

Book Review of: *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*,

Author: Paula Fredricksen, published by Doubleday, 2008, 488 pages.

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Reviewed by Robert Sungenis

Paula Fredriksen is a Jewish professor at the Religion department of Boston University. She resides both in Boston and Jerusalem. She has written a number of books about Christ and Christianity, including *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, which won her the 1999 National Jewish Book Award, and *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ*, which was used as a working document for a popular *Frontline* documentary. In addition to *Augustine and the Jews*, she has also written *Augustine on Romans*. In 2004, she was highly critical of Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of the Christ*, claiming, *inter alia*, that the movie was "inaccurate" in many places. It is my understanding that Ms. Fredriksen does not claim to be a Christian; rather, she is a Jewish historian of Christianity, much like Amy Jill Levine is a Jewish professor of New Testament at Vanderbilt University but is a practicing Jew. By all counts, Ms. Fredriksen is from the liberal school of academic theology and she treats the subject of Jesus and Christianity from that perspective. This school of thought, by and large, does not believe Scripture is divinely inspired (in the traditional definition), and thus the history and even the theology is only a product of its human authors. One of Ms. Fredriksen's more controversial claims is that the Jews had little or nothing to do with the execution of Jesus, the responsibility for that event being laid solely at the feet of the Romans.

The title of Ms. Fredriksen's new work, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, is another in a line of treatises written by Jewish scholars (and liberal Catholics partial to Jewish historiography) for the purpose of promoting a Christian stamp of approval upon modern Judaism as a viable and divinely accepted religion, as well as to show evidence where the Church thought more highly of the Jews than other non-Christian religions. The publisher is quite candid with at least one of the reasons the book was published: "*Augustine and the Jews* sheds new light on the origins of anti-Semitism and, through Augustine, opens a path toward better understanding between two of the world's great religions." Even though the Jews specifically reject the central tenet of the Christian faith, namely, that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, Ms. Fredriksen seeks to convince her reader that there is a "Christian defense" for Judaism, hoping to mollify any anti-Jewish sentiment remaining from the Catholic patristic and medieval eras. In doing so, she introduces the novel idea that Augustine, at least in the latter stages of his career, should be seen as the pioneering Catholic who creates a new and favorable Jewish apologetic for the Catholic Church, which is a dramatic shift from "any volume of Augustine's sermons [that] reveals the familiar themes of *adversus Iudaeos* invective: Jews are blind, hard-hearted, fleshly, stubborn, and prideful; they murdered Christ; they are exiles; they carry the church's books; they are saved only by conversion" (*Augustine and the Jews*, p. 311). In creating the new Augustine, however, Ms. Fredriksen admits she has one big strike against her. The other Fathers and the Church at large prior to and contemporaneous with Augustine's supposed new thought, do not provide any such defense of the Jews and Judaism, which seems to be the reason that Doubleday views them, and even the early Augustine, as fomenting "the origins of anti-Semitism." According to the publisher, and most likely Ms.

Fredriksen herself, Augustine stands alone in the effort to make Judaism one of “the world’s great religions.”¹ Whether she is right or wrong on this thesis, in part or in whole, will be the main subject of my review.

Recently, Ms. Fredriksen wrote a summary article of *Augustine and the Jews* for the annual edition of *US News and World Report’s* “Mysteries of Faith” for December 2009. Whether it is relevant or not, it should be stated that *US News and World Report* has a heavily-weighted Jewish editorial board, with the editor-in-chief being Mortimer B. Zuckerman, and the *Mysteries of Faith* editors being Peter W. Bernstein and senior editor Amy D. Bernstein. Be that as it may, since Ms. Fredriksen has summarized the main and most convincing arguments from her book in this short three-page article, for the sake of brevity we will draw mainly from it in our review but will consult her book for clarification on certain issues.

In line with the above observation that Ms. Fredriksen views Augustine as holding the pioneering opinion for the Catholic Church in regards to the Jews, the subtitle she or the editors chose for the *US News* article is: “Alone among his peers, this leader of the early church gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society.” The editor (probably one of the Bernstein’s noted above) then says: “She [Fredriksen] argues that Augustine gradually began to see their [the Jews’] role as different from pagans and schismatics, concluding that Jews should not be forced to conform to the new Christian orthodoxy.” Actually, Ms. Fredriksen goes a little further, for she asserts that Augustine promoted the idea that the continued existence of the Jews and Judaism was under the vigilance of God to such a point that “the synagogues of the late Roman Empire” testify to the fact that this protection is from “God himself,” and from this the reader is to infer that because “the Jews...should be unimpeded in their religious practice,” God had no pressing interest to have the Jews convert to the Christian faith, for He wanted “the Jews to remain Jews.” Here is Ms. Fredriksen’s opening paragraph:

“In the twilight of the Western Roman Empire, Augustine of Hippo, one of the church’s greatest theologians and thinkers, presented his interpretation of Psalm 59 in his masterwork, *City of God*. He argued there that *the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities within the newly Christian state, should be unimpeded in their religious practice*. Why did the Jews merit this unique exemption? Because, said Augustine, their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father. The same god whom Christians worshiped was himself the source of Jewish Scripture, Jewish tradition, and Jewish practice. *Thus God himself, Augustine insisted, wanted the Jews to remain Jews*. Let them preserve their ancient books, he urged; let them live openly according to their ancestral practices while scattered among the Christian majority. Is no doing Augustine taught, the Jews performed a valuable service of testimony for the church.” (emphasis added)

Ms. Fredriksen then quotes a paragraph from Augustine’s *City of God* as supporting documentation. The quote is cited by Ms. Fredriksen with three ellipses:

By the evidence of their own scriptures they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ. ... It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our scriptures, their

¹ Ms. Fredriksen suggests that bishop Paulinus of Nola may have originated some of these ideas, but she is not sure. She mentions Paulinus on pages 304 and 325 of her book as a possible source for Augustine’s “novel” idea.

scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with blind eyes. ... It is in order to give this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they supply for our benefit by their possession and preservation of those books [of the Old Testament] that they are themselves dispersed among all nations, wherever the Christian church spreads. ... Hence the prophecy in the Book of Psalms: 'Slay them not, lest they forget your law; scatter them by your might.'

