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Editorial: Theology with a mission

Think of a doctrine. Double it with variant interpretations. Divide by denominational distinctions. Add some technical jargon and 'pink slips.' Finally take away the doctrine you first thought of, and what are you left with? Probably the sum of the average theological student's awareness of the relations between his theological study and the mission of the church. He is hardly to be blamed for this, since western theology at least has been carried on for centuries with little or no direct relation to it.

It was not always thus. In the early centuries of the church the cutting edge of theology was defined by the church's mission. How was the gospel to be lived and witnessed to in hostile and religiously plural environments? How was the nature and work of Jesus to be defined and defended in changing social and intellectual contexts? The controversies and definitions that emerged from this were not the academic and irrelevant theology of popular misconception but the intellectual cutting edge of the church's struggle for identity, survival and growth—i.e. its mission.

The New Testament itself is essentially a theology of mission. Why else are its first four volumes called 'Gospels'? It emerged as the community of Jesus staked their claim, and were compelled to defend it, that he was the Messiah, and therefore the fulfillment of God's mission in and through Israel. Was such a claim, and the mission that it had launched, compatible with the Scriptures? It was the success of the Gentile mission, with the theological problem of whether and on what terms Gentiles could be fitted into the kibburoi Jewish people of God, which generated some of the most profound theological controversy and argumentation in the church itself and the documents of the New Testament. The theological debate touched the doctrine of God and his purpose for Israel and the nations, Christology, the meaning of salvation and justification, the status for Christians of the Mosaic covenant and its law, eschatology and the significance of the present age.

In medieval Christianized Europe theology turned in upon itself, while in the period of the Reformations and after, it was dragged largely to reflecting and enunciating the convictions that emerged in the controversies of the church. With some notable exceptions, such as the Moravians, no theology of mission was needed because no mission was happening in the Protestant world—a fact commented upon by the Counter Reformation (whose missionary endeavours preceded Protestant missions by two centuries) as a reason why the Protestant churches could not be counted as part of the true church: they had no mission.

Now that Protestant missions have been going for a couple of centuries, is our theology any better? The lack of integration between the two is still disturbing. Reflecting my own student days, it was certainly not the case that those who studied theology were the ones who were most interested in mission, personally let alone academically. 'Missiology' was not even a word I remember hearing until long after my undergraduate theological studies. A recent report by the British Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship indicates that, in a questionnaire concerning where students thought RTSF should be developing its resources, only 5% ticked 'Missionary Awareness.' So little is mission on the agenda of theological students or teachers, that at a recent gathering of scholars, historians, and practitioners of mission convened to establish a British Association of Mission Studies it was argued, not wholly in jest, that the aims of such a group should be the subversion of traditional theology by a healthy injection of missiology. Is there any discipline within the broad field of theological study which is not missiological in either its roots, or its implications? Like ethics, missiology has a remarkable fertilizing and integrating dynamic when it is allowed to influence the agenda and the perspective of any theological issue.

Many North American seminaries have more prominent courses, professorships and 'schools' in missiology. But the question is sometimes raised in other parts of the world among recipients of the fruit of all this whether more attention is paid to the pragmatic than to the theological, to strategies of mission rather than the perplexing issues that mission raises for us in today's world, to 'getting the job done' rather than reflecting on what it is we are doing and why. There were two great consultations on mission in 1989: the Lausanne II conference in Manila, and the World Council of Churches conference in San Antonio. The evangelical Lausanne took as its theme 'Proclaim Christ Until He Comes,' while the ecumenical San Antonio considered, 'You Will Be Done with Mission in Christ's Way'. It could be said that the latter theme raises a more profound theological agenda, whereas Lausanne was more absorbed with methodology. For in spite of its subtitle ('The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World'), Lausanne did not grapple seriously, for example, with ecclesiology—i.e. what doctrine of the whole church do evangelicals have in relation to mission?

Yet Lausanne II was itself the proof of the factor which makes the integration of missionology and theology imperative—the global nature of the church. It is a welcome sign, therefore, that last year the Association of Theological Schools in North America adopted 'globalization' as a major emphasis for the 1990s—meaning the desire to study the theology of the church in the context of the global church and its mission; the hope that 'missiology can break loose from the straitjacket of being just one discipline competing for students and recognition alongside so many others. Instead it can become the field which provides that interdisciplinary focus that the new global theological education requires.' Such was the hope also of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910! How long before it is a reality?

New Testament genre criticism for the 1990s
Craig L. Blomberg

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The twentieth century has given birth to many new critical tools for biblical scholarship. Informed students of the Scriptures return to normal study of the texts and investigation of their various aspects, such as genre, criticism, canon criticism, social-scientific analysis, lexical semantics, and a variety of other seemingly daunting methods. This is the case across most of the general disciplines of genre criticism. A selective sampling of the past ten years' most significant studies of NT genres may elucidate the 'state of the art' and prepare readers for trends in the decade ahead with still unresolved questions.

From one point of view, genre criticism is nothing new. Throughout the history of Christianity, most readers have recognized that the NT contains four distinct literary types which cannot be treated identically: the gospels, the Acts, the epistles, and Revelation. But few NT introductions or surveys, hermeneutics texts, or commentaries on individual books self-consciously reflect in any detail on precisely what their authors have in mind when they use the term genre. In recent years this has begun to change. Commentaries like those of R. Guelich, R. Fang or J. R. Michaels have included sections on 'genre' alongside material on conventional topics like authorship, date, or destination.1 Introductory works by H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, S. Brown, and S. Harris have added discrete treatments of the NT's diverse kinds of literature.2 Hermeneutics manuals like those of G. Fee and D. Stuart or L. Ryken's several works organize their entire discourses around the various literary forms and genres in sequence.3 And in perhaps the two most important and thorough surveys of NT genre criticism, D. Aune places the gospels, Acts, epistles and Revelation squarely within their acts and rhetorical expectations, detailing the extra-biblical writings of the centuries immediately surrounding the rise of Christianity which most closely resembles these four NT books.4

The term 'genre' itself is used in a wide variety of ways. For the purposes of this survey, Aune's definition strikes a good balance between uses which are so narrow as to make almost every piece of literature a unique genre and those which are so broad as to include under the same heading drastically divergent works: 'a literary form may be defined as a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of technical features that are of special interest in their genre and in the contemporary setting. Neither do the gospels belong to the genre, memoirs, in which the collected stories and sayings from the lives of great men are simply stringing together. Nor do they belong to the genre, miracle stories, in which the great deeds of ancient wonder-workers are narrated. The literary form which would thus be produced is a first-century Jewish oral history, and first-century Jews would have had to feel as easy to embellish contemporary history as they did ancient history.'5

Viewed as a literary form, the Gospels are a new creation. They are in much the same way as must be the case with the Hellenistic biographies, since they lack the sense of internal and external history (as in lives of heroes), of chronicle form (as in the annals), of the narrative form of autobiography (as in the autobiography, letter, or picaresque).6 They are thus more complex and less familiar, less well understood, and less well studied. The gospels are a unique kind of genre.

At the end of the 'seventies two important works challenged this consensus. C. H. Talbert argued for viewing the gospels as Greco-Roman biographies. Talbert was not trying to rehabilitate the case for their historical reliability but to point out parallels with three key elements which he believed the two works of art shared: a mythical structure, an origin in the legends of the 'cult' or ritual of a religious community devoted to the traditions of its founder, and an optimistic 'coming' perspective reacting against the pessimism and hopelessness of the day. Aune, however, has convincingly demonstrated that Talbert lumped too many disparate and often contradictory characteristics of both the gospels and Greco-Roman biography.7 M. Hengel agreed with Talbert that the gospels could be described as Greco-Roman biographies, but preferred to link them with that form which supplied a "relatively trustworthy historical report."8 But Hengel's study lacked the detailed discussion of comparative literature necessary to the task he had undertaken.

Another major work on the gospels as biographies appeared in the early 'eighties with P. Shuler's attempt to identify Matthew as encomium or laudatory biography. Yet this work has had little impact and failed to convince most scholars around praise for Christ but to narrate God's saving acts in history which he accomplished through the person of Jesus. Thus two recent reviewers of the literature on the genre of the gospels have concluded it was "designed to glorify Jesus" and "to glorify Jesus." Since these publications the evangelists' works must continue not to be equated with any single, fixed extra-biblical literary category.9 R. Guelich's definition of a gospel thus clearly eliminates the possibility of any ancient works besides Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John being included: "Formally, a gospel is a narrative account concerning the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus that is composed of discrete [sic] traditional units placed in the context of the Scriptures. Materially, the genre consists of that part of the Scriptures which treats of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, effecting his promises found in the Scriptures."10

Two quite different proposals have broken fresh ground in the 'eighties. R. Gundry took the evangelistic world by storm with his commentary on Matthew in which he identified the first gospel with Jewish 'midrash'. On the one hand he wished to continue to affirm distinctively North American forms of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy; on the other he argued that the narrative, theological, and literary form of Matthew does not actually occur as described but which were legendary embellishments of Matthew's sources, Mark and Q. Gundry, Matthew believed, was rewriting his authoritarian traditions just as Jewish apocalyptic and rabbinic literature often expanded and contemporized OT narratives.11 Reaction against Gundry among conservatives was considerable, with many seeing his formulations as 'sweeping away the belief that his view was incompatible with inerrancy. But for his case to stand, all of the following dubious propositions would have to be true: the original audience would have known the story as Mark and Q told it well enough to distinguish fact from fiction; both of these sources would have had to have been composed as Josephus and Mark thought; first-century Jews would have had to feel as free to embellish contemporaneous history as they did ancient history."12

W. Kelber ignored equally vigorous debate in less conservative circles with his analysis of gospel as parable. He believed that the gospels were 'literary parables' which produced the first written gospel. For Kelber, textuality and orality are largely antithetical, and Mark's severe portrait of Jesus is an outsider work that was not part of any authoritative tradition as such. Thus, he writes, "For a language that expects itself by distancing from the received mode of communication, parable is the ultimate metaphor."13 Thus Mark intends all of the gospel to be interpreted parabolically as both revealing and communicating a message against the arguments of the gospels, and especially Mark, contain more metaphor and ambiguity than many readers have recognized. But it is not clear that the entire gospel can be labelled parabolic. J. Williams and E. Malbon have shown that it is better to speak of the gospels as hybrid forms of which parabolic narrative (a broader category than 'parable') is a significant component. More seriously, Kelber has greatly overestimated the disjunction between oral and written texts by basing his hypothesis on an increasingly outdated theory of the development of the written text.14

Luke 1-3:4 probably provides the most important clues to the gospel genre. In this preface, Luke uses language which is most closely paralleled in the preludes of other Greco-Roman historians and biographers and he compares his work with certain predecessors who have apparently employed approximately the same type of 'narrative'. T. Callan finds the closest parallels in the histories of Herodotus, Tacitus, Artian, Dio Cassius, Sallust, and Josephus.15 In a very broad sense, it remains appropriate to speak of the gospels as biographies as well, once it is recognized that the ancients did not draw a distinction between history and biography, and so long as one does not try to define the kind of biography too narrowly. But the important point is to recognize that attempts to find generic identifications is that the evangelists wrote with historical intentions.16 It will not do to try to excise the gospel writers from history but to define what happened by assuming that they were composing an altogether different genre of literature. There are no other histories quite like Matthew, Luke and John; and so the term 'genre' reflects this. But the distinctions are not so great as to force us to invent an entirely unique genre just for the gospels.

At the same time, ancient historical standards of precision in reporting actual events, time, place, and person are much less rigid and more fluid than modern ones. Almost no histories were compiled as mere chronicles; most had clearly discernible ideological purposes. Thus, when compared against their contemporaries, the four evangelists acquit themselves well. Apparent contradictions between parallel accounts or with extra-biblical history all have plausible resolutions. Despite widespread protests to the contrary, one may legitimately speak of the 'historical reliability of the gospels', but in so doing one is not denying that theological motives were an important part of those teachings and events of Jesus' life which have been preserved.

Numerous implications for interpreters follow. Once allowance is made for paraphrase, abbreviation, explanation, omission, reordering, purification, and other theological techniques, one may remain confident that the gospels give trustworthy accounts of who Jesus was and what he did. The businessmen's analogy to a tapestry is no longer valid, they would deny authenticity at any point.17 On the other hand they did, and it is that aspect of the text on which readers should focus. Thus, this text itself speaks in a way which makes one's proximity to the text of the gospels significant and perhaps more important than the particular set of chronological order unless indications of time are explicitly mentioned. Luke's central
New Testament genre criticism for the 1990s
Craig L. Blomberg

The twentieth century has given birth to many new critical tools for biblical scholarship. Informed students of the Scripture recognize not only the rise and reduction in genre criticism, canon criticism, social-scientific analysis, lexical semantics, and a variety of other seemingly daunting methods, but also the manner in which these disciplines are genre criticism. A selective sampling of the past year's most significant studies of NT genres may elucidate the state of the art and prepare readers for the decade in the future with still unresolved questions.

From one point of view, genre criticism is nothing new. Throughout the history of Christianity, most readers have recognized that the NT contains four distinct literary types which cannot be treated identically: the gospels, the Acts, the epistles, and Revelation. But few NT introductions or surveys, hermeneutics texts, or commentaries on individual books self-consciously reflect in any detail on precisely what their genre differences involved. In recent years this has begun to change. Commentaries like those of R. Guelich, R. Fung or J. R. Michaels have included sections on genre alongside more conventional topics like authorship, date, or destination.1 Introductory works by H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, S. Brown, and S. Harris have added discrete treatments of the NT's diverse kinds of literature.1 Hermeneutics manuals like those of G. Fee and D. Stuart or L. Ryken's several works organize their entire discussions around literary genres in sequence.2 And in perhaps the two most important and thorough surveys of NT genre criticism, D. Aune places the gospels, Acts, epistles and Revelation squarely within their actual and potential contexts that parallel the extra-biblical writings of the centuries immediately surrounding the rise of Christianity which most closely resemble these New Testament forms.3

The term 'genre' itself is used in a wide variety of ways. For the purposes of this survey, Aune's definition strikes a good balance between uses which are so narrow as to make almost every piece of literature a unique genre and those which are so broad as to include under the same heading drastically divergent works: 'a literary form may be defined as a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of artistic features (including structure, theme, style, content, and function). Thus this survey is not interested in analysing constituent elements or literary devices, but rather in the genre itself.'4

At the end of the 'seventies two important works challenged this consensus. C. H. Talbert argued for viewing the gospels as Greco-Roman biographies. Talbert was not trying to rehabilitate the case for their historical reliability but to point out parallels with three key elements which he believed the two works of art shared: a mythological structure, an origin in the legends of the 'cult' or ritual of a religious community devoted to the traditions of its founder, and an optimistic 'world-creating' perspective reacting against the many pessimistic philosophies of the day. Aune, however, has convincingly demonstrated that Talbert lumped too many diverse literary characteristics under the defunct notion of an 'influence' or 'inspiration' and characterized the diverse genres of the gospels as well as his preferred link them with that form which supplied a relatively trustworthy historical report.5 But Hengel's study lacked the detailed discussion of comparative literature necessary to support his claims.--his.6

Another major work on the gospels as biographies appeared in the early 'eighties with P. Schurer's attempt to identify Matthew as encomium or laudatory biography.7 Yet this book was also concerned to challenge the view that the gospels have been around praise for Christ but to narrate God's saving acts in history which he accomplished through the person of Jesus. Thus two recent reviews of the literature on the genre of the gospels were made.8 Despite these protestations the evangelists' works must continue not to be equated with any single, fixed extra-biblical literary category.9 R. Guelich's definition of a gospel thus clearly eliminates the possibility of any ancient works besides Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John being included: '[formally, a gospel is a narrative accounting concerning Jesus and his death, burial, resurrection, and a sign of salvation that is composed of discrete [sic] traditional units placed in the context of the Scriptures. ... Materially, the genre consists of the record of Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection, effecting his promises found in the Scriptures.'10

Two quite different proposals have broken fresh ground in the 'eighties. R. Gundry took the evangelistic world by storm with his commentary on Matthew in which he identified the first gospel with Jewish 'madrich' on the one hand he wished to continue to affirm distinctively North American forms of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy; on the other hand he recognized that the gospels were not simply products of a single historical setting, but not actually occur as described but which were legendary embellishments of Matthew's sources, Mark and Q. Gundry, Matthew, believed, was rewriting his authoritative traditions just as Jewish, intertestamental and rabbinic literature often expanded and contemporized OT narratives.12 Reaction against Gundry among conservations was considerable but it helped to reinforce the belief that he held: 'was incompatible with inerrancy. But for his case to stand, all of the following dubious propositions would have to be accepted: the gospels are not the word of God; they have the story as Mark and Q tells it well enough to distinguish fact from fiction; both of these sources would have had the story of the life of Jesus in the community where they were known.13

W. Welker ignored equally vigorous debate in less conservative circles with his analysis of gospel as parable. He believes that 'gospels' as a genre has been traditionally understood as a genre which produced the first written gospel. For Welker, textuality and orality are largely antithetical, and Mark's severe portrait of Jesus is the outcome of a conflict between gnosiological and kerygmatic elements which he writes, 'For a language that appears itself by distancing from the received mode of communication, parable is the ultimate metaphor.'14 Thus Mark intends all of the gospel to be interpreted parabolically as both revealing and communicating the Christian message. Welker argues that Matthew, Mark, and Luke have not given more metaphor and ambiguity than many readers have recognized. But it is not clear that the entire genre can be labelled parabolic. J. Williams and E. Malbon have shown that it is better to speak of the gospels as hybrid forms of which parabolic narrative (a broader category) is only a subset.15 More seriously, Welker has greatly underestimated the disjunction between oral and written texts by basing his hypothesis on an increasingly outdated model of the development of Christian literature.

Luke 1:3-4 probably provides the most important clues to the genre gospel. In this preface, Luke uses language which is most closely paralleled in the prefaces of other Greco-Roman historical narratives. Luke's style, his mode of writing, and he compares his work with certain predecessors who have apparently employed approximately the same kind of 'narrative', T. Callan finds the closest parallels in the histories of Herodotus, Tacitus, Artian, Dio Cassius, Sallust and Josephus.16 In a very broad sense, it remains appropriate to speak of the gospels as biographies as well, once it is recognized that the ancients did not draw a distinction between history and biography, and so long as one does not try to define the kind of biography too narrowly. But the impact of these several studies is that genre identification is not a generic identifications is that the evangelists wrote with historical intentions.17 It will not do to try to excuse the gospel writers by saying that they did not have a genre in mind because they happened by assuming that they were composing an altogether different genre of literature. There are no other histories quite like Matthew, Luke and John, and Künkel's effort to reflect the same genre. But the distinctions are not so vast as to force us to invent an entirely unique genre just for the gospels.

At the same time, ancient historical standards of precision in reporting, and the way the gospels record on the one hand much less rigid and more fluid than modern ones. Almost no histories were compiled as mere chronicles; most had clearly discernible ideological purposes. Thus, when compared against their contemporaries, the four evangelists account for themselves well. Apparent contradictions between parallel accounts or with extra-biblical history all have plausible resolutions. Despite widespread protests to the contrary, one may legitimately speak of the 'historical reliability of the gospels', but even in doing so one is not denying that theological motivation is a factor in the literary composition of those teachings and events of Jesus' life which have been preserved.

Numerous implications for interpreters follow. Once allowance is made for paraphrase, abbreviation, explanation, omission, and analogia lectionis there is room for a variety of techniques, one may remain confident that the gospels give trustworthy accounts of who Jesus was and what he did. The burden of proof for those who would deny the historical reality of Jesus' life in the gospels to claim by any of the techniques employed. He would deny authenticity at any point.27 On the other hand they did, and it is that aspect of the text on which readers should focus when deciding if the text should receive divine inspiration.28 These passages reflect any kind of chronological order unless indications of time are explicitly mentioned. Luke's central
section, for example (Lk. 9:51 - 18:34), is probably not a ‘travel narrative’ of Jesus’ journey through Perea as has often been suggested; it is a highly organized, rhetorical composition designed to show Jesus’ teachings ‘under the shadow of the cross’. Similarly, while apparent contradictions between gospels can success- fully be explained and resolved, they should not be used to establish the individual gospels which remains canonical. Most students of the gospels probably need to spend more time discerning the distinctive message of each evangelist and less time constructing a coherent four. These readers probably know that the parables of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, like the stories of Mary and Martha and the ten lepers, are found only in Luke. Fewer are aware that the first two are found only in Luke. Even less do they realize that all fit into one of Luke’s most cherished and distinctive emphases - Jesus’ compassion for the underdog.

The gospels may thus be identified as theological histories of selected events surrounding the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Though each of the four has its distinctive, and John is more noticeably different from the synoptics, each is also like the others, but unlike them. The apocryphal and Gnostic gospels are certainly more like each other than like any other histories or so-called gospels. This is particularly significant in light of the increasing respect which the apocryphal and Gnostic gospels are receiving in certain circles as purportedly genuine repositories of some of the earliest Christian writings. Such portrayals of Jesus and the ‘gospels’ do not employ much connected narrative; those that do tend to focus primarily on certain ‘gaps’ in the canonical record.3 In short, they must be viewed as secondary develop- ments of the primary Gospel discourse of the time.

