

Association of Hebrew Catholics Lecture Series  
*The Mystery of Israel and the Church*

Spring 2013 – Series 11

*Typology, How the Old Testament Prefigures the New*

Talk #10

*Typology of Moses*



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Note: *This document contains the unedited text of Dr. Feingold's talk. It will eventually undergo final editing for inclusion in the series of books being published by The Miriam Press under the series title: "The Mystery of Israel and the Church". If you find errors of any type, please send your observations to [lfeingold@hebrewcatholic.org](mailto:lfeingold@hebrewcatholic.org)*

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# Typology of Moses

## Prophecy of the New Moses

Moses is a unique typological figure of Jesus, for his status as such is explicitly put forth in a prophecy by Moses himself in Deuteronomy 18:15–19:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, “Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.” And the Lord said to me, “They have rightly said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.”

This prophecy is indirectly alluded to in Deuteronomy 34:10–12: “And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt . . . [and] in the sight of all Israel.”

The new Moses in the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15, since he is to be like Moses, should be marked by those characteristics that set Moses apart as the greatest prophet until Jesus. He should be the Revealer of God’s will, do miraculous works through the power of God, free God’s people from bondage, and know the Lord face to face as Moses did. Most importantly, the new Moses will also be the mediator of a covenant between the people and God and legislator of a New Law, but not like the Old Law written on tablets of stone, for the New Law will be written on the heart through the giving of grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Jer 31:31–34).

This prophecy of the Messiah as the new Moses (Deut 18:15–19) was quoted by St. Peter shortly after Pentecost, when Peter and John cured the man born lame in Acts 3:22–23. Peter said to the people: “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’” It was also quoted by St. Stephen in his speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:37: “This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.’” This prophecy was also in the minds of the people when, after the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, they shouted: “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” (Jn 6:14). It was also alluded to in Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman at

the well. After she realizes that Jesus is a prophet, she says, “‘I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will *show us all things*.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am he’” (Jn 4:25–26). This prophecy, finally, was perhaps also alluded to by God the Father speaking out of the cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:7): “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”<sup>1</sup>

Moses is a figure of Christ in many ways: mediator of a covenant, legislator, liberator of the People of God from bondage, worker of miracles in the Exodus that provided the people with bread from heaven, and recipient of a unique contemplation.

## Moses as Mediator Is a Type of Christ

Moses was a mediator between God and the people of Israel in revealing God’s will and in the sealing of the covenant between God and man. We see this mediation of Moses especially at the foot of Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 20:18–19, the people ask Moses to tell them God’s will, for they fear that if God spoke directly to them, they would die. Moses recounts this incident in greater detail in Deuteronomy 5:22–31, and he mentions it again in Deuteronomy 18:16–17. The Lord approved the people’s desire to receive His word through a human mediator, for this indicated the recognition of their unworthiness to hear God’s Word directly.

Because Moses brought the Law of God to the people, he is recognized as the legislator of Israel. Similarly, Christ is the new legislator for the Church. The New Testament frequently notes the parallel between the revelation of God’s will given through Moses and the fuller revelation given through Christ. The Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus preaches the fullness of the Law, is clearly modeled on Moses’ giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Jesus alludes to the Law and further clarifies it in six different ways, using the form: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old. . . . But I say to you . . .”<sup>2</sup> In this way Christ surpasses the Old Testament type, for Moses legislated in God’s name, whereas Christ legislates in His own name. Cardinal Ratzinger observes that “the Sermon on the Mount is in many respects the clearest expression of his

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<sup>1</sup> The prophecy of Deut 18:15–19 is also alluded to in Hebrews 12:24–25. After speaking of Moses’ mediation on Mt. Sinai, the text warns the people to not refuse to listen to Jesus, “the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.”