First, we must assume that Ms. Fredriksen believes this quote from Augustine is the single strongest passage that proves her thesis, since she offers no other quote for support, at least in this particular article for *US News*. The quote comes from Book 18, Chapter 46 of the *City of God*. The entire chapter reads as follows (I will italicize the pertinent lines):

But the Jews who slew Him, and would not believe in Him, because it behooved Him to die and rise again, were yet more miserably wasted by the Romans, and utterly rooted out from their kingdom, where aliens had already ruled over them, and were dispersed through the lands (so that indeed there is no place where they are not), and are thus *by their own Scriptures a testimony to us that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ*. And very many of them, considering this, even before His passion, but chiefly after His resurrection, believed on Him, of whom it was predicted, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant shall be saved." But the rest are blinded, of whom it was predicted, "Let their table be made before them a trap, and a retribution, and a stumbling-block. Let their eyes be darkened lest they see, and bow down their back always." *Therefore, when they do not believe our Scriptures, their own, which they blindly read, are fulfilled in them, lest perchance any one should say that the Christians have forged these prophecies about Christ which are quoted under the name of the sibyl, or of others, if such there be, who do not belong to the Jewish people*. For us, indeed, *those suffice which are quoted from the books of our enemies, to whom we make our acknowledgment, on account of this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they contribute by their possession of these books*, while they themselves are dispersed among all nations, wherever the Church of Christ is spread abroad. For a prophecy about this thing was sent before in the Psalms, which they also read, where it is written, "My God, His mercy shall prevent me. My God hath shown me concerning mine enemies, *that Thou shalt not slay them, lest they should at last forget Thy law: disperse them in Thy might*." Therefore God has shown the Church in her enemies the Jews *the grace of His compassion, since, as saith the apostle, "their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles"*. And therefore He has not slain them, that is, He has not let the knowledge that they are Jews be lost in them, although they have been conquered by the Romans, *lest they should forget the law of God, and their testimony should be of no avail in this matter of which we treat*. But it was not enough that he should say, "Slay them not, lest they should at last forget Thy law," unless he had also added, "Disperse them;" *because if they had only been in their own land with that testimony of the Scriptures, and not every where, certainly the Church which is everywhere could not have had them as witnesses among all nations* to the prophecies which were sent before concerning Christ.

Augustine says something similar in his commentary on the Psalms:

But of the enemies themselves what? "*Slay them not, lest sometime they forget Thy law*." He is making request for his enemies, he is fulfilling the commandment. ... Slay not them of whom

the sins Thou slay. But what is it to be slain? To forget the law of the Lord. It is real death, to go into the pit of sin; *this indeed may be also understood of the Jews*. Why of the Jews, “Slay not them, lest sometime they forget Thy law”? Those very enemies of mine, that have slain me, do not Thou slay. Let the nation of the Jews remain: certes conquered it hath been by the Romans certes effaced is the city of them, Jews are not admitted into their city, and yet Jews there are. For all those provinces by the Romans have been subjugated. Who now can distinguish the nations in the Roman empire the one from the other, inasmuch as all have become Romans and all are called Romans? *The Jews nevertheless remain with a mark*; nor in such sort conquered have they been, as that by the conquerors they have been swallowed up. *Not without reason is there that Cain, on whom, when he had slain his brother, God set a mark in order that no one should slay him. This is the mark which the Jews have: they hold fast by the remnant of their law, they are circumcised, they keep Sabbaths, they sacrifice the Passover; they eat unleavened bread. These are therefore Jews, they have not been slain, they are necessary to believing nations. Why so?* In order that He may show to us among our enemies His mercy. “My God hath shown to me in mine enemies.” *He shows His mercy to the wild-olive grafted on branches that have been cut off because of pride*. Behold where they lie, that were proud, behold where thou hast been grafted, that didst lie: and be not thou proud, lest thou should deserve to be cut off. (*Homilies on the Psalms, 59, 18*).

“Scatter them abroad in Thy virtue.” *Now this thing hath been done: throughout all nations there have been scattered abroad the Jews, witnesses of their own iniquity and our truth*. They have themselves writings, out of which hath been prophesied Christ, and we hold Christ. And if sometime perchance any heathen man shall have doubted, when we have told him the prophecies of Christ, at the clearness whereof he is amazed, and *wondering hath supposed that they were written by ourselves, then out of the copies of the Jews we prove, how this thing so long time before had been foretold*. See after what sort by means of our enemies we confound other enemies. “Scatter them abroad in Thy virtue:” take away from them “virtue,” take away from them their strength. “And bring them down, my protector, O Lord.” “The transgressions of their mouth, the discourse of their lips: and let them be taken in their pride: and out of cursing and lying shall be declared consummations, in the anger of consummation, and they shall not be” (verse 12). Obscure words these are, and I fear lest they be not well instilled.

For, behold, *the Jews are enemies, whom this Psalm seems to imply; the law of God they hold, and therefore of them hath been said, “Slay not them, lest sometime they forget Thy law:” in order that the nation of Jews might remain, and by it remaining the number of Christians might increase*. Throughout all nations they remain certainly, and Jews they are, nor have they ceased to be what they were: that is, this nation hath not so yielded to Roman institutions, as to have lost the form of Jews; but hath been subjected to the Romans so as that it still retains its own laws; which are the laws of God. But what in their case hath been done? “Ye tithe mint and cummin, and have forsaken the weightier matters of the law, mercy, and judgment, straining a gnat, but swallowing a camel.” This to them the Lord saith. And in truth so they are; they hold the law, hold the Prophets; read all things, sing all things: the light of the Prophets therein they see not, which is Christ Jesus. Not only Him now they see not, when he is sitting in Heaven: but not even at that tithe saw they Him, when among them humble He was walking, and they were made guilty by shedding the blood of the Same; but not all. This even to-day we commend

to the notice of your Love. Not all: because many of them were turned to Him whom they slew, and by believing on Him, they obtained pardon even for the shedding of His blood: and they have given an example for men; how they ought not to despair that sin of whatsoever kind would be remitted to them, since even the killing of Christ was remitted to them confessing. (On Psalm 59:19)

Now let's look at the actual verses and a little context from Psalm 59:10-16 upon which Augustine is commenting. This rendition comes from the *Revised Standard Version*:

⁸But thou, O Lord, dost laugh at them; thou dost hold all the nations in derision. ⁹O my Strength, I will sing praises to thee; for thou, O God, art my fortress. ¹⁰My God in his steadfast love will meet me; my God will let me look in triumph on my enemies. ¹¹*Slay them not, lest my people forget; make them totter by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield!* ¹²For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. For the cursing and lies which they utter, ¹³consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more, that men may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth. Selah ¹⁴Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city. ¹⁵they roam about for food, and growl if they do not get their fill. ¹⁶But I will sing of thy might; I will sing aloud of thy steadfast love in the morning. For thou hast been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.

First we see that Psalm 59 is actually referring to “the nations” who are the enemies of the Psalmist, not the Jews, *per se*. But Augustine explains in his commentary, “...this indeed may be also understood of the Jews.” Be that as it may, one can easily see from reading the context of Augustine’s statements on Psalm 59 from both *The City of God* and *Commentary on the Psalms* that we are hard pressed to see him doing what Ms. Fredriksen claims he is doing. Despite Ms. Fredriksen’s gratuitous word choice on what Augustine extracts from Psalm 59 (e.g., Augustine “gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society,” or “the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities...should be unimpeded in their religious practice,” or “their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father,” and “God himself...wanted the Jews to remain Jews,” or “Augustine’s...teaching on the Jews’ special status,” which are all stated on just one page of her three-page article – later calling the Jews “history’s Pole Star, a continuing quotidian revelation of God’s will shining in the darkness of secular time” on page 3), she makes it appear as if Augustine had such a high esteem for the Jews that he was compelled to sanction Judaism as a divinely legitimized religion in and of itself. In effect, Ms. Fredriksen transforms Augustine’s brief commentary on Psalm 59 into a thesis holding that Judaism survives under the hand of God as an adjunct religion to Christianity. This is not unlike the conclusions we hear from Ms. Fredriksen’s ideological colleagues today (e.g., Amy Jill Levine, John Pawlikowski, Eugene Fisher, Mary C. Boys, Rabbi David Rosen, and many others). As such, we now have a clearer picture why Ms. Fredriksen chose the subtitle: “A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism” for she wishes to implant in her reader’s mind that Christian doctrine, at least if one looks at it through the pioneering eyes of her new and improved Augustine, defends Judaism as a genuine and viable religion, for it is required to do so because Judaism “devolved from a unique author: God the Father” who is “the same god (sic) whom Christians worshiped.”