Acts

Not nearly as much research has attempted to analyse the genre of Acts as has been expounded on the gospels. The opening verses of Acts make it clear that the book is a sequel to Luke and that the preface in Luke 1:1-4 applies to both volumes. Numerous structural parallels demonstrate the unity of the two-volume work. The gospel follows a geographic framework which portrays Jesus moving from Galilee to Jerusalem, and on to Rome. The pattern is repeated in the programme of the expansion of the gospel traced in Acts 1:8. Major episodes in the lives of key characters in Acts closely parallel stories from the life of Jesus. Thus, we may ask whether it is possible to see in these stories of the lives of the early church the same kind that one should expect to discover in the lives of the early church. Moreover, we may ask whether it is possible to discern any kind of historical genre. On this much scholars have agreed. Going into the eighties, a fair consensus would have identified Acts as a ‘historical’ narrative, designed to generate a non-fiction reader. But the question of the genre of Acts, or its function, is not essentially a question of preservation of the question of historical reliability. One group of commentators, primarily British, compared Acts favourably with such historians as Herodotus and Thucydides, and argued for a substantial measure of historicity. Sir W. Ramsay blazed the trail for this group of scholars.4 A second group appeals to E. Haenchen’s work as foundational. These scholars, primarily German, agreed that Acts contains historical intentions but believed that he botched the job rather badly. Fortunately, Luke also wrote as a theologian, so that the theology of Acts remains instructive regardless of whether the historical details of his narrative cannot be trusted.5

In the eighties, a third, primarily American, approach has emerged. Pioneered by R. Pervo, this attempt to label the genre of Acts classifies the book as a historical novel.6 In this approach, Acts is like a first-century Roman writer of fiction, but rather than just dishing up bits and pieces of the text, the apocryphal and Gnostic gospels are certainly more like each other than like any other histories or so-called gospels. This is particularly significant in light of the increasing respect which the apocryphal and Gnostic gospels are receiving in certain circles as purportedly genuine repositories of some of the earliest Christian writings. Such portrayals of Jesus and the ‘gospels’ do not employ much connected narrative; those that do tend to focus primarily on certain ‘gaps’ in the canonical record. In short, they must be viewed as secondary develop- ments of the primary Gospel discourse of the time.

Two somewhat distinctive features of Acts have often led commentators to label the book a historical novel. First, Luke is Luke’s use of speeches (primarily on the lips of Peter and Paul); the other involves the so-called ‘we-sections’ (in which the author speaks directly to the audience, usually in the plural). It is commonly known that ancient historians often composed speeches that they believed were appropriate for parable. In Acts, we find a kind of speech often consisting with a praxis, and which is often of the contents of a particular address. It is also evident that narrators frequently wrote in the first person as a literary device even when they themselves did not witness the action they describe. Yet the breadth of ancient literature which employed either or both of these devices ranges so widely from relatively reliable history to sheer fiction that their presence in Acts does not very much aid in assessing its genre.7 If, on other grounds, as seems likely, one ought to speak of Acts as a theological history, implying both historical as well as theological narratives. The focus on behaviol rather than religious speeches or the we-sections need undermine this assessment.

When one turns to the apocryphal acts, one discovers a variety of parallels in form, content and function. There is no single, all-embracing category to which they all appear to belong. They may be classified as ‘private’, ‘public’, or ‘double’ (both private and public). They may be classified as ‘praexis’. But this Greek word is ‘a non-technical, descriptive term for narratives of the accomplishments of noteworthy individuals, whether mythical, historical, or fictional’).8 Probably not as many distinctives separate canonical and non-canonical Acts as distinguish canonical and non-canonical gospels, but in terms of reliance on trustworthy traditions and ultimately be grasped. As with the gospels, the Acts may be compared with a known genre of Hellenistic literature while at the same time the literature of acts and apocryphal historical form may be the best label for the combination.9

Once again, interpreters do well to be sensitive to this balance between theology and history. Acts contains much more in the way of theology than history. In the second volume, Luke occasionally organizes material thematically. Acts 11:27-30 probably occurred about 12:24-25 (at least according to Josephus’ dates for the Judean famine and Herod’s death), but Luke places it earlier so that he may keep together several strands of tradition about Antiochus (cf. 11:29-30, 12:1-17). The second volume, however, follows the chronological outline which governs the book, he can learn to emphasize what Luke wanted to stress rather than that on which contem- porary Christians usually concentrate. Acts 1:8 indicates more than is needed for the book’s secondary audience. Luke traces the miraculous, thirty-year-long transformation of an exclusively Jewish sect found only in Jerusalem into an empirical church that soon spread from its Jerusalem origins to many other places, even in Rome. Thus Luke’s foremost concern in the two episodes involving Philip in Acts 8 is that the gospel came even to Samaritans and eunuchs (two categories of outcasts according to orthodox Jewish perspective). Questions which divide exegesis today concerning the order of and intervals between, and the filling of the Holy Spirit were probably not even on Luke’s mind.

Epistles

Only recently have scholars shown much interest in the genre criticism of the epistles, but in the eighties this discipline has flourished. Good overviews of the various kinds of letters which were common in the Hellenistic world appear in the works of G. van Kooten, G. J. van den Enden, and D. Malherbe.7 In the second chapter of his book on the letters of Philippians, Malherbe has stated that, in the second century, it has long been recognized that the framework of many of the NT letters resembled that of other Hellenistic letters from Ptolemaic Egypt and from the period of Philo, including the letter to Cleopatra, the so-called ‘correspondence of Cleopatra and Crassus’ (in the letters to the Philippians, the letter to the Galatians, and the letter to the Ephesians).8 The pastoral epistles, especially 1 and 2 Timothy, are often similarly classified; Paul’s personal remarks compare with the personal letters of other authors.9 For example, in contrast to the actions of the false teachers.10 Other epistles, most notably 1 Peter, are steeped in exhortation without formally corresponding to the pastoral letter genre.

A second example of functional genre is the letter of recommendation (also called an introductory or expository letter). These letters were common among the papyri, introducing the bearer of the letter to its recipient and then requesting a favour on behalf of the bearer, often on the basis of the friendly or familiar relationship existing between the two. Frequently the sender obligated himself to the recipient for reciprocal favours. Paul let to Philemon on urgent account wrote: Onesimus fits this pattern well.11 Paul relies on his relationship with Philemon as a vital part of his request, reminding of the debt in love to be paid.12 The letter of recommendation - on behalf of the travelling Christian missionaries whom John encourages Gaius to welcome.13

More common among recent genre criticism of the epistles is the distinction between ‘epistle’ and ‘letter’. The letter is composed of the shortcomings of the epistle, which is more likely to invoke a sense of confidence. The epistle is more likely to convince a judge or jury of the rightness or wrongness of a past action. Deliberative rhetoric tried to persuade or dissuade an assembly concerning the expediency of a future action. The epistle was intended to follow two paths. One classifies the letter function- ally, one analyses them rhetorically. Paradigms for functional classification are Acts; a letter’s subject matter, and for rhetorical classification, exercises in letter-writing which have been preserved from Greco-Roman antiquity, as well as from ancient epistolary texts. In the letter of Philemon, the idea of the epistle is derived from the works of the masters such as Aristotle and Quintillian, who use a tripartite categorization: rhetoric may be classed as deliberative (oratory), epideictic (demonstrative, laudatory).14

Several of Paul’s letters may be helpfully analysed when viewed as a specific functional genre of epistle. For example, I Thessalonians is probably best described as a parentetic letter which originated from the desire to hold a church to a high standard of specific action or attitude, often incorporating anticipation and personal example as part of the persuasive argument. The sustained praise and autobiographical commentary which dominate I Thessalonians 1 - 3 may thus be seen as deliberate. Paul has established his friendship with the Thessalonians and emphasizes that, for the most part, they do not need his guidance, but do need his support and corrections to make the Thessalonians’ ethics and eschatology, on which chapters 4 and 5 focus, and he is careless about the way for this teaching in the opening chapters.15 The pastoral epistles, especially 1 and 2 Timothy, are often similarly classified; Paul’s personal remarks correspond with the personal letters of other authors. For example, in contrast to the actions of the false teachers. Other epistles, most notably 1 Peter, are steeped in exhortation without formally corresponding to the parentetic letter genre.
section, for example, (Lk. 9:51 – 18:34), is probably not a 'travel narrative' of Jesus' journey through Perea as it has often been taken to be, but rather an organized exposition of Jesus' teachings 'under the shadow of the cross.' Similarly, while apparent contradictions between gospels can success- fully be resolved, no coherent single gospel can provide a complete individual gospel which remains canonical. Most students of the gospels probably need to spend more time discerning the distinctive message of each evangelist and less time constructing a single fourfold. Perhaps the reader probably knows that the parables of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, like the stories of Mary and Martha and the ten lepers, are not in John. The references to them are found only in Luke. Even less do they realize that all fit into one of Luke's most cherished and distinctive emphases - Jesus' compassion for the rejected and the marginalized.

The gospels may thus be identified as theological histories of selected events surrounding the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Though each of the four has its distinctive, John is more noticeably different from the synogogues, each is probably closer to the authors themselves. For example, the four canonical gospels are certainly more like each other than like any other histories or so-called gospels. This is particularly significant in light of the increasing respect which the apocryphal and Gnostic gospels are receiving in certain circles as purportedly genuine repositories of some of the earliest Christian teaching. Modernist portraits of Jesus moving from a gospel to a gospel do not employ much connected narrative; those that do tend to focus primarily on certain 'gaps' in the canonical record. In general they must be viewed as secondary develop- ments of the gospels which for a time items within a given work may be very old and perhaps, occasionally, authentic.

Acts

Not nearly as much research has attempted to analyse the genre of Acts as has been expended on the gospels. The opening verses of Acts make it clear that the book is a sequel to Luke and that the preface in Luke 1:1-4 applies to both volumes. Numbers structural parallels demonstrate the unity of the two-volume work. The gospel follows a geographical layout. Acts portrays Jesus moving from a setting in the context of the entire Roman empire (the known world of that day) to Galilee to Samaria to Jerusalem, whereas Acts begins this sequence with the programme of expansion of the gospel traced in Acts 1:8. Major episodes in the lives of key characters in Acts closely parallel stories from the life of Jesus. To see this continuity, then one should expect Acts to be classified similarly. The overall contents of the book - descriptions of key events in the life of the early church, especially in the careers of Peter and Paul - allow us to make Acts an obvious candidate for some kind of historical genre.

On this much scholars have agreed. Going into the 'eighties, a fair consensus would have identified Acts as a historical text, the purpose of which was to preserve a written record of the activities of the early church. This would not necessarily mean that Acts was a history in the modern sense of the word. Acts is not a history of the world. Acts does not deal with the 'praxes'. But this Greek word is 'a nonotechnical, descriptive term for narratives of the accomplishments of noteworthy persons, whether mythical, historical, or fictional'. Probably not as many distinctive genres separate canonical and non-canonical gospels as distinguish canonical and apocryphal canonical gospels, but in terms of reliance on trustworthy traditions, both should be granted as much weight as the gospels. The Acts may be compared with a known genre of Hellenistic literature while at the same time it is not clear to what extent the standard classification of authors traditional historical history may be the best label for the combination.

Once again, interpreters do well to be sensitive to this balance between theology and history. Acts contains much more theological content than the four gospels. In the second volume, Luke occasionally organizes material thematically. Acts 11:27-30 probably occurred after 12:21-24 (at least according to Josephus' dates for the Jewish famine and Herod's death), but Luke places it earlier so that he may keep together several strands of tradition about Antioch (cf. 11:20-30). Luke is probably the theologian and Josephus' narrative outlines which governs the book, he can learn to emphasize what Luke wanted to stress rather than that which contem- porary Christians usually concentrate. Acts 1:8-11 may indicate more than just John's second chapter. Luke traces the miraculous, thirty-year-long transformation of an exclusively Jewish sect found only in Jerusalem into an emperor-glorified church of the Gentiles and Roman region solidly entrenched even in Rome. Thus Luke's foremost concern in the two episodes involving Philip in Acts 8 is that the gospel came even to Samaritans and eunuchs (two categories of outcasts according to orthodox Jewish perspective). Questions which divide exegesis today concerning the order of events, between Peter and Paul and the filling of the Holy Spirit were probably not even Luke's mind.

Epistles

Only recently have scholars shown much interest in the genre criticism of the epistles, but in the 'eighties this discussion has flourished. Good overviews of the various kinds of letters which were common in the Hellenistic world appear in the works of M. Kaiser, R. Schadewaldt, and C. M. Derbes. More- over, it has long been recognized that the framework of many of the NT letters resembled that of other Hellenistic letters from the same period. Letters to friends, clients, or lovers, the past epistolary, especially 1 and 2 Timothy, are often similarly classified; Paul's personal remarks contained in these letters, for example, set in contrast to the actions of the false teachers.

Other epistles, most notably 1 Peter, are steeped in exhortation without formally corresponding to the narrative letter.

A second example of functional genre is the letter of recommendation (also called an introductory or intercessory letter). These letters were common among the papyri, introducing the bearer of the letter to its recipient and requesting a favour on behalf of the bearer. Often it was the benefit of the friendly or familial relationship existing between the two. Frequently the sender obligated himself to the recipient for reciprocal favours. Paul, for example, wrote to Philemon urging Onesimus fit this pattern well. Paul relies on his relationship with Philemon as a vital part of his request, reminding him of his debt to Philemon. Onesimus could have been expected to recognize the form of the letter and realize his obligation to comply with the request. Paul's letter is a letter of recommendation - on behalf of the travelling Christian missionaries whom John encourages Gaius to welcome.

More common among recent genre criticisms of the epistles is the idea that the language and style of the letter is intended to convince a judge or jury of the rightness or wrongness of a past action. Deliberate rhetoric to persuade or dissuade an assembly concerning the expediency of a future action. The main purpose of the audience to affirm or present evidence of the value of the action.
present. A full-blown rhetorical speech would contain all of the following features: *exordium* (proemion) = stated the case and gained the audience's attention; *thesis* = related the background and facts of the case; *proposition* (divisio, partisio) = stated what was agreed upon and what was contested; *thesis* (resentio) = maintained the proofs, based on the credibility of the speaker, appeals to the hearer's feelings, *or/and logical argument* (conclusio = summarized opponents' arguments *peroratio (conclusio) = summarized argument and sought to arouse hearers' emotions*.

In many instances, however, one or more of these elements might be missing.

Probably the most well-known example of the implications of rhetorical genre is H. D. Betz's analysis of Galatians as an 'apologetic letter', the written analysis of judicial rhetoric.  

Betz's approach removes attention somewhat from the classic Lutheran emphasis on 'justification by faith' and places it squarely on Paul's own self-defence as he justifies his past actions and demands a decision in his favour. And as B. Brinsmead elaborates, the apologetic genre suggests that Galatians is thoroughly dialogical - both with the opponents who are intruders and with those Galatians who have accepted their theology.

Betz's thesis, however, has been convincingly challenged. Whereas the *narratio* of 1:12-2:14 certainly reads like a self-defense, another look shows that Paul uses it to establish the legitimacy of his apostleship, and that his own original task was proof based on personal credibility, properly part of the *probatio*.  

G. Kennedy suggests that these verses are in fact part of an extended narrative, and that Galatians 3:1-6 is evidence of a further, 5:1-6:10 seems inappropriate in a letter focused on the past actions of the writer. However, in fact it is not notably aberrant and evidently Paul therefore prefers the deliberative genre. The parenthetic section fits nicely into a letter which seeks as its goal the Galatians' deep commitment, further, the text and the adherence to the Jewish Law which it entails. Several recent studies have further endorsed and refined an analysis of Galatians as deliberative rhetoric.  

2 Thessalonians may be a second Pauline example of this category of rhetorical genre.

The letter to the Romans has been helpfully analysed in terms of epideictic rhetoric. Older studies often spoke of it as a 'letter-essay' - a 'real letter' sent to specific recipients dealing with specific topics but intended for a broader audience as well. But the substantial tensions between the personal nature of the introduction and conclusion and the literary orientation of the body of the letters between the theology of chapters 1-11 and the parables of 12-15 had never been entirely satisfactorily resolved.  

Epideictic rhetoric, on the other hand, provides a structure which incorporates such tensions. Romans is a coherent whole.  

The features of a personal letter at beginning and end establish Paul's credibility and a relationship with the reader. But in contrast, the body is a series of谠ouments frequently parcelled out into different source documents.

Rhetorical analysis of the Corinthian epistles is also significant in that it corrects misinterpretations of texts like 1 Corinthians 1:2-5. Despite his apparently sweeping disclaimer, Paul does not eschew rhetoric nor reject subtle literary devices aimed to persuade. 2 Corinthians 10-13 is laden with intricate and sophisticated approaches to winning over a hostile audience. But Paul's 'blending in humility', a strategic ancient rhetoricians believed was the most praiseworthy form of boasting. Rather Paul disavows strategies that are manipulative; rather he appeals to the Corinthians on the basis of his own identity which disavows form from substance. But when he is convinced he has a word from the Lord, Paul will use every means, even disfigurement, to communicate it to others in a convincing fashion.

Genre criticism of the so-called catholic or general epistles has been laden with pitfalls. Various features of Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter and Jude suggest an author who is willing to question whether or not they even reflect genuine epistolary form. Hebrews lacks the conventional prescript. James lacks the postscript. 1 John has neither a Peter and Jude substitute an epistolary form. Nevertheless, in these letters there are clear signs of increasing interaction, and significant proposals have been put forward to help one understand their structure and form.

The author of Hebrews describes his work as a 'word of encouragement/exhortation' (Heb. 13:22). This phrase reapplies once only in the NT, referring to a preached sermon. But there are several formal and content features which Hebrews shares with homiletical or sermonic material: alternate exposition and application/exhortation, alliteration, oratorical imperatives, euphony, and unusual word order. Probably Hebrews was never intended to be a letter in the typical sense, but was prepared as a sermon to be preached and then later given an epistolary closing. Among other things, this suggests that the author of Hebrews may have had the memory is warning passages (e.g. 6:6-10; 26:29-39). Theologians may debate whether these texts best fit a Calvinist or Arminian perspective, but Christians must preach them because professing believers do apostatize and must be warned about the consequences.

Commentators traditionally viewed James in the same way form critics analysed the gospels - as loosely related units of material, tropes, searching patterns, or clearly discernible outline. But the peridox has definitively swung in the opposite direction today, in favour of reading criticism as 'a rationalization of a theological programme'. Paul is left with his own right, carefully constructing his 'epistle' according to a predetermined outline. The most significant proposal concerns the logical organization of the letter and its relationship to 1 Thessalonians. Of several important proposals, the most notable has been that of P. Davids, who sees James as highlighting three major themes: trials and temptations, wisdom and speech, and wealth and poverty. James introduces each of these themes twice; chapters 2-5 unpack them in greater detail in inverse sequence.  

Even if David's outline imposes a little more structure than is actually present, his argument is in deft reflecting attention away from 'faith vs. works' as the major concern of James. 21:26-28 is a crucial seg- ment in the argument as it weaves together this theme into the larger theme of the right use of one's material resources (see 2:14-17). A. Vanhoye has put forward an important thesis that James and 1 Thessalonians are a pair of texts that are often seen as separate but which share similar implications. The correspondence of their standpoints are vague or overly subtle. He has clearly demonstrated detailed literary artistry in the epistle, but as a proposal for the general genre of the letter he fails to convince.

Raymond Brown has described 1 John as the 'least letter-like format among the NT epistles.' This uniqueness has spawned a bewildering array of suggestions as to its genre. Brown concentrates on John's self-appointed task of intended to correct misinterpretations of the earlier work. He notes similarities to the prologue and ending statement of purpose in the gospel and suggests this is deliberate imitation. In the words of a High Anglican priest and pastoral practional trac.S. Smalley terms it a paper: a consideration, for purposes of teaching and further discussion, of the christological and ethical issues which were causing debate and even division within the Johannine church. Aune perhaps the closest to the mark by terming the book a 'deliberative homily'.

R. Bauckham has broken fresh ground with his detailed analysis of the Johannine writings. Drawing decisively on the Jewish tradition of farewell speeches, the author of 2 Peter portrays the apostle like the fathers of Israel, knowing his end is near. In this section Bauckham finds the genre of literature is a peculiarly serious one, and the author has been deceived or wronged by attribution of authorship. This may or may not follow, but Bauckham's work offers one of the few essays of positive attribution in the field. The genre analysis is used to show that the genre is an artifact of a liturgical genre analysis necessary to make pseudonymity both a potentially convincing and a morally acceptable hypothesis. In other words, Bauckham's argument reflects the well-established pseudepigraphic genre which the author of the pastoral letters appeared to have regularly assumed what he is trying to prove, while the monograph of M. Kiley on Colossians does not avoid the issue of genre altogether. On the other hand, G. Cannon has used rhetorical analysis to show that Colossians carefully follows genuine Pauline patterns, and has shown only imitated, thus strengthening the case for that letter's authenticity.