<sup>2</sup> Mt 5:21–22; 27–28; 31–32; 33–34; 38–38; 43–44.

claim to divinity.”<sup>3</sup> Moses never said, “I say unto you,” but told the people “the words which the Lord had commanded him” (Ex 19:7).<sup>4</sup>

No rabbi could speak as Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, nor could any prophet of Israel. The prophets always prefaced their inspired teaching by calling attention to the fact that it was not their word, but God’s: “The word of the Lord came to me”;<sup>5</sup> “Thus says the Lord”;<sup>6</sup> “The Lord says”;<sup>7</sup> “The Lord said to me”;<sup>8</sup> or “Hear the word of the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> Jesus never uses those formulas, but says rather: “I say unto you.” St. Matthew (7:28–29) calls attention to this unique authority by which Christ taught in His own name, saying: “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”<sup>10</sup>

Another beautiful expression of the greater mediation of the new Moses is given in Matthew 11:27, as Jesus says: “All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”<sup>11</sup> The mediation of Christ is all-inclusive. Everything has been given to the Son by the Father, whereas only some things were given to Moses, such as the Mosaic Law. The greater mediation of Christ is also expressed in John 1:17–18: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” It is also expressed in the opening verses of Hebrews: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the

prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”<sup>12</sup>

As Moses ascended the Mount and then descended to communicate the Law to the people, so Christ describes His own mediation in these terms of ascent and descent in his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:12–13. However, the ascent and descent is from heaven to earth: “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.”

The contrast between the two mediations of Moses and Christ is also implied in Hebrews 12:18–25,<sup>13</sup> a text which compares Mt. Sinai with the heavenly Jerusalem, alludes to Moses’ mediation in Exodus 20:18–19 and the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15–19, and reiterates the exhortation to listen to the “mediator of a new covenant”: “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.”

## Moses’ Contemplation Is a Type of Christ’s

Moses was able to be the mediator of the covenant at Sinai through his intimate “face-to-face” conversation with God. He saw God in the burning bush (Ex 3-4), from which God revealed His sacred name. He saw God more intimately on Mt. Sinai<sup>14</sup> for forty days and nights. The physical ascent of Moses into the cloud on Mt. Sinai is itself a magnificent type of exalted and unique contemplation. After that theophany, Moses continued to speak with the Lord in the tent of meeting, as described in Exodus 33:9–11: “When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the

3 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 282.

4 See Ex 35:1; 24:3; Deut 5:5; etc.

5 See, for example, Ez 30:1; 33:1; 34:1; Jer 6:22; 16:1; 32:6; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1.

6 See, for example, Ez 34:11; Jer 15:19; 19:1; 25:32; 31:15, 16, 23, 35, 37; Amos 1:6.

7 See, for example, Is 1:24; Ez 30:10.

8 See, for example, Jer 14:11.

9 Ez 34:7.

10 See Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 47: “I am troubled not so much by the message, though I might take exception to this or that, as I am by the messenger. The reason is that, in form these statements are jarring. Standing on the mountain, Jesus’ use of language, ‘You have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you . . .’ contrasts strikingly with Moses’ language at Mount Sinai. Sages, we saw, say things in their own names, but without claiming to improve on the Torah. The prophet, Moses, speaks not in his own name but in God’s name, saying what God has told him to say. Jesus speaks not as a sage nor as a prophet. Moses speaks as God’s prophet, in God’s name, for God’s purpose. So how am I to respond to this ‘I,’ who pointedly contrasts what I have heard with what he says.” See also Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007) 303–304.

11 See also Lk 19:21–22.

12 See also Hebrews 3:5–6: “Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ was faithful over God’s house as a son.

13 “For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers tremble that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.”

14 See Ex 24:16–18: “The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. And Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”

Lord would speak with Moses. . . . Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”

An example of this conversation is given to us in the next verses of this chapter (Ex 33:13–17). Moses asked God to show him, for the glory of God’s name, how he was to lead Israel to the Promised Land, and pleaded for God to accompany them as He had through the pillar of fire and cloud: “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee and find favor in thy sight.”