What, in fact, Ms. Fredriksen has done is turn Augustine’s reluctant concession to the Jews into an unconditional commitment to them. But if one reads carefully, and in context, Augustine’s remarks in

both the *City of God* and his *Commentary on the Psalms* they show only that he believes God allows unbelieving Jews (which is the vast majority of Jews) to exist purely for the sake of Christianity, not for the sake of “Jews as Jews,” nor to extend, legitimize, or encourage Judaism in the Christian era. As we will see later in other quotes, Augustine is clear in his writings that Judaism is a dead religion and that the only way Jews can have any spiritual hope is if they accept Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. In fact, the italicized portions above make it quite clear that the only real value Augustine sees in God allowing the rebellious Jews to exist (not including the remnant of Jews coming to salvation in Christ) is that they, in their religion of Judaism, continue to preserve God’s testimony against them in the books of the Old Testament, a preservation God is happy to use for his own advantage in order to: (a) increase the authenticity of the Christian religion which draws from the Old Testament in its testimony to the nations about the coming of Christ, and (b) to prove from the Old Testament why both the Jews and Judaism were rejected by God in favor of Christianity. We might say, in fact, that Augustine has few qualms about portraying God as ‘using’ the Jews (in the pejorative sense) to accomplish his judgment against the Jews. God allows the Jew to continue to exist not because he favors the Jews at large or sees spiritual value in Judaism as a God-glorifying religion, but because the Jew possesses something that is indispensable in vindicating God against the Jew – the Old Testament Scriptures which condemn them for their sins. Analogously, we might say that God punishes the Jew by making him carry the condemnation of Scripture like a ball and chain to whatever land he goes. This is not unusual for the God of Scripture. There are numerous instances in which he uses the sin and rebellion of the people to accomplish his will, but punishes the same people with their own sin while his will is being accomplished.

Unfortunately, we barely get glimpses of this darker side of the saga from the pen of Ms. Fredriksen. Similar to many authors today who defend Judaism as a viable and God-glorifying religion (*e.g.*, David Klinghoffer’s: “Why the Jews Rejected Jesus”; Max Dimont’s “Jews, God and History; Aaron Milavec’s “Salvation is from the Jews”; George Gilder’s: “The Israel Test,” and many others), Ms. Fredriksen fails to make even one mention of the notorious and sinful history of the Jews that can be found in flipping just a few pages of the Old Testament. In fact, the heinous sins of the Jews is the very reason that the Psalmist is writing Psalm 59. It is why he wishes that despite the seeming temporary plea to “slay them not” in verses 11 or 12 (verse 11 in the Hebrew and verse 12 in the LXX), he insists immediately in the next verses that God should “consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more,” which seems somewhat contradictory and which may have led the New American Bible to translate the previous verse as “slay them” instead of “slay them not,” and actually makes more sense in light of verse 13-14’s plea for their destruction.²

² The New American Bible (NAB) has “slay them” where most other translations have “slay them not.” Verses 12-14 of Psalm 59 in the NAB read: “O God, slay them, lest they beguile my people; shake them by your power, and bring them down, O Lord our Shield! By the sin of their mouths and the word of their lips let them be caught in their arrogance, for the lies they have told under oath. Consume them in wrath; consume, till they are no more that men may know that God is the ruler of Jacob, yes to the ends of the earth.” This 1993-1994 edition of the NAB has the imprimatur and nihil obstat, and states that the Old Testament text was taken from the 1970 New American Bible. Curiously, the 1899 Douay-Rheims has “slay them not” as does the Protestant American Standard 1901, Geneva Bible 1599, King James 1611, New American Standard 1975, 1995; New International Version 1984; New Revised Standard 1989, as does the Jewish Complete Jewish Bible 1998. The LXX also has “slay them not” as does the Hebrew. The traditional Latin Vulgate, the Clementine Vulgate 1598, the Glossa Ordinaria Migne Edition 1880 and the *Nova Vulgata* have “ne occidas” (the whole of verse 12 reads: Deus ostendet mihi super inimicos meos ne occidas eos nequando obliviscantur populi mei disperge illos in virtute tua et depone eos protector meus Domine),

Additionally, the only apparent reason the Psalmist asks God to “slay them not” is *not* for the purpose of showing mercy to the Jews at large but, as he says “lest my people forget.” The phrase “my people” intimates that the sole purpose of not slaying the wicked is to show a vivid sign to the *Psalmist’s* people (*i.e.*, the faithful Jews or nations) of how God punishes sinners without taking their lives.

This in itself is an important point in the exegesis of Psalm 59 since Ms. Fredriksen is under the impression that the clause in question applies only to those who were “slain not,” and, more importantly, she does not attempt to correct or even question Augustine’s approach to the verse. It would have helped if Ms. Fredriksen had examined the Hebrew of Psalm 59 (which would have been Jerome’s preference) as opposed to merely quoting the Septuagint (LXX) that Augustine used.³ The LXX says: “Slay them not, lest *they* forget your law,”⁴ whereas the Hebrew says: “Do not slay them lest *my* people forget...”⁵ The difference between the two is the LXX’s use of “they” as opposed to the adjectival pronoun “my” used in the Hebrew; as well as the LXX’s addition of “forget your law” whereas the Hebrew merely has “forget,” yet this is not true with every LXX translation.⁶ The Hebrew makes a distinction between “them” and “my,” thus referring to two different sets of people, whereas the LXX connects “them” with “they” thus referring to the same people with the same law. Quite a difference.

This problem is further compounded by the fact that Augustine didn’t know Hebrew and rarely used it, but he didn’t know Greek much better, only acquiring a reading knowledge of it very late in his career. As such, we must posit that Augustine was in no position to make a definitive exegesis of Psalm 59:11-12, especially since Ms. Fredriksen is seeking to use it as not only the definitive passage that shows a change in Augustine’s view of the Jews, but the sole passage that leads Augustine in that direction. How Ms. Fredriksen can make such claims without addressing these exegetical contingencies, contingencies that would not only affect Augustine’s view of Psalm 59:11-12 but Ms. Fredriksen’s overall understanding of Augustine’s view of the Jews, is quite surprising for a scholar of her reputation.

Of course, coming from the liberal school of theology, Ms. Fredriksen wouldn’t see the Hebrew as the correct text over against the LXX because, as a rule, these scholars do not believe the Hebrew was divinely inspired, but that both the Hebrew and the LXX were products only of the human author. In the

which creates the problem of whether “ne” is a conjunction meaning “that not” or an adverbial particle of assurance meaning “indeed, truly, assuredly.” The former would be translated “do not slay” while the latter would be translated “surely kill,” but this could only be a possibility if “ne” is followed by a personal or demonstrative pronoun, but here it is followed by a verb.