In an entirely different vein, Bauckham presents a fresh case for the priority of 2 Peter over 2 Peter based on 'Judg's right to the name and 'midrashic' structure. With a series of threefold illustrations Judg the false teachers threatening his community to those who were judged in OT times and are threatening a new generation of Christians. A preeminent story of the world, although 2 Peter 2 reuses much of this imagery, the samet avoids pattern of 2 Peter 2 has thoroughly reworked its source material in a way which affirms its own literary integrity.

Revelation

Readers of Revelation have puzzled over its contents for centuries. Here if ever the need for genre criticism becomes apparent. Revelation's features include three distinct genres: prophecy, apocalyptic, and eschatology.  

Traditionally, most commentators understood the book primarily in terms of a religious system. Revelation is a symbolic development along temporal (preterist, historicist, idealist and futurist) and millennial (premillennial, postmillennial, amillennial) lines. But most agreed that John's message is primarily about the future, the present, and the personal identity of the reader. Until now this has simply been stated in the form of a rhetorical question, but a number of authors have given rise to attempts to read Revelation in light of the current events of a given epoch, of history, often based on the work of the French Jesuit Pierre Chausset. Christ's return. The best-selling American book of non-fiction in the 1970s, Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth, argues that the second coming of Christ is closest to the mark by terming the book a 'deliberative homily'.

In the introduction, however, is numerous. Many generations of Christians have believed they could see the fulfilment of
present. A full-blown rhetorical speech would contain all of the following features: *exordium* (proemium) — stated the case and gained the audience's approval; 
*thesis* (opinio consensum) — the conclusion or belief that the hearer will accept; *narratio* — related the background and facts of the case; *propositio* (divisio, partisio) — was stated what was agreed upon and what was contested; 
*argumentum* (confirmatio) — maintained the proofs, based on the credibility of the speaker, appeals to the hearer's feelings, and/or logical argument; 
*rapportium* (confirmatio) — summarized argument and sought to arouse hearers' emotions.

In many instances, however, one or more of these elements might be missing.

Probably the most well-known example of the implications of rhetorical genre is H.-D. Behz’s analysis of Galatians as an ‘apologetic letter,’ the written argument of judicial rhetoric. Behz’s approach recognizes attention somewhat from the classic Lutheran emphasis on ‘justification by faith’ and places it squarely on Paul’s own self-defence as he justifies his past actions and demands a decision in his favour. And as B. Brinnseder elaborates, the apologetic speech genre suggests that Galatians is thoroughly dialogical - both with the opponents who are intruders and with those Galatians who have accepted their theology.

Behz’s thesis, however, has been convincingly challenged. While the *narratio* of 1:12-2:14 certainly reads like a self-defence, another look shows that Paul uses it to establish the original context of Galatians, rather than to provide a proof based on personal credibility, properly part of the *propositio*. G. Kennedy suggests that these verses are in fact part of an extended self-justification discourse, employed by teachers in various philosophical schools, regularly postulated and refuted the objections of hypothetical opponents, whether or not any actual were present among the audiences addressed. Paul’s responses, therefore (most notably his impassioned use of *me genoto* (may it never be!), while they may engage the logical structure of a defence of Herod’s ministry, function primarily as transitions to new stages in his argument. One may not conclude that actual opponents were present in the communities to which Paul was writing merely on the basis of these features. Sections of 1 Corinthians (especially 4:6-5:1; 9:18; 15:29-49) also seem to fit well with the ancient form of debate.

Functional and rhetorical genre criticism also shed light on other features of these varied and frequently searching passages. Paul and 2 Peter are the two NT letters whose integrity has been most doubted. Both are regularly seen as a composite of three or four (or more) separate fragments, yet several fresh proposals have been made in recent years. A. T.薪ton argues that 2 Peter is an identifiable genre in its entirety. D. F. Watson builds on several recent studies that have found inclusions and interconnections within the fragmentary text, pointing out that even though it is difficult to argue that the author thought of the text as a whole, he has to see 2:19-30 as an episodic digression.

L. Belleville has suggested that 2 Corinthians 1-7 follows the paradigm for an apologetic self-commendatory letter, with the *exordium* open to the public, the *narratio* making the defence, the *thesis* shaping the conclusion and the *rapportium* bringing together the argument and the adherence to the Jewish Law which it entails. Several recent studies have further endorsed and refined an analysis of Galatians as deliberative rhetoric. 2 Thessalonians may be a second Pauline example of this category of rhetorical genre.

The letter to the Romans has been helpfully analysed in terms of epideictic rhetoric. Older studies often spoke of it as a "letter-essay" - a real letter sent to specific recipients discussing specific topics but intended for a broader audience as well. But the substantial tensions between the personal nature of the introduction and conclusion and the literary manner of the body of the letters and between the theology of chapters 1-11 and the parables of 12-15 had never been entirely satisfactorily resolved. Epideictic rhetoric, on the other hand, provides a structure which incorporates both the written and the spoken word for Romans in a more cohesive whole. The features of a personal letter at beginning and end establish Paul’s credibility and a relationship with the addressee, while the body of the letter develops a line of thought which diverges from substance. But when he is convinced he has a word from the Lord, Paul will use every opportunity to try to communicate it to others in a convincing fashion.
Revelation in its lifetime, precisely because its imagery is sufficiently archetypal so as to fit well with world events of the times, and because it is so familiarly interpreted as to seem as if it must exist in the reader's mental view; (e) no retracing of past history in the guise of prophecy; (f) real eschatology; (g) little angelic interpretation; and (h) the affirmation that the Messiah has already come and made judgment.

The third genre which Revelation resembles is that of an epistle. No other known apocalyptic employs the epistolary conventions so familiarly. John's Daniel, or Zechariah, or one of the other Jewish and Hellenistic works of similar form and content. Nevertheless as recently as the early seventies, K. Koch could not think of any ancient apocalyptic in which the设有 grammatical and stylistic parallels both to and works merited the title 'apocalyptic' and as to what features they had in common. As a result, the Society of Biblical Literature, which in 1974 published the third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-century A.D. literature, gives a picture of the Apocalypse, which published the findings of several years of research in the second half of the 1970s. Surveying a significant array of ancient works of Jewish, Greco-Roman, Christian, Gnostic and Persian provenance, the team of researchers identified twenty-eight elements which characterized numerous apocalyptic writings and then assessed how many of the elements each of the works in question exhibited. The resulting division which they adopted read as follows:

'revelation' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by a heavenly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality that is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and eternal, in so far as it is a vehicle of ultimate truth about the world.'

Some of the works which best exemplified this genre included Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Apocalypse of John the Theologian, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Book of Revelation.

The proceedings of a subsequent, international colloquium in Uppsala in 1979 were published four years later. This volume reflected a more amorphous group of studies, for while there were several contributors who agreed that a distinction between prophecy and apocalypse was necessary, the resulting volume was not a strong case for an apocalypse as well as content and form.' Much discussion focused on Revelation's social function; recent studies continued to describe the book as apocalyptic, but the reactions were now toward a definable social crisis. More work by another SBL seminar generated 80a (1986), entitled Early Christian Apocalypticism, was published in
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Very little evangelical scholarship, however, influenced any of these gatherings, so that the upshot of all of them has been largely to affirm that apocalyptic is an outdated world-view. Revelation may have value for the modern reader, but only after it is demythologized. As A. Collins sums up, 'A hermeneutic which takes historical criticism seriously (by which I mean the historical criticism of all the Bible) can no longer work with an interventionist notion of God.'

Instead, one must view 'Revelation as expressing God's intentions, not as determining man's capacity for understanding what is real and what is good from the point of view of a believer in the God of Israel and the God of Christ.' Moreover, most proponents of apocalyptic have not sufficiently stressed the continuity of the genre from typical apocalypses. L. Morris, for example, lists the

following distinctions: (a) frequent reference to the book as prophecy; (b) typically prophetic warnings and calls for repentance; (c) a picture of the coming of the end time as a historical event that must eventually come about; (d) no recasting of past history in the guise of prophecy; (e) real eschatology; (f) little angelic interpretation; and (g) the affirmation that the Messiah has already come and made judgment.

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Revelation in its lifetime, precisely because its imagery is sufficiently archetypal\(^{1}\) so as to fit well with world events of many kinds, and because it usually also insists on an impossibly literal hermeneutics which is therefore inevitably applied inconsistently.\(^{2}\)

The vast majority of modern scholars of all theological perspectives has therefore focused on Revelation as apocalyptic. The term comes from the Greek title of the book, Ἀποκάλυψις, and tells us that the book is written in a different Jewish and Hellenistic works of similar form and content. Nevertheless as recently as the early seventies, K. Koch could still write of the apocalyptic genre as if it were a genuine separate one both as to what works merited the title ‘apocalyptic’ and as to what features they had in common. As a result, the Society of Biblical Literature in 1970 held a symposium on the Apocalypse, which published the findings of several years of research in Semeia 14 (1979). Surveying a significant array of ancient works of Jewish, Greco-Roman, Christian, Gnostic and Persian provenance, this team of researchers identified twenty-eight elements which characterized numerous apocalyptic writings and then assessed how many of the elements each of the works in question exhibited. The resulting definition which they adopted read as follows: 'Apocalyptic' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spiritual, in that it seeks to penetrate the nature of the world. Some of the works which best exemplified this genre included 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Apocalypse of John the Theologian, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Book of Revelation.

The proceedings of a subsequent, international colloquium in Uppsala in 1979 were published four years later. This volume reflected a more amorphous group of studies, but there were several contributors who agreed that a new approach to the interpretation of Revelation was needed as both a whole and as content.\(^{3}\) Much discussion focused on Revelation's social function; recent studies continue to develop this theme, with work towards coming to a definable social crisis.\(^{4}\) More work by another SBL seminar generated Semeia 36 (1986), entitled Early Christian Apocalypticism, which was elaborated, challenged, and endorsed various of the proposals which the Uppsala gathering had put forward.

Very little evangelical scholarship, however, influenced any of these gatherings, so that the upshot of all of them has been largely to affirm that apocalyptic is an outmoded world-view. Revelation may have value for the modern reader, but only after it is demythologized. As A. Collins sums up, 'A hermeneutic which takes historical criticism seriously (by which is clearly meant critical historicism) can no longer work with an interventionist notion of God.' Instead, one must 'view Revelation as expressing God's intervention in history. It expresses what is real and what is good from the point of view of a believer in the God of Israel and the God of Christ.' Moreover, most proponents of apocalyptic have not sufficiently stressed the way that the genre continues to flourish as the final decade of the twentieth century unfolds. Scholars have clearly abandoned the older positions which viewed the NT writings as largely sui generis, too distant from other ancient works to be compared with them. If one story must explain the process, it is to avoid the opposite extreme; the canonical writings do exhibit unique features and combinations of features which fit no known other ancient work. In this way, much insight can be given if one understands the genre to which the biblical materials most closely approximate, and they will be more likely to interpret them in ways appropriate for their literary forms.\(^{5}\)

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7. Non-literal and figurative (or redactional) motives are discerned for one evangelist's distinctives presentation of John's pattern that a plausible harmonization of the passages' paragraphs becomes more apparent. See my article, 'The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization', D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (eds.), in, Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), pp. 139-174.


Moving on with God: Key motifs in Exodus 13 – 20

Deryck Sheriffs

Dr Sheriffs is a South African scholar currently teaching Old Testament at London Bible College. He offers us a fresh reading of the Pentateuch by depurifying the narratives to reveal critical loss under critical fragmentation. This article, a model of a controlled typological approach to the text, was first read as a paper at the Old Testament Conference at the Tyndale Fellowship OT Study Group, July 1989.

Introduction: scope and method
I might have entitled these reflections 'the route to Canaan revisited', for my early years were lived in the Baptist and evangelical sub-culture where the language of Canaan was spoken. The use of 'promise boxes', the describing of spiritual life in terms of being on the victory side, coming out from among them and being separate, following God's guidance, feasting on the daily portion (read 'manna'), undergoing a testing experience, not harrying after the phoebots of passing through a wilderness experience, having a mountain top experience, not tarrying too long on this mountain– these idioms contributed to a model of spirituality subliminally and semantically impinged on me. I return to these ideas now not to lampoon, but because I would like to re-appropriate the stories this piety was derived from, stories which no longer instruct or make me feel better symbols of life. The Afrikaans community of South Africa, meanwhile, was appropriating the book of Exodus anew through cultural re-creation of the Great Trek on its centenary in 1938. Therein, the route to Canaan dominated all the symbols, and that phrase was used as the backdrop of the commemoration of the victory of Blood River against the Zulus, known as the Day of the Covenant, or more accurately, Day of the Vow, the Exodus-covenant language was being appropriated in their own way to interpret divine vocation. Again, I do not want to turn this note of critical loss under critical fragmentation. This article, a model of a controlled typological approach to the text, was first read as a paper at the Old Testament Conference at the Tyndale Fellowship OT Study Group, July 1989.

I: The journey motif
Exodus tells the story of a culitjural journey. 'We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to Ywhw our God. (8:27). The beginning of the journey is marked by a cultic meal eaten with 'loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand' (12:11). In this way, moving out of Egypt and moving on with God to an encounter symbolized by the covenant meal at Sinai associates a relationship with God with two simple human activities, eating and walking. One could take on quite a different and greater significance. In the fullness of time, eating the New Covenant meal will reinforce the symbolism of communing in a rite

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Moving on with God: Key motifs in Exodus 13–20

Deryck Sheriffs

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Introduction: scope and method
I might have entitled these reflections ‘the route to Canaan revisited’, for my early years were lived in the biblical and evangelical sub-culture where the language of Canaan was spoken. The use of ‘promise boxes’, the describing of spiritual life in terms of being on the victory side, coming out from among them and being separate, following God’s guidance, feasting on the daily portion (read ’manna’), undergoing a testing experience, not harboring after the fleshpots of Egypt, passing through a wilderness experience, having a mountain top experience, not tarrying too long on this mountain – these idioms contributed to a model of spirituality subliminally and seminally imprinted on me. I return to these ideas now not to lampoon, but because I would like to re-appropriate the stories this pity was derived from, stories which I had internalized and offer them symbols of life.

The Afrikaans community of South Africa, meanwhile, was appropriating the book of Exodus anew through cultic re-enactment of the Great Trek on its centenary in 1938. There was a drive to dominate modern, and a slight emphasis on the commemoration of the victory of Blood River against the Zulu, known as the Day of the Covenant, or more accurately, Day of the Vow, the Exodus-covenant language was being appropriated in their own way to interpret divine vocation. The narrative, I do not want to turn this project on the present day’s ecclesiology and epistles of Revelation. Several sections of this paper are heavily indebted to their surveys.


14 In fact, Brown has devoted an entire work to the unpacking of this thesis: The Community of the Beloved Disciple (New York: Paulist, 1979).


17 R. J. Bauckham, Judge, 2 Peter (Waco, 1983), pp. 131-164.


20 Bauckham, Judge, 2 Peter, pp. 3-17.

21 H. B. Brinsmade, Galatians – Dialogic Response to Opponents (Chico, Scholars, 1982).


24 Thus, a total of 21 letters in the New Testament, pp. 155-156.


27 The decision to focus on the covenant meal with ‘loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand’ (12:11). In this way, moving out of Egypt and moving on with God to an encounter symbolized by the covenant meal at Sinai associates a relationship with God with two simple human activities, eating and walking.
which connects Passover and Sinai. The journeying component then has to be transposed to metaphor only because no linguistic equivalent for the geographical promised land accompanies the NT inheritance.

Leaving to receive

Appreciating the Exodus story as symbolic journey, we need to be aware that Exodus typologically. Proceed for this set by the Pentateuch itself. The Exodus is one of several journeys which form a pattern linked by the text itself. Genesis blazes the trail in the narrative story of Abraham as an exodus from Ur to the Promised Land. In particular, the phrasing of Genesis 15:7 resonates with the typological foreshadowing of that narrative's exodus to Canaan: "I am YHWH, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans'. In a chapter which foresees the Egyptian oppression and records God's promissory oath of land, this connection of two journeys to the inheritance invites us to see moving on with God as a pattern of obedience. In both cases, there is a leaving in order to receive what is promised.

A trail of corpses

Another prefiguring of leaving to inherit the promise is the exodus of Jacob's funeral cortege (Gen 50:4-14 in the light of Gen 49:29-49:21) for his body to be laid alongside those of Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, and that of Leah in the plot of ground near Hebron. Finally, the narrative sequel of Exodus records Jacob's exodus to Egypt and his death of Genesis by the figure of Joseph himself, who binds his sons by oath to carry him up to Canaan for burial when the exodus happens (Gen 50:25). The exodus-burial oath to Joseph is cited in Exodus 14:19 when it records that Joseph's embalmed bones joined the trek from Egypt to the Red Sea and beyond. Joshua 24:32 completes this series of journeys to the inheritance, the promise embodied, by recording the burial of Joseph's bones in Shechem, the area of his tribal allotment. Joseph's is the last and the longest-delayed journey. In the Pentateuch, everything is led by God in a Pentateuchal and biblical motif which motivates inward orientation, social involvement and sense of identity.

Down-to-earth spirituality

In parenthesis, while thinking of patriarchal burials, we may recall the Ancient Near Eastern ideal of filial piety. From Mari and Ugarit we know that burial involved an ancestor cult, giving proper burial and maintaining offerings and libations. While proper burial and gathering to the fathers is valued in these Pentateuchal stories, there is no mention of a continuing on-site cultic activity. In this way, land promise has displaced ancestor cult, and inheritance of the land is God's gift, dependent on God's oath, rather than being dependent on the oath of the father. This is a significant element when we consider this contributes to the this-worldly orientation of OT spirituality, and its relative lack of other-worldly hope. Certainly, the nearness of heaven to OT spirituality has much to offer our generation.

Whether walking or carried in procession, the patriarchs enshrine a spirituality of faith in which their core identity is defined by belonging to the chosen people rather than by the other-worldly oblation that is the hallmark of the NT. God's guidance, using the Hebrew root nahu: twist the lens of Deuteronomy 8 to view the experience of the exodus journey to Sinai.

And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you and test you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that you might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. . . . Know this then in your heart, that the LORD your God is giving you rest and that he is confirming to you all the land which he swore to your fathers. . . . You shall obey the LORD and keep his commandments, that you may be blessed. . . . And you shall take heed to do it diligently, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearng him (Dt. 8:2-5).

In passing, we notice the geographical and metaphorical use of derek — the 'way' through the wilderness and the 'ways of YHWH', the 'way' of nature, the God-given order (the heart) needed to match outward compliance, the connection between obedience and life, and the motif of fear of the Lord, all characteristic of Deuteronomy's covenant theology. The Father-son metaphor not only emphasizes the relationship bond, but implies the whole learning process as well. Yet the context balances the discipline and training dimension with the provider aspect of the Father role. God feeds and clothes as well as acting as discipliner.

Father-son relationship

The sonship of Israel is a key motif in the liberation struggle with Yahweh and is enunciated early on: 'Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me”'; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your firstborn son' (Exod 3:1, 2). That Yahweh is the Father of Israel is evident from the exodus story, the concept appearing with equivalent prominence in the malec episode which Deuteronomy alludes to. God did subject Israel to the ordeals of desert and slavery, and the test of faith is a test of discipline, and on the other hand, it is Yahweh's role as paradigmatic, and in 16:4 as bread-giver. It is Israel's obedience to instructions rather than their will to survive that establishes Yahweh as Father. Deuteronomy does explicitly link the oreldal element ('he humbled you and let you hunger') and the obedience element (whether you would keep his commandments or not).

Transforming ordeal

In a re-reading more recent than Deuteronomy's, Cohn attempts to relate Israel's wilderness experience to the dynamics of change involved in transitional periods such as tribal rites of passage, millenarian movements and religious pilgrimages. In a stimulating article entitled 'Liminality in the Wilderness', Cohn draws on the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner to study this. The traveller's experiences in terms of separation, marginality and re-incorporation with the development of community and an identity is transformed. In a review of both earlier currents of thought, Cohn emphasizes the common bonds of social processes, or more the unique features of Israel's transition experience, I think we must recognize the orthodox of oral and the truth that Deuteronomy has to offer. In the next section, we will analyze Deuteronomy 8:2-18 as text.

Deuteronomy 8 as lens

We may begin our re-reading of Exodus as learning experience from a vantage point of reflection outside the Exodus narrative itself but cannically a close re-reading of the text. The following four sections will analyze the wilderness period as a training exercise, and we may use the journey of Deuteronomy 8 to view the experience of the exodus journey to Sinai.