We can see from this that Moses did not see the very essence of God. For if he did, he would not have asked God to reveal Himself more fully to him. Thus the fact that Scripture says that God spoke to Moses “face to face” does not mean that Moses received the beatific vision (as do the blessed in heaven). Rather, he received infused prophetic knowledge from God in the intimacy of prayer, mediated by angelic appearances. The expression “face to face” implies a degree of intimacy with God that is extraordinary, and is a supreme *figure* or *type* of Jesus’ face-to-face knowledge of the Father. Nevertheless, Moses’ vision remained on the level of a certain obscurity characteristic of faith.<sup>15</sup> This is also shown by the fact that St. Stephen in Acts 7:38 says that God spoke to Moses through an angel: “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai.”

This obscurity is symbolized perhaps in the cloud that covered Sinai and the tent of meeting, and is made clear by the fact that Moses, after speaking with God in this way, asked to “see His glory.” If Moses had actually seen the beatific vision of God’s essence on Mt. Sinai, then he would not have asked to see God’s glory, as if it were something that still remained hidden from him. And what does God reply to this most audacious request? He replies that no man can see His glory while continuing to live in this life. Nevertheless, He shows Moses His “back,” which seems to consist in knowledge of His mercy (Exodus 33:18–23). In other words, Moses did not receive the full vision of God that we hope to receive in heaven, but rather some angelic vision and infused knowledge—something intermediate between the hiddenness of God in this life and the fullness of vision in heaven. St. Paul speaks of this kind of prophetic vision in 1 Corinthians 13:9–12, in which he contrasts the enigmatic visions of the prophets with the perfection of the beatific vision that we hope for:

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but

15 It is interesting to note that no human person had the beatific vision until Christ’s harrowing of hell on Holy Saturday. Those who died in a state of grace had to wait in the Limbo of the Just until they could receive the fruits of the Redemption through Christ.

then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

Moses too saw through a mirror darkly, although his prophecy was far more fundamental for Israel than that of all the later prophets.

### ***Moses’ Contemplation Points to Christ’s Fuller Vision of the Father***

Moses’ intimate contemplation of God is very important in showing us the primacy of contemplation over activity. Moses could legislate and thus organize the life of Israel for ages to come only because he enjoyed a unique contemplation of God, through which he received the knowledge of the Torah he was to pass on to Israel to be her form of life and the norm of her activity. Contemplation must precede activity to be its inspiration, and normally follows it as its reward and fruit. Moses was an archetype of spiritual activity: he brought the people out of Egypt, led them in the desert, transmitted the Torah, and judged the people according to that divine Law. All of that activity, however, had its origin in the contemplation of God in a unique intimacy, apart from which he could have done nothing.

Similarly, in the New Covenant, all the activity of Christ, the new Moses, had its origin in a unique contemplation of the Father. As Moses spoke “face to face” with the Lord and so could legislate for Israel, so Jesus was favored by a unique “face-to-face” contemplation of a higher order—the immediate vision of God—that enabled Him to reveal the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to institute the New Covenant. Moses’ contemplation is a great figure of the contemplation of Christ. Yet the type, as great as it is, falls immeasurably short of the reality prefigured. Whereas Moses was refused in his request to see the glory of God directly, being granted only a vision of His back, Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3), constantly *beheld* the Father in His human intellect.

Joseph Ratzinger addresses the relationship between the contemplation of Moses and that of the New Moses in *Jesus of Nazareth*:

Although Moses’ immediate relation to God makes him the great mediator of Revelation, the mediator of the Covenant, it has its limits. He does not behold God’s face, even though he is permitted to enter into the cloud of God’s presence and to speak with God as a friend. The promise of a “prophet like me” thus implicitly contains an even greater expectation: that the last prophet, the new Moses, will be granted what was refused to the first one—a real, immediate vision of the face of God, and thus the ability to speak entirely from seeing, not just from looking at God’s back. This naturally entails the further expectation that the new Moses will be the mediator of a greater covenant than the one that Moses was able to bring down from Sinai.<sup>16</sup>

16 Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 5–6.