³ This omission of Ms. Fredriksen’s is odd in light of the fact that she spends the first seven pages of this chapter titled “Slay Them Not” discussing the differences between Jerome’s partiality to the Hebrew and Augustine’s esteem of the Septuagint, but never applies the outcome of these differences to the crucial passage at hand, namely, Psalm 59:11-12, yet she italicizes the clause “so that they may not forget your Law” in her rendering of Augustine’s citing of it.

⁴ Μη ἀποκτείνης αὐτούς μήποτε ἐπιλάθωνται τοῦ νόμου σου.

⁵ אֲל־תַּהַרְגֵם בְּן־יִשְׁכַּח עַמִּי

⁶ Other versions of the LXX, however, have μήποτε ἐπιλάθωνται τοῦ λαοῦ σου (“lest they forget my people”) as opposed to μήποτε ἐπιλάθωνται τοῦ νόμου σου (“lest they forget your law”).

beginning of the chapter in her book titled “Slay Then Not,” Ms. Fredricksen notes that Augustine and Jerome sparred about the relevance of the LXX, but she fails to state that Jerome’s allegiance to the Hebrew was based on the fact that he, and the Church with him, held it as divinely inspired, whereas the same parties held the LXX as merely a translation created by 70 Alexandrian Jewish scholars a few centuries before Christ of the original Hebrew texts of scripture. This would not be the first time that Augustine allegiance to the LXX and his ignoring of the Hebrew would cause problems in biblical exegesis. It was his idiosyncratic use of the LXX’s translation in Sirach 18:1, for example, that caused him to conclude that the creation account in Genesis 1 occurred in one day, in opposition to the consensus of Fathers who understood it as six days. Additionally, Augustine’s use of the LXX in Malachi 4, which has “Elijah the Tishbite” instead of only “Elijah” found in the Hebrew text, led Augustine to think that, because the word “Tishbite” was specified it meant that the actual Elijah must come from heaven to earth, causing him to sidestep Jesus’ affirmation that the Elijah of Malachi 4 was merely John the Baptist (*cf.* Mal. 4:5; Matt 11:14). The truth is, Augustine was more often a better theologian than he was an exegete of Scripture. As noted, he did not know the original languages of Scripture, but without them it is very difficult to know precisely what a given text is saying, especially if there is discrepancy or ambiguity.

Without these checks and balances in exegesis, we can see why Ms. Fredriksen, working off the LXX, has few qualms using Augustine’s remarks on Psalm 59:11-12 to conclude that the Jews of whom the Psalmist says “slay them not” are the same Jews who might “forget their law.” But the problem is not so much with Augustine’s use of the LXX, for as even Ms. Fredriksen admits, Augustine merely says that the Jews, “in their hearts they are our enemy; in their books, our witness” (p. 329), or in citing Augustine’s remark from his book *Against the Jews* 7, 9 she says, per Augustine, that “the Jews never realize that what they carry is actually a covenant for the Gentiles, to whom they unknowingly minister” (p. 330). The problem is not so much with Augustine but what Ms. Fredriksen then parlays from Augustine’s treatment of Psalm 59:11-12, such as, her intimation that if the Jews are not supposed to forget their law, then we might say that God wants the Jews, as Jews, to keep following the law not merely as “book carriers” for Christians but because Judaism itself is a God-ordained religion right alongside Christianity. It is difficult to relieve Ms. Fredriksen of such a bias when she spares no sprinkling in her article of such gratuitous remarks as: “Augustine gave the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society,” or “the Jews, alone of all the religious minorities...should be unimpeded in their religious practice,” or “their religious practices devolved from a unique author: God the Father,” and “God himself...wanted the Jews to remain Jews,” or “Augustine’s...teaching on the Jews’ special status,” or calling the Jews “history’s Pole Star, a continuing quotidian revelation of God’s will shining in the darkness of secular time.” Later we will see that Ms. Fredriksen buttresses these far-reaching conclusions by claiming that Augustine ceases using the “Cain analogy” when categorizing the Jews and replaces it with the idea that Cain applies to *both* Christian and Jews who are, together under God’s vigilance, marked strangers on earth, which, she says, Augustine develops in *The City of God*.

But before we get to that, let’s examine the remainder of Psalm 59. The Psalmist prays that God would “make them totter” and “bring them down” (Hebrew of verse 11). He says they are like “howling dogs prowling about the city” (Hebrew of verse 14). These are certainly not flattering pictures of the Jews. If anything, the Psalmist wishes to portray them as vagabonds who are allowed to survive only because they will serve as object lessons of disgrace and punishment to God’s faithful people. St. Paul did much the same with the Christians in the budding Church of the first century when he cited examples from the Old

Testament of God's wrath upon the sinful Jews and warned the Christians that the same could happen to them if they rebelled against God (*cf.* 1Co 10:1-12; Rm 15:14; Heb 3:1-4:16). Additionally, Ms. Fredriksen must deal with the clear image of calling for the Jews' "destruction" in verse 13 (14), both in the LXX and the Hebrew but even stronger in the LXX: "And for their cursing and falsehood shall utter destruction be announced, they shall fall by the wrath of utter destruction, and shall not be..."⁷ Ms. Fredriksen never explains how this verse jibes with her claims that verses 11-12 teach an indefinite sparing of the Jews.

As far as we can tell from Ms. Fredriksen's article and book, the Jews, merely because they are Jews, are to have a "special status" and a "privileged place in Christian society." Ms. Fredriksen, ignoring the context of Psalm 59, tries desperately to squeeze out a flattering picture of the Jews whereas a face value reading of the text, as well as Augustine's additional comments on this Psalm and the Jews elsewhere, teaches that the only "special status" that unbelieving Jews have is the ignominious privilege of being allowed to exist for the sole purpose of possessing something that is of value to God for the advancement of Christianity. How could God be expected to do less? Judaism is a religion which, at its core, rejects the very God of Christianity, Jesus Christ. How could Judaism have a "*privileged* place in Christian society" when its religion fits the description, as St. John says in his epistles, of "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist" (1 John 4:3)? This is the pink elephant in the room of ecumenical "dialogue" that everyone is staring at but few want to admit is staring back at them with a jaundiced eye, including Ms. Fredriksen.

