishmael in his theological writing. In Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, he recalls them as symbols of the way of the "flesh" and of slavery by reinterpreting the Genesis account through allegorical interpretation. Paul's allegorical interpretation functions to contest a doctrinal conflict within the Galatian church, creating a rhetorical divide of what is acceptable and what is not through the representation of Hagar and Sarah. Essentially, Paul contests teachings from Judaizing Christians which jeopardizes his power as a founder of the congregation and restricts the theological identity of the congregation to participating in physio-cultural rituals, like circumcision. The significance of this record creates the largest impact on future generations of Christian interpreters. The representation of Hagar as a symbol of conflict connected to those in spiritual slavery and the allegorical hermeneutics will become key points for Christian interpreters.

Literary Context

The genre of the Galatians Epistle is what Adolf Deissmann has termed "true" or "real letters" – letters that were intended for specific circumstances and audiences, not letters written to promote a systematic theology.¹⁰¹ Nuancing Deissmann's original classification of genre, the letters are not meant to be private as they were written with the intention of being read in front of the congregations as instruction for living the

¹⁰¹ Adolf Deissmann, in Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 41, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), ci.

Christian life.¹⁰² The passionate tone of the letter is unparalleled in the Pauline corpus, implying that the situation faced in the Galatian congregations was severe.¹⁰³ Features typical to ancient Graeco-Roman letters include: opening, thanksgiving, body, parenesis, and closing.¹⁰⁴

The divisions of the epistle are easily distinguished into three groupings: in chapters 1-2 Paul presents his case for writing; chapters 3-4 promote his arguments; and chapters 5-6 concludes the letter with exhortations and other instructions.¹⁰⁵ These divisions are not to claim that chapters 3-4 are the only sections of the letter which matter or have rhetorical impact; the whole letter is constructed in a way that is infused with rhetorical devices that allows Paul to communicate his argument to his audience.¹⁰⁶ However, chapters 3-4 are recognized as being some of the most difficult material in the letter, as they contain harsh language and ambiguous examples of Paul's theological argument, such as the Hagar-Sarah allegory.

Chapter 3 begins a lengthy argument focusing on Abraham and righteousness, contrasted with the Law. Carefully avoiding any reference to circumcision originating as a practice with the patriarch, Paul extensively focuses on the theme of faith.¹⁰⁷ Galatians 3:6 directly correlates Abraham's righteousness is based on his faith in God, referencing Genesis 15:6.¹⁰⁸ Paul extends this faith to his Gentile audience: "... so, you see, those

¹⁰² Longnecker, cii.

¹⁰³ Frank J Matera, and Daniel J Harrington, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina Series, V. 9, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Longnecker, cvi.

¹⁰⁵ Mika Hietanen, *Paul's Argumentation in Galatians: A Pragma-Dialectical Analysis*, The Library of New Testament Studies, (London: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2007), 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, 154-5

¹⁰⁸ Matera, 113.

who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’ For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed” (Gal 3:7-9). Any person of faith shares in the heritage of Abraham.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to that heritage and blessing (Gal 3:9), the Law is a curse to all who are under it, as they seek to be justified through the legal works yet fail to keep the totality of the Law (Gal 3:10).¹¹⁰ Christ’s soteriological function is to break the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13), with the result that the blessing of Abraham is expanded to Gentiles (Gal 3:14).

Furthermore, Christ is identified as Abraham’s seed: “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ as of many; but it says, ‘And to your offspring,’ that is, to one person, who is Christ” (Gal 3:16). Inherent to the theme of promise is the concept of inheritance, which Paul describes as being given to Abraham before the law, claiming the law’s inability to affect the initial inheritance.¹¹¹

The argument continues to develop the roles of the Law and of Christ. Essentially, the Law is subordinate to the promise which has been revealed and fulfilled through Christ, though it was useful in exposing transgressions and therefore, increasing

¹⁰⁹ Bruce, 155.

¹¹⁰ Bruce describes the dilemma of the Law in this verse: “But one may inquire more particularly: why is the curse incurred by all who rely on legal works for justification? Is it simply (i) because no one keeps *everything* prescribed by the law, so that, by reason of however limited a failure to attain full marks, every one becomes liable to the curse (cf. 5:3)? Or is it (ii) because the curse falls on every one who seeks justification by the law, even if he does attain full marks?” (Bruce, 159). Despite both perspective being present in rabbinic theology, Paul’s personal experience of receiving righteousness in Christ after his conversion despite having kept the Law previously is enlightening to his implications in this argument (Bruce, 160).

¹¹¹ Ibid., 174.

awareness of the need for redemption (Gal 3:19-25).¹¹² Galatians 3:26-29 revive the themes of faith and offspring: "...for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."

The themes of familial ties and slavery become more pronounced in chapter 4 and are applied to the new spiritual reality that faith in Christ brings: the believers are no longer enslaved by the lower powers of the world but are adopted into God's family and are now heirs (Gal 4:1-7). Paul even describes himself in motherly language as he births the churches (Gal 4:19), indicating how intimately involved Paul is with this community. Chapter 4 seems to serve as a crux of the argument, giving one last argument for why the Galatian Christians ought to retain the core tenant of freedom as found in the gospel instead of ascribing to religious rites, such as circumcision.¹¹³ The Hagar-Sarah allegory contains each of the major themes of righteousness versus law, family, and freedom contrasted with slavery.

Structure/Outline of 4:21-31

Introduction/question (v. 21)
Abraham and his two sons (v.22-23)
 The sons and their mothers (v. 22)
 The manner of their births (v. 23)
Allegorical Interpretation (v. 24-27)
 Hagar as a Covenant (v. 24-25)
 Jerusalem of above (v. 26-27)
Application: identifying the audience with Isaac (v. 28-31)

¹¹² Matera, 137.

¹¹³ Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, *Galatians*, First ed., Belief, a Theological Commentary on the Bible, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 145.

Children of promise (v.28)
Persecuted by the one of the flesh (v. 29)
Cast out the slave (v. 30)
Children of the free woman (v. 31)¹¹⁴

Paul's Use of Allegory

The literary genre of this passage is unique to the biblical texts, as it is the only place in Scripture to explicitly identify its argument as an allegorical interpretation. Its presence in Paul's argument is ambiguous, but Betz suggests that the indirect nature of allegorical interpretation Paul is allowing the Galatians to "find the truth for themselves."¹¹⁵ Comparing the broader framework of this type of literature within the Greco-Roman world is helpful in determining the meaning and rhetorical function of allegory, and how this impacts Paul's argument. In Greek, the verb *allegorou* is made up of *allos* ("other") and *agoureou* ("to say").¹¹⁶ Heraclitus, a first century C.E. Greek philosopher, defined allegory (*allegoria*) as "the trope that says one thing but signifies another than what is said."¹¹⁷ Its prevalence in Greco-Roman culture influenced the Jewish diaspora in the city of Alexandria, giving way to a tradition of allegorical interpretation practiced in Hellenistic Judaism. The Alexandrian tradition adapted Greek culture, particularly the allegorizing of Homer and Platonic philosophy.¹¹⁸ Of the practitioners of this category of allegory, Philo is the most well-known, and is

¹¹⁴ 5:1a ("For freedom Christ has set us free.") is attached as the conclusion of this pericope by some but is also treated as a transition to the exhortations. The introduction of Christ is not conducive to the allegory. [Debbie Hunn, "The Hagar-Sarah Allegory: Two Covenants, Two Destinies." *Biblica* 100, no. 1 (2019): 118).

¹¹⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 240.

¹¹⁶ Martinus C. de Boer, and Jennifer K Cox, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. 2011), 295

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

contemporaneous to Paul.¹¹⁹ The pattern of this allegorical interpretation emphasizes the philosophical application of the biblical texts, seeking the ultimate truth behind the literal passages.¹²⁰

Within Judaism, there was another strand of tradition which produced allegorical interpretation: the Rabbinic, or Palestinian, tradition. Rabbinic allegorical interpretation evolves from the rabbinic tendency to produce “similar situation” typology, associating events of the present or future based on models of history; the Song of Songs became the primary case for rabbinic allegory.¹²¹ The parameters of rabbinic allegory limited the practice only to passages of Scripture in which the literal meaning appeared unsatisfactory, though the literal meaning was not allowed to be abandoned, as was the case in the Alexandrian tradition.¹²² Whereas rabbinic allegory tended to produce Messianic expectations or types of Law, Alexandrian allegory produced moral exhortations and examples, the philosophical truth outweighing the historicity of the Scriptures in almost every case.¹²³

¹¹⁹ However, the two allegorically interpret the Genesis passage in entirely different ways. For the sake of example, the following demonstrates how Philo applied allegorical interpretations to the narratives in Genesis 16-21. Philo interpreted Sarah as “reason,” which remains unattainable for a certain time, and Hagar as “encyclical education.” Together, they demonstrate Abraham’s quest for wisdom and represent the process that everyone who loves learning follows. [F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1982), 215].

¹²⁰ Ibid., 215.

¹²¹ R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, 2Nd ed. / ed., (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 13-4. For a distinction between similar situation typology and allegory, Hanson states, “It is evident that in this document [the *Damascus Document*] we have an example (perhaps the earliest known clear example) of typology – the interpreting of an event belonging to the present or the recent past as the fulfillment of a similar situation recorded or prophesied in Scripture – slipping gradually into allegory, that is to say the interpreting of an object or person or a number of them as in reality meaning some object or person of a later time, with no attempt made to trace a relationship of ‘similar situation’ between them.” [22]

¹²² Ibid., 25.

¹²³ Ibid., 44, 49.

Each of these Jewish allegorical traditions become the foundation for Christian allegorical interpretation,¹²⁴ though the Alexandrian strand develops later with proponents such as Clement of Alexandria and his successor, Origen.¹²⁵ Paul's form of allegory is undoubtedly closer to the allegorical interpretations of the rabbis than of Philo.¹²⁶ For Paul, allegory is considered to correspond to "types" and typological interpretations, viewing Old Testament figures as spiritual precursors of the events central to Christianity.¹²⁷ Unlike the Alexandrian tradition, which emphasizes the abstract and timeless truths in allegorical interpretation, Paul reinterprets historical events for spiritual insight.¹²⁸ Therefore, the story of Hagar and Sarah is used to demonstrate truth concerning the present conflict for the Galatian church.

Dichotomy of Freedom and Slavery in Pauline Discourse

The letter to the Galatians has two prominent themes: freedom and slavery. These concepts undergird the entire Hagar-Sarah allegory, so a clear understanding of what they mean to Paul is critical as the reader approaches the allegory. The paradigm of free/slave is meant "as a structuring and organizing device to characterize another situation."¹²⁹ The combination of these metaphors relies on the cultural relevance of the web of relationships present in the Greco-Roman world. Modern interpreters have idealistic connotations of freedom conditioned by the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment ideologies, including the association of freedom with the absence of sin, social

¹²⁴ Ibid., 35-6.

¹²⁵ Bruce, 217.

¹²⁶ de Boer, 297.

¹²⁷ Bedford, 144.

¹²⁸ de Boer, 297.

¹²⁹ Nina E. Livesey, "Is Freedom an Existential Category in Ancient Discourse?" *Biblical Interpretation* 2019; 27, no. 2 (2019), 295.

oppression, and coercion.¹³⁰ During the ancient Greco-Roman context in which Paul was active, freedom had a direct meaning: to be free simply meant that one was not in the position of slavery.¹³¹ Likewise, slavery was the most deplorable social position in the ancient world; its prevalence makes the metaphor of it effective, because of how undesirable the situation was. Essentially, slaves were exploited and objectified, to the point where they were perceived as being just “bodies”, occasionally no different than animals.¹³²

In ancient discourse, this paradigm of free/slave was typically invoked to describe the relationship between the emperor and his free subjects, and other leaders followed suit in applying this paradigm to situations where they were in conflict.¹³³ Within the socially conditioned metaphors, the concepts of slavery and freedom can be determined to invoke specific cues in the religious community to understand the implications of their choices as aligning them to specified sources of authority and their relation to such authority. The free/slave paradigm in Galatians serves to underscore Paul’s resistance to his opponents. “Paul’s various newly crafted oppositions – around flesh/promise; [Ishmael]/Isaac; present-day Jerusalem/Jerusalem above; children of the slave woman/children of the free woman – all function to reinforce the primary slave-free paradigm.”¹³⁴ This paradigm is intended to persuade the Galatians to (re)accept his teaching over the Judaizing teachers.

Historical Context

¹³⁰ Ibid., 277-8.

¹³¹ Ibid., 281.

¹³² Ibid., 282.

¹³³ Ibid., 285-6.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 293.

Galatians is credited as being one of the undisputed, authentic Pauline letters.¹³⁵

The issue of dating the letter is more problematic: scholars posit the letter's composition between 49-58 C.E. and the dating reflects biographic evidence of Paul's missionary experiences¹³⁶ as well as a historic development in the inclusion of Gentiles into an originally Jewish movement.¹³⁷ A likely context for this letter is Paul responding to a situation that has happened after other preachers came, presumably from a faction of Christian Jews, and began implanting a law-centric teaching to the Gentile Christians. References of false teaching and allusion to agitators are scattered throughout the letter, and while no in-depth details can be conclusively determined, it is clear that the messages from these other teachers were in contrast to the gospel Paul had presented (Gal, 1:7, 3:1, 4:17, 5:7-12, 6:12-13).¹³⁸ Determining the exact situation, teaching, and polemics of Paul's opponents is impossible; however, what can be said about the situation is that Paul was not directly engaging with those opponents in the letter, but trying to have a dialogue with the congregations with whom he had a relationship.¹³⁹

The recipients of the epistle are the Christian congregations in Galatia, a region of Asia Minor thought to have origins having been settled primarily by Greek-speaking

¹³⁵ Longnecker, lvii.