How is this borne out in the New Testament? What is the divine name revealed by Jesus to the world? He does not reveal a new name like the Tetragrammaton, but rather He reveals to Israel and to the world that God is Father in a new and unheard-of way.<sup>17</sup> The Son reveals that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This revelation of the Trinity comes from a fullness of revelation, a face-to-face vision greater than that of Moses. The Gospels are full of references to Christ's contemplation of the Father. At the end of the prologue to John's Gospel, after comparing Jesus to Moses, John goes on to say: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (Jn 1:18). To be "in the bosom of the Father" refers to a uniquely intimate and immediate knowledge of the Father that is proper only to the Son.

In His nocturnal dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus makes a strong assertion of His vision. After revealing the necessity of Baptism as a birth from above, Nicodemus asks how this can be. Jesus answers with a mysterious rebuke:

Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we *know*, and bear witness to what we have *seen*; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.<sup>18</sup>

The Messiah is able to reveal the new Torah to Israel because He sees the Father, having come forth from the Father. Similarly, in John 6:46, Jesus says: "Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has *seen the Father*."<sup>19</sup>

Matthew (11:25–27) and Luke (10:21–22) also record a saying of Jesus referring to His unique fullness of knowledge of the Father. In Luke's version, Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit and says:

I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

17 See CCC 240: "Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father."

18 See also Jn 3:32–35: "He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony; he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand."

19 See also Jn 5:19: "Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he *sees* the Father doing."

The Son is the great prophet of the New Covenant, for He sees the Father face to face, and thus can reveal Him to "babes," those who have the humility of faith. He speaks of heavenly mysteries, such as His own identity as the Son of the Father, not as something dimly grasped in the darkness of faith, but as something clearly known and seen. Christ, as the Gospels present Him, does not have faith, for He has something more: *vision*. This knowledge of the beatific vision is what enables Christ to say that He *knows* the Father, and thus can reveal Him to men as the "author and finisher of our faith."<sup>20</sup> Christ could not have declared the mystery of the Trinity to us as He did if He had not seen it in His human intellect through the beatific vision.

It follows that Christ did not suddenly discover His mission and identity as He grew up, as Moses discovered his mission first in the vision of the burning bush, but had it in a mysterious way from the beginning. It is indeed true that Christ acquired knowledge from His experience of life. However, clear knowledge of His mission and identity could not come from acquired knowledge, but only from the beatific vision, from *seeing the Word* which is Himself. In fact, we see the twelve-year-old Jesus already with the certainty of that identity, when He says: "Did you not know that I must be in *my Father's house*?" (Lk 2:49).

It also follows that Christ did not have the virtue of faith, for faith is of things *unseen*. The beatific vision is incompatible with faith. Christ, like the blessed in heaven, had vision, which is better than faith and will replace it. Christ is the *author* of faith (Heb 12:2), but not a recipient and transmitter of it, as Moses and the other prophets were.

## Typology of Moses and the Cross

Two episodes concerning Moses prefigure the Cross. One is the brazen serpent, discussed above, and the other is the battle described in Exodus 17:8–16 in which the Israelites led by Joshua prevailed as long as the arms of Moses were extended in the sign of a cross:

Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my banner, saying, "A hand

20 Heb 12:2, Douay-Rheims translation.

upon the banner of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

The Letter of Pseudo-Barnabas<sup>21</sup> 12.2–3 brings out the typology:

Yet again He speaks of this in Moses, when Israel was attacked by strangers. And that He might remind them, when assailed, that it was on account of their sins they were delivered to death, the Spirit speaks to the heart of Moses, that he should make a figure [type] of the cross, and of Him about to suffer thereon; for unless they put their trust in Him, they shall be overcome for ever. Moses therefore placed one weapon above another in the midst of the hill, and standing upon it, so as to be higher than all the people, he stretched forth his hands, and thus again Israel acquired the mastery. But when again he let down his hands, they were again destroyed. For what reason? That they might know that they could not be saved unless they put their trust in Him.<sup>22</sup>

St. Justin refers to this text in his Dialogue with Trypho. The Jew Trypho asks for references to the Cross in the Old Testament and St. Justin refers to this episode of Moses’ arms outstretched:

“Bring us on, then,” said [Trypho], “by the Scriptures, that we may also be persuaded by you; for we know that He should suffer and be led as a sheep. But prove to us whether He must be crucified and die so disgracefully and so dishonourably by the death cursed in the law. For we cannot bring ourselves even to think of this.”