In other books of Augustine's he reveals precisely the same motivation for his understanding of why God has allowed the unbelieving Jews to exist. From the context of his remarks we can easily see that it is not Augustine's purpose to flatter the Jews or to give them a divine status above other peoples, but to remind them of just how evil they were in their past history and that their existence at large today has nothing to do with their claims to personal virtue or religious merit. In his reply to Faustus the Manichean, Augustine writes:

In view of the multitudes from all nations who have become zealous believers in these books, it is laughably absurd to tell us that it is impossible to persuade a Gentile to learn the Christian faith from Jewish books. Indeed, it is a great confirmation of our faith that *such important testimony is borne by enemies*. The believing Gentiles cannot suppose these testimonies to Christ to be recent forgeries; for they find them in books held sacred for so many ages *by those who crucified Christ*, and still regarded with the highest veneration *by those who every day blaspheme Christ*. If the prophecies of Christ were the production of the preachers of Christ. we might suspect their genuineness. But now the preacher expounds *the text of the blasphemers*. In this way *the Most High God orders the blindness of the ungodly for the profit of the saint*, in His righteous government *bringing good out of evil that those who by their own choice live wickedly may be*, in His just judgment, *made the instruments of His will*. So, lest those that were to preach Christ to the world should be thought to have forged the prophecies which speak of Christ as to be born, to work miracles, to suffer unjustly, to die, to rise again, to ascend to heaven, to publish the gospel of eternal life among all nations, *the unbelief of the Jews has been made of signal benefit to us*; so that those who do not receive in their heart for their own good

⁷ Καὶ ἐξ ἀρᾶς καὶ ψεύδους διαγγελίσονται συντέλειαι ἐν ὀργῇ συντελείας καὶ οὐ μὴ ὑπάρξουσιν.

these truths, carry, in their hands for our benefit the writings in which these truths are contained. *And the unbelief of the Jews increases rather than lessens the authority of the books, for this blindness is itself, foretold.* They testify to the truth by their not understanding it. By not understanding the books which predict that they would not understand, they prove these books to be true (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 16, No. 21, emphasis added).

Earlier in the same book he says:

For among all their anointed ones the Jews looked for one who was to save them. But in the mysterious justice of God they were blinded; and thinking only of the power of the Messiah, they did not understand His weakness, in which He died for us. In the book of Wisdom it is prophesied of the Jews: “Let us condemn him to an ignominious death; for he will be proved in his words. If he is truly the Son of God, He will aid him; and deliver him from the hand of his enemies. Thus they thought, and erred; for their wickedness blinded them.” These words apply also to those who, in spite of all these evidences, in spite of such a series of prophecies, and of their fulfillment, still deny that Christ is foretold in the Scriptures. *As often as they repeat this denial, we can produce fresh proofs, with the help of Him who has made such provision against human perversity*, that proofs already given need not be repeated. (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 43, emphasis added).

One of the main reasons Augustine raises these arguments is that Faustus, like Marcion, believed that the Old Testament should be rejected. Augustine writes of Faustus as follows:

Faustus said: “Why do we not receive the Old Testament? Because when a vessel is full, what is poured on it is not received, but allowed to run over; and a full stomach rejects what it cannot hold. So the Jews, satisfied with the Old Testament, reject the New; and we who have received the New Testament from Christ, reject the Old. You receive both because you are only half filled with each, and the one is not completed, but corrupted by the other” (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 15, No. 1).

Augustine also defends the use of the Old Testament *via* the Jews in his *Treatise Against the Pelagians*:

Of that same kind were they who crucified the Lord, and continued in the same unbelief. Thence there are still their children in the great multitude of the Jews, although now the New Testament as it was prophesied is made plain and confirmed by the blood of Christ; and the gospel is made known from the river where He was baptized and began His teachings, even to the ends of the earth. *And these Jews, according to the prophecies which they read, are dispersed everywhere over all the earth, that even from their writings may not be wanting a testimony to Christian truth.* (*Treatise Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, Book 3, Ch. 9, emphasis added).

He argues the same way in his Sermons:

Mark now the time of the New Testament, consider well the nation of the Jews, thou wilt find it as a dry fleece; whereas the whole world, like that floor, is full of grace, not hidden, but manifested. Wherefore we are forced exceedingly to bewail our brethren, who strive not against hidden, but against open and manifested grace. There is allowance for the Jews. (*Sermon* 81, 9).

Commenting on various other Psalms, Augustine makes the same argument:

For the Jews slew Christ, lest they should lose their place. Christ slain, they lost their place. Rooted out of the kingdom were they, dispersed were they. He, raised up, requited them tribulation, He requited them unto admonition, not yet unto condemnation. For the city wherein the people raged, as a ramping and a roaring lion, crying out, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him,” the Jews rooted out therefrom, has now Christians, by not one Jew is inhabited. There is planted the Church of Christ, whence were rooted out the thorns of the synagogue. (*Homilies on the Psalms*, 41, 11).

Let none say, ‘Of the Jews said He this, I am not Israel; rather the Jews are not Israel.’ For the elder son, he is the elder people reprobated; the younger, the people beloved. “The elder shall serve the younger:” now is it fulfilled: now, brethren, *the Jews serve us, they are as our satchellers, we studying, they carry our books*. Hear wherein the Jews serve us, and not without reason....With them are the Law and the Prophets, in which Law, and in which Prophets, Christ is preached. When we have to do with Pagans, and show this coming to pass in the Church of Christ, which before was predicted of the Name of Christ, of the Head and Body of Christ, *lest they think that we have forged these predictions*, and from things which have happened, as though they were future, had made them up, *we bring forth the books of the Jews*. The Jews forsooth are our enemies, *from an enemy’s books convince we the adversary*....If any enemy clamor and say, “Ye for yourselves have forged prophecies” be the books of the Jews brought forth, because the elder shall serve the younger. Therein let them read those predictions, which now we see fulfilled; and let us all say, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting, and all the people shall say, So be it, So be it.” (*Homilies on the Psalms* 41, 13, emphasis added).

In another place, Augustine argues that the continued existence of the Jews is similar to the reason that St. Paul gives for God allowing the existence of heretics and heresies in the Church – to prove who is faithful in the Christian Church, not for the sake of the heretics:

However, all who accept and read any books of our canon in which Christ is spoken of as having been born and having suffered in the flesh, and who do not unite with us in a common veiling with the sacrament of the mortality, uncovered by the passion, but without the knowledge of piety and charity make known that from which we all are born, although they differ among themselves, *whether as Jews and heretics, or as heretics of one kind or other, are still all useful to the Church, as being all alike servants, either in bearing witness to or in proving some truth*. For of heretics it is said: “There must be heresies, that those who are approved among you may be manifested.” Go on, then, with your objections to the Old Testament Scriptures! Go on, ye servants of Ham! (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 24, emphasis added).

Similarly, in another place Augustine compares the Jews to Cain, the man who murdered his brother Abel but was spared with a mark to inhibit others from killing him:

But what does God reply? “Not so,” He says; “but whosoever shall kill Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” That is, it is not as thou say; not by bodily death shall the ungodly race

of carnal Jews perish. For whoever destroys them in this way shall suffer sevenfold vengeance, that is, shall bring upon himself the sevenfold penalty under which the Jews lie for the crucifixion of Christ. *So to the end of the seven days of time, the continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death.* (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 12, emphasis added).