¹³⁶ It is generally acknowledged that the presentation of these experiences is stylistically, chronological, and, at some points, theologically divergent when comparing Paul's presentation in the letter to the Galatians and the author's narration of the same events in Acts. Matera's outline of events and corresponding references from both accounts is as followed: Paul as persecutor of Christian community (Gal 1:13; Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11); Paul's former way of life (Gal 1:14; Acts 22:3; 26:4-5); Paul's conversion (Gal 1:15-16a; Acts 9:3-19a; 22:6-16; 26:12-18); Paul's experience in Arabia and Damascus (Gal 1:16b-17; Acts 9:25; 26:19-20); First visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-20; Acts 9:26-29; 22:17-21); Paul in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21; Acts 9:30; 11:25-26); Reactions to Paul's conversion (Gal 1:22-24; Acts 9:21, 27-29); the Jerusalem conference (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 11:30; 12:25; 15:1-29; 18:22); the incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14; Acts 15:36-41) [Matera, 105-109].

¹³⁷ Longnecker, lxxiii.

¹³⁸ Matera, 7-8.

¹³⁹ Longnecker, lxxxix.

Gauls or Celts.¹⁴⁰ The epistle is addressing the divisions in the churches between Jewish and Gentile believers caused by debates on theological practice, including circumcision. North Galatian and South Galatian hypotheses have dominated the conversations about the identity of the Galatian churches. The North Galatian hypothesis claims the letter is addressed to inhabitants of the northern territory in which Paul had engaged in (unattested) missionary work, sometime during the fifties.¹⁴¹ The South Galatian hypothesis claims Paul visited this area of the province during his first missionary journey (as attested in Acts), resulting in dating the letter between the later forties and early fifties.¹⁴² While it does not necessary affect the interpretation of the writing, the support of one hypothesis over the other impacts the acceptable dating of the letter and reconstruction of historical events.¹⁴³ The identifying features of the community of the Galatian congregations, regardless of geographic location and timeframe of Paul's work with them, is that they are primarily composed of Gentiles who have embraced the gospel. This historical context is crucial to emphasize, as it locates the conflict within the Christian church, as opposed to suggesting an inter-religious conflict between Jews and Christians; the focus is on the theological identity within a group of Christian believers.

Galatians 4: Contextual Analysis

Paul addresses his argument to those who “desire to be under the law,” by rhetorically questioning if they had not listened to the law (Gal 4:21). At the core of this question, Paul is confronting the Galatians’ acceptance of the presumed interpretation

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., lxii-i.

¹⁴¹ Matera, 20

¹⁴² Ibid., 20.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 20.

from the Judaizing preachers.¹⁴⁴ To desire to be under the Law represents a religious posture in which one relates to God through the rituals and regulations of the Mosaic covenant.¹⁴⁵ It has been suggested that this allegory could be an example of Paul transforming his opponents' arguments to defend himself; by reinterpreting the Hagar-Sarah story, Paul is subverting claims that taught Gentiles that they were Ishmaelites who needed to be accepted back into the familial line of Abraham through circumcision.¹⁴⁶ Even without evidence that this was a familiar passage in the law-centric preaching of the groups to engage the Galatians after Paul, Paul has built up this illustration throughout the letter by focusing on Abraham; to be a true descendent of Abraham is dependent on having faith in Christ, not by observing rituals (Gal 3:6-9, 13-14, 15-18, 29).¹⁴⁷ Paul's reference to the "law" can imply the larger scope of Hebrew sacred texts beyond the Sinaitic legislation; elsewhere, it can reference the whole Torah, and even the prophetic literature.¹⁴⁸ However, it primarily stands against the rituals and ceremonies of the tradition, while desiring to advocate for the moral dimensions of the law.¹⁴⁹

He begins to retell a story from the Abraham traditions: that he had two sons from two women, one a free woman and the other a slave (Gal 4:22). By juxtaposing the son of the slave as being "born according to the flesh" and the son of the free woman being "born through promise" (Gal 4:23), Paul is alluding to the stories of Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac, though they are unnamed throughout most of the argument. The phrase "according to the flesh" (*κατα σαρχ*), is lacking in the Genesis account, but the

¹⁴⁴ de Boer, 286.

¹⁴⁵ Hunn, 119.

¹⁴⁶ Longnecker, 200, 208.

¹⁴⁷ de Boer, 289.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 291.

¹⁴⁹ Longnecker, xcv, xcvi, c.

concept of the “flesh” has been used throughout the epistle as a negative idea when contrasted to the “spirit” (Gal Gal. 3:3, 4:29, 5:16-21).¹⁵⁰ The phrase could simply be referring to being born through natural processes (in contrast to a miraculous intervention as with the case with Isaac), though de Boer suggests that there is subtle allusion to circumcision since the term “flesh” only occurs in Genesis 16-21 in regard to circumcision.¹⁵¹ Throughout the ancestral stories in Genesis, Isaac was the fulfillment of the promise God gave to Abraham. Ishmael, on the other hand, is seen as the child who was born as a way to short-cut God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah. This continues the tension of the text of Genesis, as Hagar receives a promise about Ishmael and his descendants becoming a great people, even though he is not the child of the covenantal promise; it raises the question of group identity.

Paul’s interpretation then takes a turn that would drastically impact Christian exegetical practices for centuries to come as he proposes an allegorical interpretation: “Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants,” (Gal 4:24). The allegorical interpretation correlates the two mothers to the two covenants. The allegorical context allows Paul to bypass the historical fact that the Gentiles are aligned with Ishmael and the Jews are aligned with Isaac; in this new soteriological interpretation, both Jews and Gentiles have the capacity to be children of promise or to be under the law.¹⁵² Within the context of Galatians, Paul has already invoked a mothering image of his own care for the congregations of Galatia; this image and connection of mothers and covenants becomes

¹⁵⁰ Atsuhiko Asano, *Community-- Identity Construction in Galatians: Exegetical, Social-Anthropological, and Socio-Historical Studies*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series, V. 285. (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 168.

¹⁵¹ de Boer, 292.

¹⁵² Hunn, 120.

thematically intensified in this allegory. Paul is creatively and subtly connecting his own status of mother into these allegorical categories to persuade the recipients of the letter to recognize the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the gospel he proclaimed and taught to them.¹⁵³

The Hagar portion of the allegory is described: “²⁴ Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. ²⁵ Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children,” (Gal 4:24-25). Thus, the allegory follows the following scheme: Mount Sinai, slavery, the law, and Hagar are all correlated to each other and these as a group correspond to the present Jerusalem. In 4:1-7, Paul establishes an argument that the law is an enslaving force that carries over to this order of related allegorical images.¹⁵⁴ The connection of Hagar and Mount Sinai in Arabia has puzzled scholars, considering there is not substantial evidence that supports Mount Sinai being in Arabia or any connection between Hagar and Arabia.¹⁵⁵ The historical connection is that Mount Sinai was the location where the Law was received; any etymological attempts of connecting Hagar to the mountain or Arabia, otherwise fails. Paul then declares that she “corresponds” to the present Jerusalem – insinuating that the Judaizers who are trying to do things according to the flesh and are being in slavery of the Law. The difficulty in this comparison is to decide whether this argument extends to Judaism – the effects of such a claim has caused deep fractures in the relationship

¹⁵³ Matthew S. Harmon, *She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul's Isaianic Gospel in Galatians*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche, Bd. 168, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 177.

¹⁵⁴ Hunn, 123.

¹⁵⁵ Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 208.

between Christianity and Judaism throughout history, despite the fact that they were not distinctive, separate religions at the writing of this epistle. However, that context is not maintained in the interpretations of Galatians as Christianity becomes predominately Gentile. Within the context of Paul's larger arguments in Galatians, the focus is on an intra-Christian conflict, between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians within a certain community. Paul additionally cites his conflict with the elders in Jerusalem earlier in the letter (Gal 2), likely indicating that the "present Jerusalem" is associated with the Jewish Christian assemblies and leaders, not with unbelieving Jews.

Paul then addresses Hagar's counterpart in the allegory: "But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother" (Gal 4:26). The chain of connection is as followed: Jerusalem above – free – mother [implied mother is Sarah, who is not named in the passage]. The component of the allegory is the positive counterpart of "Jerusalem above." Once again, the allegorical scheme presented is a bit ambiguous, with the previous scheme (Gal 4:24-25) not having an explicit counterpart, and now shifts the emphasis of imagery from mother to location. The primary connection for the Galatian audience to understand their freedom is to understand the Jerusalem above, not Sarah the mother; this is to distinguish between the literal Sarah (who is the mother of the Jews and the children of promise) and the allegorical Sarah (who is mother only of the free children).¹⁵⁶ Conceptually, the "Jerusalem above" has its background in the literature of the Hebrew Prophets which describe both an eschatological Jerusalem that will come to replace the current one and a "heavenly" Jerusalem already existing; the temporal and spatial dimensions are combined and transformed to describe this new

¹⁵⁶ Hunn, 127.

phenomenon of the Jerusalem above.¹⁵⁷ Harmon rightly notes the important shift in Paul's presentation of the two Jerusalems:

Rather than seeing a contrast between Israel and her enemies, the two women represent Jerusalem at two different phases in her existence. On this understanding the prophet is comparing Zion's formerly barren status with her future, in which her descendants will be so numerous that Zion's former boundaries will be insufficient to contain them (54:1-3). This interpretation may have contributed to the development of the exegetical tradition of an eschatological/heavenly Jerusalem mentioned above. It is this tradition that Paul appears to draw upon in positing a contrast between the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above in 4:25-26.¹⁵⁸

Within the description of this Jerusalem above, Paul includes a quote from Isaiah 54:1: "Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married" (Gal 4:27). This marks the third occasion of Isaiah 54:1 being referenced in the letter (Gal. 3:16, 4:19).¹⁵⁹ In the context of Isaiah, this verse is followed by an eschatological description of the beauty of the city that will be inhabited by the barren woman's children (Isa 54:11-12).¹⁶⁰ The barren woman in the Isaiah passage relates to Sarah, the barren mother in Paul's covenantal allegory. The reference to the husband can be interpreted as the Law, as the Law does not bring forth the children, but the promise of God does; the Law will be unsuccessful at bringing in children into the eschatological Jerusalem.¹⁶¹ The prophetic claim of more numerous children than the fertile woman becomes a connection to the Christian movement gaining more children than other Jewish sects since it allowed Jews and

¹⁵⁷ Fung, 210.

¹⁵⁸ Harmon, 179-80.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 186.

¹⁶⁰ Hunn, 127.

¹⁶¹ Harmon, 180.

Gentiles to participate.¹⁶² The issue with Judaizing teaching is that it places restrictions on group membership, impeding participation in the community of faith on the basis of physio-cultural markers.

The final verses of this section contain the application of the allegory to the Galatians: they are Isaac, the children of promise, who have come to faith and community without Sinaitic laws (Gal 4:28). Paul's interpretation of Genesis brings some interesting details in these concluding verses, specifically the persecution of the promised children by those born of the flesh: "But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also," (Gal 4:29). Paul reinterprets that Ishmael was "playing"/"mocking" as "persecuting" Isaac, allowing the story to justify its punishment for Ishmael and Hagar.¹⁶³ As discussed in the second chapter, a reasonable solution to understanding the discrepancy between the "playing" and Sarah's reaction and Paul's interpretation of persecution is to nuance the action by using "mocking" or "laughing."¹⁶⁴ The nature of mocking Isaac ignites Sarah's anger as she perceives Ishmael as acting out of his status to belittle her son and as being a potential threat to Isaac's inheritance.¹⁶⁵ Paul's interpretation of persecution is reflective of his relationship towards the Jewish Christian church and is potentially drawing on rabbinic literature which alludes to the persecution of Isaac by Ishmael.¹⁶⁶

This identification of the Galatian audience with Isaac is intended to empower the congregation to maintain their identity and to protect their freedom in Christ (Gal 4:28,

¹⁶² Fung, 211.

¹⁶³ Matera, 178.

¹⁶⁴ Alter, 98.

¹⁶⁵ Hackett, 20-1.

¹⁶⁶ Harmon, 182.

31).¹⁶⁷ The solution was to cast out the slave woman and her son so that he would not share in the inheritance, a solution which is comparable to what occurs in Genesis 21:10 (Gal 4:30).¹⁶⁸ This conclusion has several possible applications: does it refer to physically casting out members of the congregation, a refusal to participate in Jewish regulations for worship, or a spiritual fate that is awaiting each member whose faith is played out in the allegory?¹⁶⁹ The initial two options are preferred in scholarship,¹⁷⁰ and as will be seen, by other early Christian interpreters.

Conclusion

Despite the ambiguity that shrouds the exact nature of the intra-religious conflict in the Galatian community, Paul's creation of the allegory of Hagar and Sarah is a pivotal moment in the emergence of Christian interpretation and theology of conflict. The familial conflict of Genesis has been applied to the household of God as expressed in local churches. The empowering nuances of Hagar's story are traded for a reinterpretation that explicitly centers her as a symbol of slavery and conflict. The Christian Church now has a pattern in which it can apply to its theological and hermeneutical conflicts: are you with the children of promise and Sarah, or with the children of the flesh and Hagar?

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 184.

¹⁶⁸ Bruce, 224-5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 225.

¹⁷⁰ Longnecker, 217; Matera, 178; Harmon, 184-5; Asano, 177.