Journey, road and walk metaphors

The exodus is the journey, the metaphor of a walk with God along a route chosen by him through unknown terrain and hazards to an ultimate destination, it has embedded itself in Christian tradition and consciousness as a core metaphor of life. In this process, this travelling by foot with divine guidance has accumulated associations in a manner characteristic of tense verbs, and many journey, path, guidance, light, and destination metaphors will owe nothing directly to the patriarchal cycle or the exodus story. For instance, there is a metaphor of walking by faith or walking with God. This has become a fundamental metaphor in Christian spirituality — the pilgrimage journey or pilgrimage metaphor. Enoch sets a typological precedent: 'Enoch walked with God' (Gen 5:22,44) in a life of intimacy and fellowship, culminating in the ultimate transformation. This seems separate from exodus journey motifs, yet treaty grant and use the 'walk' imagery, as does Deuteronomy in connection with covenant, so that the ordinary 'walking metaphor of Genesis spiritually links with Israel's covenant spirituality.

It is hard to tell, for instance, if the summary statement of spirituality found in Micah 6:8 forms part of the exodus story or is a poem written after the event, and despite explicit references in the context. Does the phrase 'and walk carefully with your God' image the trek with Moses and Aaron and Miriam which is referred to explicitly in verse 4, or not?

Yet some echoes of the exodus walk are direct, such as those which focus on the guidance spoken of by Exodus 14. The characteristic aspect of guidance and illumination is a pattern of accompaniment along it with pillar of cloud and fire, which mark the exodus as more than a departure, are appropriated by prophets addressing exiles. There will be an unhappy exodus for YHWH will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard' (Is 52:12), "in paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, and the crooked into straight paths" (Is 58:11). This verse and symmetrical is overcome by the supply of pools of water and luxuriant vegetation. (Is 41:17:1: 48:21; 49:8).

Guidance on the journey

As part of the journey pattern, the guidance motif is certainly written large into the exodus story and liturgical reflections on it. The role of the prophet on this back is underscored by God's guidance, using the Hebrew root nahu: twist the lens of Deuteronomy 8 to view the experience of the exodus journey to Sinai. It makes us remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you and test you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that you might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. . . . Know this then in your heart, that the Lord your God is giving you rest and that he is confirming to you all the land which he swore to your fathers. . . . You shall obey the Lord and keep his commandments, that you may be blessed. . . . And you shall take heed to do it diligently, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearng him (Dt. 8:2-5).
which connects Passover and Sinai. The journeying component then has to be transposed to metaphor only because no literal evidence suggests that the geographical promised land accompanies the NT inheritance.

Leaving to receive

To appraise the Exodus story as symbolic journey, we need to read the Exodus typologically. Precedent for this is set by the Pentateuch itself. The Exodus is one of several journeys which form a pattern linked by the text itself. Genesis blazes the trail for the Pentateuch in the story of Abraham as an exodus from Ur to the Promised Land. In particular, the phrasing of Genesis 15:7 reiterates with the typological foreshadowing of that narrative's exodus to Canaan (Gen. 15:1) and the lifting up of God, gathered around a new Zion, in continuity with, yet alternative to, the gathering at Mount Sinai (Heb. 12).

Canonicai method

Numbers extends and nuances the journey motif because of its explicit and implicit typological parallels between the journey of both Egypt-Sinai, Sinai-Kadesh, Kadesh-Mobah, and the clustering of motifs, such as the murmuring motif, within these narrative blocks.11 Grasping these links between journeys in the Pentateuch stories confirms a method of appropriation. Typological re-reading is demonstrably canonical, and evident both within the OT canon itself and in the NT, this connection of two journeys to the inheritance invites us to see moving on with God as a pattern of obedience.12 In both cases, there is a leaving in order to receive what is promised.

A trail of corpses

Another prefiguration of leaving to inherit the promise is the exodus of Jacob's funeral cortège (Gen 50:4-14 in the light of Gen. 49:29, 48:21) for his body to be laid alongside those of Sarah and Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, and that of Leah in the plot of ground near Hebron. Finally, the narrative sequel of Exodus 14, of which the Exile will be, is the exodus of Jews of Genesis by the figure of Joseph himself, who binds his sons by oath to carry him up to Canaan for burial when the exodus happens (Gen. 50:25). The exodus-burial oath to Joseph is cited in Exodus 14:19 when it records that Joseph's embalmed bones joined the trek from Egypt to the Red Sea and beyond. Joshua 24:32 completes this series of journeys to the inheritance, the promise embodied, by recording the burial of Joseph's bones in Shechem, the area of his tribal allotment. Joseph's is the last and the longest-delayed journey motif, the journeying motif in the sense of the implied journey of Genesis spiritually links with Israel's covenant spirituality.

It is hard to tell, for instance, if the summary statement of spiritual journey found in Micah 5:8, 'A leader will come among his people, and the exodus will be in spite of, not in the course of, the age of the wilderness, or even before the exodus, where the people are in a sort of wilderness of spiritual journey, even though in the exodus language the wilderness references constitute the wilderness reference. The 'in spirit' of verse 4, or not?16

Yet some echoes of the Exodus walk are direct, such as those which focus on the guidance spoken of by Exodus 14. The journey motif is one of guidance, and of assurance and encouragement along it with pillar of cloud and fire, which mark the exodus as more than a departure, are appropriated by prophets addressing exiles. There will be an unbroken exodus 'for Yhwh will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard' (Is. 51:19). "In paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into morning, and the deeps into a thing bright.' (Is. 42:16). The darkness and suffering will be overcome by the supply of pools of water and luxuriant vegetation. (Is. 41:17f, 48:21; 49:8f).

Guidance on the journey

As part of the journey pattern, the guidance motif is certainly written large into the exodus story and liturgical reflections on it. Indeed, the journeying motif has been emphasized God's guidance, using the Hebrew root nakh:17

God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines... Yhwh led by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along that path (13:17,21).

Yhwh lead by day in steadfast love the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy abode (14:14)."18

The way exodus guidance appears in the poetry of Psalms 77 and 78 illustrates extension of metaphor, for of the four occasions of exodus guidance they are exemplars of pillar of cloud guidance (in three (77:20 and 78:3,72) this visual symbol is displayed by Shepherd-flock imagery. This process of elaboration by associating images is so natural that it can pass unnoticed. Indeed, poets may associate images consciously and unconsciously, just as we mix metaphors in everyday speech consciously or unconsciously.19 Other changes when older traditions join in the new. The exodus of Genesis 43:1-13 does not so much to the magnetic field of different imagery (Shepherd-flock rather than Cloud-light) as due to a new theological slant being placed on the tradition. Perhaps the retelling of the exodus in Isaiah 63 with the naḥ of Yhwh as guiding presence illustrates a theological nuancing (63:11-14)."20

What concerns us here is how the journey-persence-guidance pattern becomes an extended metaphor and model of spirituality, or perhaps, taking into account Israel's failure to progress, we should say a map of spiritual hazard.

II: Testing

Experience and growth

Germane to the entire concept of spirituality is growth in the knowledge of God, in the sense of the progressive acquisition of the test of faith, and a learning experience. Today there are signs that point to theological education's coming to terms with the role of experience in the acquisition of theological appreciation. The relationship between teaching methods and Israel's trial and error pattern of learning, which is displayed for us so clearly in the Exodus-wilderness story. The signs of a greater openness are diverse, I would like to pursue one of them: that theology's insistence on context from praxis, and its attempts at re-readings of the exodus narrative; the charismatic renewal movement's emphasis on the need for a pastoral appreciation for the role of group dynamics in the process of learning and change in varied contexts, from mid-western North America's commitment to rehabilitation and the work of academic specialists, who subsequent to particular-life-experiences in groups, have written books like W. Wink's The Bible in Human Transformation; toward a paradigmatic Biblical ecology (Fortress, 1988), or Conrad L'Heureux, Life Journey and the Old Testament: an experiential approach to the Bible and Personal Transformation (New York: Paulist, 1986); the footnotes of W. Brueggeman which model an end to specialist isolationism and an ability to engage the issues of social and personal change in a way which brings overlooked features of the biblical text to life in our contemporary cultures.21

Deuteronomy 8 as lens

We may begin our re-reading of Exodus as learning experience from a vantage point of reflection outside the Exodus narrative itself but cannily a close re-reading of the wilderness period. Indeed, Deuteronomy 8 is a re-reading of the wilderness period as a training exercise, and we may use the lens of Deuteronomy 8 to view the experience of the exodus journey to Sinai.

And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the desert, lest you say in your heart, the mighty hand of the LORD your God is not able to save you... And let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor the thing which the LORD your God does not do live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. . . . Know then in your heart, and your soul, that as by the hand of the LORD your God you are being brought into a good land, a land of brooks of water, and of fountains, and springs, flowing out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat, and barley and grapes, and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of oil... you shall not eat any of it. You shall eat it only in the place where the LORD your God will give you enter...you shall eat the manna as a reminder of the place you came from (Deut. 8:2-3, 6).

In passing, we notice the geographical and metaphorical use of derek — the 'way' through the wilderness and the 'ways' of Yhwh, the follow-the-leader orientation (the heart) needed to match outward compliance, the connection between obedience and life, and the motif of fear of the Lord, all characteristic of Deuteronomy covenant theology. The Father-son metaphor not only emphasizes the relationship bond,22 but implies the whole learning process as well. Yet the context balances the discipline and training dimension with the provider aspect of the Father role. God feeds and clothes as well as acting as discipliner.

Father-son relationship

The sonship of Israel is a key motif in the liberation struggle with Israel, which is underscored early on: 'Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me"; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will still bring all the first-fruits of the land, and with all the first-fruits of the land I will serve you. Then I will accept you, as a son accepts his first-born.' In the context of the exodus story, the concept appears with equivalent prominence in the main episode which Deuteronomy alludes to. God did subject Israel to the ordeals of desert wilderness, which is to be read as the testing to and the proving of the murmuring motif. Yet 'the test' in the text of Exodus itself, as connected with the verb ash — to prove (RSV), is used here not only as a test to prove a fact, but as testing and proving as God's role as father and, in 16:4 as bread-giver. It is Israel's obedience to instructions rather than their will to survive which is the primary concern. Deuteronomy does explicitly link the ordeals element ("he humbled you and let you hunger") and the obedience element (whether you would keep his commandments or not).

Transforming ordeal

In a re-reading more recent than Deuteronomy's, the Coin attempts to relate Israel's wilderness experience to the dynamics of change involved in transitional periods such as tribal rites of passage, millenarian movements and religious pilgrimages. In a stimulating article entitled 'Liminality in the Wilderness',23 Coin draws on the work of the anthropologist Ronald L. Fischer and has studied that.24 Paradox and symbolic experiences in terms of separation, marginality and re-incorporation with the development of community and an identity are seen to emphasize the common bonds of social processes, or more the unique features of Israel's transition experience, I think we must recognize the truth of oral and the truth of Deuteronomy, and that to the extent that Israel has been a son, sonship discerns between. In the wilderness.
Already/not yet

NT theology has found that Already/Not Yet transition model to be a helpful one. Pauline theology has been characterized as a conversation between the two rhythms, as expressed, for instance, in the sonship and freedom of the Spirit to cry 'Abba, Father!' and yet also to groan inwardly. Hebrews too has its sonship and trial and pilgrimage motifs, with a distinct notion of ambiguity of outcome as regards those who had started out on their spiritual journey. Finally, as regards canonical trajectory and the usefulness of the sonship-pilgrimage impulses for the connection explicit between the covenant narrative of Exodus, the sermonic reflection of Deuteronomy, the identification of the new Exodus and the transition to principle in wisdom education (Ps. 3:11ff), and its re-use in Hebrews as an authoritative quotation from OT Scripture. The case is made here that which is embodied as typological pattern in the gospel stories of Jesus' ordeal in the wilderness. This completes the loop back to Deuteronomy 8. Prior to exodustering, in trying and in many ways the outcome of testing in the OT, is the prototypical psalmian theme in Genesis 22 which forms the patterning linking forefather and exodus generation.

Trial and error learning

Returning to Exodus, we note that the other echoes of nashîh are ironical, for they concern Israel irrationally reversing the attempt and settling to try and put YHwh to the test. This role reversals signal their failure to learn, and it left its mark in the resonances of the names Massah and Meribah from Exodus 17:1-7 in Israel's history (Jer. 2:18; 9:25; 106:23) and exultation alike (Heb. 3, 4). The desert trek to Sinai is the prime trial and error learning period. After Sinai, the failure to learn is punished in equivalent ways. There are references in the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness a punishment, which the journey to Sinai and the southern border of Canaan was not.

The metaphor of the 'LORD's Son', is set in motion with the Israelites entering the Promised Land, as was the journeying itself. The story line of Exodus gels with the spirituality of the Psalter, for the orientation/disorientation/refreshment perspectives which arise from the liturgical collection coheres with the alternation of lament and exultant thanksgiving of Exodus 14 and 15, and the ongoing cycle of despair and consolament induced by the hunger and enemy attack which is altered by God's action in later episodes and way stages.

The paradox of fear

Here the conversion paradoxe is that they are told 'Do not fear!' it is, in fact, essential that they do fear. In this context, the 'fear of the LORD' is charged with emotion. It is the emotional equivalent of the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness, a punishment, which the journey to Sinai and the southern border of Canaan was not. The narrative of the Exodus, as is the case of the language of the Canaanites, is flee it, fear is the locus of dramatic and divine presence. Brueggemann brings this out in his chapter headed 'You Lacked Nothing!' Reviewing the entire wilderness period, as Deuteronomy 8 does, we see that the Father did not abandon the son who wandered in the desert, did not withdraw his presence or provision, even during the desert experiences of the God of the Hebrews, his presence and activity dramatized through visual effects. There is also a conceptual paradox attached to each episode which makes them memorable, and strengthens this connection.

Seeing is believing

In Exodus 14:10, the Israelites are pictured as lifting up their eyes to see the ensuing Egyptian attack: 'and they were in great fear'. This sparks the anguished cry that slavery would have been preferable to death in the wilderness - an emotion that is quite absent from the original biblical story line. Moses then delivers a salvation oracle with the characteristic opening 'Fear not!', and a picking up of the 'seeing' motif, 'see the salvation of the LORD . . . for the Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again' (14:13).

With repetition and alliteration the point is made that God will give proof-of-Presence, responding to the seeing 'for they are jealous of my people, and they hate them because they are His people, His flock in whose sight you are the thousandth part' (14:8f). Seeing was believing, for the believing was the LORD and in his servant Moses.

This is a conversion experience from one object of fear to another. It is, of course, part of a much larger transference, a shift from one suzerain to Another, from one land to another, and away from the treacherous treacherous as was the journeying itself. The story line of Exodus gels with the spirituality of the Psalter, for the orientation/ disorientation/refreshment perspectives which arise from the liturgical collection coheres with the alternation of lament and exultant thanksgiving of Exodus 14 and 15, and the ongoing cycle of despair and consolament induced by the hunger and enemy attack which is altered by God's action in later episodes and way stages.

III: The fear of the LORD

The metaphor of the 'fear of the LORD' is certainly strategically placed in the exodus narrative, for it links the experiences of the Red Sea rescue with the Sinai covenant relationship. Both are exodusters, both belong to the original narrative. Moses says: 'Do not fear, for God has come to have you, and that the fear of him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin against him; and in verse 18, is no quiet reverence but as emotional, indeed physiological, as was the Red Sea experience. In both contexts, the original experience is overwhelming in its sensory effects. In 20:18, this becomes even more so, its rigidity, transcendence and temporality of the mountain, described in the story sequence of chapter 19, are summarized as the cause of this strong reaction along with the words: 'Tell the congregation of Israel' that the mountain preserves us from more than a semantic fallacy.

The semantics of fear

The fear of the LORD is the experience of feeling terrified, and wishing to keep a safe distance between themselves and this holy God. Yet 'the fear of him . . . before your eyes', which Moses' words challenge, argue, must have a different nuance from terror, just as Israel's mundane experience differed from the Sinai experience even for the wilderness generations. This then becomes the theme that the theophanies were so formative for Israel's faith, the semantic field encompassed by the phrase 'the fear of the LORD' can never really detach itself from Red Sea and Sinai, to drift away into the future. Neither then is it any longer an ethical rather than worshipful, propositional principle rather than transforming effect. There are other nuances to the 'fear of the LORD' than feeling terrified, it is true, and in the wisdom literature there are seminal statements about the 'fear of the LORD' associated with humility, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, the fear of the LORD is the day orientation in contrast to the unique episodes of Red Sea and Sinai. These contexts have been sensitively explored in Blocher's 1977 Tyndale lecture 'The Fear of the LORD as the "Principle of Wisdom", and are certainly germane to an OT spirituality which encompasses everyday behaviour as much as extraordinary encounters with God.

We would want to affirm that the fear of the LORD theology of Exodus coheres with the 'fear of the LORD' theology of Deuteronomy and of the Wisdom literature, and of the Psalms. One basis for affirming this lies in the sacramental feature of the story itself. The Sinai experience is not the first occurrence of the 'fear of the LORD' motif in the exodus narrative. At the beginning of the story and associated with the fulfillment of the promise of multiplications, the midstwies feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them (1:17) . . . and because the midwives feared God he gave them families(1:21). In a political and ethical context, that is an obedience-blessing theology like Deuteronomy's. The midwives preceded the rest of Israel in their fear of YHwh, displaying the propositional side. The close association made in this civil disobedience exemplar between 'fear of God' and ethical decision, and between trust in God and the contrasting choice of political expedience. Likewise, Exodus 14:13 associates 'fear of YHwh' with trust in God and his appointed leader, Moses.

In Exodus 14, then, emotional fear of YHwh is extended into the faith, trust, and obedience way of living. Brain physiology, for example, research on emotions and, to an extent, also the ability to think of YHwh as near, determines how our wakeful, conscious brain. Learning the 'fear of the LORD' involves the whole brain and the whole person, and seeing the phrase the 'fear of the LORD' in the Sinai covenant clan preserves us from more than a semantic fallacy.
Already/not yet
NT theology has found that Already/Not Yet transition models are useful for interpreting Pauline spirituality: 'as a great fear'. This sparks the anguished cry that slavery would have been preferable to death in the wilderness — an emotional presentation by the first person story line. Moses then delivers a salvation oracle with the characteristic opening 'Fear not!', and a picking up of the 'seeing motif,' see the salvation of the LORD... for the Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again' (14:13).

With repetition and alliteration the point is made that God will give proof-of-Presence, responding to the 'seeing'; the identical expression found elsewhere in the principle in wisdom education (Ps 3:11f), and its re-use in Hebrews as an authoritative quotation from OT Scripture. The story line flows in a way which is embodied as typological pattern in the gospel stories of Jesus' ordeal in the wilderness. This completes the loop back to Deuteronomy 8. Prior to exertion and testing, in many ways the outcome of testing in the OT, is the redemptive plan in Genesis 22 which confirms the patterning linking forefather and exodus generation.

Trial and error learning
Returning to Exodus, we note that the other echoes of nasah are ironical, for they concern Israel irrationally reversing the attempt and applying to put Yhwh to the test. This role signals their failure to learn, and it left its mark in the resonance of the names Massah and Meribah from Exodus 17:1 in Israel's tradition (20:16; 27:4; 32:1; 102:32) and Exhoration alike (Heb 3. 4). The desert trek to Sinai is the prime trial and error learning period. After Sinai, the failure to learn is punished in equivalent fashion, and Israel indeed the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness is a punishment, which the journey to Sinai and the southern border of Canaan was not. The defeat of the Egyptians first alive, then dead. In fact, the fear of Yhwh grips the routed Egyptians first. Their flight into the water counter-acts the defeat, and their defeat is simultaneous with their ground, and spiritually juxtaposes the fear unto death with the fear unto life. The Song of the Sea highlights the two-sides motif, presented in the alternation of fear, a war of Yhwh's and the fight with Amalek in Exodus 17, with the decree of perpetual hostility, underlines it. This two-sides, conflictual situation is explicitly linked with the political theological discourse from kingdom of darkness to kingdom of light, and the whole understanding of spiritual warfare, epitomized by the extended metaphor of Ephesians 6. The Song of the Sea also develops a poetic 'fear unto death' motif in 15:4-16 where divinely inspired terror overweights Israel's enemies to effect their displacements.

The paradoxe of fear
Here the conversion paradoxe is that though they are told 'Do not fear! it is, in fact, essential that they do fear. In this context, the "fear of the LORD" is charged with emotion. It is the vehicle through which the Israelites are to be disciplined as a people for the 40 years' wandering, and as a journeying itself. As the language of Canaan would have it, it is for the locus of daily miracle and divine presence. Brueggemann brings this out well in his chapter headed 'You Lacked Nothing.'

Reviewing the entire wilderness period, as Deuteronomy 8 does, we see that the Father did not abandon the son who received his inheritance, did not with¬draw his presence or provision, even during the times of experiences of the God of the Hebrews, his presence and activity dramatized through visual effects. There is also a conceptual paradox attached to each episode which makes them memorable, and strengthens this connection.