“And the Lord God set a mark upon Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.” It is a most notable fact, that all the nations subjugated by Rome adopted the heathenish ceremonies of the Roman worship; while the Jewish nation, whether under Pagan or Christian monarchs, has never lost the sign of their law, by which they are distinguished from all other nations and peoples. No emperor or monarch who finds under his government the people with this mark kills them, that is, makes them cease to be Jews, and as Jews to be separate in their observances, and unlike the rest of the world. Only when a Jew comes over to Christ, he is no longer Cain, nor goes out from the presence of God, nor dwells in the land of Nod, which is said to mean commotion. Against this evil of commotion the Psalmist prays, “Suffer not my feet to be moved;” and again, “Let not the hands of the wicked remove me;” and, “Those that trouble me will rejoice when I am moved:” and, “The Lord is at my right hand, that I should not be moved;” and so in innumerable places. This evil comes upon those who leave the presence of God, that is, His loving-kindness. Thus the Psalmist says, “I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.” But observe what follows, “Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast given strength to my honor; Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled;” which teaches us that not in itself, but by participation in the light of God, can any soul possess beauty, or honor, or strength. (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 13).

Interestingly enough, Ms. Fredriksen argues late in her book that Cain, “Augustine’s premier biblical figure for the Jews, is suddenly strangely absent. What happened to Cain? Where did he go?” (p. 331); “Cain drops out when Augustine quotes Psalm 59:12 only in his two later, undated sermons” (p. 347). For Ms. Fredriksen the reason is: “...by the time that he found Psalm 59, he did not need it....Only within the specific context of the latter half of the *City of God* did Augustine finally relinquish Cain as a type of the Jews” (p. 349). Did he? Ms. Fredriksen offers us no direct statement from Augustine saying that he dropped Cain, nor a statement saying that he adopted Psalm 59 in lieu of Cain. How could he, since in both Psalm 59 and the Cain narrative the transgressor is spared immediate death despite his wickedness? The only logic Ms. Fredriksen offers for her assertion is: “I think that this is so because Augustine delivered them [the two sermons] only after he had conceived and become committed to his vision in *City of God*” (p. 347). How Ms. Fredriksen can arrive at such a firm conclusion when she doesn’t even know the date of these two sermons is surprising, especially when she later admits that although “Cain makes no appearance...all of Augustine’s earlier ideas that he had developed against Faustus are there: the missing kingdom, the visible practices, the permanent blindness, the unwitting servitude...” (p. 347). To say the least, she gives us a very confusing and meandering understanding of just what Augustine believed regarding the Jews.

Perhaps the reason Ms. Fredriksen feels justified in putting Psalm 59 on a higher level of divine commitment to the Jews than what the Cain analogy has to offer is that she has ignored the context of Psalm 59 (which, as we have seen above, eventually calls for the destruction of those who were previously spared). Instead she focuses on one statement “Slay them not” as the fulcrum upon which

everything else must rest; and she does so without even the slightest investigation into the textual discrepancies that are rampant in these verses. I would have hoped that this kind of one-verse proof-texting would be confined to biblical fanatics, not hopefully, among the professional ranks with whom Ms. Fredriksen normally associates. As noted previously, the problem is not so much with what Augustine does with Psalm 59 (however limited he was in his allegiance to the LXX) but what Ms. Fredriksen concludes from Augustine. Later she attempts to combine Augustine's remarks on Psalm 59 with Augustine's recognition of the value of the flesh over against Faustus' rejection of the same and concludes that these two concepts "provided him with a way to regard contemporary Jewish observance as God-given, as God-protected, and as good for the Church. By wanting to value 'flesh' positively, Augustine came to value 'Jew' and 'Judaism' positively" (p. 339). The problem with these kinds of statements is that they seek to exploit the positive side of the double-entendre in phrases such as "God-given" and "God-protected" at the expense of the negative. Even Satan's existence is "God-given" and "God-protected" and even "good for the Church," since God uses Satan to accomplish his will, but in the larger scheme of things, Satan is the worst evil ever known to mankind. We are at a loss to see these crucial distinctions from Ms. Fredriksen.

Regardless of those implications, Augustine's supposed elimination of the Cain analogy in his two "undated sermons" is only the first 'argument from silence' that Ms. Fredriksen commandeers in attempting to prove her point about the Jews' ongoing divinely-appointed status and privilege, awaiting a second argument later in her article and book in which Augustine's silence will again be used to garner favor toward the Jews. As Ms. Fredriksen sees it: "Restated in biblical idiom, this idea defines the difference between Israel and the nations...And here, as he argued against Faustus, Christians and Jews formed one community over against pagans and heretics, because (true) Christians, like Jews, worshiped the One God" (p. 351). This is hardly the case for Augustine. Never once does he speak of Jews having a place alongside Christianity, much less does he ever commit himself to saying that they "worship the One God." How could he? Augustine knows that the Judaism of his day outrightly rejected Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. Certainly the Jews of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Moses, worshiped the "One God," but not the Jews in Augustine's day who rejected Jesus Christ. Jesus was clear in his teaching to the Jews that if the Jews rejected Jesus they also rejected the Father, the very Father they previously thought of as "the One God" (Jn 8:1-59). But nowhere in her article or book does Ms. Fredriksen make these crucial distinctions. Instead, she makes Augustine a friend of Christ-rejecting Jews, and even against the consensus of his own Catholic Church.

Looking at Augustine's other comments, in his *Treatise on the Priesthood*, Augustine argues from a slightly different perspective, but a perspective that is highly valuable for us today since he seeks to give balance to the "Old Covenant is not revoked" controversy of which so many are confused today:

They who receive the wild doctrines of Valentinus and Marcion, and of all whose minds are similarly diseased, exclude the Law given by God to Moses from the catalogue of the Divine Scriptures. *But Jews so revere the Law, that although the time has come which annuls it, they still contend for the observance of all its contents, contrary to the purpose of God.* But the Church of God, avoiding either extreme, has trodden a middle path, and *is neither induced on the one hand to place herself under its yoke, nor on the other does she tolerate its being slandered, but commends it, though its day is over, because of its profitableness while its season lasted.* Now it is necessary for him who is going to fight with both these enemies, to be fully

conversant with this middle course, *for if in wishing to teach the Jews that they are out of date in clinging to the old law, he begins to find fault with it unsparingly, he gives no little handle to those heretics who wish to pull it to pieces*; and if in his ambition to stop their mouths he extols it immoderately, and speaks of it with admiration, as necessary for this present time, he unseals the lips of the Jews. Again they who labor under the frenzy of Sabellius and the craze of Arius, have both fallen from a sound faith for want of observing a middle course. The name of Christian is applied to both these heretics; but if any one examines their doctrines, he will find the one sect not much better than the Jews, and differing from them only in name, and the other very nearly holding the heresy of Paul of Samosata, and that both are very wide of the truth. Great, therefore, is the danger in such cases, and the way of orthodoxy is narrow and hemmed in by threatening crags on either side, and there is no little fear, lest when intending to strike at one enemy we should be wounded by the other. (*Treatise on the Priesthood*, Book 1, 4, emphasis added).

All in all, Augustine's description of the Jews is not the least bit flattering. Except for the remnant that Augustine anticipates will convert to the Christian faith, the unbelieving Jews' existence is tolerated even as wicked Gentiles or demons are tolerated until the end of time. It is certainly not anything close to the positive image that Ms. Fredriksen seeks to portray, in addition to her attempt in recent articles and books to claim that the Jews had little if anything to do with the death of Christ, placing the blame and guilt solely on the Romans. To that conclusion, Augustine says the following, even in the *City of God* which she believes offers Augustine's alternative view of the Jews:

The Jews were possessed by devils, and devoured; for in the place of Calvary, crucifying Christ, and lifting on the Cross, they said as it were with childish sense, not understanding what they said, "Go up, thou bald head." For what is, "Go up"? "Crucify Him, Crucify Him" (*Homilies on the Psalms* 45, 1).