Chapter 4: Origen

Origen is the first major theologian of the early Church whose reception of Hagar will be explored by this thesis. Throughout his career as a catechesis instructor in Alexandria, head of a missionary school, and later as a priest in Caesarea Maritima, Origen arose as a strong proponent of a hermeneutic that emphasized the spiritual aspects of Scripture. Though only a few pertinent examples can be treated, they represent Origen's homiletics and apologetics. The homilies are situated in the context of sermons delivered to the church community in Caesarea and preached systematically through the narratives of the biblical books.¹⁷¹ The apologetic work, *Contra Celsum*, was the final great work of Origen during his life in Caesarea.¹⁷²

Hagar functions as a representation of Origen's spiritual hermeneutic to contest hermeneutical perspectives, both within and outside of the Church. Origen consistently uses the details of sight in her story to interpret Hagar as a symbol of authentic faith. In an attempt to clarify Christian identity and ideology of biblical interpretation, Origen advocates for imitating Paul's use of allegory to discern the divine meanings of historical narratives, enabling Christians to preserve the Old Testament as Scripture without the compulsion to keep the literal law.

¹⁷¹ Manlio Simonetti, John A Hughes, Anders Bergquist, Markus N. A Bockmuehl, and William Horbury, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 40.

¹⁷² Joseph W. Trigg, Origen, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998), 52.

Origen's Hermeneutics

Origen's approach to biblical interpretation began from a philological perspective, encompassing procedures of textual criticism,¹⁷³ literary and historical analysis, and moral evaluation.¹⁷⁴ Biblical hermeneutics as a methodological process was brought to fruition with Origen's scholarship, providing organization and depth to previous interpretation practices.¹⁷⁵ Unlike prior Christian interpreters, Origen expanded his scholarship to be inclusive of the whole canon of Scripture.¹⁷⁶ Yet beyond the philological approach to exegesis, Origen's defining characteristic is his account of multiple senses of Scripture.

For Origen, the word of God in the text of Scripture is identified with the eternal Word of God, meaning that, "... the letter of the sacred text functions, like the human body assumed by Christ, as the envelope which encloses the Divine Logos (*C. Celsum* VI 77; *Comm. Ser. In Mt.* 27): Sacred Scripture is the permanent incarnation of the Logos."¹⁷⁷ Connected to this belief is Origen's claim of the spiritual sense of Scripture, which lies behind the literal text as the deeper, essential meaning.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, due to the divine nature of Scripture, "... the sense it offers must always be worthy of God and beneficial for man."¹⁷⁹ To support this perspective, Origen cites a collection of New Testament passages (Heb 8:5, 10:1; Cor. 10:11, 4; Gal. 4:21-24; Col. 2:16-17) that

¹⁷³ The Antiochene tradition is indebted to Origen for his work in textual criticism (Trigg, 63, and Simonetti, 45-6).

¹⁷⁴ Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 42.

¹⁷⁵ Simonetti., 39.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 39-40.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 41.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 42-3.

¹⁷⁹ Bertrand de De Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis: The Greek Fathers*, vol. 1, (Petersham, Mass.: Saint Bede's Publications, 1994), 98.

demonstrate the discovery of the spiritual sense of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁸⁰ Scholars and theologians have been torn over Origen's hermeneutics beginning shortly after his death, showing particular concern over his inclination towards allegory when interpreting the biblical text, with many citing an abandonment of all reality and history in favor of intellectual wanderings.¹⁸¹ On the basis of his philological techniques and the necessity of starting at the literal in order to progress in meaning, Origen holds at the very least to a "modest value" of the literal sense of Scripture.¹⁸² Simonetti describes the unique position offered by Origen's hermeneutics, being grounded in a Christological framework, as having the capability to engage the whole canon of Scripture, without rejecting portions of it and without following all of the customs it expresses.¹⁸³

Homilies on Genesis and Exodus

As a genre, Origen's homilies resemble his commentaries on the biblical text, they are far less technical and speculative than the commentaries.¹⁸⁴ The homilies are a concise and exhortative expounding of the text in sequential order.¹⁸⁵ Trigg offers an apt description of Origen's approach to homilies:

As a teacher, Origen recognized that he was not speaking to the learned audience at the eucharistic gathering, but, as a teacher, he also sought to make his hearers a bit more like himself by initiating them into the transformative study of Scripture. He therefore sought to provide them an example of a reverent and, above all, prayerful approach to the Bible that they could apply themselves.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Referencing Origen's *First Principles* IV, 2, 6 (13) [De Margerie, 99-100].

¹⁸¹ Some examples of patristic critics: Diodore of Tarsus (†394) and his pupil, Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428); a modern critic is R.P.C. Hanson. (Peter W. Martens, "Origen Against History? Reconsidering the Critique of Allegory." *Modern Theology* 28, no. 4 (2012), 635-7).

¹⁸² Simonetti, 44-6.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 44-5; 46; 48.

¹⁸⁴ Trigg, 39.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

Homily VII is a sermon directly expounding the Gen. 21 passage through the lens of allegory; Origen opens the sermon with an invocation that a veil would not shroud the hearts when Moses is read.¹⁸⁷ This homily is the most substantial material regarding the treatment of Hagar in both the Genesis story and the epistle to the Galatians that exists in the existing corpus of Origen's works. The sermon begins with commentary on Isaac's weaning, as it represents spiritual maturity, and incorporates the Galatians passage. The "astonishing" aspect of Paul's allegory is that clearly the things occurring in the Genesis story did happen "in the flesh" – Isaac was born of Sarah, weaned, and played all in a real, physical way.¹⁸⁸ Paul was teaching the Christians to interpret history allegorically "and especially these in which the historical narrative appears to reveal nothing worthy of the divine Law."¹⁸⁹

The opposition between those who are carnal and those who are spiritual exists not only in life but in exegetical practice, which Origen insists is a "battle more violent."¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, there is an initial confusion of the act of playing which incurred such wrath from Sarah and why something would be considered persecution to the Apostle's allegory. The superficial reading cannot produce an adequate answer; allegory

¹⁸⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Translated by Ronald E Heine, The Fathers of the Church, V. 71, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 127. The reference to the veil (2 Corinthians 3:16) is a signature description of Origen's hermeneutics [Susanna Drake, "Origen's Veils: The Askēsis of Interpretation." *Church History* 83, no. 4 (2014): 815-842]. Drake argues that the metaphor of "unveiling" and its connotations of blindness, literalness, carnality, and femininity have devastating consequences of anti-Semitism (Ibid., 815-6). "Veiling" and "unveiling" became metaphors for distinguishing Jewish and Christian interpretative practices (Ibid., 817). Drake states, "Origen used the imagery of veiled and unveiled readers to draw borderlines between Jews, Christians, and heretics, and he meant for these borderlines to clarify the differences among the diverse religious groups of his city [Caesarea Maritima]" [Ibid., 82]).

¹⁸⁸ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 128.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 128-9.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 129.

is needed to make sense of the situation. Origen does associate Sarah with virtue,¹⁹¹ thus when the child of the flesh “plays” or attempts to deceive the child of virtue it is indeed a persecution; this is to be applied to the audience’s lives in their struggle to retain Christian virtue in a pagan society.¹⁹² Additionally, Thompson cites this dichotomy of physical and spiritual a part of the context of hermeneutical differences: “The allegorical reading here represents an early contribution to a long discussion over the relationship between the ‘letter’ of Scripture and its ‘spirit’...”¹⁹³ This allegorical reading will continue to develop in the homily.

Furthermore, the fundamental distinction between the two sons carries over to the Christian audience. While each son is indeed a son of Abraham, they are not equal in status. Ishmael is sent away with gifts and a blessing, but Isaac is the heir of the promise to Abraham and becomes a great nation. For the Christian audience, those who follow God out of fear are still considered children and can receive gifts but are “inferior” to those who follow God out of love.¹⁹⁴ Thus, Origen is attempting to persuade his Christian audience to reflect on their own spiritual identity to determine which son is their representative.

Abraham’s gift to Isaac was the bottle of water; “but Ismael drinks water from a bottle, but this bottle, as it is a bottle, fails, and, therefore, he is thirsty and does not find a well.”¹⁹⁵ Instead of allegorizing Hagar, as Paul does, to represent the Jewish Law,¹⁹⁶ Origen places that on the bottle of water: “The bottle of the Law is the letter, from which

¹⁹¹ This is a continuation of the Alexandrian allegorical interpretation started by Philo [Thompson, 30].

¹⁹² Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 131.

¹⁹³ Thompson, 30.

¹⁹⁴ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 132.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁹⁶ Thompson, 31.

that carnal people drinks, and thence receives understanding. This letter frequently fails them. It cannot extricate itself; for the historical understanding is defective in many things.”¹⁹⁷ In contrast, the Church drinks from wells that abound in spiritual interpretation.¹⁹⁸

Origen then compares the Samaritan woman to Hagar: “On account of this mystery also, I think, our Lord and Savior said to the Samaritan woman, when, as if he were speaking with Agar herself he said: ‘Whoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again; but he who shall drink of the water which I give him shall not thirst forever.’”¹⁹⁹ The opening of the eyes in the wilderness is a good thing and an invocation to seek the spiritual sense.²⁰⁰ With these connections, Hagar emerges as an exemplar, not a villain.²⁰¹ When Hagar casts Ishmael away from her in the wilderness, her eyes are opened to see the well. This brief scene creates a web of interpretation from Origen, moving swiftly between quotations from the Hebrew Prophets to the Apostle Paul:

Is not the spiritual and mystical meaning in these words clearer than light, that that people which is “according to the flesh” is abandoned and lies in hunger and thirst, suffering “not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but a thirst for the word of God,” until the eyes of the synagogue are opened? This is what the Apostle says is a “mystery”: that “blindness in part has happened in Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, and then all Israel should be saved.” That, therefore, is the blindness in Agar who gave birth “according to the flesh,” who remains blind until “the veil of the letter be removed” by the angel of God and she see the “living water.” For now the Jews lie around the well itself, but their eyes are closed and they cannot drink from the well of the Law and the prophets.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 133.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁰⁰ Sight is an important spiritual metaphor in Origen’s writings. [Origen, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 235-239].

²⁰¹ Thompson, 31.

²⁰² Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 134.

Origen's critiques of Judaism at this point make it necessary to determine the relationship between Origen and Judaism. Throughout his life, Origen resided in towns with thriving Jewish communities and centers for learning; he himself even incorporates the scholarship of famed Jewish scholars, Philo and Josephus, and bits of rabbinic interpretation into his own works.²⁰³ During his time in Caesarea, in which this homily was proclaimed, Origen had relations with the Jewish community, often concerning intellectual matters.²⁰⁴ The description of the Jews and their "literal" interpretation as presented in this homily is a consistent critique from Origen, despite his established familiarity with the Jewish exegetical tradition, which includes its forms of allegory.²⁰⁵ Martens asserts that Origen "...critiques a particular set of literal interpretations supportive of troubling liturgical and doctrinal commitments...when Origen criticized his Jewish opponents for being literalists, he was consistently leveling a charge against a handful of readings of the law and prophets that both promoted central tenets of Judaism and, at the same time, advanced a critique of central Christian convictions."²⁰⁶

However, Christians who fail to read Scripture through the spiritual sense are also criticized, for they remained with the same type of interpretive veil.²⁰⁷ While Origen does not completely reject the literal reading of Scripture, he desires that Christians would not stop at this reading; in order to progress in their faith and understanding, the spiritual sense of Scripture must be discovered.²⁰⁸ The homily quickly concludes with a call for

²⁰³ Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 135-6.

²⁰⁴ His is even speculated to have loaned a local rabbi his copies of Philo's works [Trigg, 36].

²⁰⁵ Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 133, 140, 146-7.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 134.

²⁰⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 134.

²⁰⁸ Additionally, this section of the homily is remarkably similar to Origen's reflections on biblical interpretations as found in his *On First Principles*. [de De Margerie, 98, 100].

prayers so that their eyes may be opened.²⁰⁹ Thus, Hagar represents a type of spirituality which ought to be emulated; the conflict of the homily is against those who embrace only a literal sense of Scripture. In this homily, Origen "...rehabilitates and Christianizes Hagar. Alongside her other roles, she now prefigures the church, the new people of God who have been rescued from the bondage of the law."²¹⁰

One of the homilies on Exodus is likewise relevant for developing Hagar as a symbol of communal conflict concerning interpretation. Homily III "On That Which is Written 'I am Feeble in Speech and Slow in Tongue'" expounds on Moses' transformation in the presence of the Lord during the scene with the burning bush. Before his experience with the Lord's greatness, Moses, having been educated by the Egyptians, had outstanding rhetorical eloquence; however, the numinous communication with the Lord made such human eloquence sound dumb in comparison.²¹¹ The Lord responds to Moses by assuring that God will open Moses' mouth and provide the words to be spoken to Pharaoh.²¹² While Origen briefly explains the possibility of the devil interfering and putting words into people's mouth, for example, Judas, he then returns to the saints who have had their mouths, ears, and eyes opened by the Lord. Amongst figures such as Isaiah and Elisha, Hagar is listed for the episode where the Lord opens her eyes in the desert to find the well of "living water."²¹³ This positive inclusion of Hagar receives no other direct commentary, though it is consistent in connecting sight and spirituality, as also shown in the Genesis homily. Sight functions as a metaphor for authentic faith and

²⁰⁹ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 134.

²¹⁰ Thompson, 31.

²¹¹ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 248.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 249.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 250.

spiritual awakening;²¹⁴ since Hagar was granted sight, she is metaphorically granted faith in God.