Seeing is believing
In Exodus 14, the Hebrews are pictured as lifting up their eyes to see the oncoming Egyptian attack: 'and they were in

New covenant fear
Finally, there is a trajectory of paradox from Exodus to the sayings concerning the new covenant, where Jesus' teachings and authorities, Jesus tells his followers not to fear the authorities but rather to fear God, and not to fear and yet to fear. 'Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Moreover, you are of more value than many sparrows' (Mt 10:28, 31). This extends into the new covenant the tradition of the fear of death as an instrument of ethical rather than worshipful, propositional principle rather than transforming effect. There are other nuances to the fear of the LORD than feeling terrified, it is true, and in the Wisdom literature there are seminal statements about the fear of the LORD associated with humility, knowledge, wisdom, understanding and discernment. This strong position as a position of trust, which facilitate this transformation. I cannot stop to argue these points but would refer to Paul's use of the exodus traditions in describing the transformation of the believer 'believing the glory of the Lord', and 'being changed into his likeness' (2 Cor. 3:18).

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; all the land of Egypt is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These words of God, embracing time past and future, hold, as the narrative itself shows, the space between leaving Egypt and arriving in Canaan, are nuclear, radiating an exodus spirituality.

Theology of OT studies
Sadly, traditional OT studies seem untuned to the wave-lengths of vibrant spirituality emanating from this text. What is a jewel of OT theology has functioned more as a prism which demarcates the wavebands of traditional OT studies. The wavebands of source-critical analysis, of form-critical taxonomy, of historical-critical assessment, of collection and redaction, etc. are all necessary. But they are not hypotheses, and of canonical trajectories are well represented by lines on the pages of the commentaries, monographs and professors. The problem is that research does not have the ability of the text to scrutinize and transform the reader, and few attempts are made at re-readings which are generated by turning the text with sensitive fingertip and catching glimpses of multitudinous light off its many facets.

Perhaps exegetes are modest and would conceal their moonlighting as weekend preachers, but we can be glad that the trends of hermeneutics which allow us to speak of levels of meaning, re-readings, and contextualization now make spiritual vicarious experience possible and allow us to develop the text of this genre.

I would like to examine facets of this: the concept of Yhwh as destination and centre, paradox, the use of imagery and symbolism, and the centrality of covenant in connection with identity and vocation.
I brought you to myself” — journey to the centre

The whole exodus story is about leaving and arriving and what lies between. The introductory phase (Exod 1:1-19) orients the reader for time and place by rehearsing the departure point of Egypt, the exile and return from exile. The second phase (Exod 19:1-28) is about entrance and going on to refer to stages of the journey, mentioning encampment at Rephidim and approach to Sinai.

In this narrative setting, the utterance of God expresses the most profound and the most personal thought of the divine nature and journeying. There is the physical trek and there is the geographical arrival to be sure. The account minimizes neither, yet, the divine nature and journeying is what is at risk. The physical journey is the outward visible form of a profound spiritual movement which God wishes to bring about. Spirituality for Israelites leaving Egypt meant to travel freely, yet, was also to travel with God.

Encounter with God at Sinai was indeed the announced goal of the exodus. 'When you have brought forth the people of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain' (Exod. 3:18). The Lord is calling Moses in two ways. Firstly, it was what Moses himself experienced at the burning bush. This awesome, life-transforming encounter was to be the essence of the whole community. They were all destined to stand on holy ground, confronted by supernatural fire and sound, as awed as their forefather had been himself, and they were all destined to hear the God of their fathers address them in audible Hebrew.

Secondly, worship at Sinai was to constitute the publicly and prophetically proclaimed purpose of God announced to Moses and the nation: 'I am the God of your fathers... I have given you this land' (Exod 3:16). This picks up this three-day journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Ywhw our God' (Exod. 3:18). The narrative journey into Sinai involves the beginning of a new life, or, metaphorically speaking, the beginning of a new life. The sense of connection to God comes through the wilderness experience, the journey, the ordering of the tabernacle, and the giving of the Law. The people are united in their worship of the God who led them through the wilderness and gave them the law.

The people united in their worship of the God who led them through the wilderness and gave them the law.

The poetic who composed a liberation theology for the exiles left us prototypes of imaginative re-readings of the exodus story. They had first entered imaginatively into the exodus story, and then their imagination created a new exodus, a new departure through the waters, the journey through the desert, the pillar of cloud and fire. These motifs from the original story are transformed and given new meaning, new context.

The journey has become a symbol of salvation, both sign and promise, of a new journey.

The destination is new as well. Interestingly, there is no mention to be found in the fifteen chapters of Isaiah 40 – 55, which deal with the exodus or any Sinai event, possibly because the prophet wished to present and emphasize the new grace and promise. Zion is the new mountain. But there is an exact parallel to the original exodus story in that Zion is no mountain, but a city. It is a new ‘mountain’ or mountain kingdom — a deceptively simple statement matched by ‘Yhwh called him out of the mountain’ (v. 3b). The physical mountain, the energetic ascent, the physiological effort, and the divine invitation all serve to emphasize the person-to-person encounter. This is a positive image of God’s love and compassion, which is exactly what the smoke, fire, quaking, thunder and trumpet sound — dramatizes the encounter. Once the words ‘and brought you to my people’ have been uttered, the mountain and special effects enhance rather than obscure what happens.

In terms of spirituality, the story and geographical setting have immense value. Bushes and mountains: very mundane, unimpressive and unpromising. This particular bush and this particular mountain on this particular day, go there on another day and there is nothing to see. For all its splendour, the divine nature and journeying is what is at risk. The narrative has alerted us to this difference between symbolic setting and personal encounter. The mountain is not the destination of the Exodus. The journey is to God himself. There will come the day when the clouds and rain will cease, the city and the mountain will have stayed long enough at this mountain; turn and take your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites... (Dt. 1:6, 9). The exact location of the mountain has indeed been forgotten.

Imagery, symbolism and re-readings

At this point it is helpful to recall that all re-readings are typological, and hence rely on symbol, metaphor and spiritualization of the original text. There is perhaps some value, though a limited one, in making a pilgrimage back to the site of Jabel Musa. But we could not count on an experience like Moses’ at the burning bush, and the lifting of the Lord’s hand was met at Horeb in a person-to-person encounter. We can, however, find our way into the meaning of the narrative by revisiting the original setting, either literally, or, metaphorically in historical-critical terms, and then enacting it as a symbolic journey. This begins with visual imagination as we enter the story. It continues with interaction with the symbolism. We must interiorize the mountain, the smoke, the lightning, the thunder, the quaking until we hear the living voice of God speaking again and we see that he has brought us to himself. We must make ourselves available to him and ready to be his instruments.

The people expressed their liberation theology for the exiles by creating new stories about the exodus that were imaginative and creative. They wanted to transform the experience of the exodus into a new experience that was different from the original event. They wanted to understand the meaning of both the exodus and the meaning of their own lives. They wanted to be blemished and promised.

We should link the theophanies of chapters 19 and 16 with the visual effects of chapter 14. So it was, when daylight came, that Yhwh looked down towards the Egypt country from a pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw the Egyptian army into complete disarray (14:24). Denver affirms that much of the exodus narrative concerns ‘proof of God’s power’ (14:21). A new era began: interlocking concentric circles spreading outwards from the narratives of the coming of Yahweh.

Gutierrez has linked these features of the narrative with the liberationist understanding of God. He notes: ‘Augustine: ‘You would not seek me if you had not already found me’. He points to God’s instructions about the announcement to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:18) in which encounter with the image of the cross (11:13-19)Signup for the 365 Days of Bible Reading Challenge today! Sign up for the 365 Days of Bible Reading Challenge today! For years, I’ve been looking for a daily Bible reading plan that fits my lifestyle. I wanted something that was easy to follow, but also challenging enough to keep me engaged with the Word. That’s why I decided to create the 365 Days of Bible Reading Challenge. This plan is designed to help you read the entire Bible in one year, one verse at a time. It’s perfect for beginners and seasoned readers alike, and you can start at any time of the year. Each day, you’ll receive an email with a verse from a different book of the Bible. Just read the verse and reflect on its meaning, then move on to the next one. It’s that easy! Signing up is free and can be done instantly. So why wait? Join me for this journey of faith and let’s discover the Word together!”.

Brother Lawrence’s reflections, The Practice of the Presence of God, remind us of this Presence dimension of spirituality. The exodus narrative and the gospels and Acts with their stories of a birth, a transfiguration, a resurrection meal, a dramatic empty tomb and a resurrection meal remind us that the interface between human consciousness and God himself is extremely complex, varied and subtle. A biblical spirituality should keep us open to experiences of differing modes and confirmations of the presence of God. Its paradoxical quality signals its mystery. The exodus narrative encourages us to embrace and in creative ways to disavow or disengage from initiatives that the initiative and impulse come from God himself, even when he seems to need the cry of lament or complaint to provoke him into appearing on the scene.

Paradox of perspective

The second paradox is embedded in the phrase 'carried on eagles' wings’. The paradox is interpretive because this way of life is divine perspective enacted on arrival, still dusty from the trek through the wilderness with the footsoldiers of Israel. The reader has identified with the first desert experience of tired and thirsty walkers arriving at a pool of bitter water. The narrator introduces the hazards of the desert with this story: 'They went into the wilderness of Shur; they went three days in the wilderness and found no water when they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter' (15:22ff.). Likewise in chapter 17, they trek on only to out upon at Rephidim where 'there was no water for the people to drink' (17:1).

The human experience is one of hardship and threat to survival, all too keenly felt: the divine experience is one of carrying Israeli's on eagles' wings. This paradox of human biblical spirituality from conversion onwards. On the one hand it is all grace, all God; of the other, it is response, endurance and the 'who persists to the end wins' of the Corinthians. The main reasons of logic, or systematization, to resolve this paradox of human effort and enable grace, an exodus spirituality united all the experiences of the exodus narrative in a way that related to the crisis of Exodus. Its fall reality cannot be measured by collapsing the wave function into law, obligation, stipulation, obligation, unbelief, or the condition of the human being. The blessing, promise, guarantee. Both would constitute quantum leaps away from the narrator's presentation.

Metaphor and image: eagle’s wings and royal treasure

One might say that OT imagery refreshes the parts of propositional theology cannot reach.

Embedded in the divine exodus of Exodus 19:4ff. are several metaphors. Their presence reminds us of the imaginative participation that story invites us to imaginative participation, so metaphor opens doors of perception. The popularity of Psalm 23 is coincidence — it is very popular because it provides an entry to worship. The Hebrew reader must leave to draw near to their God who has drawn near (nirujah 'a'leynah). 'The search for union with the Lord governs the entire life of the Israelite, and the experience of the spiritual presence of an entire people... 'This union with the Lord' resulting from 'I brought you to myself' is not, Gutierrez is at pains to point out, a mystical and individualistic interior experience in this setting.

In Isaiah 40 – 55, the return journey is fundamentally a return to Yhwh. To return is to repent (läbb lends itself to this double journey metaphor), and if the text calls for a literal departure from Babylon (48:20; 52:11), and it does, then equating v. 3 with v. 4 seems in tension with the theme of return and attitude ('let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: let him return to Yhwh', 55:7). This seems unrealistic to me, and the notion of a return to Yhwh is an old and special relationship, is expressed in the commission of the servant to 'bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him' (49:5).

We might say that the exodus story is Sinai-centred and the promulgated narrative project affirms that both an explicitly Yhwh- and covenant-centred. This has implications relevant to the 'centre' debate in OT theology.
I brought you to myself — journey to the centre.

The whole exodus story is about leaving and arriving and what is at stake. The narrative is a journey that is a metaphor for the spiritual journey. It 1:12 orients the reader for time and place by rehashing the departure point of Egypt, the eclipse of time reckoned by the cycle of the moon, the covenanted day and night, and goes on to refer to stages of the journey, mentioning encampment at Rephidim and approach to Sinai.

In this narrative setting, the utterance of God expresses the most profound truth to be comprehended: the existence and nature of the journey. There is physical trek and there is the geographical arrival to be sure. The account minimizes neither, the divine and the human, the journey and the journeying. The physical journey is the outward visible form of a profound spiritual movement which God wishes to bring about. Spiritualty for Israelites leaving Egypt meant to bring tragedy to their Bethel.

Encounter with God at Sinai was indeed the announced goal of the exodus. 'When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain' (Ex. 3:18). The Israelites call of Moses in two ways. Firstly, it was what Moses himself experienced at the burning bush. This awe-inspiring, life-transforming encounter was to be the experience of the whole community. They were all destined to stand on holy ground, confronted by supernatural fire and sound, as awed as their forebears had been before. They were to be a royal priesthood, the holy nation, the temple of the living God. And now, pray we, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Ywhw our God' (Ex. 16:1).

The escape to the desert is picking up this motif into our narrative. We understand the drama of the wilderness, which is to say, we understand the meaning of the narrative by revisiting the original setting, either literally, or, metaphorically, in historical-critical ways, we are attempting to chart the escape route. This becomes visual imagery as we enter the story. It continues with interaction and the symbolism. We must interpret the mountain, the smoke, the lightning, the thunder, the quaking until we hear the living voice of God speaking again and we see that he has brought us to himself.

The poets who composed a literary theology for the exiles left us prototypes of imaginative re-readings of the exodus story. They had first entered imaginatively into the exodus narrative and second, narrated and viewed the escape from Egypt through the waters, the journey through the desert, the pillar of cloud and fire. These motifs from the original exodus journey, the physical journey of the Israelites, are now the exiles to a new consciousness God's purpose. There is a shift from exodus narrative to lyrical poetry, from record to eschatological vision. The past journey becomes a symbol, both sign and promise, of a new journey.

The destination is new as well. Interestingly, there is no mention to be found in the fifteen chapters of Isaiah 40 — 55, or any Sinai event, possibly because the prophet wished to emphasize understanding and acceptance of a new grace and promise. Zion is the new mountain. But there is an exact parallel to the original exodus story in that Zion is no mountain, no geographical feature, but a religious concept from Egypt. In each, the physical journey involved the reality of the inner orientation towards God himself and participation in the covenant promises.

In Isaiah 40 — 55, the return journey is fundamentally a return to Ywhw. To return is to repent (šābb lends itself to this double journey metaphor), and if the text calls for a literal departure from Babylon (48:20, 52:11), and it does, then exile is also a spiritual departure from Babylon and attitude (let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to Ywhw, 55:7). This spiritual transformation is a return to Ywhw, and special effects enhance rather than obscure what happens.

In terms of spirituality, the story and geographical setting have immense value. Bushes and mountains: very mundane, unimportant stuff. Yet they are the main image used for particular bush and this particular mountain on this particular day, go there on another day and there is nothing to see. For all its打造, the divine is speaking, the narrative has alerted us to this difference between symbolic setting and personal encounter. The mountain is not the destination of the Exodus. The journey is to God himself. There will come the time, the period of wilderness is to be left behind, and you have stayed long enough at this mountain; turn and take your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites. . . . (Dt. 1:16). The exact location of the mountain has indeed been forgotten.

Imagery, symbolism and re-readings.

At this point it is helpful to recall that all re-readings are typological, and hence rely on symbol, metaphor and spiritualization of the original text. There is perhaps some value, though a limited one, in making a pilgrimage back to the site of Jebel Musa. But we could not count on an experienced tour guide like the author of the Book of Numbers, and was met at Horeb in a person-to-person encounter. We can come to an understanding of the meaning of the narrative by revisiting the original setting, either literally, or, metaphorically, in historical-critical ways, we are attempting to chart the escape route. This becomes visual imagery as we enter the story. It continues with interaction and the symbolism. We must interpret the mountain, the smoke, the lightning, the thunder, the quaking until we hear the living voice of God speaking again and we see that he has brought us to himself.

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We might say that the exodus story is Sinai-centred and the proposed journey to Egypt is a metaphor to affirm that even explicitly Ywhw- and covenant-centred. This has implications relevant to the 'centre' debate in OT theology.

Paradox and symbol of presence.

Next, we want to examine another paradox built into the very phrase 'I brought you to myself'. The phrase begins and ends with God and One who is exalted at the destination has initiated and shared the journey all along.

This is no general truth about the omnipresence of God, such as a heading in a work of systematic theology, but rather a point which the text makes in its own style. These are theophanies prior to Sinai. For instance, in 16:19 there is a public theophany: 'they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Ywhw appeared in the cloud'. This theologian introduced another paradox in the exodus story, indeed paradox built into the very phrase 'I brought you to myself'. The phrase begins and ends with God and One who is exalted at the destination has initiated and shared the journey all along.

The human experience is one of hardship and threat to survival, all too keenly felt; the divine experience is one of carrying Israel, a people who remember that they are sent to biblical spirituality from conversion onwards. On the one hand it is all of grace, all of God; on the other, it is response, endurance and he who perseveres to the end will be saved. This paradox is an attempt to meet the reason of logic, or systematization, to resolve this paradox of human effort and enabling grace, an exodus spirituality which unites the condition of human relationship of exodus. Its full reality cannot be measured by collapsing the wave function into law, obligation, stipulation, obligation, that is, the meaning of both, the blessing of grace and promise. Both would constitute quantum leaps away from the narrator's presentation.

Metaphor and image: eagle's wings and royal treasure.

One might say that OT imagery refreshes the parts propositional theology cannot reach.

Embedded in the divine exuberance of Exodus 19:4ff. are several metaphors. Their presence reminds us of the exodus as story invites us to imaginative participation, so metaphor opens doors of perception. The popularity of Psalm 23 is to coinage — it is a metaphor for a liturgical journey with its pictures of Shepherd, sheep, green pastures, still water, protective staff and club, dark ravine, etc. Isaiah 40 is likewise full of visual imagery, but in that case, the metaphor is the life of apocalyptic. In Israel, to approach God in worship, entering the tabernacle precincts or the temple, was to step into the metaphor. In Isaiah 19:4,6 God invites Israelites to visualize a pair of outspread wings. We know from the remark of Proverbs 30:18 that the sight of an eagle in flight captured the imagination of
the Israelite poet, filling him with a sense of wonder and awe. Starting from the natural world, the familiar sight, the image of an eagle here opens eyes on spiritual reality. Poet Deuteronomy (32:11) and the dramatist of creation in Genesis 1:28 played on this image of soaring flight.5

We know that wings and deities were associated from the 3rd millennium BC in Mesopotamian mythology, whether the Sumerian Thunderbird 'Ittu-dug', or the vulture emblem flying above the Pharaoh's battle chariot, or a falcon, a bird hovering over Assyrian kings at war. The eagle symbolism of Exodus 19 fits most aptly into this scenario of intervention in battle seen in Egyptian and Assyrian iconography, and with the opening phrase you have 'they saw what I had done for the Egyptians', it is possible that the superior ability of Yhwh to protect and triumph, proved in plague and at the Red Sea, is implicit in the eagle's wings soaring—Yhwh would be a naturalistic one rather than iconographically polemic.

The second metaphor is s'igailah, the 'treasured possession', and we know that it was already in metaphorical use in the OT as the 'possession' of a god, or a vassal-king as the 'possession' of his suzerain.6 It is improbable that Near Eastern texts will parallel a whole community of liberated slaves being addressed in such honoured terms by the Creator-god. That s'igailah here nuances positive value, rather than claim and superiority, over other religions, gives the notion of a constant selection and the status of 'priesthood' and holiness.7 Creation theology and covenant theology are held together in dynamic tension, yet there is no final term for the whole earth is 'mine' in parallel with 'you shall be mine'.

Vocation and nationalism

Exodus 19:4 has a flashback: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians'. The concluding promise—'kingdom of priests and holy nation'—extends the distinction Egyptians/Hebrews, and metaphorically to 'the whole earth' is a geographical extension from the land of Egypt. The effect is to heighten the value God places on the covenant bond and national identity is certainly more than the perception here, as in the entire story—witness the phrase 'God of the Hebrews', yet covenant with God and covenant brokered experience is a term not found in the Exodus generation, which is plainly not so, but because they were paradigmatic for later generations in interpreting their own experience and expectations of God.8 It is this paradigmatic quality and the theological re-reading within the story of covenant's confrontation with the economic and socio-political domain, an exodus spirituality is concerned with self-definition, community, commonwealth and justice, without which there is no 'holy nation'.9

Conclusion

We started from the patternning of the narratives, and found that motifs such as promise, departure, journey, guidance, testing, presence, testing, fear of the Lord, throne, covenant commitment and cultic worship characterized Israel's spiritual experience. They typify Israel's faith not because there are no other generations who have had religious experiences to the Exodus generation, which is plainly not so, but because they were paradigmatic for later generations in interpreting their own experience and expectations of God. It is this paradigmatic quality and the theological re-reading within the story of covenant's confrontation with the economic and socio-political domain, an exodus spirituality is concerned with self-definition, community, commonwealth and justice, without which there is no 'holy nation'.

Stages of faith for individual and community

By examining the dynamic of human experience as link factor between us and ancient Israel, we open our eyes to personal, social, cultural and policy implications. Christian. No understanding of biblical spirituality as a learning experience and growth process can operate without an understanding of personhood and the mechanisms of maturing, and although Christians may on occasions speak of 'embrace of pain' and 'social imagination' can see a little too complimentary to the Israelites in the wilderness, and sound conceptually abstruse compared with the story line, his perspective is unhelpful. The nature of changes that are wrought through discontinuity, displacement and disjunction10 do justice to how difficult life is among an anamnesis of emancipatory modes of life.11 To look for biblical concepts of learning, change and the processing of experience within the text of Exodus seems right, indeed Pauline, and discloses some of the complexities of the divine-human encounter. We witness the ejection of Israelites from cultic communion from Korah onwards.