“You know,” said I, “that what the prophets said and did they veiled by parables and types, as you admitted to us; so that it was not easy for all to understand the most [of what they said], since they concealed the truth by these means, that those who are eager to find out and learn it might do so with much labour.”

They answered, “We admitted this.”

“Listen, therefore,” say I, “to what follows; for Moses first exhibited this seeming curse of Christ’s by the signs which he made.”

“Of what [signs] do you speak?” said he.

When the people,” replied I, “waged war with Amalek, and the son of Nave (Nun) by name Jesus (Joshua), led the fight, Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both hands, and Hur with Aaron supported them during the whole day, so that they might not hang down when he got wearied. For if he gave up any part of this sign, which was an imitation of the cross, the people were beaten, as is recorded in the writings of Moses; but if he remained in this form, Amalek was proportionally defeated, and he who prevailed prevailed by the cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus (Joshua) was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross.

Tertullian refers to this episode as a type of the victory of the Cross:

21 An early writer of the Church, considered an apostolic father, though not necessarily St. Barnabas.

22 Epistle of Barnabas 12.2–3, in ANF 1:144–145.

And again, why did Moses on that occasion only when Joshua was warring against Amalek, pray sitting and with out-stretched hands, when in such critical circumstances he might have been expected rather to commend his prayer by bended knees, by hands beating the breast, and face turned down to the ground? Evidently because on that occasion, when one was contending who bore our Lord’s name, as our Lord himself was afterwards to contend against the devil, the form of the cross was essential, so that by it Joshua might gain the victory.<sup>23</sup>

## Typology of the Rebellions against Moses and His Intercession for the People

### *The Rebellion of the People*

Throughout the forty years of wandering in the desert, the people repeatedly rebelled against the mediation and authority of Moses, prefiguring the rejection of the mediation of Christ. The most important example is the worship of the Golden Calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The people rebelled in part because after forty days of waiting they lost faith that Moses would come back down the mountain. So they said to Aaron: “Up, make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Ex 32:1). Similarly, as mankind awaits the return of Christ, many despair at the delay and look to this world and the works of their hands as the source of salvation.

The sin of the Golden Calf is an exemplary sin, because it was the repudiation of Moses’ authority in the very moment in which He was exercising His supreme mediation by entering into forty days of contemplation on Mt. Sinai so as to bring down to the people the Torah that would guide their entire life. It can be seen as a type of the repudiation of Christ in His Passion, precisely as He exercised His supreme mediation in establishing the New Covenant in His Blood. There is also an interesting parallel between Aaron and the Israelites at Sinai and the chief priests who condemned Christ. Aaron made the Golden Calf, and the people said: “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” (Ex 32:4). The chief priests before Pilate said something similar: “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

Another type of rebellion against the mediation of Moses is that of Aaron and Miriam in Numbers 12. On account of the Cushite woman that Moses married, they say: “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” (Num 12:2). Numbers 12:3 then observes that Moses was meeker “than all men that were on the face of the earth.” Clearly Moses’ meekness made him suitable to bear the authority of supreme mediation between God and Israel. Moses did not defend himself, but left that to God, who defended Moses’ authority by

23 Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3.18, trans. Ernest Evans, (Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 227.

striking Miriam with leprosy, which was removed only after Moses interceded on her behalf. God also testified to Moses' authority saying:

If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?<sup>24</sup>

Moses here is a type of Christ in three respects: his exemplary meekness, his supreme intimacy with God that is the source of his authority, and his vindication by God. Christ of course is the most humble man in human history, realizing the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." His meekness is brought out all the more by His divine identity. The Christological hymn in Philippians 2:8–9 brings out Christ's supreme humility and God's vindication: "being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name."