Origen continues the homily on this distinction between the instruction the Lord provides through opening the eyes, mouth, and ears and the vanity of those who speak against God; he cites Marcion and Valentinus as examples who caused great controversy with their heretical interpretations.²¹⁵ Further into the sermon, Origen once again emphasizes the importance of rising above the literal meaning of the narratives to attain their spiritual meanings, for this would be the equivalent of meeting God on the mountain (Ex. 4:27).²¹⁶ The homily follows the narrative, recounting Moses' and Aaron's journey in the wilderness and confrontation of Pharaoh. The reiteration of sight, wells/living water, and spiritual meaning, all correlated associations with Hagar and her story, demonstrates cohesion between this homily and the Genesis homily.

Homilies on Joshua

Homily 9 gives perspective to Origen's understanding of the relationship between the two testaments of Scripture as he expounds on the passage about Jesus son of Nun reading the story of Deuteronomy to the assembly of Israel. The start of the homily focuses on the application of the being "living stones" upon the foundation of

²¹⁴ Balthasar, 239, 244.

²¹⁵ Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 251.

²¹⁶ The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain is referenced in this passage as well: "And you, therefore, unless you ascend the 'mountain of God' and 'go to meet' Moses there, that is unless you ascend the lofty understanding of the Law, unless you mount up to the peak of spiritual understanding, your mouth has not been opened by the Lord. If you stand in the lowly place of the letter and connect the text of the story with Jewish narratives, you have not gone to meet Moses 'on the mountain of God,' nor has God 'opened your mouth' nor 'instructed you in what you must say.' Unless, therefore, 'Aaron had gone to meet Moses on the mountain,' unless he had seen his sublime and elevated mind, unless he had perceived his lofty understanding, never would Moses have spoken the words of God to him nor delivered to him the power of signs and wonders nor have decreed him a participant in such a great mystery." [Ibid., 252].

Jesus and the holy apostles, with unity of message being a point of emphasis.²¹⁷ Unlike Jesus son of Nun, “*our* Jesus” wrote his law upon living stones.²¹⁸ In contrast, Origen critiques those who ask literal questions of the text:

How was he able to depict so large a book to the sons of Israel—or even to those standing and remaining there—so that they did not disperse until the writing of so many verses was finished? Or even how were the stones of the altar able to bear the contents of such a large book? Such things let those Jewish defenders of the letter who are ignorant of the spirit of the Law tell me. In what manner is the truth of the narrative demonstrated in this? Yet among those former ones ‘to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart.’ But for us, “who have turned to the Lord” Jesus, ‘the veil is taken away’ because ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom of understanding.’²¹⁹

Whenever one comes to faith, Jesus writes a “second law” on their hearts.²²⁰

Furthermore, Origen claims “... whenever “Moses is read” to us and through the grace of the Lord “the veil of the letter is removed” and we begin to understand that “the Law is spiritual,” then the Lord Jesus reads that law to us.” The examples of the way in which Jesus reads the law are the warning are not to muzzle a threshing ox (in reference to the Apostles in 1 Cor. 9:9) and the Galatians allegory. Allegory is interpretative practice which enables the interpreter to understand Scripture as Jesus intends. Origen associates two covenants to be present in these examples.²²¹

Therefore, Jesus reads the Law to us when he reveals the secret things of the Law. For we who are of the catholic Church do not reject the Law of Moses, but we accept it if Jesus reads it to us. For thus we shall be able to understand the Law correctly, if Jesus reads it to us, so that when he reads we may grasp his mind and understanding.²²²

²¹⁷ Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, Translated by Barbara J Bruce, and Cynthia White, The Fathers of the Church, V. 105, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 97.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 98.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²²⁰ Ibid., 100.

²²¹ Ibid., 103.

²²² Ibid., 104.

Origen is aware of the possibility of conflict inherent in his position, as it acknowledges that not everyone in the church are of the true faith.²²³ Though not as direct in its exposition of Hagar, this homily continues the motif of invoking the Galatians allegory as an authoritative mode of reading Scripture, and its implications that hermeneutical practice is a defining piece of Christian identity.

Contra Celsum

Contra Celsum (c. 248 CE) is an appropriate, but not exhaustive, sample of apologetic literature to be reviewed for Origen's treatment of Hagar.²²⁴ Origen composed the work at the request of Ambrose (of Alexandria), his patron, to defend the faith of Christians and the churches against the accusations made by Celsus in his book, *The True Doctrine*.²²⁵ Of all of the surviving works of Origen, *Contra Celsum* is the only one to be preserved in its entirety in Greek.²²⁶ However, Celsus' thoughts are only preserved as quotations throughout Origen's defense, making it difficult to fully reconstruct his ideological position.²²⁷

Origen opens Book II with a critique of Celsus' creation of an imaginary Jew in which he used to deliver his argument against the Christians.²²⁸ Due to his familiarity

²²³ "I fear that our word may offend some of the hearers, but nevertheless it must be said that we teach what is written, because this word proves to us that not all of us who hear the Law are of the church of the sons of Israel. But it does not follow, if there is some difference between the hearers of the Law and the church of the sons of Israel, that the hearer is excluded from salvation." [Ibid., 104].

²²⁴ Chadwick declares the work to be the pinnacle of the apologetic movement in the second and third centuries. "What he gives us in the *contra Celsum* is not merely a refutation point by point of a remarkably well-informed opponent. The apology also helps us to see both the arguments which Origen would have used when engaged in disputation with learned pagans at Alexandria or Caesarea, and the way in which he himself in his own mind could be satisfied that Christianity was not an irrational credulity but a profound philosophy." [Origen, and Henry Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ix].

²²⁵ Crouzel, Henri, *Origen*. 1st ed., (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 33.

²²⁶ Ibid., 47.

²²⁷ Chadwick, xxii.

²²⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 66.

with Jewish exegetical traditions, Origen is able to refute the claims of Celsus' literary Jew.²²⁹ Origen argues that there are Jewish believers, called the Ebionites, that have retained the "law of their fathers" which Celsus claims they have abandoned; even Peter, before receiving spiritual interpretation, followed Jewish patterns while still believing in Jesus as the Messiah.²³⁰ Origen's reference to the Ebionites retains the critique of "literalism" of Jewish exegetical tradition practiced within the Christian community.²³¹ Jesus had carefully waited for the coming of the Spirit to guide the apostles in the way of truth, that is in spiritual interpretation, to teach them how certain patterns of Jewish worship were mere "shadows."²³² After a reflection on the Holy Spirit and interpretation, Origen focuses on refuting the claims that the law has been abandoned by referencing the Galatians allegory. Origen claims Celsus' Jew could have made a more plausible argument by claiming any of the diverse opinions concerning Jewish practice and Christian faith. Ultimately, Celsus did not fully understand the situation he was arguing against and merely used this out of hostility.²³³

²²⁹ Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 136.

²³⁰ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 66.

²³¹ "For Origen, thus, the Ebionites and others with similar convictions in the Christian community practiced a limited version of the literalism that flourished in Jewish exegetical circles. While recognizing Jesus as the prophesied Messiah, they nevertheless insisted upon regarding several of the law's precepts literally. The common strand running through Origen's critique of their exegesis is that it constituted a rejection of their Messiah's and the apostolic exegetical counsel." [Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 155-6].

²³² Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 67-8.

²³³ "Moreover, Celsus' Jew makes these assertions because he is muddled, although he could have said with greater plausibility: Some of you have left these customs because you follow interpretations and allegories; others interpret spiritually, as you profess to do, but observe the customs of your fathers just as much as before; while others do not even give interpretations, but want both to accept Jesus as the one prophesied and to observe the law of Moses according to the traditional customs, thinking that they possess in the letter the whole meaning of the Spirit. Furthermore, how could Celsus have got a clear idea of this matter, seeing that later he has even mentioned godless heresies which are entirely alien to Jesus, and others that have abandoned the Creator, and did not see that there are also Israelites who believe in Jesus who have not left the law of their fathers? But he had no intention of examining the whole question with a desire to find out the truth, so that if he found anything of value he might accept it; he wrote this merely out of hostility, being fully determined to pull everything to pieces the moment he heard it." [Ibid., 69].

Book IV: “The Sun and Moon serve mortals” contains various topics, beginning with Origen’s defense of the *Imago Dei* and the divine plans for judgment, in contrast to Celsus’ vulgar understanding of such concepts.²³⁴ After lengthy defense of the credibility of both Jews and Christians, Origen begins to critique Celsus’ view of Scripture, particularly Genesis.²³⁵ This critique covers the use of the patriarchs’ names by sorcerers and deceivers and the creation of humanity, particularly as described in Genesis 2, in which he confronts Celsus over the allegorizing of the account and how it compares to the Greek account by Hesiod and Plato.²³⁶ The critique and defense of the Genesis content continues, following the narrative of the text, before arriving at series of instances meant to be interpreted allegorically; Origen states: “In many passages the Word made use of stories about actual events and recorded them to exhibit deeper truths, which are indicated by means of hints. Of this sort are the stories about the *wells*, and the *marriages*, and *the intercourse of righteous men with different women*.”²³⁷

Finally, Origen dedicates a section on allegorically interpreting maidservants/brides. In this section, he quotes Paul’s allegory in Galatians (4:21-4; 26). The only commentary he gives on the Hagar-Sarah allegory is:

Anyone who likes to take up the Epistle to the Galatians will know how the stories about the marriages and the intercourse with the maidservants may be allegorized. For the Word does not want us to emulate those who did these things in respect of their physical acts, as they are commonly supposed, but to emulate their spiritual actions, as they are usually called by the apostles of Jesus.²³⁸

²³⁴ Ibid., 205.

²³⁵ Ibid., 209.

²³⁶ Ibid., 211-5.

²³⁷ Ibid., 219.

²³⁸ Ibid., 220.

By emphasizing the use of spiritual interpretation, Origen defends the Church from accusations of its critics that they are a barbaric community. Origen's apologetics seek to demonstrate the intellectual and moral vigor of the Church's standing in pagan society.²³⁹

Evaluation

Origen's treatment of Hagar, especially Genesis Homily 7, is generally a positive portrayal of Hagar. The consistency of the spiritual readings of Scripture and an emphasis on divine grace place Hagar in the scope of salvation history, along with figures such as Moses, Elisha, and the Samaritan woman. Whenever the Galatians allegory is referenced in Origen's corpus, it is used to defend the practice of allegorical hermeneutics or to emphasize the "Jerusalem of above," as it is keeping with the spiritual sense of Scripture. Yet, even when those elements of the Galatians allegory are invoked, the Hagar-slave-Sinai-present Jerusalem counterparts are generally avoided, with the exception being in *Contra Celsum*. Nevertheless, the focus of that passage is still the defense of the spiritual aspects of biblical narratives, so the audience does not emulate the physical aspects. An understated aspect of Origen's work is that his allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament preserves it for Christian use, instead of it being rejected, as Marcion attempted, all the while keeping Christians from wanting to keep the precepts literally.²⁴⁰ This result of his exegetical practice is incredibly formative for clarifying the emerging Christian identity.

It should be noted that even with this restraint for the negative allegory, Origen does maintain a distinction between the sons, Isaac and Ishmael, which reflects a

²³⁹ Chadwick, xi.

²⁴⁰ Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 142.

dichotomy of conflict in the communities of faith. The Genesis and Galatians texts seem to influence the perspective of a hierarchy of the sons, with one son, despite being given gifts and a blessing, is inferior. More concerning is the explicit reference to the synagogue being a place of famine for God's word. It appears Hagar and the spiritual metaphor of sight were valuable, if somewhat minor, components of Origen's theology which creates a restraint from associating Hagar with the synagogue. As group-identity is often a key marker for which Hagar is used, it is significant that she is not associated with the synagogue because her experience of sight, to Origen, is the opposite of the synagogue's experience. The "blindness" of the synagogue is a critique of hermeneutical practices, which is a primary cause of division between Christians and Jews especially in the developing years of Christianity.²⁴¹

Ultimately, Origen's interpretation of Hagar as a symbol of conflict over hermeneutics, both within the Church community and against those outside of the faith, establishes several modifications to the expectations of later interpreters of Hagar. The importance of allegorical/spiritual interpretation is perhaps the most significant, and allegorical treatment will reemerge when Augustine's writings are examined. The communal conflict between Christians and the synagogue will continue most prominently in Chrysostom's works. However, the classification of Hagar as a positive symbol, due to her sight, remains a unique feature of Origen's interpretation.

²⁴¹ Drake, 815-6.

Chapter 5: Chrysostom

John Chrysostom is regarded as one of the best Christian preachers of antiquity. While his ecclesial career culminated with his tenure at and expulsion from the see of Constantinople (398-404 CE), the origins of his ministry began in his hometown of Antioch (386-97 CE).²⁴² Historically, Chrysostom's time as a priest in Antioch is primarily preserved through recordings of his preaching, as over 900 sermons from this period of his ecclesial career remain.²⁴³ All the material to be explored for his treatment of Hagar is representative of this Antiochene context and reflects Chrysostom's perspectives about Antioch's diverse religious population as he seeks to instruct his congregation on Christian identity and practices.²⁴⁴

Within Chrysostom's materials, the context indicates some form of conflict in the Christian community found in their familial and interreligious community relationships. The main contested domains are ideology and power, as Chrysostom seeks to reestablish the Church's authority over members of his congregation who have been simultaneously engaging in Jewish practices. In the context of communal conflict, Hagar represents the Old Testament and its irrelevance in light of the Christian faith. In familial context, Hagar

²⁴² Wendy Mayer, Pauline Allen, and John Chrysostom. *John Chrysostom*. The Early Church Fathers. (London: Routledge, 2000), 6, 8.

²⁴³ Ibid., 6-7.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 3-4, 7. See also: Jaclyn LaRae Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-4, 9-10, 67-88. And: Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch*, Greek Culture in the Roman World, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 82-90.

is presented as a troublesome servant, who has some potential for spiritual growth, to address the importance for the Christian audience to maintain household unity.