Such was the founder of the earthly city. He was also a figure of the Jews who slew Christ the Shepherd of the flock of men, prefigured by Abel the shepherd of sheep (*City of God*, Book 15, Ch. 7).

Because the Jews did triumph, when they saw Christ crucified; they thought that they had fulfilled their will to do Him hurt: the fruits of their cruelty they saw in effect, Christ hanging on the Cross (*Homilies on the Psalms*, 41, 12).

...was the case when the Lord was crucified through the cruelty and impiety of the Jews (*City of God*, Book 3, Ch. 15).

For we both honor the passion of Christ as accomplished for us, and we hate the crime of the Jews who crucified Him (*City of God*, Book 16, Ch 2).

What the disciples who loved Him saw, saw also the Jews who crucified Him (*Tractate on John*, 14, 3, 12).

There we find that on the fourth day of the week the Jews took counsel to put the Lord to death (*Letters*, 36, 13, 30).

Also, in another place: “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (*Letters*, 74, 4, 14).

What is this but that He puts Himself for the Jews, of whose nation He was, who were troubled with great anger and crucified Christ, when He, mindful of mercy, said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?” (*City of God*, Book 18, Ch. 32).

But as we say to the Jews, You killed Christ, although it was their parents who did so, so these persons shall grieve that they in some sort did what their progenitors did (*City of God*, Book 20, Ch. 30).

As for Judaism, or even the Judaized version of Christianity that some Jews were promoting (the favorite target of John Chrysostom in his book *Against the Jews*, from which many Jews and liberal Catholics today accuse him of “anti-semitism”), Augustine has this to say:

“For ‘salvation is of the Jews’ [John 4:22] is nothing else than that Christ is of the Jews” (*On Psalm 45*, 10).

As regards the worship of the Almighty God, you might call us a schism of the Jews, for all Jews are bold enough to profess this worship, were it not for the difference in the form of our worship, though it may be questioned whether the Jews really worship the Almighty (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 20, No 4).

For there is surely no proportion between the culpability of him who exhibits the various opinions held by the fathers in a commentary on Scripture, and the guilt of him who reintroduces within the Church a most pestilential heresy. If, however, there is for us no alternative but to receive the Jews into the Church, along with the usages prescribed by their law; if, in short, it shall be declared lawful for them to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the synagogues of Satan, I will tell you my opinion of the matter: they will not become Christians, but they will make us Jews (*Letter 74*, Ch. 4, No 13).

So the unbelieving people of the Jews is cursed from the earth, that is, from the Church, which in the confession of sins has opened its mouth to receive the blood shed for the remission of sins by the hand of the people that would not be under grace, but under the law. And this murderer is cursed by the Church; that is, the Church admits and avows the curse pronounced by the apostle: “Whoever are of the works of the law are under the curse of the law” (*Reply to Faustus*, Book 12, No. 11).

As for Jewish ritual, Augustine had the same balanced view as St. Paul. On the one hand, if some new Jewish Christians wanted to engage in some harmless Jewish ritual, Augustine conceded to it out of tolerance. On the other hand, he was adamant that no Christian could ever be required to take part in these rituals. This is in contrast to Ms. Fredriksen’s repeated assertions in her book that Paul, Peter, James and the other apostles “continued to live as observant Jews” (p. 291) or that these apostles were just like “Jesus [who] had lived his life as a pious and Law-observant Jew” (p. 301), when there is no such evidence in the New Testament, except for one or two instances, one of which Paul circumcises Timothy,

but this circumcision is not because there is any evidence that Paul is an “observant Jew” but only for the purpose of placating the Jews he intends to evangelize who would feel more comfortable speaking to Paul if his companion Timothy were circumcised. Only in this limited way does the New Testament offer any instances in which Paul “became a Jew to the Jews” (*cf.* 1Cor 9:20; Gal 2:10-16; 5:1-4). Furthermore, Jesus was on the Old Testament side of the cross when Jewish ritual was demanded of Jews, but Paul and Peter were in a time when the Old Covenant was revoked and the ritual became obsolete and meaningless (*cf.* Heb 7:18; 8:1-13; 10:9; Col 2:15-16; Eph 2:15). Ms. Fredriksen provides none of these crucial distinctions. As for Augustine, he writes:

This party, therefore, endeavoring to raise odium and persecution against him, charged him with being an enemy of the law and of the divine institutions; and there was no more fitting way in which he could turn aside the odium caused by this false accusation, than by himself celebrating those rites which he was supposed to condemn as profane, and thus showing that, on the one hand, the Jews were not to be debarred from them as if they were unlawful, and on the other hand, that the Gentiles were not to be compelled to observe them as if they were necessary (*Letter 81, 2, 9*).

And I now, as speaking in the sight of God, beseech you by the law of charity to believe me when I say with my whole heart, that it never was my opinion that in our time, Jews who become Christians were either required or at liberty to observe in any manner, or from any motive whatever, the ceremonies of the ancient dispensation (*Letter 81, 2, 17*).

Lastly, Ms. Fredriksen tries to make a case that Augustine believed the Jews were in a different theological category than heretics or schismatics, and it is this thesis that serves as the backbone of her view that Augustine was partial to the Jews. But Ms. Fredriksen realizes this thesis is difficult to prove and thus she must avoid “what Augustine says about theological and rhetorical Jews” for it “cannot be read as direct evidence to help us settle this question,” rather, she must, by her own admission, resort to “something that he does not say.” As we noted with Augustine’s supposed dropping of the Cain analogy, Ms. Fredriksen must rely on an argument from silence, but to her it is at least a big silence.

As she sees it, there were three distinct and important episodes Augustine experienced, which when compared and contrasted with each other, lean him toward viewing the Jews differently than heretics and schismatics. “The first was the imperially sponsored coercion of North African pagans. The second was the duress inflicted on Donatist Christians....And the third was the forced conversion to Catholic Christianity of the 540 Jewish residents of Magona.” Since the Church made a somewhat violent dissipation of the pagans and used another measure of force against the Donatists, Fredriksen regards these two Augustine-approved events as precedent setting, mainly because when the Church forced the Jews of Magona to convert to the Christian faith, Augustine said nothing. It is this silence regarding the Jews of Magona that leads Ms. Fredriksen to conclude that “Augustine never advocated extending such muscular pastoral care to current Jewish communities.” This same silence then encourages Ms. Fredriksen to extract even higher levels of esteem from Augustine, leading her to the provocative statement: “Augustine’s Judaism was an incarnate, historical community that stretched continuously from the pages of the Bible to the synagogues of the late Roman Empire.” Hence, it appears that the continued existence of Judaism for Ms. Fredriksen, vis-à-vis Augustine, is not the “mark of Cain” or the “necessity of heresies” that the bishop of Hippo continually used in his writings, but as a divine sign that Jews

legitimately worship in synagogues because the Bible, and ultimately God, told them to do so. Ms. Fredriksen draws these conclusion from nothing more than Augustine's "silence" on whether the Church was right or wrong in having the 540 Jews at Magona convert to the Christian faith, backed up by Augustine's questionable interpretation of "slay them not" in Psalm 59.