### ***Moses' Intercession on Behalf of the People***

Every time the people rebel against Moses and his authority to speak on behalf of God, he intercedes on behalf of the people, that they be not exterminated because of their sins and rebellions, and that God may continually lead them and hear their prayers.

After God tells Moses that the Israelites were worshipping the Golden Calf, He asked leave of Moses to let Him consume the people in His wrath. God says: "Let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation" (Ex 32:10). Why does God ask Moses' permission? Clearly He is trying Moses and inviting his intercession. At which point Moses says:

"O Lord, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'" And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Numbers 12:6–8.

<sup>25</sup> Ex 32:11–14. Another parallel episode in which God threatens to exterminate Israel and make a great nation from Moses is given in

In Exodus 32:30–32 Moses continues his work of mediation with the people:

On the morrow Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Alas, this people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

Moses' intercession is a magnificent type on two levels: allegorical and moral. It is both a type of Christ's intercession before the sins of mankind, and a type of intercession practiced by the faithful that participates in the universal intercession of the Messiah.

St. Paul echoes Moses' words in Romans 9:1–3, even to the point of asking to be cut off from Christ on behalf of the Israelites, as Moses had asked to be blotted out of the book of the Lord on their behalf:

I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race.

What was denied to Moses and Paul—to be accursed for the sake of the people, was granted to Christ who "redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree'—that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles" (Gal 3:13–14).

Isaiah 53:4–12 reveals the antitype of Moses' intercession in the intercession of the Suffering Servant, stricken for justification of the people:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. . . . because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Despite Moses' intercession, God still exacted exemplary punishment on the sons of Israel for the sin of the Golden Calf. After the episode, the sons of Levi cut off the idolaters. In Exodus 32:26–29, Moses calls out:

"Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. And Moses said, "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day."

Numbers 14:11–19, when the people were afraid to enter Canaan after they were discouraged by the report of the spies.

This difficult text presents a moral typology of putting oneself on the side of the Lord, even if it means the sacrifice or breaking of family relationships. Jesus seems to be alluding to this text of Exodus when He says in Matthew 10:34–38 that He came not to bring peace, but a sword:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

### Manna as a Figure of the Eucharist

The manna that nourished the Israelites for forty years as they wandered in the desert is a magnificent figure of the Eucharist that Jesus instituted as a sacrament of spiritual nourishment. The event is described in Exodus 16:4–35. After the people blamed Moses for taking them out of Egypt where they “sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full,” the Lord said to Moses:

“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord. . . . in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an omer apiece, according to the number of the persons whom each of you has in his tent.’” And the people of Israel did so; they gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; each gathered according to what he could eat. And Moses said to them, “Let no man leave any of it till the morning.” But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. . . . Now the house of Israel called its name manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Moses said, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” And the people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land; they ate the manna, till they came to the

border of the land of Canaan.

That Jesus instituted a better kind of manna—miraculous bread from heaven for our journey through the desert of this life—is a prime motive of credibility for faith in Jesus as the Messiah. What Moses won from God for the Israelites in the desert, Jesus gave to the Church for her entire pilgrimage through history. Instead of feeding us with perishable food for forty years, Jesus’ bread from heaven has nourished the People of God with the divine life for two thousand years.<sup>26</sup>

The manna is a figure of the Eucharist in various respects. First, because it is “*bread from heaven*.” Normal bread comes from the earth, in that it is made from grains of wheat. This bread was rained down on Israel from above. Thus it is a natural symbol of the fact that the Eucharist nourishes us with a reality that is not from this earth nor even from the natural order, but supremely from above. It is in fact the Word Incarnate. Jesus brings out this figure in John 6:48–51:

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven.

The manna also was not the product of human toil like normal bread, but came down from above as the dewfall. This prefigures the fact that the Eucharist in its interior reality is not the fruit of human technology or accomplishment, but is the supremely gratuitous gift of God.