Chrysostom's Hermeneutics

Chrysostom represents the Antiochian tradition of Christian interpretation, preferring to retain an analysis of the literal text before offering a spiritual interpretation or moral exhortation.²⁴⁵ The central theological theme of Chrysostom's perspective on biblical interpretation is that of condescension; de Margerie describes the concept as following:

When the God who is beyond every extrinsic determination, the God who is transcendent, takes the initiative to address finite, limited, circumscribed entities like human beings, in their language which is concrete, and when he wished to be understood by them and to enable them to know the particular historical events of his saving economy, he is lowering himself to be *with* them (condescension) through a clearly delineated exactness of ideas and expressions.²⁴⁶

The role of progressive revelation through history in condescension allows for Chrysostom to exegete the Old Testament by providing a way to explain its difficult aspects.²⁴⁷ Scripture is the written framework containing the imperfect conversation between God and humanity, therefore, understanding the historical and grammatical components are necessary for "...this educative concern of God who is progressively leading humanity from the abyss into which it had fallen to the salvation accomplished by the Incarnation..."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Simonetti, 60, 74; de De Margerie, 198.

²⁴⁶ de De Margerie, 202.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 197.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 199, 207.

Regarding his preaching, Chrysostom's exposition preferred the ethical and edifying over the theological dimensions of the biblical texts.²⁴⁹ The ethical dimension is meant to encourage "...the return [of the listeners] to God through practice of the virtues."²⁵⁰ Thus, the dialogue between God and humanity, as contained in the writing and preaching of Scripture, is completed.²⁵¹

Homily 6 — On Fasting: Preached during the Sixth Week of the Holy Forty Day Fast

Homily 6 — On Fasting is considered to be one sermon from a series of nine centering on the themes of repentance and almsgiving that were preached by Chrysostom in Antioch, circa 386-7.²⁵² The obvious intention of the homily is to promote a morally excellent Christian life. The homily centers on the ideas of keeping certain disciplines, understanding the causes of sin, and the meaning of divine law, all theological ideas necessary to understand in one's religious tradition.

Towards the end of the homily, Chrysostom begins to demonstrate the relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. This is to emphasize that it is the Christians who have been "delivered from the controversies of the Jews."²⁵³ Creating a distinctively Christian identity is crucial for Chrysostom to maintain the Church's social power in the pluralistic religious atmosphere in Antioch. A reoccurring element of this distinction is to define the Christians, having accepted the revelation of Christ, as being superior to the Jews. This is demonstrated with an example of

²⁴⁹ Simonetti, 74.

²⁵⁰ de De Margerie, 209.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 207.

²⁵² John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving*. The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation, V. 96. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), XV.

²⁵³ Ibid., 79.

condescension, in which Chrysostom describes how the Incarnate God was revealed by word and by deed with examples from Scripture.²⁵⁴

This homily argues for that superiority by emphasizing the dichotomy of the two Covenants, which are shown on the practical and theoretical level.²⁵⁵ In an allegorical move, Chrysostom refers to Abraham showing the two covenants through his wives; Abraham represents the one Lawgiver: "... likewise, here there exist two covenants. Jeremiah foretold of these covenants through words, and Abraham revealed these covenants through works, by having two wives. Just as there was one husband and two wives, there is one Lawgiver and two covenants."²⁵⁶ Though the language differs, this argument is remarkably similar to Paul's argument in Galatians; Hagar, one of Abraham's wife, represents the Old Covenant which is no longer needed after the revelation of the New Covenant.

Discourses Against Judaizing Christians

This theological treatise, consisting of eight discourses, was written by Chrysostom during his time in Antioch (386 CE); it appears that there was some perceived threat to Antiochene Christianity due to some members of the congregation participating in Jewish rituals and practices.²⁵⁷ The collection of homilies relies heavily on rhetorical form of invective, meant to vilify and defame the opponents.²⁵⁸ The material is considered to establish a precedent of Anti-Semitic rhetoric which supersedes the

²⁵⁴ Chrysostom, *On Repentance*, 80-81.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 81-2.

²⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation, V. 68. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979), IX.

²⁵⁸ Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century*, (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 112-3.

historical context in which it was initially developed.²⁵⁹ Patristic scholar Robert Louis Wilken states, “In a strict sense, John’s homilies on the Judaizers do not follow the formal requirements of the fixed speeches of the rhetorical tradition. Nevertheless, the techniques of the *psogos* are apparent in the use of half-truths, innuendo, guilt by association, abusive and incendiary language, malicious comparisons, and in all, excess and exaggeration.”²⁶⁰

Discourse I contains an allusion to the allegorical Hagar as described by Paul. The rhetoric is hateful and clearly represents a type of supersessionist theology in which Jews, as demonstrated throughout the Scriptures, are stiff-necked and have fallen away from favor with God; (Gentile) Christians are now the children and the Jews are now the dogs.²⁶¹ The synagogue is depicted as a brothel,²⁶² a theatre, a den of robbers, and a lodging of wild beasts.²⁶³ In the fourth section of this discourse, Chrysostom references the Galatians passage to refute reputed Christians who are heavily associating with the local Jews:

I shall say to him: What fellowship do you have with the free Jerusalem, with the Jerusalem above? You chose the one below; be a slave with that earthly Jerusalem which, according to the word of the Apostle, is a slave together with her children. Do you fast with the Jews? Then take off your shoes with the Jews, and walk

²⁵⁹ Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, IX.

²⁶⁰ Wilken, 116.

²⁶¹ In reference to the story of the Canaanite women in Matthew 15. [Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, 6].

²⁶² For an in-depth treatment of how sexuality is used in Early Christian discourse to rhetorically attack Judaism, see: Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (version 1st ed.). 1st ed. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. (Philadelphia: PENN/University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). It should be noted that this creates an excellent example of how the narrative framing of a conflict differs from the actual domain being contested [Mayer, *Religious Conflict*, 3]. The sexual practices of the Jews are not actually the concern of the sermon; the contested domain is power, as Chrysostom attempts to reassert the Church’s power and superiority over the members who are attracted to Judaism.

²⁶³ Ibid., 10.

barefoot in the marketplace,²⁶⁴ and share with them in their indecency and laughter. But you would not choose to do this because you are ashamed and apt to blush. Are you ashamed to share with them in outward appearance but unashamed to share in their impiety? What excuse will you have, you who are only half a Christian?²⁶⁵

As established in Galatians, Hagar, or the slave woman, represents the earthly Jerusalem as well as the old covenant. For Chrysostom, anyone who participates in Jewish rituals are identifying themselves with Hagar, the slave, and are therefore not full Christians. Chrysostom suggests that if anyone observes one engaging in Judaizing to hold them accountable, as it is part of the Christian witness to examine one another.²⁶⁶ The intent of the discourse is to reestablish the influence of the Church and its teachings over its members who have begun participating in Jewish practices.

Homilies on Genesis²⁶⁷

The homilies on Genesis are considered to have been delivered in Antioch before Chrysostom's election to Constantinople in 398, though there is no specific date attached to the cycle of sermons.²⁶⁸ Homily 38 expounds on the Genesis 16 passage, providing the most direct treatment of Hagar in all of Chrysostom's work. Chrysostom's exegesis of the Hagar narratives revives the concept of familial conflict. The homilies provide an interpretation of Hagar as a stereotypical servant who threatens the orderliness of the

²⁶⁴ This reference is to the Jewish ritual of dancing barefoot in the marketplace during Yom Kippur, an event which had recently occurred before this homily (Allen and Mayer, 13). Apparently, Yom Kippur was particularly appealing for many Christians; in part due to many community members' enthusiasm of fast days made them eager to participate in Yom Kippur, which came to be viewed similarly to Lent (Maxwell, 139-40).

²⁶⁵ Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, 16.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁶⁷ Thompson cites two major themes for Chrysostom's series on Genesis: 1) the kindness of God to limited, finite humans; 2) the importance of marital and familial harmony. [Thompson, 39]. The second of these themes will be explicitly stated, but the first one will emerge when Hagar encounters the Divine.

²⁶⁸ Robert C Hill, *Homilies on Genesis, 1–17*. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 8.

household, though she demonstrates some potential for spiritual growth. The power dynamics of class and gender are important threads in the homilies.

A central part of the homily is the development of the characters, particularly Abram and Sarai, as this story is within the larger liturgical arc concerning the patriarch and his endurance to produce an heir.²⁶⁹ Early in the introduction of the material, Chrysostom declares the intent of the message as being edifying to marital relationships:

This passage, in fact, is capable of instructing both men and women to give evidence of harmony in relating to each other and to preserve inviolate the bond of marriage, to teach the husband not to contend against his wife but to make great allowance for her as being the frailer vessel, and the wife not to disagree with her husband, but to rival each other in carrying the other's burdens and to prize domestic peace ahead of everything.²⁷⁰

Chrysostom dedicates attention to the surrounding narrative of the unfulfilled promise of descendants and begins to develop emotionally poignant and virtuous characters. Despite the perplexing circumstance of infertility, Abram remains “just” and “far from regarding any longer the obstacles on the side of nature, realized instead the inventiveness of the Lord and the fact that, being creator of nature, he is able to find ways even where there are none, and so, like an obedient servant, he did not concern himself with the manner of fulfillment but left it to his inscrutable providence and had faith in his words.”²⁷¹ Self-control becomes one of the defining traits of Abram.

Hagar is briefly referenced and Chrysostom notes that, being from Egypt, she was probably one of the possessions given to the family from Pharaoh during their time in Egypt.²⁷² However, Hagar is not the concern of the homily; Chrysostom shifts the focus

²⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, and Robert C Hill. *Homilies on Genesis 18-45*. The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, V. 82. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 355.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 355-6.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 356.

²⁷² Ibid., 357.

to describing Sarah with her “sensible attitude and the extraordinary degree of her self-control” in the situation. Sarah’s plan for the surrogacy was an act of love for her husband and concerned with alleviating the childless situation on his behalf.²⁷³ Hagar’s successful conception was proof for Sarah that the infertility was due to her own self.²⁷⁴

In contrast to the virtuous Abram and Sarah, the “maidservant” (as Chrysostom does not refer to her by name in the homily except when quoting Scripture) is an ungrateful and spiteful woman. A wry comment is made to the audience: “This, you see, is the way with servants; if they happen to gain some slight advantage, they can’t bear to stay within the limits of their station but immediately forget their place and fall into an ungrateful attitude.”²⁷⁵ Both her station and her gender²⁷⁶ contribute to her attitude which intensifies as she becomes “arrogant” and scorns Sarah.²⁷⁷ However, Sarah, as the weaker counterpart of the marital relationship, is wrong to have complained to Abram for her initiative of the surrogacy plan.²⁷⁸ When discussing the interactions between Sarah and Abram, commentators note that “...Chrysostom is permitting himself the luxury of exploiting all the emotive potential of this incident.”²⁷⁹ Sarah and Abram’s main desire is to preserve their love and relationship, having little regard for Hagar outside of being a means to an end. Chrysostom describes this as a true relationship and how wonderfully it demonstrates the dynamics of marriage, praising especially the man, who is required to be careful with the wife’s frail nature and to lead in the pursuit of a peaceful bond.²⁸⁰

²⁷³ Ibid., 358.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 364.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 264.

²⁷⁶ Chrysostom describes women as having a frail nature (364).

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 364.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 365.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 365.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 366-7.

With Abram's permission to deal with Hagar as Sarah saw it, the text recounts the altercation between the women and Hagar's subsequent flight. Once again, Chrysostom depicts Hagar's actions as something that is typical of people in her station: "That is the way with servants, after all: whenever they are not permitted to have their own way but rather their efforts at independence are thwarted, immediately they throw off the yoke of their masters and take to flight."²⁸¹ Then Chrysostom makes a bold statement: that even in her situation, Hagar was still favored and given the vision of the heavenly messenger *on account of* Abram's seed in her.²⁸² Chrysostom elaborates this theological claim:

Consider the Lord's loving kindness in overlooking no one; instead; even if she be a servant or maidservant he personally gives evidence of his characteristic providence for everyone, having regard not to the difference in status but to the disposition of soul. In this case, however, the angel appeared, not on account of the maidservant's position, but out of regard for the just man: as I said before, she was due to be shown great care for the reason of her being worthy to receive the just man's seed.²⁸³

The message to Hagar is meant to remind her of her proper station – that is, that Sarah is her mistress regardless of the relations between Hagar and Abram.²⁸⁴ Through the admittance of her flight, Chrysostom does appreciate Hagar for her truthfulness in the situation.²⁸⁵ Ultimately, she is to return to her station: "Acknowledge your servitude, don't ignore her authority, don't get ideas above your station, entertain no high and mighty thoughts; 'submit yourself to her control,' give evidence of your subjection."²⁸⁶ This request brought great relief and peace of mind to Hagar, especially with the added promise of Ishmael.²⁸⁷ The pastoral implication of this scenario is the Lord will pay

²⁸¹ Ibid, 367.

²⁸² Ibid., 367.

²⁸³ Ibid., 368.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 368.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 369.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 369.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 369.

attention to us when we humble ourselves during our problems: “Nothing, you see, is so advantageous to our nature as humbling ourselves, having our self-importance lowered and our frowardness of spirit checked. Then in particular, after all, the Lord gives heed to us, when we listen to him with sorrowing spirit and contrite heart, bringing fervent supplication to our entreaties.”²⁸⁸

When further discussing Ishmael and his future, Chrysostom once again clarifies that this response from the Lord is truly demonstrating a concern for Abram.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Hagar is given the acknowledgement of a developing character, as her declaration of naming both messenger and place signifies the great sense of gratitude for her experience: “Do you see the maidservant becoming gradually wiser from the hardship affecting her, giving evidence of deep gratitude for the kindness done her and acknowledging as far as in her lay the great care that had been accorded her.”²⁹⁰ Thompson argues that Chrysostom is holding Hagar up as a model for Christians to follow, having exhibited virtues such as endurance in the face of hardships and contrition and gratitude over one’s sins.²⁹¹ Though not as enthusiastic as Origen for the positive development of Hagar as representative of the Christian faith, this interpretation does serve as a resolve of the familial conflict in the narrative.