This said, Exodus 19-4:6 is a political statement, and to come up to the point of Yhwh at Sinai as a political act, just as much as the singing of The Song of the Sea was, and the dancing of Miriam. An exodus spirituality is not individualistic—worship is not only personal and devotional, a Latin American approach, though by the time of the liberation theology and the liberation struggle in South Africa challenge us repeatedly to respond to the communal and ideological dimensions of faith, and incorporate these into our spirituality.

The imprinting process

Exactly why and how the exodus narrative has so deeply imprinted itself on subsequent generations and their hopes is a little more difficult to answer, granted the thoroughly super natural, miraculous and interventionist quality of God's participation. Isaiah 40:55 resonates with exodus imagery, but the exiles who made the return journey from Babylon to Jerusalem could be described as 'a people watching the clock, rank and file, woke to no manna or quails. On return they were under the Persian empire, not free of its permission to renew worship. As Nehemiah's prayer so poignantly expresses it: 'Better is that I should be counted among the nations, than dwell alone in the house of Jacob'. The hope that the exiles and returnees would restore to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves (Ne 9:36). The disparity between the paradigmatic exodastic language and the circumstances of the diaspora dissension, leading to a rejection of this symbolization process. Yet it did not, much to R. P. Carroll's perplexity. The exodus imagery was not that easily dislodged.

After reviewing re-uses of the exodus traditions within the OT, Fishbane remarks: 'The simultaneous capacity of the exodus paradigm to elicit memory and expectation, recollection, theological re-creation and the accommodating of experience to historical emplacement is a fundamental aspect of the biblical historical imagination',12 but he makes no attempt at describing how that imagination worked. We show that stories act on human imagination to ingrain their images. The original stories have all the 'what-happens-next' appeal of good stories and are full of strong visual components. They are rich in cultural, religious and social imagery—like the tree at Marah, the seventy palms of Elim, or the manna.13

Weinfeld points out that the remnant community after national disaster also has a vocation. It rests on the 'priesthood of Yahweh' in Isaiah 6:6, and we may follow the trajectory from Exodus 19 to Isaiah 6 and into the NT through John 1 (with John 2:23).20

Democratic liberationists, identify themselves with Israel and read their historical destiny in terms drawn from the exodus story, both in political, and in liberation theology. The covenant relationship expressed in nuclear form in Exodus 19:4-6 and its new covenant re-readings. Entering covenant was a matter of individual wholeheartedness as well as of collective, and public commitment. Buber, Brueggemann asserts, covenant 'transposes all identity questions into vocational questions'.14 Moreover, national identity is about 'embroidery of the people', the process of making a claim to the land.15 We witness the ejection of Israelites from cultic communion from Korah onwards.

The imagination and spiritual resonance

Using a different metaphor, we could put it this way. Spiritual perception involves vibrating to the resonance set up by the originators of the experience in mere and conscious or unconscious stimuli trigger the melody with the effect that the tune plays again in the mind. The Song of the Sea was a song sung in a unique historical situation; once sung it has a life of its own, and is replayed in quite different situations but retaining the resonance of worship. Reading Paul in Corinthians, however, and the new covenant formulary of Exodus 19:4-6, are all likely to have been brought to life in Israel's worship and their phrases and imagery imprinted on heart and mind in group experience.

Entering the exodus story and tapping into its spiritual may not, for us, be the route of liturgy and communal worship but might involve using the imagination in a way that allows the spirit to resonate in response to the stories. This could make use of imaginative exercises using creative writing, or sketching, or visualization techniques of various kinds. Meditation starting from a striking image, such as 'eagles' wings', with its powerful visual and emotional qualities, and flowing into associated clusters of images along a common trajectory, is a responsive technique open to us and may emulate the creative imagination of biblical poets prior to composing their poetry.

These stories and their motifs have captured the imagination of generations seeking to interpret their situation, their faith and their longing to move on with God. I would hope that our academic training in OT might enhance our ability to understand the God of the exodus with imagination, heart and spirit in our generation.

1 This hermeneutical re-reading of the OT and the process of symbolic meaning-making by which African political struggles against European colonial domination were inspired by the biblical key equation 'African wolves/white men' has been thoroughly documented and discussed by T. Dunbar-Moodie, The Rise of Africaner power, Social and Political History (London: Routledge, 1989); D. H. James, 'The Roots and Fruits of Africaner Civil Religion in White South Africa', in Social and political History (ed.), New Faces of Africa (Pretoria: UNISA, 1984), pp. 14-35; T. L. Thompson, The Political Mythology of Apartheid (London: Yale, 1975).


3 W. C. Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), selected 'promise' as centre OT theology for some time, since the late 1970's, for some problems of omission and underplay of alternative valid emphases.
Democratic liberationists, identify themselves with Israel and read their historical destiny in terms drawn from the exodus narrative. They thus adopt a national identity rooted in covenant relationship expressed in nuclear form in Exodus 19-4-6 and its new covenant re-readings.\(^1\) Entering covenant was a matter of individual wholeheartedness as well as of national and cultural identity. It was a profound political act, just as much the singing of The Song of the Sea was, and the dancing of Miriam. An exodus spirituality is not individualistic, then, but rather a community spirituality which transcends the confines of national consciousness, though it is not entirely naive. Pharaoh perceived the journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to YHwh as a political act. He was right, and his mistake was that he was not sympathetic to the impulse that Swith YHwh were socio-political events. The political background to so much of biblical covenant language, including the whole core metaphor of kingdom and of vassal loyalty, is a sure sign of ideological critique and the dis-placement of alternative socio-political systems by covenant language. If, or in our terms, by national identity, already established, deeply rooted in the covenant’s confrontation with the economic and socio-political domain, an exodus spirituality is concerned with order and well-being. Its dynamic term is not a mark of ownership and business, and hence, with which there is no ‘national’ life.

**Conclusion**

We started from the patterned narrative of the Scriptures, and found that motifs such as promise, departure, journey, guidance, protection, time, event, and community commitment and cultic worship characterized Israel’s spiritual experience. They typify the nation’s faith not because they were specific to their generation’s unique experiences to the Exodus generation, which is plainly not so, but because they were paradigmatic for later generations in interpreting their own experience and expectations of God.\(^1\) It is this paradigmatic quality and the typological re-readings within the domain of covenant’s confrontation with the economic and socio-political domain, that exodus spirituality is concerned with order and well-being. Its dynamic term is not a mark of ownership and business, and hence, with which there is no ‘national’ life.

**Stages of faith for individual and community**

By examining the dynamic of human experience as link factor between us and ancient Israel, we open our eyes to personal, social, and cultural development.\(^1\) The key idea of Abraham as shalom, as a paradigmatic example of the relationship between the ‘priests of Yahweh’ in Isaiah 61.6, and we may follow the trajectory from Exodus 19 to Isaiah 61 and into the NT. The text of Isaiah 61.6 is found in Jesus’ (Lk. 4) and his disciples’ (1 Pet. 2.9). When people groups, such as British colonials or Afrikaner Calvinists or Mass

**Vocation and nationalism**

Exodus 19:4-6 in a flashback: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians’. The concluding promise—‘kingdom of priests and holy nation’—extends the distinction Hebrews/ Egyptians, for which the whole nation is a group of ‘all the earth’ is a geographical extension from the land of Egypt. The effect is to heighten the value God places on the covenant bond, and national identity certainly a category of perception here, as in the entire story—witness the phrase ‘God of the Hebrews’, yet covenant with God and covenant borrowers. The sacred is a metaphor of otherness of Egypt and Canaan that ‘holy people’ cannot possibly be satisfactorily associated with a nationhood as such. The theology does demythologize and delegitimize Pharaonic Egypt, but cannot be read to legitimatize a new, purely national community. The separation from Egyptians and other goy into God and into covenant relationship is associated with priestly functioning (mamlekh kohanim), which certainly denies access to God’s presence, but probably also implies that the nation (goy qadosh) has, as it were, a priestly ministry towards other peoples. The nation of Israel as a theocratic critique of Egypt and Canaan that ‘holy people’ cannot possibly be satisfactorily assimilated with a nationhood as such. The theology does demythologize and delegitimize Pharaonic Egypt, but cannot be read to legitimatize a new, purely national community. The separation from Egyptians and other goy into God and into covenant relationship is associated with priestly functioning (mamlekh kohanim), which certainly denies access to God’s presence, but probably also implies that the nation (goy qadosh) has, as it were, a priestly ministry towards other peoples. The nation of Israel as a theocratic critique of Egypt and Canaan that ‘holy people’ cannot possibly be satisfactorily assimilated with a nationhood as such. The theology does demythologize and delegitimize Pharaonic Egypt, but cannot be read to legitimatize a new, Deuteronomy (32:11) and the dramatist of creation in Genesis 1:28 played on this image of soaring flight.\(^2\)

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The second metaphor is ‘sighual’, the ‘treasured possession’, and we know that it was already in metaphorical use in the OT as the ‘possession’ of a god, or a vassal-king as the ‘possession’ of his suzerain.\(^3\) It is improbable that Near Eastern texts will parallel a whole community of liberated slaves being addressed in such honoured terms by the Creator-god. That sighual here nuances positive value, rather than claim and gratification, and implies the distinction and the connoting selection and the status of ‘priesthood’ and holiness.\(^4\) Creation theology and covenant theology are held to be in dynamic tension. ‘All the earth is mine’ runs in parallel with ‘you shall be mine’.


Exodus theme. Its application to it is interior, juridical or existential (sin, the law, death) is a deepening but not a replacement of the socio-political reference of the OT (p. 127).


3. The dating of the Song of the Sea is, of course, disputed, but my point stands because the poem’s composition or amplification at any date illustrates the resonance effect, and a literary re-use of Ex. 15:1-21 as postulated by many scholars, only underlines the point, though it is one form only of its life; another, for example, manifests itself in the composition of Rev. 15:

4. In my judgment, B. P. Robinson represents a return to an unnecessary dogmatization, in his professed re-reading in Rabbih and Church Father manner—"Symbolism in Exod. 15:22-27 (Marah and Elim)," Reuse Biblique 93 (1987), pp. 376-388.


6. Note the evaluation of S. Reid: “From the beginning of the introduction of liberation theology, Third World theology has been rooted in the spirituality of the community of faith”, in ‘The Book of Exodus: a laboratory for hermeneutics’, in M. L. Branson and C. R. Paul (eds.), Conflict and Context: hermeneutics in the Americas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 163. Compare the criticism from the Katoon Document that: ‘spirituality has tended to be an otherworldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic’ (op. cit. p. 16).

7. Note the way this text is appropriated by Katoon theologians with respect to the poor: ‘the people of South Africa this situation is all too familiar’ (op. cit. p. 19).


10. God, and receives special instructions as to what he should do (16:1-35). God’s attitude is one of fear, alarm, and西省 and sickness and appalls us. Not grasping that earthly existence is of less importance than life to come, or that the sanctity of the nation at stake, we experience dismay as we read (16:31- 35). But there is more in follow: the People have grasped neither the significance nor the seriousness of what has happened. They presume that the tragedy represents a display of wizardry by Moses rather than divine displeasure. Slowly rising up against him, and by a further stroke of God’s judgment nearly 15,000 people lose their lives. Only the desperate intercession of Moses and Aaron on God’s behalf can avert it.

11. The first thought that strikes us concerns the extreme severity of the sentence. Can this be the God we worship? Would he do similar things today? Certainly, there are other similar incidents in the OT. They begin with the account of the food, continue with God’s instructions to Joshua about the devoted nations occupying Canaan (Jos. 6 and 7), and go on to such instances as his judgment upon Israel following Daniel’s commands to the Babylonian people. Whatever we may think about the severity, we must notice two points. God judges all nations, including his special people. Also, throughout Scripture, a longsuffering God waits a long time before imposing judgment.

12. But we must ask what principles arise from the Korah incident. I would suggest there are:

1. Principles that never change: The Korah episode exemplifies principles seen in previous judgments, and these remain relevant to us today. This is a principle of God’s sovereign will.

2. The basic cause of judgment is the failure to recognize God and to respond with trustful thanksgiving.

3. God’s judgment comes against individuals, families or nations.

4. The rebellion by a group of leaders may reflect widespread rebellion by the people.

5. Judgment against an individual or a small group may have the purpose of teaching an important lesson to and thus warning a much larger group.

Let me go over each point.

God is the judge of all mankind. He judges more severely those that have more light. His judgments on Israel were correspondingly more severe than on the idolators. A third stage followed rapidly. We were (to use the NIV translation) ‘given over’—given over to sexual impurity (1:24), to shameful lusts (1:26), and to a depraved mind (1:28). Notice that vulnerability to sexual sin is here part of the judgment. God gave us over, gave us over to ‘sexual impurity for the degrading of [our] bodies? To put it another way, God removed our outward protection against sexual perversion. He removed it because we refused to acknowledge him as God. He allowed us in our pride to stumble blindly along an open path until we lost ourselves in a maze of sexual allurements.

AIDS is not a judgment of God against homosexuals. It is a judgment of God against society—a society God has allowed to make the same mistake, among others, into which our pride has led us. And it is the sexual insanity that is the real judgment. AIDS merely is the result, the final working-out of the judgment.

Sexual depravity in the church

I use the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ advisedly. It is plain that the church is in this case part of society. I believe that Christians

as holy in the sight of the Israelites . . . (Nu. 20:11-12).

So it is the person who knows about God, yet ‘neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him’ (Rom. 1:21). In each case failure to honour and glorify God himself brings the judgment. In Moses’ case, he alone suffers. In the Korah case, the Korahite followers suffer.

The third and fourth principles are linked together. The rebellion of the 250 reflected very widespread failure to recognize who God was, and what his real significance is to Israel.

The fifth principle is clear both in the OT and the NT—Terror fills people when judgment falls. The result of God’s judgment on Ananias and Sapphira was ‘that great fear seized the whole church’ (Acts 5:1-11). Sometimes it takes terror to bring true repentance, but God prefers to do it by revealing his kindness (Rom. 2:4).

NT teaching about judgment

The most enlightening teaching about judgment brings us directly to the question of AIDS. Paul in Romans 1 explains how and why judgment comes upon us. All up to now we have thought of judgment in the form of earthquake, war, famine, plague, etc. Paul’s explanation of the phenomenon digs a little deeper. He shows that judgment may start long before the final strokes appear. Let me try to express the gist of Romans 1:18:

In our pride we human beings refused to respond to our innate capacity to know God (to see him in creation). Because of this sin, judgment came upon us. It came as what some theologians call ‘the death of the darkness of blindness. You cannot think properly unless the one true God is central to your thinking. You cannot think straight unless the one true God has mastered you. Therefore our thinking became futile. We grew stupid, obtuse. Brilliant in academic performance perhaps, we were quite unable to see what was right under our noses. This is how God’s judgment begins.

AIDS, judgment and blessing

John White

Dr John White, well known as a psychiatrist and author of many books on practical and personal Christian living, makes a penetrating analysis of a delicate and controversial issue.

Summary

The question of AIDS and divine judgment leads us to a consideration of the nature and the principles of both. AIDS is not just an infectious disease, but a symptom of a decay of the community as a whole. Judgment comes to those who refuse to acknowledge God as what and who he is. It may take many forms. In its early stages there is a loss of understanding, with abandonment to the folly of idolatry, and exposure to sexual promiscuity (the physical effects of promiscuity). But God intends his judgments on his people to be a prelude to blessing, as his people repent.

Many Christians feel that AIDS represents God’s judgment on the homosexual community. How do I as a self-confessed conservative view the question: Is God especially mad at gays?

We still have only limited knowledge about the disease and its origins. At first we thought AIDS originated in a gay and drug-using community in Haiti, and that it was a disease of gays. Further research makes it seem more likely that the disease began in one of the countries in tropical Africa, where it existed in long simian monkeys. It is believed that it could have spread to humans by a species of anopheline mosquito. In several African countries, where the disease is widespread and the simian virus is a priority, we believe that it could have spread to humans by a species of anopheles mosquito. In several African countries, where the disease is widespread and the simian virus is a priority, we believe that it could have spread to humans by a species of anopheles mosquito.

Let us turn then, to the examples of God’s judgment in the Bible. What can we learn from them that will help us to have a balanced view of AIDS and homosexuality?

God’s judgments in the OT

In OT times God executed judgment by sending plague, natural catastrophes, war, captivity and death. He took no delight in the death of his people, and he was always concerned for the suffering, plentiful in mercy. The horrific nature of the judgments reflected the gravity of sin. Always God’s aim was to purge and to purify the people through whom he planned to carry out his saving purposes.

We might begin by considering the famous incident described in Numbers 16—the rebellion of the sons of Korah. Backed by a dissatisfied group of leading Levites, Korah (Nu. 16:1-10), along with a couple of non-Levites, Dathan and Abihu, protested against the leadership of Aaron and Moses. They aimed at supplanting the Aaronicpriestly succession (16:16-18).

To understand the incident we must also grasp that the royal leadership was divine. God led the people either by the pillar of fire and cloud, or else by communicating his wishes via Moses. Thus the rebellion against Moses and Aaron was really rebellion against God. The people’s real sin was that of failure to honour God’s leadership and person.

In the face of the rebellion Moses proposes that the rebels offer incense to God (a priestly function). This will test whether the people still belong to him with divine approval (6:4-7). Stung by the insulting refusal of Dathan and Abiram to appear before him, Moses also crouses to

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Exodus theme. Its application to it in interior, juridical or existential realities (sin, the law, death) is a deepening but not a replacement of the socio-political relevance of the OT” (p. 127). 3. While the words of the Karia Document: Challenge to the Church: a theological reappraisal of the Karia Political Texts in South Africa (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). 4. The dating of the Song of the Sea is, of course, disputed, but my point stands because the poem’s composition or amplification at any date illustrates the resonance effect, and a liturgical re-use of Ex. 15:1-19 as postulated by many scholars, only underlines the point, though it is one form only of its life; another, for example, manifests itself in the composition of Rev. 15. 5. In my judgment, B. P. Robinson represents a return to an unnecessarily derogation in his proferred re-reading in Rabbino and Church Father manner -- Syncretism in Exod. 15:22-27 (Marash and Elimi), Reuse Biblique 93 (1987), pp. 376-380. 6. See also the second edition of the Exodus Narrative as Israel’s Articulation of Faith Development, in hope within History (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 276. His engagement in primarily with J. W. Fowlser, Sages of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), and Becoming Adult. Becoming Christians (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), who build on the psychology of Erik Erikson. 7. Note the evaluation of S. Reid: “From the beginning of the introduction of liberation theology, Third World theology has been rooted in the spirituality of the community of faith”, in The Book of Exodus: a laboratory for hermeneutics”, in M. L. Branson and C. R. Pauley (eds.), Conflict and Context: hermeneutics in the Americas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 163. Compare the criticism from the Karia Document that: “spirituality has tended to be an otherworldly affair that has very little, if anything at all, to do with the affairs of this world. . . Moreover, spirituality has also been understood to be purely private and individualistic” (op. cit., p. 16). 8. Note the way this text is appropriated by Karros theologians with respect to the large numbers of people of South Africa this situation is also too familiar” (op. cit., p. 19). 9. R. J. Carroll, “Second Isaiah and the Failure of Prophecy”, Studia Theologica 28 (1974), pp. 99-113. 10. M. Fishbane, Text and Texture: close readings of selected biblical texts (New York: Schocken, 1979), ch. 10, pp. 121-140: “The Exodar: Mois (The Paradigm of Historical Renewal), p. 140.

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Many Christians feel that AIDS represents God’s judgment on our homosexual community. How do I as a self-confessed conservative view the question: Is God especially mad at gays? We still have only limited knowledge about the disease and its origins. At first we thought AIDS originated in a gay and drug-using community in Haiti, and that it was a disease of gays. Further research makes it seem more likely that the disease began in one of the countries in tropical Africa, where it existed for long centuries. It is possible that it could have spread to humans by a species of anophelines mosquito. In several African countries, where the disease is widespread and the acceptance and tolerance for homosexuality spreads it. If AIDS represents divine judgment, it is unlikely to be primarily judgment against homosexuals.

Let us turn then, to the examples of God’s judgment in the Bible. What can we learn from them that will help us to have a balanced view of AIDS and homosexuality?

God’s judgments in the OT

In OT times God executed judgment by sending plague, natural catastrophes, war, captivity and death. He took no delight in punishment or suffering, but his judgment was for the delight in punishment, long suffering, plentiful in mercy. The horrific nature of the judgments reflected the gravity of sin. Always God’s aim was to purge and to purify the peoples through whom he planned to carry out his saving purposes.