Before Ms. Fredriksen can make such conclusions from Augustine's silence, the first requirement is to demonstrate conclusively from Augustine's writings that in no instance did he approve of forced conversion of the Jews. Unfortunately, at least in this article, Ms. Fredriksen does not provide even one instance of Augustine's disapproval, much less a preponderance of evidence. Second, Ms. Fredriksen would need to show from case studies of Augustine's words and actions that when he was silent on an issue his reticence can be interpreted as his approval or disapproval of the matter at hand, as opposed to a sign of his ignorance or indifference. Perhaps Augustine was silent about the Jews at Magona because he simply didn't care about them enough to protest, a possibility that Ms. Fredriksen doesn't even consider, much less refute. Third, Ms. Fredriksen needs to take into account the specific historical situation in her three-case study. A mere number of 540 Jews at Magona may not have represented a major threat to the Church, whereas the North African pagans who, as Ms. Fredriksen puts it, had built the "temple of Juno Caelestis in Carthage," as well as the Donatists who "represented the single gravest challenge to the local hegemony of Catholic Christianity in North Africa," would, indeed, represent a significant threat in Augustine's mind. As such, it may be the case that Magona did not register on Augustine's theological radar screen, and thus perhaps his "silence" on the issue. Additionally, Augustine's whole career dealt with heretics such as the Manicheans, the Pelagians, the Priscillianists, the Origenists, the Arians, *etc.*, and thus the Donatists received his attention for that very reason. Moreover, the Church has since officially stated that coercion of any people, be it pagans, heretics, or Jews, is not legitimate, but even this has a caveat, since the Church still holds that the rights of non-Christian religions can only be tolerated "within due limits" (Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*). In retrospect, we might say that Augustine saw the pagan and Donatist threat in North Africa as outside the "due limit" clause, whereas the 540 Jews at Magona were not. We are speculating, of course, but this speculation just helps prove the point that whether it's speculation or "silence" we cannot make definitive conclusions on such tenuous evidence.

Let's look at this issue from the other side. Let's assume for the sake of argument that, even though Augustine was "silent" on the case of the Jews in Magona, he actually *did* believe they should not be coerced into Christianity. Let's also say that in his silence about Magona, Augustine was leaning toward what the Church would eventually concede regarding pagans, heretics and Jews, that is, that it is wrong to coerce them into Christianity. The Jews of Magona, then, would be Augustine's first, albeit "silent," adoption of this stance. The same logic, however, also requires us to say that Augustine should have reached the same point of conviction about the coercion of the pagans and Donatists, since that is where the Church at large eventually ended up in her thinking on the issue of coercion. That being the case, Ms. Fredriksen cannot then use Augustine's silence on the coercion of the Jews of Magona as a measure of his views toward the Jews at large since, in the grander scheme of things, she must admit that Augustine was wrong in agreeing to coerce the pagans and Donatists. As such, it would be impossible for Ms. Fredriksen to demonstrate that Augustine ignored the Jews because he didn't mind them living in their heresy (*e.g.*, denying the deity of Christ) but dealt harshly with the pagans and Donatists because he did mind them practicing their particular Christological heresies.

Lastly, we can confirm Augustine's lack of distinction between pagans, heretics and Jews by the frequent times he lumped them all together, as in this passage from his *Sermons*:

Now ye may know, Dearly Beloved, that these unite their murmurings with Heretics and with Jews. *Heretics, Jews, and Heathens* have made a unity against Unity. Because it has happened, that in some places the Jews have received chastisement because of their wickednesses; they charge and suspect us, or pretend, that we are always seeking the like treatment for them. Again, because it has happened that the heretics in some places have suffered the penalty of the laws for the impiety and fury of their deeds of violence; they say immediately that we are seeking by every means some harm for their destruction. (*Sermons*, 12, 18, emphasis added).

It is plain then that the Holy Ghost is blasphemed both *by Pagans, and by Jews, and by heretics*. Are they then to be left, and accounted without all hope, since the sentence is fixed," Whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"? and are they only to be deemed free from the guilt of this most grievous sin who are Catholics from infancy? For all those who have believed the word of God, that they might become Catholics, came surely into the grace and peace of Christ, either from among *the Pagans, or Jews, or heretics*: and if there be no pardon for them for the word which they have spoken against the Holy Ghost, in vain do we promise and preach to men, to turn to God, and receive peace and remission of sins, whether in Baptism or in the Church. For it is not said, "It shall not be forgiven him except in baptism;" but, "it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (*Sermon* 21, 6, emphasis added).

He says much the same in his book *On Patience*, only here he separates converted Jews from carnal Jews:

So then, as we are not to deny that this is the gift of God, we are thus to understand that there be some gifts of God possessed by the sons of that Jerusalem which is above, and free, and mother of us all, (for these are in some sort the hereditary possessions in which we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ:") but some other which may be received even by the sons of concubines to whom *carnal Jews and schismatics or heretics* are compared. (*On Patience*, 25, emphasis added)

In his book, *On the Trinity*, Augustine is even more direct:

...works of mercy are of no profit, *either to Pagans, or to Jews who do not believe in Christ, or to any heretics or schismatics* whatsoever in whom faith and charity and sober holiness are not found. (*On the Trinity*, 12, 7, 11, emphasis added)

Finally, Augustine made the same lumping together of Jews, pagans and heretics in his commentary on Psalm 110:

And what wonder if He shall then rule, when the righteous reign with Him forever, and the ungodly burn with eternal punishments? What wonder, if He shall then? Now "in the midst of Thine enemies," now in this transition of ages, in this propagation and succession of human mortality, now while the torrent of time is gliding by, unto this is the rod of Thy power sent out of Sion, "that Thou mayest be Ruler in the midst of Thine enemies." Rule Thou, rule among *pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren*. Rule Thou, rule, O Son of David, Lord of David, rule in

the midst of *pagans, Jews, heretics, false brethren*. “Be Thou Ruler in the midst of Thine enemies.” We understand not this verse aright, if we do not see that it is already going on. (*Homilies on the Psalms*, 110, 6, emphasis added).

In the end, Ms. Fredriksen’s thesis fails on all counts. We can safely conclude that on the question of the Jews, Augustine was not “alone among his peers” nor did he “give the Hebrews a privileged place in Christian society.” He did not see synagogues as taken from “pages of the Bible” nor did he view the Jews as “history’s Pole Star...shining in the darkness.” Rather, as is clear from the variety of his books we have shown above, Augustine viewed the Jews as darkness that needed to come to the light due to their many sins and heresies. Augustine was very clear that the Jews’ present existence was tolerated by God for the purpose of authenticating the Christian religion and serving as a sign of his continuing judgment against the Jews. Jews, like all unbelieving men in the world, are given a certain amount of time to repent of these sins and accept God’s graces through Jesus Christ.