Chrysostom concludes the homily by drawing out the implications of the story for his Christian audience. The themes of restraint, humility, and gentleness in marital relationships are of primary importance.²⁹² Hagar’s role in the surrogacy and subsequent

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 370.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 370.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 371.

²⁹¹ Thompson, 40.

²⁹² Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 371-2.

flight creates conflict within the family that must be dealt with; she symbolizes the potential conflict that Christian households might encounter if they have servants. The goal is to create and maintain a peaceful and ordered household, with the proper respect being shown between spouses and the children and servants following their pattern.²⁹³

Homily 46 covers the account of Genesis 21 with similar emotive exaggerations and themes as Homily 38. A similar conflict arises when Sarah observes the two sons together, and in a preemptive attempt to suppress any “forwardness” Ishmael might have inherited from his mother as well as a fear that Ishmael would share in the inheritance after Abraham’s death, Sarah requests Abraham to expel them from the household.²⁹⁴ Though God agrees with Sarah’s “logical” request, Abraham is emotionally distressed over the request which he viewed as “harsh, repugnant, and severe.”²⁹⁵ As God wishes to protect the familial bonds, Abraham is told to comply with Sarah’s demand.²⁹⁶ Chrysostom commends Abraham for immediately following the request of expulsion, cited this time as being from the Lord, and to ignore “natural feelings.”²⁹⁷

As Hagar and Ishmael are expelled into the dessert, Chrysostom exhorts his audience: “Notice once again, however, I ask you, how she, too, is accorded care from on high owing to the favor shown the good man.”²⁹⁸ Throughout the remainder of God’s intervention and kindness towards Hagar and Ishmael, their connection to Abraham is

²⁹³ “Accordingly, I beseech you, far from prizing anything more highly than this, let us move might and main to have peace and harmony in our family life.” [Ibid., 372].

²⁹⁴ John Chrysostom, and Robert C Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 46-67*, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, V. 87. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 4

²⁹⁵ Note however, that Abraham’s concern was only with Ishmael’s wellbeing: “It was not, you see, that he took much interest in Hagar; rather, he was well disposed towards his son for the reason that he was then still in his youth.” [Ibid., 5].

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.

repeated.²⁹⁹ The pastoral application of this homily is the necessity of God's grace during severe trials that would otherwise render us without hope or aid.³⁰⁰ As concluded in the analysis of Genesis, the expulsion of Hagar serves as a type of resolution to the familial conflict.

Commentary on Galatians

In between 395 CE and 398 CE, Chrysostom completed a commentary on the letter to the Galatians, systematically expounding each verse of the epistle, this time withholding a moral application.³⁰¹ Imitating Paul's application of the allegory to his context with the Galatian congregations, Chrysostom uses the allegory to represent the reality of his situation in Antioch, as the Church competes in a religiously diverse area. Once again, Chrysostom prefers to contest the domain of power with the Jewish community. Partial emphasis in his methodology is to explain the historical and literary components of the letter in order to clarify Paul's message; for example, giving a note on that Paul is actually calling a "type" an allegory.³⁰² Early in the allegory, it is established that "...in that the Patriarch's sons were not of equal dignity, one being by a bondwoman, the other by a free-woman..."³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Thompson rightly identifies that Hagar's dignity is derived from Abraham through Ishmael. [Thompson, 41].

³⁰⁰ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 46-67, 7-8.

³⁰¹ J.H. Newman, "Preface," in Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Volume Xiii : Saint Chrysostom : Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), xiii.

³⁰² "Contrary to usage, he calls a type an allegory; his meaning is as follows; this history not only declares that which appears on the face of it, but announces somewhat farther, whence it is called an allegory." [Ibid., 34]

³⁰³ Ibid., 33. This is similar in sentiment to Origen's Genesis Homily VII [Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 132].

One of the fundamental distinctions in the Hagar and Sarah allegory (Gal 4:21-31) is the between the church, represented by the fruitfulness of the promise (Sarah), and the synagogue.³⁰⁴ After establishing the connection of “Hagar-Sinai-Jerusalem,” and by relation the Old Covenant which was given at Mount Sinai and is kept by her children who are also in bondage (Gal 4:25), Chrysostom address the Isaiah quotation:

Who is this who before was barren, and desolate? Clearly it is the Church of the Gentiles, that was before deprived of the knowledge of God? Who, she which has the husband? plainly the Synagogue. Yet the barren woman surpassed her in the number of her children, for the other embraces one nation, but the children of the Church have filled the country of the Greeks and of the Barbarians, the earth and sea, the whole habitable world. Observe how Sarah by acts, and the Prophet by words, have described the events about to befall us.³⁰⁵

Chrysostom makes explicit the connection between Sarah and Isaac and the Christian audience’s experience in the faith. Isaac was conceived by the promise of God in Genesis 18:41 entering Sarah’s womb. Chrysostom compares this to the experience of committing to the Christian faith: “...so also in our regeneration it is not nature, but the Words of God spoken by the Priest, (the faithful know them,) which in the Bath of water as in a sort of womb, form and regenerate him who is baptized.”³⁰⁶ But that is not the whole of the experience the Christian audience seems to be facing. Chrysostom raises the question: “But what kind of freedom, it might be objected, is this, when the Jews seize and scourge the believers, and those who have this pretense of liberty are persecuted?”³⁰⁷

This persecution is typified through the Genesis material, including the response that Paul and Chrysostom suggests. The expulsion of the son of the bondwoman is not due solely to the persecution he caused; he has his rights and inheritance stripped from

³⁰⁴ Clark, 129.

³⁰⁵ Schaff, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians*, 34.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 35.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 35.

him: “For this punishment was not exacted from him on account of his temporary persecution, (for that would have been of little moment, and nothing to the point,) but he was not suffered to participate in the inheritance provided for the son.”³⁰⁸ Chrysostom claims that this punishment is also typified and intended by God to unfold during history, to eventually manifest in the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Church.³⁰⁹ The final line of relevance creates an apt summary of Chrysostom’s entire homily: “And hereby they intend the Church; for she knew not God, but as soon as she knew Him, she surpassed the fruitful synagogue.”³¹⁰

Evaluation

Chrysostom’s treatment of Hagar distinctively revolves around communal conflict. The Genesis homily provides the most insight to familial conflict and the pastoral concern Chrysostom had for developing a sense of morality and peace within his congregation. The remaining works focus on the conflict between the Christian and Jewish communities. In comparison to Origen,³¹¹ Chrysostom does acknowledge that both Jews and Christians misunderstand the fundamental aspects of the Christian faith, though the persecution by the Jewish community seems to make that the central concern. The representation of Hagar is predominately negative. The acknowledgement of development in Genesis and its potential pastoral implications in the homilies on Genesis is a notable positive portrayal, in that the familial conflict was eventually resolved. His discussion of the Genesis materials in Galatians is remarkably consistent to his Genesis homily in that the emphasis is on the faith of Abraham and the power of God in providing

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 35.

³⁰⁹ Thompson, 41.

³¹⁰ Schaff, *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians*, 35.

³¹¹ Origen, Genesis Homily VII.

the conception of Isaac. Though having the fewest relevant sources of the receivers in this selection, Chrysostom's treatment of Hagar continues to solidify her status as a symbol of conflict, especially concerning interreligious conflict.

Chapter 6: Augustine

Augustine is undoubtedly one of the most renowned theologians of the Church. Despite his upbringing within a Christian context, Augustine accepted the Manichaean sect's teachings and critique of the Church, specifically towards its use of the Old Testament, which was viewed as an embarrassing collection of lowly stories.³¹² After a conversion and baptism into the Church during his time as a rhetor in Milan (387 CE),³¹³ Augustine returned to Northern Africa to begin his ecclesial career, first as a *servus Dei*, than as a priest, and finally as bishop of Hippo (395-430 CE).³¹⁴

The treatment of Hagar will be surveyed in his works dating from his reign as bishop, specifically from 417-426 CE. In contrast to previous chapters, whose treatments of Hagar were mainly in the form of homilies and commentaries, Augustine makes reference to Hagar most often in his epistolary literature. However, he also gives attention to Hagar in major theological treatises as *The City of God*. These sources address conflicts within Augustine's North African context, but also theological controversies which span the western territory of the Church. The reoccurring theme of the relationship between the Two Testaments is foundation to Augustine's treatment of Hagar. For Augustine, Hagar symbolizes opposition to the traditional faith and teaching

³¹² Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Forty-fifth anniversary ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 31.

³¹³ Ibid., 117.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 133; Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*. Rev. and updated [ed.], 2nd ed. Vol. Volume 1, the Early Church to the Reformation, (New York: Harper One, 2010), 246-7.

of the Church during times when power, Christian identity, and ideology were contested.³¹⁵

Augustine's Hermeneutics

With an ecclesial career occupying the end of the Roman Empire in Northern Africa, Augustine represents the culmination of hermeneutical practices of Early Christianity. Deriving inspiration from his mentor Ambrose, Augustine introduces some forms of allegorical interpretation especially when approaching the Old Testament; this remedies his previous aversion to the text during his time with the Manicheans.³¹⁶ When the literal text is presented in a way that is not worthy of God, Augustine adheres to the practice of figurative or spiritual interpretation.³¹⁷ Unlike Origen, Augustine's Christology emphasizes humanity, by which the divine is mysteriously revealed, thus making the historical a necessary precedent for the spiritual sense.³¹⁸ Further influence of Ambrose may be seen in the adoption of his "providential typology" where the historical events of the Bible, even the unethical narratives, are allowed by God for the unfolding of a typological plan.³¹⁹ These elements of Augustine's hermeneutics give way to a specific

³¹⁵ This thesis is echoed in Thompson's evaluation of Augustine: "In various anti-Donatists treatises (400-418 CE), Hagar comes to symbolize all those whose relationship with the church was irregular, at best (another Ambrosian theme)" [36]. Ambrose's interpretation of Hagar does focus on the Galatians allegory to describe Sarah (the Church) supplanting Hagar (the Synagogue), as well as a historical reading which justifies and provides divine endorsement for Hagar's expulsion. [Thompson, 34-5]. This thesis expands the claim of Thompson by including controversies from Donatists, Pelagians, and pagans.

³¹⁶ Bertrand de De Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis: Saint Augustine*, vol. 3, (Petersham, Mass.: Saint Bede's Publications, 1994), 11-3. Ambrose is noted to have retained the different senses of Scripture (literal, moral, and mystical), and preferred to give weight to the mystical, as demonstrated by allegory; this is an influence of Origen's works (Simonetti, 89).

³¹⁷ Simonetti, 104.

³¹⁸ De De Margerie, 17.

³¹⁹ Thompson, 35.

way of describing foreshadowing: prefigurement, signs/signifying, and images.³²⁰ By embracing this style of interpretation, Augustine claims that most of the Old Testament can be interpreted both figuratively and literally.³²¹

His *On Christian Doctrine* sets forth several related principles: the acceptance of multiple meaning being present in Scripture; the whole of Scripture is meant to illuminate the difficult passages; the intention of the writers was to promote love, and it is the responsibility of the interpreter to discover that message, even if the text appears contrary; and technical training for interpretation is necessary.³²²

Finally, a crucial element of Augustine's hermeneutics is his assertion that the authority of Scripture and the Church are closely connected.³²³ By observing his own conversion, Augustine recognized that it was only through engagement with the Church, through the guidance of Ambrose, that he was able to accept the totality of Scripture.³²⁴ de Margerie summarizes Augustine's position:

In short, Augustine held that the scriptures, almost universally accepted in one way or another, lead to the Church which they herald and of which they are a part, a universal rather than simply local Church. Through a twofold progression toward both its historical roots and its present transcendental source, this biblical Church leads the readers of scripture to Christ, the eternal Savior, and to the undivided totality of his infallibly true word.³²⁵

³²⁰ Wendy E. Helleman, "'Abraham Had Two Sons': Augustine and the Allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Galatians 4:21-31)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 48, no. 1 (April 2013), 41-2.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

³²² Simonetti, 107-8.

³²³ De Margerie, 16-7.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-9.

To Boniface (or, Epistle 185)³²⁶

In 417 CE, Augustine engaged in correspondence with a count and tribune in Africa, Boniface.³²⁷ The topic at hand was concerning the treatment of the Donatists, as that raging schism would be a defining theological battleground for Augustine, as well as a concern for Boniface as violence was a common result from the dissenting faction. The Donatist movement was the predominate force in Hippo when Augustine arrived in the late 390s CE; Augustine had spent a majority of his ecclesial career to this point creating strategies of debate to persuade Donatist leaders, aristocrats, and common people to renounce the sect.³²⁸ In 411, the Roman authorities officially condemned the Donatist movement; however, as this letter dates six years beyond that legislation, it is clear that the contested power between the two Christian sects had not been resolved.³²⁹

The general premise of the letter is to demonstrate how the Donatists are not theologically aligned with the Catholic Church and the resulting battle over social influence. Augustine depicts the Donatists as the culprits of division, but also seeking to

³²⁶ This letter bears remarkable similarity to the argument Augustine constructs in his Tractates on the Gospel of John 11 (dated 416) [Helleman, 54]. Helleman summarizes the argument: “With respect to the allegory, Augustine realizes that Sarah punished Hagar so severely that she fled (*afflixit earn graviter*, 11.13). As for the Donatists, Augustine recognizes that persecution has occurred on both sides. Then he asks how one can recognize true persecution: Is it “affliction” of the body or the more serious issue of spiritual “deception” (*illusionem spiritus*) as in rebaptism (10. eu. tr.11.13)? He notes that Hagar, after departing from her mistress, was met by an angel and told to return to her mistress. Even as he acknowledges that he does not know all the facts of the matter, Augustine applies the treatment of Hagar to the Donatists, telling them that even if they have suffered corporal punishment through the Catholic Church, they have suffered as Hagar at the hand of Sarah; she was told to return to her mistress (10. eu. tr. 11.15).” [Ibid., 56].