The manna is a figure of the Eucharist also because it was something utterly *unknown* to the Israelites, which is expressed by the name “manna,” which means “what is it?” This mystery prefigures the Eucharist because it is the reality of the New Covenant most veiled in mystery. Transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, and Holy Communion, although not contradictory, utterly transcend everything that pertains to our ordinary experience. The mysteriousness of the manna as a figure of the supernatural mystery of the Eucharist is also indicated in Deuteronomy 8:3: “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the manna is a figure of the effects of grace of the Eucharist in that God gave them each only

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26 With regard to the symbolism of the manna in relation to the Eucharist, see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2011), 77–115. Brant Pitre argues that there are expectations in the Jewish tradition that the Messiah will feed the Israelites with manna from heaven in the Messianic age.

27 See also Deuteronomy 8:16, in which Moses told the people that God “fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.”

so much as they needed each day. Those who gathered a greater physical quantity did not receive more, and those who gathered a lesser physical amount, did not receive less than they needed. This is a figure of two aspects of the Eucharist. First, the tiniest particle of the consecrated bread and wine contains the whole Christ, just as much as the largest quantity. Secondly, the Eucharist nourishes the recipient with grace according to the level of his own spiritual state and fervor, and not according to the quantity received.

Another aspect of the symbolism of the manna with regard to the effects of the Eucharist is that it was “suited to every taste,” according to Wisdom 16:20–21:

Instead of these things thou didst give thy people food of angels, and without their toil thou didst supply them from heaven with bread ready to eat, providing every pleasure and suited to every taste. For thy sustenance manifested thy sweetness toward thy children; and the bread, ministering to the desire of the one who took it, was changed to suit every one’s liking.

As the manna was suited to every taste, so the Eucharist is suited to every spiritual taste, because it gives us the supreme reality of Christ’s life and charity. The grace of God communicated in the Eucharist is always perfectly adapted to our personal spiritual needs. This is also expressed in Psalm 34:8: “O taste and see that the Lord is good.”

This symbolism of the sweetness of the manna has been incorporated into the office of Corpus Christi written by St. Thomas Aquinas (and the rite of Eucharistic Benediction):

Panem de caelo praestitisti eis. (You have given them bread from heaven.)

R/. Omne delectamentum suavitatis in se habentem.  
(Having within it all delight of sweetness.)

The antiphon to the Magnificat of St. Thomas’ office of Corpus Christi for first vespers also brings out this symbolism: “Oh how tasty is your Spirit, Lord. To show your sweetness to your children, you fill the hungry with the tastiest bread come down from heaven, and send the fastidious rich away empty.”<sup>28</sup>

The manna is described in Psalm 78:25 as the “bread of angels.” This was not literally true of the manna, for it was a material food that angels cannot partake in. It was angelic only in its supernatural origin. The Eucharist, however, is indeed “bread of angels” in its interior effect (*res tantum*), for in it we are nourished in sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the divine nature (see 2 Pt 1:4). This is literally the “bread of the angels.” Like us, the holy angels have been given a participation in the divine nature through grace and glory.

Finally, the manna prefigures the Eucharist in that it was food only for the pilgrimage in the desert. After the Israelites entered into the Chosen Land, the manna ceased. Similarly, the Eucharist is spiritual nourishment only for the state of this present life. Once the faithful enter into the true promised land, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Eucharistic nourishment will cease together with the other sacraments, because God will be seen face to face.

The aspect of Eucharistic adoration was also prefigured by the jar of manna conserved in the Ark of the Covenant and put in the Holy of Holies, in which God’s presence was adored. The manna itself, however, was not properly the object of adoration, for it was a purely material reality, although of supernatural origin. Its placement in the Holy of Holies was a type of the Eucharist in the tabernacle, which alone is the proper object of adoration.

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<sup>28</sup> First Vespers of Corpus Christi, translated by Joseph Kenny, available online at <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/CorpusChristi.htm>.