We might begin by considering the famous incident described in Numbers 16—the rebellion of the sons of Korah. Backed by a dissatisfied group of leading Levites, Korah (Num. 16:1-15), along with a couple of non-Levites, Dathan and Abi Shu, protested against the leadership of Aaron and Moses. They aimed at supplanting the Aaronic priestly succession (Exod. 16).

To understand the incident we must also grasp that the real leadership was divine. God led the people either by the pillar of fire and cloud, or else by communicating his wishes via Moses. Thus the rebellion against Moses and Aaron was really rebellion against God. The people’s real sin was that of failure to honour God’s leadership and person.

In the face of the rebellion Moses proposes that the rebels offer incense to God (a priestly function). This will test whether the pillar of cloud and fire can be stopped (instead of speaking to the rock) is an example of this. God judges Moses because he [did not trust in me to ensure honour to God], as holy in the sight of the Israelites . . . (Nu. 20:11-12). Such a person who does not know about God, yet `neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him’ (Rom. 1:21). In each case failure to honour and glorify God himself brings the judgment. In Moses’ case, he alone suffers, but the people as a whole suffer. The third and fourth principles are linked together. The rebellion of the 250 reflected very widespread failure to recognize who God was, and what his real significance is for society.

The fifth principle is clear both in the OT and the NT. Terror fills people when judgment falls. The result of God’s judgment on Ananias and Sapphira was `that great fear seized the whole church’ (Acts 5:1-11). Sometimes it takes terror to bring true repentance, though God prefers to do it by revealing his kindness (Rom. 2:4).

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The most enlightening teaching about judgment brings us directly to the question of AIDS. Paul in Romans 1 explains how and why judgment comes upon us. All up to now we have thought of judgment in the form of earthquake, war, famine, plague, etc. Paul’s explanation of the phenomenon digs a little deeper. He shows that judgment may start long before the final strokes appear. Let me try to express the gist of Romans 1:18-28.

In our pride we human beings refuses to respond to our innate capacity to know God (to see him in creation). Because of this sin, judgment came upon us. It came as what some theologians call the God who now in his blindness. You cannot think properly unless the one true God is central to your thinking. You cannot think straight unless the one true God has mastered you. Therefore our thinking becomes futile. We grew stupid, obtuse. Brilliant in academic performance perhaps, we were quite unable to see what was right under our noses. This is how God’s judgment begins.

A second stage of the judgment followed. We lost what discrimination we had (Rom. 1:21-23) and became idolaters. A third stage followed rapidly. We were (to use the NIV translation) ‘given over’—given over to sexual impurity (1:24), to shameful lusts (1:26), and to a degraded mind (1:28).

Notice that vulnerability to sexual sin is here part of the judgment. God gave us over, we gave over to ‘sexual impurity for the degrading of [our] bodies’? To put it another way, God removed the ‘dim light’ of sexual perversion. He removed it because we refused to acknowledge him as God. He allowed us to pride to stumble blindly along an dint until we lost ourselves in a maze of sexual allurements.

AIDS is not a judgment God against homosexuals. It is a judgment of God against society—a society God has allowed to manos. So there are no myths into which our pride has led us. And it is the sexual insatiation that is the real judgment. AIDS merely is the result, the final working-out of the judgment.

Sexual depravity in the church

I use the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ advisedly. It is plain that the church is in this case part of society. I believe that Christians
by our materialistic outlook on life have become intellectual bozos but behavioural humanists and materialists. We thus seem to become the prisoners of the interpretations of this world that the church no longer relies on. The judgment has also fallen upon us. One Christian leader after another falls into sexual sin which also sweeps the rank and file of the church. As a psychiatrist who sees many Christians, I know that the extent of sexual frankpanky in the church is now comparable with what goes on in the right-wing profligacy.

The research department of Christianity Today recently conducted two surveys among their readers. One concerned pastors' sexual habits and the other, the sexual failures of lay readers of the magazine. The research department mailed out nearly two thousand questionnaires, divided equally between the two groups. The results confirm what some of us already knew.

12% of the pastors responding to the Christianity Today survey admitted sexual intercourse in the course of their pastoral work. 18% admitted to passionate kissing, fondling, mutual masturbation, etc. Such pastors regret and are troubled to make their confession, but commonly have nowhere to turn for help and counsel.

The Christianity Today statistics indicate that sexual failure in the pew is yet more troubling than that in the pulpit. The report continues, "Indicences of immorality (among the laity) were nearly as common as among pastors and having sexual intercourse without sexual attraction is 23% said they had extramarital intercourse, and 20% said they had engaged in other forms of extramarital sexual activity."

Frangipane, a US charismatic leader, comments, 'There are respectable men who love God and seek to serve him, yet secretly in their hearts they are prisoners of Jezebel. Even now they are deeply ashamed of their bondage to pornography; and they can barely control their desires for women. Ask them to pray and their spirits are awash with guilt and shame. Their prayers are but the whimpering of Jezebel's eunuchs.'

It now grows clearer that 'hard core porn' is the major factor in recent increases in rape, sexual cruelty and murder. Unhappily, we begin to see the terrible end-products of depravity, as Paul lists them in Romans 1, both in contemporary society and in church members.

Unhappily, Christian sexual failures do not confine themselves to heterosexual activity. Homosexual practices (aft and in secret) to say nothing of the struggle against homosexual impulses) are widespread.

Statistics in countries other than the US may differ, but I question whether they differ much. Pastors all over the world report grave concern about the extent of promiscuity among Christians. But please note: the current weakness of Christians in the face of the world's impurity is itself an expression of God's judgment. God has 'given us over' to sexual violence, and is therefore saying to us: 'You should only draw our attention to our deeper sin, the sin of not honouring him as God in the way we conduct our lives.'

Judgment in the form of plague

Last week I met a sweet Christian woman whose husband (also a Christian) died recently from AIDS. It continued the gay lifestyle as soon as he was converted. His disease was simply a form of divine judgment.

In the New Testament and the historical Gospels, there is another biblical principle of divine judgment: that God's people may share in the judgment that comes on the guilty, even though they themselves may be innocent. Even when we do not participate in the church's sins, we may share in their consequences, Jesus and Caleb had to suffer forty years of wilderness journeys in spite of their personal righteousness.

Such a case is puzzling. Up to the time when he discovered he had the disease, the husband's story had been one of triumph. Deeply repentant for his past, he had sought God's mercy, had experienced forgiveness and even an unusual experience in the church. Yet God had been manifestly against him. The Fellowship Christians blamed their marriage as a triumph of grace. Even after the diagnosis of the young couple had come to light, the woman had not been accepted into the church. God was in fact against him. Perhaps we can understand why his past should catch up with the husband, but why the threat to the wife's life? Tragically, both parents were now being treated like a catastrophe to others. God nowhere promises his followers immunity from 'unjust' suffering.

AIDS is a physical sickness, one that some authorities predict will eventually compare with the bubonic plague of the fourteenth century. How should we view sickness of any kind? Clearly it does not always represent God's judgment on the sick person, or even on the society of which he suffers (see Genesis 50:20). Yet God's judgment does sometimes fall on the sick.

Scripture does not mention sickness before the fall. Presumably sickness reflects something similar to the thorns and thistles God cursed the ground with at the fall. Several physical and emotional ills can be seen in the account, seen as a result of the fall of the fall, and of the divine curse that accompanied it. Mortality itself arose from it (Genesis 2:17), as did the shame and fear of nakedness. The pain of childbirth was especially mentioned, and the way the curse would affect women (Genesis 3:16), while men for physical strength and toil were to characterize their work (Genesis 3:17-19). There can be little doubt that all sickness, physical or mental, came with the fall.

It came because Satan became the ruler of this world. Having believed his lie, human beings came under the power both of the lie itself, and of the lie's father. John records: 'He was the seducer of all the nations, the prince of this world (ruler of this world) (John: 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan thus becomes the agent of divine judgment, a fact that is not always easy to come to terms with. While we recognise the natural tendency to see sickness as the result of his rule. Sometimes Satan is mentioned as the source of a problem. It is by no means clear what the nature of Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was, but whatever it was it constituted a 'messenger of Satan'. It was a messenger of Satan sent to do God's work in Paul. So do we accept Satan's messengers or oppose them?

When we grasp that Satan is an instrument of God's judgment, it becomes a little easier to understand why we should always oppose sickness, whether with medicine, or with prayer, or with both. To accept judgment merely is not necessarily a rejection of I Peter 2:24 with a place for sin, as Moses' bidding Aaron ran with his censer into the midst of his plague-inflicted compatriots to 'make atonement for them. 'He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped' (Numbers 7:48-49). When Phineas took violent action against a plague victim, Satan took notice (Numbers 25:7-13). Judgments, even when they are already in progress, are open to appeal. God takes no pleasure in executing them. When David built an altar on Araunah's threshing floor, the Lord answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped' (2 Sa. 24:25).

We must never be passive in the face of divine judgment. Jesus came to 'destroy the devil's work' (1 John 3:8). By his incarnation, death and resurrection, he manifested his kingdom and rule on earth, his authority to advance against the ruler who has been the pawn of the Father's judgment. By healing the sick and casting out demons, he showed both the nature of the kingdom and his own authority in it.

Blessing: the reverse side of judgment

I believe that God's judgment on the church throughout the world is only just beginning. There will be many more exposures of Christian wrongdoing, along with many false accusations. We will be mocked and ridiculed, not by way of sharing Christ's sufferings, but because we have not honoured God as God. Our trials in this case will represent his purposes.

When God judges his people, he does so because without a thoroughgoing repentance he is unable to bless them. Blessing is always his final goal. However, repentance is more than a light-hearted decision to adopt another viewpoint. It does indeed involve a change of viewpoint, but as the Hebrew word nacham reminds us, there is ideally a profound change of mood. Frustration over my struggle with sin gives place to something more profound. I need contrition in true repentance. I experience grief, grief that is not merely dissipated over my plight. I weep as I become aware how much I have grieved my Lord. It may lie within my power to change my opinion about something, but to weep with a tender heart over my Lord's wounds is a gift only the Holy Spirit can give me.

Therefore when God judges his people, he does so because he sees it as the only way to restored blessing. The only church that can be blessed is a purified and repentant church. Only a purified and repentant church will be an instrument for a worldwide awakening.

AIDS is one of the end-results of the evolution of God's judgment upon society, as well as upon God's people. Yet far from being a disaster, this is a gift from God. God is not abandoning either his people or a lost society. Rather he is moving in judgment, that he might teach us repentance, and then that he might bless us.

Let us then recognize the situation for what it is. Let us cry out to God for contrite hearts. Let us deal with those aspects of our lives that God is trying to reach. It may be that as we do so God will move everywhere with the greatest awakening that this world has ever seen.

1 How Common is Pastoral Indiscipline?, Leadership, Volume IX, Number 1, p. 12

A survey of church history articles 1986-9

Martin Davie

Echoing the words of Ecclesiastes 12:12, it can safely be said that 'of the making of articles on church history there is no end', and to survey them all would cause great weariness of the flesh both to the surveyor and his reader. Nevertheless, it is never intended not to be an exhaustive survey of all articles on church history produced from 1986 to 1989, rather, the articles mentioned are those I personally found interesting, and ones which I think may interest others.

If I have omitted your favourite article or the one you have written, my apologies to you.

The articles are arranged under three headings. These are: 'Patristic and Medieval', which covers church history prior to the Reformation, 'Reformation', which covers the 16th and 17th centuries, and the medieval period which is taken to be the history of the church from the 18th century to present day.

Patristic and medieval

Dan G. McCartney, 'Literal and Allegorical Interpretation in Origen's Centre Colossus', Westminster Theological Journal XLVIII, Fall 1986.

As the title suggests, McCartney examines Origen's literal and allegorical interpretation of Scripture as exemplified in the Greek Colossus. His conclusion is that Origen interpreted the Bible literally "when intellectual proof was required", but allegorically "where edification and stimulation were involved".


In the first of this pair of articles Petersen contends that given the paradigms of both literal and allegorical interpretations of Scripture in writing, Athanasius' treatment of Christ's fear is 'poignantly realistic'. In the second, he argues that Athanasius' "courage" is to be "true to a man suffering courage", in the sense of "confidence in God" and "willing obedience", and "acceptance of the divine will despite the fearsome situations in which the individual is found".

by our materialistic outlook on life have become intellectual lethargy but behavioural humanists and materialists. We profess to be Christians but what the world relies on. The judgment has also fallen upon us. One Christian leader after another falls into sexual sin which also sweeps the rank and file of the church. As a psychiatrist who sees many Christians, I know that the extent of sexual hanky-panky in the church is now comparable with what goes on in the world.

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Statistics in countries other than the US may differ, but I question whether they differ much. Pastors all over the world report grave concern about the extent of promiscuity among Christians. But please note: the current weakness of Christians in the face of the world’s impurity is itself an expression of God’s judgment. God has ‘given us over’ to sexual violence in order to bring us to our senses. This should only draw our attention to our deeper sin, the sin of not honouring him as God in the way we conduct our lives.

Judgment in the form of plague
Last week I met a sweet Christian woman whose husband (also a Christian) died recently from AIDS. He had abandoned the gay lifestyle as soon as he was converted. His wife has always been deeply devoted in love. In the last month or so, he had been very ill and had gleaned another biblical principle of divine judgment: that God’s people may share in the judgment that comes on the guilty, even though they themselves may be innocent. Even when we do not participate in the church’s sins, we may share in their consequences. Josua and Caleb had to suffer forty years of wilderness journeys in spite of their personal righteousness.

Such a case is puzzling. Up to the time when he discovered he had the disease, the husband’s story had been one of triumph. Deeply repentant for his past, he had sought God’s mercy, had experienced forgiveness and even an unusual assurance that his life was now God’s. It is strange to see so many Fellows Christians hailed their marriage as a triumph of grace. Even after the dismay of the diagnosis, the young couple had come to the realization that they, too, were vulnerable to the sickness. God is bringing against him. Perhaps we can understand why his past should catch up with the husband, but why the threat to the wife’s life? Tragically, our private sin can be a catastrophe to others. God nowhere promises his followers immunity from ‘unjust’ suffering.

AIDS is a physical sickness, one that some authorities predict will eventually compare with the bubonic plague of the fourteenth century. How should we view sickness of any kind? Clearly it does not always represent God’s judgment on the sick person, or even on the society of which the sufferer is a part. (Rom. 4:21, 22; 2 Cor. 12:1-8.)

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It came because Satan became the ruler of this world. Having believed his lie, human lives under came the power both of the lie itself, and of the lie’s father, John records in John 14:31: “No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you (and others).” No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you (and others).’

The articles are arranged under three headings. These are: ‘Narrative and Mediaeval’, which covers church history prior to the Reformation, ‘Reformation’, which covers the 16th and 17th centuries, and ‘Modern’, which covers the 18th century to the present day.

Martin Davie

As the title suggests, McCartney examines Origen’s literal and allegorical interpretation of Scripture as exemplified in the Greek text of the Cēsar. His conclusion is that Origen interpreted the Bible literally: ‘when intellectual proof was required, but allegorically where elucidation and stimulation were involved’.


In the first of this pair of articles Petersen contends that given the paradoxical view of the fear of God, Origen’s view of the fear of God is ‘poignantly realistic’. In the second, he argues that Athanasius’ treatment of Christ’s fear is ‘perhaps deliberately ironic’. Both essays are engaging, well argued, and thought-provoking. It is a pity their views do not reflect Athanasius’ ‘confidence in God’ and ‘willing obedience’ (as New Testament scholars have pointed out).

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Debate continues about the origins of infant baptism, and Wright contributes to this debate by suggesting that the idea that infant baptism originated in the 1st century AD is an 'increasingly attractive hypothesis'. An issue which Wright does not tackle is whether it isNevertheless, important, that is that of the theological significance of his suggestion. If infant baptism did have its origins in the baptism of believing children, in what ways should this affect our baptismal policies today?


In his Cur Deus Homo Anselm sought to show why Christ's incarnation was necessary. In his examination of this work Root argues that Anselm's attempt to prove the necessity of God's action in Christ is flawed because it does not allow God freedom to act in new and creative ways after his initial creation of the world.


Anyone interested in patristic Christology should note this article by Siddals in which she maintains that Cyril's use of Aristotelian and Porphyrian logic needs to be recognised in any evaluation of Cyril's theology, and indeed, in any assessment of the Neonian controversy'. If Siddals' interpretation of Cyril is correct, however, the question still needs to be asked whether Cyril's use of logic clarified or distorted his understanding of the biblical witness to Christ.


In this article Droge examines the claim made by Justin Martyr in his 'Dialogue with Trypho' that Christianity is the true philosophy, and argues that it has its background in the thought of the second-century Middle Platonists, Numenius of Apamea, and the intellectual movement of which he was a part. A helpful article for those seeking to understand the basis of Justin's thought to the thought of Justin and of the patristic apologists in general.


As part of his continuing attempt to expound the thought of the Fathers and their contemporary relevance, Torrance looks at the teaching on creation, provision and resurrection in the work of the second-century- apologist Athanasius. He concludes that Athanasius helped to lay the basis for that idea of the contingent and dependent universe which underlies modern scientific discovery, and that he 'integrated physical and theological ingredients in our understanding of the interaction with the independent universal' in a way that has much to offer to the continuing dialogue between theology and natural science.


With the current interests in hermeneutics it is instructive to see how a Christian of the past used Scripture in the construction of doctrine. Noble explains Gregory Nazianzen's Lenten catechetical lecture for 387 in which he considers Gregory Nazianzen's use of Scripture in defence of the Deity of the Spirit. His work is extremely important, as he shows how Gregory Nazianzen's use of the Deity of the Spirit was a very intricate technique which, he argues, is entirely a free gift and the sinner has no role to play in his justification'. A clear introduction to Luther's distinctive teaching on justification.


Theodore Beza is normally seen as an academic theologian, but was also a Pastor. Rain looks at his pastoral teaching and concludes that Beza was a good shepherd who taught that Scripture the doctrine that nourished the faithful'. A useful article that draws attention to a neglected area of Beza's teaching, and reminds us that theology needs to be pastorally applied!


The Confession of Faith drawn up by Calvin and his pupil De Chadié and adopted by the First National Synod of French Protestants in 1559, has tended to be neglected in favour of other reformer statements of faith such as the 'Westminster' of 1643. Clifford maintains, however, that such neglect is unjustified because he argues that the Confession Fidei Gallicana is, for all its neglect, a model confession. The range and character of its statements fully reflect the chaste balanced biblical faith of John Calvin, which always was to avoid any unwarranted extra-scriptural speculation.'


In this study of the origins of the Puritan migration to America in the 17th century, Zakai argues that this migration was not caused by any great crisis in English society as a whole. It was instead the result of increasing strife between Puritans and their non-Puritan neighbours, and the insinuing of prospects for a Puritan reform of the church as a local issue. To put it simply, it was the attitude of their neighbours and state of their local churches that made the Puritans leave for America.


As I have said, Beza is normally seen as an academic theologian. He is also widely perceived to be the man who was responsible for the corruption of Reformed theology by enticing it to move away from the biblically based thought of Calvin. In this reassessment of Beza, Letham accepts that he gave a warm welcome to the logical methodology than did Calvin, and that he firmly defended limited atonement doctrine in spite of Calvin's but contends nevertheless that Beza's 'overall thought on predestination and its relationship to Christology, his formulations on faith and assurance in connection with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his thought on the church's doctrine and his understanding of the idea of a deep-seated departure from his predecessor'.


The Anabaptist understanding of the church and its relationship to society was very different from that of the major reformers such as Luther and Calvin. In this Latin Historical Theology lecture for 1987, Cowell seeks to explain this difference in terms of Anabaptist eschatology. He argues that it was the eschatology of the mainstream Anabaptists which determined their views on separation from the world, the necessity for purity of life among believers, church discipline, and their rejection of the right of the state to coerce people in matters of religious belief.


In this inaugural lecture as Professor of Church History at Aberdeen, Stephens states that: 'There is a thread that runs through the life and thought of Zwingli's theology, a conviction that colours every view he expresses. It is this, the definition of the person and hominum of God, and shows how this central idea finds expression in Zwingli's thoughts on true and false religion', the Bible, the state, the sacraments, and 'the providence of God'.


A concise introduction to Calvin's thought on the individual and society which looks at what he had to say about 'the human being as an individual and as a member of society in the context of God's activity in the world', and which suggests some contemporary implications of his teaching on these matters.

Enlightenment and modern

Keith Clements, 'Bonhoeffer: Theist or Moralist?', Theology LXXXIX No. 725, May 1986.

In this article on Bonhoeffer's ethics, Clements argues against Stewart Sutherland's interpretation of Bonhoeffer in his book God, Jesus and Belief, and maintains that Bonhoeffer's ethics only make sense if we see them as centred on God and his saving action. On the basis of various passages in his Letters and Pastoral Papers, Writs, such as Reinhard Robas found 'the去除 idea that as a justice that Bonhoeffer as one who abandoned the traditional Christian belief in a transcendent God. It is good to be reminded by Clements that this was not the case, and that Bonhoeffer's thought was actually based on such a belief.'