³²⁷ Augustine. *Letters, Volume 4 (165–203)*. Translated by Wilfrid Parsons. Vol. 3rd print. Letters. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), 141.

³²⁸ Carles Buenacasa Perez, “The Letters Ad Donatists of Augustine and their Relevance in the Anti-Donatist Controversy,” International Conference on Patristic Studies (16th : 2011 : Oxford, England), *St. Augustine and His Opponents*, Edited by Markus Vinzent. Studia Patristica, Vol. Lxx. (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 440.

³²⁹ Ibid., 447.

portray themselves as martyrs³³⁰ when the Church reprimands them.³³¹ Contextually, this leads Augustine to expound on the Beatitude of persecution as found in Matthew's recording of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:10). By stressing that persecution is only genuine when it is suffered for the sake of justice, Augustine claims: "Agar suffered persecution from Sarai, yet the one who persecuted was holy and she who suffered was sinful. Is that any reason for comparing the persecution suffered by Agar to that with which the wicked Saul afflicted holy David? Obviously, there is a very great difference, not because David suffered, but because he suffered for justice' sake."³³² Thompson rightly describes this twist to the question of persecution: "Augustine concludes that the Donatists of his own day prove nothing by alleging that they have been persecuted; the question turns on whether the persecution was righteous or unrighteous."³³³

Augustine sets up a comparison between the Catholic Church as Sarah and the Donatists as Hagar by examining both the details from Genesis and Galatians of their relationship. The question revolves around what Scripture intends to tell us about the incident of Sarah persecuting Hagar:

He says plainly that the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother, that is, the true Church of God, and that it is prefigured by the woman who afflicted her handmaid. But, if we were to state the argument more correctly, it was rather she who persecuted Sara by her haughtiness than Sara who persecuted her by restraining her; the one did an injury to her mistress, the other imposed

³³⁰ Martyrdom was a significant theological theme for the Donatists, to the extent that it was actively sought out by its adherents [Chris Thomas, "Donatism and the Contextualization of Christianity: A Cautionary Tale," International Conference on Patristic Studies (16th : 2011 : Oxford, England), *St. Augustine and His Opponents*, Edited by Markus Vinzent. Studia Patristica, Vol. Lxx. (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 369.

³³¹ Augustine, *Letters Volume 4*, 148-9.

³³² Ibid., 150.

³³³ Thompson, 36.

restraint on pride.³³⁴ Furthermore, it is demonstrated in the Psalms that those who are considered “good” and “holy” pursue their enemies.³³⁵

This forms the foundation for “a just persecution which the Church of Christ inflicts on the wicked.”³³⁶ The Donatists, like Hagar, persecuted those over them out of their own sinful attitude; the persecution they face from the Church (or Sarah) because of their defiance is considered righteous. The response of the Church is meant to be grounded in love and to correct those who are in error and to pursue them until they give in to the truth.³³⁷ The Church is to refrain from taking the lives of those who they persecute, but the Donatists are more prone to attempt the kill both the members of the Church and the members of their own sect; some of them even attempt to anger the pagans in attempt to be martyred.³³⁸ Augustine continues the letter, detailing the violence that stems from the Donatists movement and suggesting for civic support of the Catholic Church as it seeks to (re)establish peace and unity.³³⁹

To Bishop Asellicus

In 418, Augustine wrote a letter to a fellow Bishop, Asellicus, opening with a discussion concerning their senior, Donatian, on abstaining from Jewish practices.³⁴⁰ This includes clarification on the nature of the two Testament of Scripture and on the relationship of the Law and Christians, as well as the occurrence of sin. The letter is distinguishing Christians from Jews by utilizing many references from Paul’s arguments

³³⁴ Augustine, *Letters Volume 4*, 151.

³³⁵ Ibid., 151.

³³⁶ Ibid., 152.

³³⁷ Ibid., 152.

³³⁸ Ibid., 152-3. These events are considered to be a reflection of Donatist practices going back to the 380s-390s [Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine*. Cambridge Books Online. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 763-4].

³³⁹ Augustine, *Letters Volume 4*, 159-161; 166-170.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 333.

in the letter to the Galatians. Augustine clarifies the theological relationship between the Two Testaments and the identity of Christians as those who are not bound to the ethnic markers or literal rituals of the Old Testament. Christians are the children of Abraham, not through flesh, but through spirit.³⁴¹ It is important to “...distinguish two Israels: one which receives the name because of the flesh, the other, by the spirit, has attained to the reality which is signified by the name.” Augustine does note the tension between this assertion, as Jews/Israel were from the flesh of Abraham and they were not born from Hagar, who is associated with the children of the flesh.³⁴² After quoting Galatians 4:21-5:1 in its entirety, Augustine continues explaining these distinctions:

See how, according to this spiritual meaning of the Apostle, we belong to the free woman, Sara, although we trace no carnal descent from her, while the Jews, who do trace their descent from her, are shown to belong rather to Agar, the bondwoman, from whom they do not trace their decent.³⁴³

Thus, the “spiritual mystery” reveals that Christians belong to Sarah, while Jews are associated with Hagar.³⁴⁴ The remainder of the letter is focused on clarifying the differences between Jews and Christians, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the spiritual significance of Christianity. The intent of this argument is to rebuke “that obscure person named Aptus, of whom you wrote that he is teaching Christians to become Jews, and likewise, as your Holiness claimed, calls himself Jew and Israelite in order to forbid the use of those foods which the Law...”³⁴⁵ amongst other practices, which makes it clear that he is attempting to be a carnal Jew, not a “spiritual” one.³⁴⁶

³⁴¹ Ibid., 339.

³⁴² Ibid., 341.

³⁴³ Ibid., 342-3.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 343.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 345.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 346.

Once again, Hagar is used to create the boundaries of what is acceptable ideology and practice to be considered Christian.

Polemics

Concurrent to the previous letters, Augustine began shifting his attention to theological issues beyond his African context. Shaw suggests that the failure of the Catholic Church to establish full control over the Donatists in Africa, despite public condemnation in 411 and subsequent legislation against the sect in 412 and 414, had taken its toll on Augustine.³⁴⁷ After spending nearly 20 years of his career fighting against a sect and gaining very little power from the small victories, Augustine needed to turn his attention towards theological issues concerning Christianity in the western empire if he wanted to maintain relevance in the church.³⁴⁸ The British monk Pelagius emphasized the notion of free will in his theology, even to the extent of denying original sin and the necessity of grace.³⁴⁹ This theological position provided the controversy in which Augustine could gain relevance within the western Church. Augustine's treatment of Hagar as a symbol of the Old Testament is displayed proximately in these correspondences.

A Work on the Proceedings of Pelagius was written in 417 CE to confer with Bishop Aurelius of Carthage about the acquittal of Pelagius at the Synod in Palestine.³⁵⁰ The fifth accusation Pelagius faced at the Synod was concerning his remark that the

³⁴⁷ Shaw, 311-2.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 312-3.

³⁴⁹ B.B. Warfield, "Introductory Essay on Augustine and the Pelagian Controversy," *Writings Against the Pelagians, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff. [1st series]ed, Vol. V, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.R. Eerdmans Pub, 1956), xiii.

³⁵⁰ Augustine, "A Work on the Proceedings of Pelagius," in *Writings Against the Pelagians, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff. [1st series]ed, Vol. V, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.R. Eerdmans Pub, 1956), 183.

kingdom of heaven was evidenced in the Old Testament which the Synod accepted as being compatible with the Church's faith. However, Augustine, when referring to Galatians 4 in response to this decision by the Synod, raises the question "...what has the kingdom of heaven to do with the Old Testament."³⁵¹ There is a difference between the prefiguration of the spiritual blessings in the Old Testament and those who live by the Old Testament to obtain the earthly happiness it promises (as in the promise of land, victories, and descendants), which is the testament given at Mount Sinai.³⁵² Augustine warns: "But whatever blessings are there figuratively set forth as appertaining to the New Testament require the new man to give them effect."³⁵³ He commends Paul's allegorical distinctions between the two as characterized by the women and their children.³⁵⁴ Note that this difference between the earthly and heavenly has occurred throughout time although some heirs of the New Testament have perfectly administered the Old because God distributed these things throughout various times and seasons.³⁵⁵ The temporal aspect of the prefigurements (Hagar/Old Testament/earthly blessing // Sarah/New Testament/spiritual blessings) is a significant theme in Augustine's writings.

Augustine is angered that the opinion of the Pelagians puts Hagar on the same level as Sarah. By granting equal status to Hagar to Sarah, the domains of ideology and power are contested. Ideologically, this propagates the tension of how Christians are supposed to appropriate the authority of the Two Testaments. From the consideration of power, the Pelagian's opinion is viewed as a derision of the accepted authority of Paul's

³⁵¹ Ibid., 188.

³⁵² Ibid., 189.

³⁵³ Ibid., 189.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 189.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 189.

hermeneutics and the Church's reiteration of that: "...the distinction which has been drawn by the Apostolic and catholic authority is abolished..."³⁵⁶ Then, he associates the views of the Pelagians with different heretical figures like Marcion and the Manichaeans: "On this account (that I may put into as brief a space as I can what my own views are on the subject), as much injury is done to the New Testament, when it is put on the same level with the Old Testament, as is inflicted on the Old itself when men deny it to be the work of the supreme God of goodness."³⁵⁷

Against Two Letters of the Pelagians is addressed to the bishop Boniface, circa 420 CE or later, with the intention of refuting the heresies of the Pelagians.³⁵⁸ A series of calumnies of the Pelagians, specifically referencing a letter by Julian and a letter from eighteen bishops to the bishop of Thessalonica.³⁵⁹ Of particular interest is the discussion concerning the two Covenants found in Scripture, beginning in chapter 7 of Book III. Once again, the argument centers around the significance and prefigurement of the New Testament as well as the association of Mount Sinai with bondage, drawing from the Hagar-Sarah Allegory.³⁶⁰ Augustine lists the righteous figures of the Old Testament as likewise being children of promise and of grace.³⁶¹ In contrast, those who belong to the Old Testament associated with Mount Sinai belong to Hagar and believe "...that the letter can suffice them for life; and do not seek the divine mercy, so as they may become doers of the law, but, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and wishing to establish

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 189.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 189.

³⁵⁸ Augustine, "Against Two Letters of the Pelagians," in *Writings Against the Pelagians, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff. [1st series]ed, Vol. V, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.R. Eerdmans Pub, 1956), 377.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 378; 402.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 405.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 405.

their own righteousness, are not subject to the righteousness of God.”³⁶² Yet, even the Scripture itself testifies to this group being subject to rebuke for their unfaithfulness.³⁶³ These children of the Old Covenant were interested in the earthly promises but “... were ignorant of that which those promises signify under the new testament....”³⁶⁴ Additionally, the observance of the commandments were conducted primarily out of fear and lacked true faith which comes from the will.³⁶⁵ While the context of the letter is to refute the Pelagian viewpoint, Augustine incorporates a critique of the Jews under this explanation as well. Despite how “...the new testament as it was prophesied is made plain and confirmed by the blood of Christ,” the Jew continue in their unbelief.³⁶⁶

God gave the Old Testament “...because it pleased God to veil the heavenly promises in earthly promises, as if to establish in reward until the fullness of time...”³⁶⁷ For the Christians, the content and observances of the Old Testament laws assist in guiding the proper ordering of a Christian life, but only when those observances are kept “as spiritually understood.”³⁶⁸ Once again, the familial metaphor comes into play, as those who belong to the new covenant “are the children of promise, and are regenerated by the Father God and a free mother.”³⁶⁹ Augustine does attempt to clarify the distinction between the “Old Instrument,” that encompasses all those who prophesied up until John the Baptist, and the “Old Testament” which was the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai; this creates a natural segue to quote from Galatians 4.³⁷⁰

³⁶² Ibid., 405.

³⁶³ Ibid., 405.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 405.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 406.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 406.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 406.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 406.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 406.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 407.

The concluding portion of this argument returns to the idea of righteousness. Following Pauline theology, Augustine defends the notion that the law is unable to justify a person for their transgressions and only Christ has the power to justify and transform. Thus, the old testament is old by chronology (as it was given in an “earlier time”) but also in its testimony on the nature of humanity; it is the “old man” that is represented in it while the new testament shows the “new man.”³⁷¹ Building on the previously established notions of earthly and heavenly promises, Augustine claims: “But if God is worshipped for the sake of that earthly happiness, the worship is that of a slave, belonging to the children of the bondmaid; but if for the sake of God Himself, so that in the life eternal God may be all things in all, it is a free service belonging to the children of the freewoman, who is our mother eternal in the heavens...”³⁷² Though she was once barren, the free mother has now surpassed the bondmaid and her children.³⁷³ This section concludes with a statement concerning the Holy Spirit’s role in the lives of the children of promise during the times of the old testament.³⁷⁴

Essentially, the treatment of Hagar remains consistent in both of Augustine’s responses to the Pelagians. The temporal and earthly nature of Hagar, and by extension, of the Old Covenant, recedes in importance in light of the free woman and the New Covenant, which bring into fulfillment the promised spiritual blessings and identity as recipients of grace. These themes will be continued in Augustine’s masterpiece, *The City of God*.

The City of God

³⁷¹ Ibid., 408.

³⁷² Ibid., 408.

³⁷³ Ibid., 408.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 408.

The last great literary work of Augustine embodies the classifications of both theological treatise and polemic argument. Crafted in response to the crumbling of the Rome Empire, beginning with the sacking of Rome in 410 CE,³⁷⁵ *The City of God* offers consolation by emphasizing the mysterious working of God throughout history and the primacy of the Christian's heavenly citizenship.³⁷⁶ The book narrates the complex relationship between the members of the heavenly city and the earthly city, destined to be intermingled with one another until the last judgment during which God will separate the cities.³⁷⁷ Paul's allegory of Hagar and Sarah is critical in providing the language and framework for the cities and their respective associations. The presentation of the two cities provides a commentary of history which allows Christians to theologically explore their identity through the increasing awareness of God's salvific engagement with the world. The first ten books of the work contain Augustine's defense against classical Roman paganism; the remainder is a case for true Christian worship as explored through the origins, history, and ends of the two cities.³⁷⁸

Augustine connects the formation and origins of the heavenly city to the creation account of Genesis 1. The light God created and separated from the darkness was not merely a physical source but a form of knowledge: "For either this was some corporeal light, whether in the upper parts of the world, far beyond our sight, or from which the sun was later set alight, or else the word light was used to signify the holy city, made up of

³⁷⁵ Augustine, *The City of God: De Civitate Dei*. Translated by William Babcock, Boniface Ramsey, and Augustinian Heritage Institute. The Works of Saint Augustine Books, a Translation for the 21st Century / Augustinian Heritage Institute; Pt. 1 Vol. 6. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), x.

³⁷⁶ Brown, 250.

³⁷⁷ James Wetzel, *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge Critical Guides, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

holy angels and blessed spirits, of which the Apostle says, *the Jerusalem above, our eternal mother in heaven* (Gen. 4:26), and says again in another place, *For you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness* (1 Thess. 5:5).³⁷⁹ begins a foundation for types of knowledge; Augustine describes creature knowledge is like evening, but turns into morning when directed to love of Creator. However, the implication that the heavenly city/Jerusalem of above is associated with light at the beginning of creation is important to note, as it demonstrates the eternality of the city and the obvious connection with theologically positive themes, such as light.

Book XV traces the two cities throughout history, beginning in the Genesis narrative of Cain and Abel. During this history, Israel became an earthly image of the heavenly city, "... an image signifying the truth, even though not presenting it as distinctly as it would come to be."³⁸⁰ Logically, the Galatians allegory is introduced at this point to highlight the apostolic connection to the idea of the two cities. The earthly city is a prefigurment of the heavenly city, and it even had a prior prefigurement in the form of Hagar – she was "a kind of image of this image."³⁸¹ Nevertheless, the images are no longer needed when the truth, as represented by Sarah and the heavenly city, is revealed; therefore, there is justification in casting out Hagar and her son (Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30) and for leaving behind the earthly city.³⁸² With the collective memory of the destruction of Rome, the fleeting nature of the earthly city, as represented by Hagar, increases the need to embrace one's alliance with the eternal, heavenly city.

³⁷⁹ Augustine, *The City of God: De Civitate Dei*, 7-8.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 140.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 141.

³⁸² Ibid., 141.

An excursus is given describing the heavenly city whose citizens are born from grace; the essential theme of the members of the heavenly city is their love, which enables commonality and charity.³⁸³ Following Paul's interpretation, Augustine cites Abraham's two sons as exemplifying this dichotomy: "Both sons, obviously enough, came from Abraham's seed, but one was begotten in the ordinary way, showing how nature works, while the other was given by promise, signifying divine grace. In one case, human practice is displayed; in the other, divine beneficence is acclaimed."³⁸⁴ Augustine's persuasion of his audience to desire the identification with the children of grace/members of the heavenly city is the driving force of these descriptions.

Book XVI continues the unfolding ancestral history from Genesis to demonstrate the presence of the two cities. Thus, Augustine must address the Genesis 16 account of the birth of Ishmael, though he does so sparingly, having already considered the matter to have been discussed in XV with the allegory. Following in the tradition of previous interpreters, the circumstances are carefully explained to protect the virtue of the patriarch.³⁸⁵ Despite the birth of Ishmael, the emphasis is on Isaac as the true heir. This is referenced as the comfort given to Abraham when he was initially hesitant to cast out Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:12-13).³⁸⁶

A refrain of the rejection of Hagar and Ishmael is included in the rejection of Saul's kingship. The division of the Israelite kingdom, both at the time when the leadership was taken away from Saul and later under Rehoboam's reign, is yet another

³⁸³ Wetzel, 39.

³⁸⁴ Augustine, *The City of God: De Civitate Dei*, 141.

³⁸⁵ "...the behavior of both Hagar and Sarah in Genesis 16 is compared unfavorably to the 'temperance' of Abraham." [Thompson, 37]

³⁸⁶ Augustine, *The City of God: De Civitate Dei*, 222.

example of the two cities. Augustine describes them as “...the Israel that is the enemy of Christ and the Israel that adheres to Christ, the Israel that belongs to the maidservant and the Israel that belongs to the free women. For these two peoples were at first together, just as Abraham still adhered to the maidservant until the barren woman, now made fertile by the grace of Christ, cried out, *Cast out the maidservant and her son* (Gn. 21:10).³⁸⁷ In the narrative of Saul, God’s decision to withdraw kingship “was shown to be eternal and immutable” by the qualification that God would never repent or change the decision.³⁸⁸ Likewise, the division between the two spiritual Israels is considered to be permanent. Augustine asserts the power of the Israel belonging to the free woman (ie., the Church) to be the true and dominate force in the narrative of salvation history. Augustine states that the Old Covenant from Mount Sinai (Gal 4:24) “is only of benefit because it points to the new.”³⁸⁹ This is reminiscent of Paul’s argument in Galatians 3:19-25 and serves as final iteration of Augustine’s understanding of the temporality of the Old Covenant as symbolizes as Hagar.

Evaluation

As a defender of the Catholic Church in times of crises, Augustine has the most significant quantitative and qualitative treatment of Hagar among the early Christian theologians explored in this thesis. Furthermore, as a culmination of the Christian tradition, Augustine’s interpretations have traces of influence from previous interpreters. Augustine continues the tradition of upholding Abraham Sarah, and Isaac as virtuous examples despite the questionable circumstances of their narratives. Hagar (and Ishmael)

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 256.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 255.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 256

are always representative of inferiority. The only sympathetic treatment of Hagar is in the letter to Boniface, in which Augustine seems to consider her suffering, but even that is constructed into a moral claim that one suffers because of sin, which is used to support civil intervention in the conflict with the Donatists.

The allegorical nature of Hagar and related symbols (earthly city, old covenant) are so frequently used that discerning his theological perspectives of biblical interpretation and of the relationship between the two Covenants is clearer than the previous receivers. Augustine used Hagar as a symbol to illustrate the teachings of the Church on Scripture as a way to settle disputes with various groups. Like Origen, a major critique of the opposition was their misunderstanding of Scriptures and the need to rectify their misleading teachings with the true meaning of Scripture; often this was derived from an allegorical and intertextual perspective. Nevertheless, Thompson aptly summarizes Hagar's function in Augustine's writings: she is nothing more than "a hammer against his foes."³⁹⁰ Augustine's treatment of Hagar epitomizes her symbolic power in delineating the boundaries of the Church's position on hermeneutics and identity in times of religious conflict.

³⁹⁰ Thompson, 36.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

“In contrast to a political event, a literary event has no unavoidable consequences subsisting on their own that no succeeding generation can ever escape. A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it – if there are readers who again appropriate the past work or authors who want to imitate, outdo, or refute it.”³⁹¹ - Jauss

As the reception proves, Hagar is a symbol of conflict for many interpreters, particularly addressing contexts where group identity, power, and ideology are contested. With the major works from each of the early Christians selected for examination in this thesis now adequately examined, larger conclusions to the interpretation of Hagar during this period can be fully expressed. The primary development in the history of reception and the types of conflict which Hagar represents will be discussed.

Primary Development: Allegorical Interpretation

While some details of the Genesis accounts make their way into various reflections, particularly with Origen, it is the Galatians passage which is the most influential for Christian interpreters.³⁹² Two main reasons exist for this: intertextuality and the flexibility of allegory. Many of the theological battles and skirmishes in the early Church revolved around the Scriptures including finer points of Christology, as well as questions around the nature, function, and proper execution of Scripture. Particularly valuable to these conversations about the Bible were Paul’s reflections as they provided the guidance and standard of how to mediate the tensions within Scripture and between Scripture and praxis. Paul’s creation of the Hagar-Sarah allegory to comment on the

³⁹¹ Jauss, 22.

³⁹² As discussed in the Galatians chapter, while Philo is considered to be one of the earliest proponents for allegorical interpretation, his allegory is different than Paul’s more typological approach.

nature of the two covenants can be adapted to nearly any discussion of a similar topic, as allegories of any type have a timeless element to the message. As Paul's allegorical style most closely resembles typology, which grounds overarching messages in historical events, the early Christians continued this style. The status of the Apostle Paul in the early Church as well as the flexibility of the allegory made it an excellent rhetorical maneuver to succeed in argument. Essentially, Paul sanctioned the framework of language for using Hagar to address religious conflict.

Revisiting Religious Conflict

By revisiting the definition of religious conflict as put forth by Wendy Mayer, the various writings explored through this thesis can be categorized by their contested domains. The complexity of conflict permits several domains to be contested simultaneously. The dominate categories are ideology, power, and identity.

The Genesis narratives portray Hagar in the midst of the contested domains of power, as demonstrated by the social dynamics of Abraham's family, and identity, as both Sarah's and Hagar's conflict centers around their identification through fertility statuses. In Paul's letter to Galatians, Hagar is used to further the argument over the notions of ideology (how to approach the Old Testament rituals), power (which faction of belief will become normative for the community), personality (as Paul asserts himself as the mother of the congregation and as an apostle with his own authority), and identity (how the community understands themselves theologically as children of promise, and to expand the identity of the community beyond ethnic-cultural markers).

Every instance of Hagar in the works of Origen that has been surveyed reveals a consistency in utilizing Hagar to contest ideology (particularly related to hermeneutics)

and by extension the domain of identity is contested to incorporate Origen's style of hermeneutics as being the true representation of Christians who have progressed in their faith to comprehend the spiritual depths of Scripture. Power is contested as Origen positions himself, and those who identify with his teaching, against those who insist on different ideology. This occurs on several levels: within the Church, the congregation is designated into distinct groups, with one being favored and defended; outside of the congregation, Origen contends with the pagan Celsus to defend the Church as a reasonable and intellectual entity in society.

In Chrysostom's works, the three contested domains specifically focus on discouraging his congregation from participating in Jewish rituals and practices. By arguing for the superiority of the New Testament over the Old Testament (ideology), Chrysostom intends to conform his audience to distinctively Christian practices and identity, as well as attempting to secure social power for the church in the religiously diverse community of Antioch. Hagar appears consistently as a representation of the Old Testament/Jewish tradition which Chrysostom argues as irrelevant with the emergence of the Christian faith. Additionally, Chrysostom addresses the domain of power within traditional household structures by expounding on the Genesis narratives of Hagar, seeking to maintain the authority of the husbands over the women and servants of the house.

Augustine's treatment of Hagar reveals similar domains and implications as the previous Christian interpreters. Ideologically, Hagar represents those outside the "traditional" faith of the Catholic Church which Augustine seeks to defend; once again, this primarily is directed against hermeneutical ideas concerning the relationship of the

two Testaments. Identity becomes the natural extension of ideology. *City of God* is the most developed work concerning identity formation, as it allows Christians to theologically explore their identity through the descriptions of the two cities. In his African context, power continues to be contested by groups with preferences towards the Old Testament (the Donatists and the Jews); the Catholic Church struggled to maintain power over the sectarian groups despite having the civic favor of the Roman Empire. Augustine's conflict with the Pelagians represents an attempt to gain theological influence and significance in the wider scope of the Church.

The research presented in this thesis has contained its limited exploration of conflict and identity through the symbol of Hagar to the early Christian church in the Mediterranean. This contextual exploration has demonstrated the important role of rhetoric in determining in-group/out-group biases for the Christian community. While it is critical for religious groups to shape and articulate their distinctive identities, this process becomes complicated when they share a common authoritative text and tradition with other groups. The outcomes of these ideological battles within the Christian community are by no means confined only to that community; the possibility exists for other religious or political groups to become involved. The tenuous relationship between Christianity and Judaism is furthered when interpretations are imitated and applied without consideration of historical nuances and contextual distance.

Conclusion

The reception of Hagar in the works of these representatives of early Christianity has demonstrated the diachronic persistence of conflict within various levels of community (families, sects within a religious tradition, separate religious institutions, and

even the civic sphere). Though a necessary occurrence in constructing identity, one ought to consider the potentially harmful implications of the narrative framing of the conflict. While each of the receivers ideally considered love of God and neighbor to be the primary intent of hermeneutics, their arguments often resulted in a theological stance which promoted exclusion and degradation of those with whom they disagreed. The value in observing the reception of Hagar as a symbol of conflict is to become better aware of the essence of religious conflict, the selection of biblical texts in the process of engaging these contested domains, and the impact the rhetorical framing of conflict has on various levels of community.

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