Barth's work on the Trinity has been called the greatest work on the subject since the Reformation or even Augustine. Bradshaw's article examines the doctrine of the Trinity and the influences which shaped it, and concludes that 'Barth's trinitarian doctrine needs to be interpreted in terms of his response to the problem of idolatry and existentialism'. For me, this conclusion raises a further theological question. If Bradshaw is right, in what way is the validity of Barth's doctrine not affected by the influence of idolatry and existentialism upon it?


The 19th century is often depicted as a time of conflict between ev- er-growing knowledge and an obstinate Christianism which fought this new knowledge all the way along. The truth, in fact, was that many Scotland and Scotland reflects in this article in which he explores how the Victorian churches responded to scientific discoveries with either enthusiasm, 'Christian' acceptance, or 'open hostility', a 'cautious but general' willingness to accept some of their findings.


Many evangelicals are suspicious of Barth and regard his work as unsatisfactory. In this Tyndale Historical Theology lecture, Baxter questions the problem of 'radical secularisation' and 'radical evangelicalism'. The conclusion she reaches is that Barth's theology was truly biblical in intention since he was a theologian who was concerned 'that not only the 'radical' and 'secular' be excluded from the Church, but that preaching be strictly in accordance with scripture', but that human error and fallibility meant that this intention was not always carried out in practice.

Debate continues about the origins of infant baptism, and Wright contributes to this debate by suggesting that the idea that infant baptism originated at the time of the birth of the child is an 'increasingly attractive hypothesis'. An issue which Wright does not explicitly address is whether the Church fathers held this view or not, an issue which is nevertheless important, is that of the theological significance of his suggestion. If infant baptism did have its origins in the baptism of believing children, in what ways might this affect our baptismal policies today?


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With the current interest in hermeneutics it is instructive to see how a Christian of the past used Scripture in the construction of doctrine. Noble explores the thought behind Gregory Nazianzen’s Homilies on the Holy Spirit, and notes that the exegetical tradition on the Holy Spirit is ‘entirely a free gift and the sinner has no role to play in his justification’. A clear introduction to Luther’s distinctive teaching on justification.


The early heretic Valentinus is normally described in theological textbooks as such a heretic as to be uninteresting. This book shows how the themes and context of his writings can be of great interest today. This book was written by a man who has written a short book in which he states that the Church fathers used the doctrine that nourished the faithful. A useful article that draws attention to a neglected area of Beza’s thinking, and reminds us that theology needs to be pastorally applied!


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Barth’s work on the Trinity has been called the greatest work on the subject since the Reformation or even Augustine. Bradshaw’s article examines the doctrine of the Trinity and the influences which shaped it, and concludes that ‘Barth’s trinitarian doctrine needs to be interiorized in the church’s life and practice but also that the critical ideas of idealism and existentialism are present in his work. For me, this conclusion raises a further theological question. If Barth is right, how is the validity of Barth’s thought to be assessed when it is affected by the influence of idealism and existentialism upon it?’


The 19th century is often depicted as a time of conflict between ever-widening knowledge and an obscurantist Christianity which fought this knowledge war all the way along the line. The truth was, in fact, more complex and Scotland reflects in this article in which he explores how the Victorian churchmen responded to scientific discoveries by maintaining a strong theological defence, and ‘open hostility’, or a ‘cautious but general' willingness to accept some of their findings.


Many evangelical Greeks are suspicious of Barth and regard his work as unbiblical. In this Tyndale Historical Theology lecture, Baxter considers the nature of Barth’s biblical theology and the needs of the contemporary church.

The conclusion she reaches is that Barth’s theology was truly biblical in intention since he was a theologian who was concerned ‘that not only the church, but the churchman, would take seriously the message contained in the text of the Bible, and that message to be understood with due respect for its proper context and its intended meaning'.
A fascinating article on a little-known subject which shows how the nation Army doctrine was influenced by the nine-point statement of faith produced by the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, and the Wesleyan-Arminian 'holiness' teaching of the visiting American preacher Zabdiel Prentiss and Robert and Harvard Fair Smith, and how the broad statement of faith adopted by Booth's Christian Mission in 1865 became a distinctive Wesleyan creed by 1876.


This article by Cook is intended to dispel evangelical ignorance about Kierkegaard and would make a good starting point for anyone wanting to find out about Kierkegaard and his teaching. Cook defends Kierkegaard against the charges that he was a mystic, a relativist, and a moralist, and also shows that he was not a pantheist, individuality, detachment, subjectivity, fate and purity of heart.


In October 1945 the council of the Protestant Church in Germany produced a 'public acknowledgement of responsibility and guilt' for their inadequate response to Nazism. Conway looks at the background, weaknesses and significance of this 'Stuttgarter Declaration' in an article which is worth pondering by anyone who is interested in the political responsibility of church leaders (who should be portrayed), and which provokes thought about what God might be asking the church to repent of today.

Samuel T. Logan, 'Where have all the tulips gone?', Westminster Theological Journal L No. 1, Spring 1988.

Despite the title, this is not an article which has escaped from Gardeners' World! It is in fact an examination of the decline of orthodox Calvinism in New England between 1639 and 1776, due to the desire for human freedom being given higher priority than zeal for God. Logan analyses in detail how the fundamental question of how far the beliefs of the Puritans still held good was looked at for the questions it raises about whether Calvinism and modern notions of political liberty and human autonomy are compatible. Does an emphasis on the sovereignty of God necessarily mean a deprivation of human freedom?


Charles Simeon provided a role model for generations of evangelical Anglican clergy and this article by Bennett provides a good introduction to why this was the case. An article which can be recommended to anyone who wants a clear and concise summary of Simeon's life and thought.


In an article which complements the one by Logan mentioned above, Noll examines the reasons why American theology moved away from Calvinism during the period with which he is concerned, while in Scotland Calvinism remained dominant. He also adds a 'hymnological' explanation of why the move to a more 'formal' unionistic theology needed to be on an institutional and existential level, as well as on a theological level, and that non-theological factors have to be taken into account in attempting to explain the,outcomes of attempts by 18th century Anglican theologians to produce a new, more detached, and non-ideological, and more 'correct' Anglican article which should interest those who want to know about Scottish and American church history.


This learned and wide-ranging monograph explores a critical nexus of theological and hermeneutical issues (which is a major concern of modern critical scholarship) and which is reflected in the Old Testament may be acknowledged, intertwined, and allowed to function theologically (back cover). The extended bibliography which follows is an attempt to orientate readers to the book's argument. The review editor is grateful for Dr Goldingay's assistance.

A substantial introductory chapter looks at the sorts of diversity to be considered in the first part of the book. This approach is applied to a particular subject. Misunderstanding will arise unless it is clearly perceived that Goldingay writes the book using an 'approach to an argument' rather than a 'thesis'.

A significant section of the Introduction defines four different responses to the question of 'diversity' said to be found in the OT. Whereas formal contradiction involves a difference at the level of words, whereas isomorphic contradiction involves a difference at the level of words, whereas no contradiction is involved in the understanding of the OT which is the focus of the book. However, views speakers whose disagreement is never merely verbal nor merely contextual (though Goldingay notes that 'for all the differences between a text and its context', the concept of 'contextual contradiction' is the most fruitful in the exegesis of the Old Testament (p. 12). Thereafter the book is structured in three Parts, each of two chapters.

Each Part outlines in the first of the two chapters a particular strategy for dealing with the OT's theological diversity, while in the second that approach is applied to a particular subject. Misunderstanding will arise unless it is clearly perceived that Goldingay writes the book using an 'approach to an argument' rather than a 'thesis'. The second chapter in each Part outlines a way of thinking or of looking at the realities of which the OT speaks' [p. 14], concluding that 'the meaning of the OT is not simply the collection of statements about matters of fact. It is the context of the whole which is the reality that we face when we read the Old Testament' (p. 12).

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Despite the title, this is not an article which has escaped from Gardners' World! Its task is in fact an examination of the decline of orthodoxy Calvinism in New England between 1630 and 1776, due to the desire for human freedom being given higher priority than zeal for visible conformity. It is an important contribution to the legitimate debates about the way in which we look at the questions it raises about whether Calvinism and modern notions of political liberty and human autonomy are compatible. Does an emphasis on the sovereignty of God necessarily mean a deprivation of human freedom?


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Each part outlines in the first of the two chapters a particular strategy for dealing with the OT's theological diversity, while in the second that approach is applied to a particular subject. Misunderstanding will arise unless it is clearly perceived that Goldingay writes the book using the approach. The 14 themes of diversity which are treated in the book cover a wide range of topics spanning the whole Bible. It is not an exhaustive list, but it does provide a good basis for the study of the OT.

Goldingay explains unity in relation to diversity on a contextual approach as relating to the fact that different speakers respond to different situations. The book is written in such a way that it is easy to follow and the style is clear and well-structured.

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Ecclesiastion fits this scenario. Golding says that "some of these models are more appropriate for understanding situations involving the grand piano (p. 92) and he argues that "the people of God cannot take it for granted that each of these models of what it means to be the people of God is equally relevant to God's situation." He refers to the question "is it really Israel that is intended?" (p. 93) and then "is the vision of the 21st century church a vision of the church that is to come together in the exile." (p. 96).

Golding suggests a "theological renaissance of understanding" (one that may be necessary) and one of the ways of doing this is to consider an "Evangelical or Critical Approach" under the subheading "Can we affirm some viewpoints and criticize others?" The answer to which is, basically, yes. Among other things, he argues that the reaction of scholarship to this development is "not a simple matter of a change of emphasis" or a change of meaning in the text, rather it is a change of meaning in the text. "Theology and scholarship need to work together, not be isolated from each other." (p. 101)


The present volume is one of more than twenty that have appeared since the Word Biblical Commentary series was launched in 1977. This volume, like its predecessors, offers a balanced treatment of the text, some major concepts, and the development of the interpretive history. By focusing on the interpretive challenges of the text itself, Durham provides a substantive, yet accessible, introduction to the book of Exodus. The text is treated as the work of God's people, with particular attention paid to the implications of the text for the contemporary church. Durham's approach is characterized by a commitment to the authority of the text and a desire to make it relevant to the contemporary reader.

The book begins with an introduction to the book of Exodus, covering the background, structure, and key themes. Durham then moves on to a detailed examination of each of the major events in the story, including the exodus from Egypt, the covenant at Mount Sinai, and the journey through the desert. The book concludes with a reflection on the enduring significance of the book for the church.

Durham's approach is characterized by a commitment to the authority of the text and a desire to make it relevant to the contemporary reader. He is careful to balance his critical analysis with a strong emphasis on the role of the text in the life of the church. Throughout the book, Durham provides a wealth of insights and applications that are designed to help the reader make sense of the text and apply its teachings in their own lives.

In short, this is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the book of Exodus. Whether you are a scholar, a pastor, or a layperson, this book will provide you with a solid foundation for understanding and applying the message of the book.


This book represents the Moore Theological College Lectures of 1983 given by Dumbrell. The reader should not be misled by the title of the book.
Ecclesiastes fits this scenario. Goldingay suggests that "some of these modes of conversation are more than just a conversation" (p. 92) and argues that "the people of God cannot take it for granted that each of these models of what it means to be the people of God is equally valid" (p. 93). He contends that by "putting the question 'when is Israel really Israel?' (Gunning p. 94) is the 'when' of the question of faith and the question of the purpose of the text. Goldingay believes that the solution to this problem comes together in the exit (p. 96).

Goldingay asks us to consider "An Evaluative or Critical Approach" under the subheading "Can we afford some views, and criticize others?" The answer to which is, basically, yes. Among the examples of this kind of study that Goldingay mentions is that of development where he correctly rejects an evolutionary approach to the text by pointing out that "the message of God is available in a new sense of change, but this development follows a zigzag line, an up-and-down one in which insights are lost as well as gained" (pp. 103-104). These are examples of the ways in which Goldingay feels that scholars have used different methods of approach and for this he deserves our thanks. Few are likely to rival his grasp of the issues, his command of the scholarly literature or his perceptive writing. It is a book that would form an excellent basis for discussion in a seminar over a term. It is certainly an indispensable study for those who wish to appreciate and appropriate the theological legacy of the OT.

David G. Debows


The present volume is one of more than twenty that have appeared since the Word Biblical Commentary series was launched in 1977. There are many reasons for its delayed appearance, but chief among them is that the task of commentary on the book of Exodus is a daunting one. Yet the richness of the text, and the need for a reliable commentary, are the reasons why this project eventually came into being.

In his preface and introduction Durham declares something of his own purposes and objectives. He mentions, among other things, that the purpose of his commentary is to provide a "thorough" study of the text. He also declares that the commentary will be "theologically oriented," and that it will be "expository and exegetical."

The preface and introduction of this study is a thorough and well-written review of the current state of the field. The author's ability to provide a thorough exegesis of the text is evident throughout.

Durham's study is thorough, well-written, and packed with valuable insights. His exegesis of the text is thorough, and he provides a wealth of information about the context and meaning of the text. His explanations of the various passages are particularly helpful, and he provides a wealth of information about the context and meaning of the text. His explanations of the various passages are particularly helpful, and he provides a wealth of information about the context and meaning of the text.
that this question be answered more thoroughly and clearly. I think that the basic answer in these texts is that Christ himself became the beginning of the new creation (Col. 1:15; Eph. 2:5-7; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 3:9). The resurrection of Christ is the climax of the biblical narrative of salvation and new creation. In the light of this understanding of resurrection, I believe that the biblical authors intended the resurrection to be the beginning of a new creation. The resurrection is the decisive event that makes it possible for the new creation to begin. The new creation begins with the resurrection of Christ and continues to unfold in the present and future. The resurrection is the event that makes it possible for the new creation to begin and to grow. It is the event that gives it life and purpose. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be realized in the present and future. The resurrection is the event that gives it substance and form. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be experienced and to be lived. The resurrection is the event that gives it meaning and purpose. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be understood and to be interpreted. The resurrection is the event that gives it hope and comfort. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be shared and to be transmitted. The resurrection is the event that gives it faith and devotion. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be believed and to be loved. The resurrection is the event that gives it power and might. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be accomplished and to be realized. The resurrection is the event that gives it victory and triumph. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be achieved and to be celebrated. The resurrection is the event that gives it glory and honor. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be known and to be revered. The resurrection is the event that gives it substance and form. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be experienced and to be lived. The resurrection is the event that gives it meaning and purpose. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be understood and to be interpreted. The resurrection is the event that gives it hope and comfort. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be shared and to be transmitted. The resurrection is the event that gives it faith and devotion. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be believed and to be loved. The resurrection is the event that gives it power and might. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be accomplished and to be realized. The resurrection is the event that gives it victory and triumph. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be achieved and to be celebrated. The resurrection is the event that gives it glory and honor. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be known and to be revered. The resurrection is the event that gives it substance and form. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be experienced and to be lived. The resurrection is the event that gives it meaning and purpose. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be understood and to be interpreted. The resurrection is the event that gives it hope and comfort. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be shared and to be transmitted. The resurrection is the event that gives it faith and devotion. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be believed and to be loved. The resurrection is the event that gives it power and might. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be accomplished and to be realized. The resurrection is the event that gives it victory and triumph. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be achieved and to be celebrated. The resurrection is the event that gives it glory and honor. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be known and to be revered. The resurrection is the event that gives it substance and form. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be experienced and to be lived. The resurrection is the event that gives it meaning and purpose. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be understood and to be interpreted. The resurrection is the event that gives it hope and comfort. It is the event that makes it possible for it to be shared and to be transmitted.
that this question be answered more thoroughly and clearly. I think it is a basic and fundamental aspect of these texts that Jesus became himself the beginning of the truth of God to the world. (See the resurrection appearances in Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:13-35; John 1:14; 20:19-20; 21:15-23; 1 Cor. 15:3-517; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5 and 21:4) and his death was the ultimate and definitive expression of that truth. Further, I am sure that the New Testament and the entire Christian Bible are woven together around the theme of resurrection, which is the New Testament's central organizing theme. In recent years, many scholars have tried to develop an alternative interpretation of the NT that is not based on resurrection. However, this alternative interpretation has been criticized for being inconsistent with the teaching of the New Testament and the Christian faith. Therefore, I believe that the New Testament's central theme is the resurrection of Jesus.
EDITORIAL: Responding to the God of History

Fact is stranger than fiction. 1984 came and went with all its Orwellian fantasies unfulfilled, though the prophets of doom at the time saw us hurtling downhill on how close we were to the fiction becoming fact. The winter of 1989-90, on the other hand, is already being hailed by historians as likely to rank along with dates like 1689-90 in England, 1776 in America, 1789 in France and even 1917 in Russia, in the world-changing events it has brought. The collapse of communist domination in eastern Europe and the voluntary renunciation of the institutional right to rule by the Communist Party in Moscow, coming at the same time as major steps in South Africa towards the ending of racial injustice there, have left us gasping in astonishment at events we would have deemed almost unthinkable a short time ago. Some theological reflections suggest themselves.

A major effect of the convulsions in Europe, noted even by secular commentators, has been the dissolving of the popular territorial image of good and evil. The Iron Curtain had for a generation symbolized not merely the political reality of a divided Europe, but also a convenient moral and spiritual frontier for those who coloured the west angelic and the east diabolic, which was certainly the mythology purveyed by countless spy movies and novels. Without denying whatever relevance the myth may have embodied (as myths usually do), it needs to be said that Christians can never succumb to a territorial (or racial) definition of good or evil. Just as the kingdom of God is not territorially defined, neither is the kingdom of darkness. There always has been an ‘evil empire’, but it was never confined to a single continent, as the simplistic Star Wars mentality (in its cinematic or its militarist form) would have us think. Jesus taught us that the wheat and the weeds grow side by side in the field of the world, and the task of distinguishing them is ultimately a task for angels (the real ones) and reserved for the final judgment. Meanwhile we do well to follow Paul’s advice to ‘judge nothing before the time’. It may have been a bad year for the devil. But it hasn’t been so good for the confident prophets of doom either, with their assured scenarios of satanic communism’s world domination heralding apocalyptic tribulations.

We are told to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Hard enough to do in personal relationships, and even more difficult in the world of international affairs, where one segment of humanity’s rejoicing may become another’s weeping. Who could fail to rejoice at the sight of ecstatic Germans celebrating the collapse of the Berlin Wall, with all the related prospects for political freedoms and economic opportunities which are opening up to almost all of eastern Europe? But who will pay for those economic opportunities? It is a complacent self-delusion to think that western economic power and affluence is a simple direct result of the west’s own effort or merely the proof of the superiority of market capitalism over state communism. The wealth of the west is as dependent now in its maintenance as it ever was, in its development upon the unfair and exploitative world economic system which loads all the dice against the poorer nations of the south. However, in spite of the system (or, in fact, as part of it), the western north has at least endeavoured to contribute to what it calls development in other parts of the world through various kinds of aid. The motives are rarely altruistic, but at least it happens. The question arises now, in the light of so much promised aid to eastern Europe and democratizing Russia, how will the rest of the world fare? If the First World embraces the Second World, who cares for the Third World then? Mammon will always prove a more enduring rival to the living God than Marxism. It would be ironic and tragic if the white and northern segment of humanity hugged its ‘blessings’ ever closer to its continental cousins while the south grew even more excluded in its poverty and oppression. And for how long would the south tolerate such ever starker global disparity? Our biblical theology and ethic must compel us to face such questions if we take seriously our commitment to humanity as a whole in interpreting the flow of contemporary history.

Lecturing on Isaiah 40-55 during some of the most astonishing of these recent events prompts another reflection, namely the speed and surprise of the way God acts in history. What the exiles in Babylon had long for a generation began to happen so suddenly that they could not take it in, and indeed appear to have objected to the way God was answering their hopes. Similarly today, walls long thought and declared impregnable simply crumbled. Dictators boasting their security one day were fleeing the next.

He brings princes to naught
And reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
No sooner are they planted
Than he blows on them and they wither (Is. 40:23f).

Thus spoke the prophet about the transience of human power before the sovereignty of Israel’s God. And who had done it? The insistent question in Isaiah 40-55 is answered on a human level by Cyrus, before whom the nations of the world trembled and tried to strengthen their own and each other’s idolatries (41:5-7). But behind him stood God himself. Indeed, the prophet affirms, God had raised him up for that very purpose and was the giver of all his success, victories and progress. It was too much then for some devout Jews to accept that the God of Israel should use a pagan king for his saving purpose. It is doubtless astonishing for many who have prayed to God for generations to be delivered from the grip of atheistic or racist persecution that God should choose to use the very head of the oppressive system as the agent of changes that have turned the world upside down. Yet the biblically alert believer should not baulk at this. For why should the God who used Nebuchadnezzar ‘my servant’ (Je. 27:6) and Cyrus ‘my anointed’ (Is. 45:1) not also use a Gorbachev (whose first name ironically means ‘Who is like God?’) or a de Klerk? The fact that it is said explicitly that Cyrus did not acknowledge Yahweh (45:4f) shows us that God needs no acknowledgment on the part of those he chooses to carry out his purpose in history (as Pharaoh might now be willing to agree). Equally, the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was eventually